

Memorandum

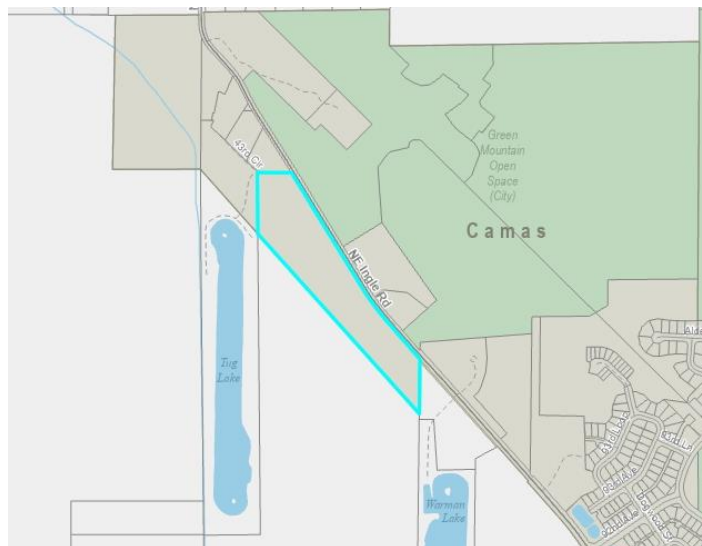
To: Alan Peters
Robert Maul

From: LeAnne M. Bremer, P.C.

Subject: Tax Parcel No. 172346-000: Annual Review Application

Date: September 13, 2023

On behalf of Ginn Group that has an interest in Tax Parcel No. 172346-000, I am submitting this memorandum requesting that the City of Camas process a comprehensive plan amendment and rezone (annual review) application from a commercial designation to a residential designation (CC to MF-18). The property is on the western edge of the City and shown here:



We understand that because the City is initiating the process to conduct an update of its entire comprehensive plan, the City is considering placing a moratorium on accepting individual annual review applications until the City completes its update in 2025. We believe there are both legal and policies arguments that would support allowing Ginn Group to file its annual review application this coming January. Ginn Group is proceeding with filing a pre-application

to initiate the process, and requests that the City continue processing the full application according to the schedule the City has followed in prior years.

Legal Framework

First, RCW 36.70A.130(1)(a) under the Growth Management Act states that “[e]ach comprehensive land use plan development regulations shall be subject to continuing review and evaluation by the county or city that adopted them.”

Further, in subsection (2)(a) of that same section, it states:

Each county and city shall establish and broadly disseminate to the public a public participation program consistent with RCW 36.70A.035 and 36.70A.140 that identifies procedures and schedules whereby updates, proposed amendments, or revisions of the comprehensive plan are considered by the governing body of the county or city no more frequently than once every year. "Updates" means to review and revise, if needed, according to subsection (1) of this section, and the deadlines in subsections (4) and (5) of this section or in accordance with the provisions of subsection (6) of this section.

The City has complied with this provision and adopted code that addresses proposed amendments to its comprehensive plan in chapter 18.51 CMC. The chapter, consistent with state law, permits applicants to file annual review applications in January of each year. CMC 18.51.010.

There is no provision in GMA that requires the City to suspend the annual review process while it is conducting its more comprehensive update. Typically, the City does not receive a significant amount of annual review applications each year, and processing applications would involve the same analysis that would occur in the comprehensive plan update (e.g., whether this property should be redesignated to residential for a variety of factors, including the fact that it is not marketable as commercial property, as the owner has received no interest in commercial development since annexation). We understand the City staff has a lot of planning efforts on its plate right now, but applicants typically take the initial laboring oar justifying a requested site-specific change, which Ginn Group is willing to do, as well as assist in other ways to ensure that staff is not appreciably burdened with processing this individual application.

Moreover, the City has a continuing duty to ensure that the goals of GMA are met including the goals of accommodating affordable housing, preserving property rights, and encouraging the

involvement of citizens in the planning process.¹ Continuing to allow annual review applications would further these goals.

