



MEDINA, WASHINGTON

Planning Commission

Tuesday July 28, 2026

Subject: Development Impacts Project

Planning Commission Action: Discussion item only. No action.

Staff Contact: Kim Gunderson, Medina Planning Consultant

Summary

The City of Medina intends to permanently enact regulatory reform that will trend development away from recent development tendencies and address the impacts of these tendencies on the sense of community enjoyed in Medina. This effort is known as the Development Impacts Project. This project has commonly been referred to as “bulk impacts” over the last 20 years and the issue has been a regular matter of focus for regulatory reform in Medina. The goal of the Development Impacts Project is to develop permanent amendments to Medina’s zoning context in a way that resolves development-related impacts and implements the land use goals of the Medina Comprehensive Plan:

H-P1: “Ensure new development is consistent with citywide goals and policies, including but not limited to sustainable site standards, landscaping and tree retention requirements, and diversity of housing options all while maintaining a quiet, safe, and livable city.”

LU-G1: “To maintain Medina’s high-quality residential setting and character, while considering create housing solutions to accommodate community members of all socioeconomic groups.”

LU-G3: “To maintain active community involvement and equitable engagement in land use policy and regulation.”

Problem Statement

The City has observed an increasing trend in the development of massive single-family homes which tend to overwhelm the size of adjacent homes and injure the privacy and property enjoyment of neighboring residents. Medina frequently reviews proposals for the demolition of modest homes and their replacement with boxy, wide, tall homes accompanied by considerable glazing that is often oriented toward neighboring living spaces.

Thematic Public Feedback

Medina recognizes that the character of high-quality living is not hallmarked only by luxurious homes, but by privacy in indoor living space and comfort in outdoor recreational space, too. Bucking trends in many other western Washington communities to decrease minimum lot sizes and increase bulk consumption of property, Medina has represented the value conveyed by its residents in the quiet comfort of their sylvan waterfront environment. In recent years, these residents have expressed a loss of their comforts by the growing trend of massive neighboring residential development. The trend of proximal, boxy homes has caused obtrusive light and noise, loss of privacy and property enjoyment, and an unease among some residents in the geotechnical stability of Medina’s steep slopes to withstand the charge of such large structures.

In an effort to address these concerns, the City enacted emergency legislative action limiting the

proximity of development within adjoining side yards by increasing side yard setbacks on all properties (Ordinance 1052). In the same legislative action, the City created requirements for recessed upper stories and removed its allowance for height bonuses, which previously could allow the construction of a home up to 36-feet in height. It is expected that at its July 27, 2026 City Council regular meeting, Council will be asked to take action on a second piece of emergency legislation which contains many of the same provisions as Ordinance 1052, but removes its recessed upper story requirement, clarifies its vacant home lighting provisions, and increases the minimum lot width for all zones from 70-feet to 90-feet.

In response to the passing of Ordinance 1052, property owners interested in developing their properties shared that these limitations have yielded a loss of property value and seemingly restrict denser development that is otherwise called for by the state.

The themes heard by the Medina community on this topic comprise “The Problem” and can be summarized as:

- Large, boxy, proximal development has **reduced privacy, reduced property enjoyment and value, and caused excessive noise and light.**
- Regulations applied under Ordinance 1052 has caused a **loss in property value** and works **averse to denser development** priorities of the state.

The focus of this project will be to explore methods of amending the City’s zoning landscape that considers each of these themes offered by the public and to create a balance between fostering the increased density with livability for all residents.

Council Direction

At its April 27, 2026 regular meeting, City Council gave the following direction:

“Direct the Planning Commission to study each presented zoning reform opportunity for its efficacy in satisfying the goals of the Development Impacts Project and prepare a recommendation for Council’s adoption.”

Additional discussion with Council divided the project into two phases: Phase 1, which intends to expeditiously resolve The Problem; and Phase 2, which is a longer-term study of the broad zoning reform opportunities introduced by the Planner at Council’s April 27, 2026 meeting. It is expected that this project will prioritize Phase 1 and will limit its focus initially at its resolution, initiating Phase 2 at the completion of Phase 1.

Phase 1

Kim Gunderson of Mahoney Planning, LLC is under contract with the City of Medina to provide on-call current and long-range planning support services, and has been tasked with leading the Development Impacts Project. Kim has prepared and attached a PowerPoint slide deck that will be presented to Planning Commission at its July 28, 2026 meeting. The slide deck refamiliarizes Planning Commission with the project and introduces the Phase 1 code amendments recommended by staff. Staff propose the adoption of permanent revised zoning code provisions in its resolution to Phase 1; this is in direct response to consistent outspoken feedback from Development Impacts Project stakeholders who have asked for reliability as the Project advances. Kim will seek feedback from the Planning Commission at its regular meeting on July 28 which would be incorporated into any as-needed revisions to Phase 1 draft work products.

Following the July Planning Commission meeting, it is expected that Kim will prepare a Department of Commerce Notice of Intent to Adopt with request for expedited review and a SEPA Checklist and Threshold Determination for Phase 1 of the Development Impacts Project. These project

components are statutorily required for development code amendments and offer additional opportunities for public comment and engagement. Any comments would be presented to Planning Commission at their August meeting, when a public hearing on Phase 1 of the Development Impacts Project is expected to occur. Planning Commission will be asked following the public hearing for a recommendation to City Council on the adoption of recommended Phase 1 code amendments.

Attachment(s)

PowerPoint Slide Deck prepared by Kim Gunderson for presentation at July 28, 2026 Planning Commission meeting

DRAFT Ordinance, MMC Amendments for Development Impacts Project Phase 1

Privacy Landscape Screening List

Proposed Planning Commission Motion:

Discussion item only. No action.