



Increasing Residential Building Capacity E2SHB 1923 Grant Opportunity Overview

Growth Management Services

Local Government Division

E2SHB 1923 (2019) encourages all cities planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA) to adopt actions to increase residential building capacity. Cities are especially encouraged to increase residential building capacity in areas that have supportive transportation and utility infrastructure, and are served with frequent transit service. Cities are also encouraged to prioritize the creation of affordable, inclusive neighborhoods and to consider the risk of residential displacement, particularly in neighborhoods with communities at high risk of displacement.

This bill provides a total \$5,000,000 in grants assistance, prioritized by the legislature for cities over 20,000 in population. A city may receive up to \$100,000 in grant funds for:

1. taking at least two of the actions to increase residential building capacity listed below,
or
2. developing a housing action plan.

Commerce will reach out directly to eligible cities to apply for the funding. Those cities will be asked to complete a survey about eligible actions, specifically if they already have them, and for which ones they intend to apply for funding. Commerce will use the information to make decisions about the grant program. Applications will be available in August. In the meantime, we recommend that eligible jurisdictions work with decision makers to review the list of eligible activities below, and decide which ones they may pursue for funding. If your city has not received notification of the survey, please contact Paul Johnson at (360) 725-3048 or paul.johnson@commerce.wa.gov.

After the first round of grants, if funding allows, Commerce may consider accepting and funding applications from cities with a population of less than 20,000 if the actions proposed will result in significant housing capacity or regulatory streamlining.

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Activities eligible for E2SHB 1923 funding

1. Select at least two of the actions listed below:

- a) ***Increase residential density near commuter or light rail stations to 50 dwelling units per acre. Designated areas should be at least 500 acres in size.***

This may be done in the form of a sub-area plan or rezoning within a designated area in response to or anticipation of commuter or light rail stations. Special attention should be paid to prioritize bicycle, pedestrian, and transit access to station areas. Regulations should require *no more than an average of one on-site parking space per two bedrooms* in multifamily areas.

- b) ***Increase residential density along high frequency transit corridors to 25 dwelling units per acre. Designated areas should be at least 250 acres for cities with a population of less than 40,000 people, or 500 acres for cities with a population over 40,000.***

This may be done in the form of a sub-area plan or rezoning along a transit corridor in response to or in anticipation of high frequency transit corridors. *High frequency transit service is defined as bus service at least four times per hour, at least 12 hours per day.* Rezones should include higher density residential development within a 10- to 15-minute walk of transit stops, with special attention to considerations for road crossings to transit service. Regulations should require *no more than an average of one on-site parking space per two bedrooms* in multifamily areas.

- c) ***Authorize at least one duplex, triplex, or courtyard apartment on each parcel in one or more zoning districts that permit single-family residences unless a city documents a specific infrastructure or physical constraint that would make this requirement unfeasible for a particular parcel.***

This option would allow much more diversity in housing stock within single family zoning districts. Documentation of specific infrastructure or physical constraints should go beyond whether sewer or other services currently exist at the location. Documentation should describe how specific geographic features of the land, such as water bodies or critical areas make it extremely difficult to develop, or serve isolated parcels with urban services.

- d) ***Authorize cluster zoning or lot size averaging in all zoning districts that permit single-family residences;***

Cluster zoning is a zoning method in which development density is determined for an entire specified area, rather than on a lot-by-lot basis. Within the specified cluster

zone, a developer can exercise greater flexibility in designing and placing structures, as long as the total density requirement is met.

Lot size averaging allows the size of individual lots within a development to vary from the zoned maximum density, provided that the average lot size in the development as a whole meets that maximum. Housing can then be developed on lots smaller than otherwise permitted in a zone, allowing for greater densities in some areas and more diversity throughout the development.

These tools can be especially useful in lands encumbered by critical areas or other constraints that point to a more flexible approach.

- e) ***Authorize attached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on all parcels containing single-family homes where the lot is at least 3,200 square feet in size, and permit both attached and detached ADUs on all parcels containing single-family homes, provided lots are at least 4,356 square feet in size. Qualifying city ordinances or regulations may not provide for on-site parking requirements, owner occupancy requirements, or square footage limitations below 1,000 square feet for the accessory dwelling unit, and must not prohibit the separate rental or sale of accessory dwelling units and the primary residence. Cities must set applicable impact fees at no more than the projected impact of the accessory dwelling unit. To allow local flexibility, other than these factors, accessory dwelling units may be subject to such regulations, conditions, procedures, and limitations as determined by the local legislative authority, and must follow all applicable state and federal laws and local ordinances.***

All jurisdictions planning under the GMA over 20,000 in population and all counties over 125,000 in population are already required to allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in single family zones.¹ To be eligible for funding under E2SHB 1923, eligible jurisdictions must adopt an ADU ordinance that is consistent with these specifications for lot size, unit size, no parking requirement, no owner occupancy requirement, reduced impact fees, and subsequent separate sale of separate units. Beyond these items, local governments may choose to waive utility connection fees, building or permit fees, or address design. For more information please review [MRSC's guidance](#) on this topic, except that the [1994 CTED ADU guidance](#) is superseded by these requirements.