Policy Considerations

Both the City and legislature have recognized the current need for more affordable housing options, including middle housing. Waiting to allow this type of housing until the update is complete, and then factoring in development review and construction time, could easily result in needed housing not being available until 2027.

Middle housing is seen as providing more affordable home choices near jobs, schools, and transit, and more options for first-time homebuyers, and as providing other benefits, including less sprawl into farmland and forests, more walkable communities, reduced home energy use, lower municipal infrastructure costs, jobs for small, local builders, and increased local tax revenue.²

In 2021, the City created a Housing Action Plan to “encourage housing diversity, affordability, and access to opportunity for people of all incomes,” where the “goal of the plan is to help the community achieve a greater variety of housing types and costs to better meet the needs and desires of individuals and families.” One of the goals of the plan is to:

Develop Housing to Accommodate Growth. Projections based on anticipated population growth indicate the need for about 4,590 additional housing units in Camas through 2040. In contrast, Clark County’s Vacant Buildable Lands Model identifies capacity for an additional 3,730 housing units in Camas based on the City’s current average of 6 dwelling units per acre. Thoughtful changes to Camas’s zoning and development regulations can allow the City to better accommodate projected growth.

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We are not too far removed from when the City adopted this plan in 2021 for circumstances to have changed dramatically, with the need for affordable housing perhaps being greater as population increases.

In addition, 2023 was a landmark session for housing legislation in Washington, responding to an “unprecedented housing crisis” brought on by the shortage in housing supply and the dearth

¹ RCW 36.70A.020.

² See e.g., <https://www.sightline.org/2023/01/03/washingtons-2023-middle-housing-bill-explained/>

of affordable housing options. Arguably one of the most significant bills passed in the 2023 session was what is commonly known as the Middle Housing Bill, which went into effect on July 23, 2023. This law includes the following important policy statements that the City echoes in its Housing Action Plan:

- The legislature finds that Washington is facing an unprecedented housing crisis for its current population and a lack of housing choices, and is not likely to meet the affordability goals for future populations. In order to meet the goal of 1,000,000 new homes by 2044, and enhanced quality of life and environmental protection, innovative housing policies will need to be adopted.
- Increasing housing options that are more affordable to various income levels is critical to achieving the state's housing goals, including those codified by the legislature under chapter 254, Laws of 2021.
- There is continued need for the development of housing at all income levels, including middle housing that will provide a wider variety of housing options and configurations to allow Washingtonians to live near where they work.
- Homes developed at higher densities are more affordable by design for Washington residents both in their construction and reduced household energy and transportation costs.
- While creating more housing options, it is essential for cities to identify areas at higher risk of displacement and establish anti-displacement policies as required in Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill No. 1220 (chapter 254, Laws of 2021).
- The state has made historic investments in subsidized affordable housing through the housing trust fund, yet even with these historic investments, the magnitude of the housing shortage requires both public and private investment.
- In addition to addressing the housing shortage, allowing more housing options in areas already served by urban infrastructure will reduce the pressure to develop natural and working lands, support key strategies for climate change, food security, and [urban area] recovery, and save taxpayers and ratepayers money.

Under this law, Camas must amend its development regulations six months after the comprehensive plan update that would allow greater densities in residential zones, including single-family zones. But given today's need and the delay in implementation provided by this deadline, allowing annual review applications, especially for residential development, is critical to meet current housing needs.

Ginn Group proposes housing that is financially attainable for working families. Seeing this land used for a higher and better use and providing an opportunity to create much needed 'missing middle' housing options in the City of Camas is the basis for the request. If approved, the project will generate approximately 100 units of 'missing middle' housing in Camas.

Ginn Group respectfully requests that the City not suspend annual review applications at all, but at least for residential projects that can fulfill the City's Housing Action Plan and the policies behind middle housing. Thank you for your consideration.