

From: abjack5@comcast.net
To: PlanningCommission@Medina-WA.gov; [Council](#)
Subject: Bulky House Ordinance
Date: Tuesday, April 21, 2026 1:48:16 PM

Dear Medina City Council and Planning Commission Members,

I am a 30-year resident of Medina. I am deeply saddened by the prevalence of lots being cleared to enable the construction of large boxy homes that cover the entire buildable lot. My understanding is that Ordinance 1052 was approved to provide the planning commission time to study ways to mitigate the unintended negative consequences of the bulky structures on *existing* residents *and* the overall character of our community. I strongly support this ordinance's goal because without it, the rural character, charm, mature landscaping, tree canopy and resident's privacy, all part of Medina's comp plan, are in jeopardy.

I spoke at the Bulky House Public Hearing on April 13. During that time, I had the opportunity to listen to the architects, developers, contractors and a couple of residents who spoke against Ordinance 1052 because it impacted development projects they are actively pursuing. Many of them discussed the "unintended consequences" of this ordinance. I can certainly appreciate the frustration of residents who have already purchased property or were about to submit for permitting based on the old code. They have made decisions and investments in their projects based on those codes. I wonder if it's possible to modify the ordinance for homeowners who purchased property before the ordinance date and submit their building permit by a certain future date, to be allowed to use the old setback measurements. This could be a fair compromise.

There are also very real negative unintended consequences of these developments on neighbors and community, especially on narrow lots where the houses are very close together. It is not just the sheer height and bulk of the developments, but also the removal of most of the mature plantings that results in an ongoing loss of privacy and sunlight, increased noise and nighttime light, reduced greenery and tree canopy throughout the community and no remaining plants/trees large enough near the home to give it visual scale. New small plantings will likely take 20 plus years to replace what was lost or even begin to shield these tall flat roofed structures. This devalues the neighbor's property, significantly impacts their privacy, quality of life, and often requires the neighbors to have to invest in home and landscaping modifications to try and mitigate or recapture (if they even can) some of the privacy, quiet and natural beauty they have lost.

During the last five years, four neighboring properties around us have been redeveloped. The lots are all narrow and just about 20,000 sq feet. They were well treed lots. All were pretty much cleared during development. That's about 2 acres of tree canopy completely gone. The result is 4 very large boxy homes with minimal new landscaping. At night, their lights shine directly into our living spaces, where previously we had none. They look right into our

windows day and night. Fortunately, we have one large hedge that screens part of our house from the development next door. But the new home rises above that hedge, blocking sunlight. Their windows look right into our bedroom, bathroom and into our once private and serene breakfast nook and kitchen. We used to see the greenery of our hedge and blue sky or stars above. Now we still see hedge, but above it is the long, flat side of what will look like an office building. Fortunately, a small section of the neighbor's hedge was retained in response to our insistence, but the remainder of the property line will be completely cleared, making our outdoor living space a fishbowl.

When we first met our new neighbor to discuss their plans, they shared with us that every architect and contractor they spoke with told them that they needed to maximize the size of their house to balance Medina's high land prices. That became their goal and is likely the goal of most developers. This theme drives the trend to build the biggest house possible on the lot, which unfortunately has the biggest impact on existing neighbors, mature landscape and large trees. The current tree code, which allows for the removal of significant trees in the buildable envelope without mitigation, contributes to this problem.

Ordinance 1052 is a step in the right direction. Eliminating bonus height, requiring landscape buffers between homes and managing noise and light would help. The setback issue is tricky, especially on the narrow lots. Perhaps design standards requiring some sort of exterior wall modulation or architectural elements would be more palatable than reduced setbacks and the wedding cake design on these narrower lots. Here are some additional ideas for consideration:

- *Develop design standards

- *Incentivize retention of existing mature hedges rather than planting new ones that will take years to provide meaningful privacy and noise insulation.

- *Require new hedges to be a *minimum* of 6-8' height.

- *Require roots of neighbor's hedges along the property line (not just trees) be protected during construction. Our neighbor excavated 10+ feet right at the property line, sheering off the roots of our hedge and mature plantings which have remained exposed all winter. We hope they survive!

- I *Incentivize retention of large mature trees and landscaping on development sites, particularly along the property lines.

- *Add and enforce meaningful penalties for violation of tree code.

Thank you for considering this important issue and keeping Medina's comprehensive plan goals in the forefront. Many of us moved here because of the character of this community. It

would be a shame to lose it.

Sincerely,

Allyson Jackson

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