- f) ***Adopt a subarea plan pursuant to RCW 43.21C.420.***

Cities with populations over 5,000 may adopt optional elements of comprehensive plans of development regulations that apply within subareas for areas that are either:

- a. Areas designated as mixed use or urban centers in a land use or transportation plan adopted by a regional transportation planning organization; or

¹ See RCW 36.70A.400 and RCW 43.63A.215(3) (laws of 1993)

- b. Areas within one half mile of a major transit stop, zoned for an average minimum density of 15 units per gross acre. A major transit stop is defined as a stop on a high capacity transportation service funded under RCW 81.104, commuter rail stops, stops on rail or fixed guideways, stops on bus rapid transit routes or routes that run on high occupancy vehicle lanes; or stops for a bus or other transit mode providing fixed route service at intervals of at least thirty minutes during the peak hours of operation.

The plan must be accompanied by an environmental impact statement (EIS) assessing and disclosing the probable significant adverse environmental impacts. Any development proposed within 10 years of the EIS, which is consistent with the plan and regulations may not be challenged under SEPA.²

g) *Adopt a planned action pursuant to RCW 43.21C.440(1)(b)(ii).*

A planned action is an adopted plan and environmental review on a sub-area within an urban growth area, consistent with a comprehensive plan adopted under the Growth Management Act. The plan and environmental review are completed before projects are proposed. Project-level significant impacts must be addressed in a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) document, unless the impacts are specifically deferred for consideration at the project level. The SEPA document may be a determination of non-significance (DNS), a mitigated determination of significance (MDNS), or an environmental impact statement EIS). To be eligible for funding, the planned action area should:

- Contain mixed use or residential development; and
- Encompasses an area that is within one-half mile of a major transit stop; or will be within one-half mile of a major transit stop no later than five years from the date of the designation of the planned action. Major transit stop means a commuter rail stop, a stop on a rail or fixed guideway or transitway system, or a stop on a high capacity transportation service funded or expanded under chapter [81.104](#) RCW.

For more information see <http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Planning/Land-Use-Administration/Planned-Action.aspx>

h) *Adopt an infill exemption under RCW 43.21C.229 for residential or mixed-use development*

This section allows for exemptions from SEPA evaluation if the city or county's applicable comprehensive plan was previously subjected to environmental analysis and if the local government considers the specific probable adverse environmental impacts of the proposed action and determines they are adequately addressed by the development regulations or other requirements.

² See RCW 43.21C.420 (amended by E2SHB 1923, laws of 2019)

Such an exemption categorically exempts government action related to development proposed to fill in an urban growth area, where current density and intensity of use in the area is lower than called for in the goals and policies of the applicable comprehensive plan and the development is either (i) Residential development, (ii) Mixed-use development, or (iii) Commercial development up to 65,000 square feet, excluding retail development. It does not exempt government action related to development that is inconsistent with the applicable comprehensive plan or would exceed the density or intensity of use called for in the comprehensive plan.

- i) Adopt a form-based code in one or more zoning districts that permit residential uses. "Form-based code" means a land development regulation that uses physical form, rather than separation of use, as the organizing principle for the code;***

The purpose of a form-based code is to control the size and bulk of buildings, instead of regulating by the number of units. This can help a local government encourage development that meets the desired community character, but encourages a greater number of units of a given parcel, as the number of units are not restricted. For more information see mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Planning/Development-Types-and-Land-Uses/Form-Based-Codes.aspx.

- j) Authorize a duplex on each corner lot within all zoning districts that permit single-family residences.***

A duplex on a corner lot can have the advantage of looking like a single-family housing unit with a front-facing door on each corner. This approach can add density in single-family areas without appearing to add a traditional duplex, but provides the benefit of additional smaller units which can be more affordable.

- k) Allow for the division or redivision of land into the maximum number of lots through the short subdivision process provided in chapter 58.17 RCW;***

RCW 58.17.020(6) defines a short subdivision as "the division or re-division of land into four or fewer lots, tracts, parcels, sites, or divisions for the purpose of sale, lease, or transfer of ownership. However, the legislative authority of any city or town may by local ordinance increase the number of lots, tracts, or parcels to be regulated as short subdivisions to a maximum of nine. This applies in all cities and for counties within urban growth areas. By increasing the number of lots in short plat, more development may be permitted by the quicker short plat process, which can be processed administratively, rather than the longer subdivision process, which generally requires approval of the legislative body. Local governments may also wish to review RCW 58.17.100 which allows for delegation of final plat approval to the planning commission or staff rather than going back to council.

- l) Authorize a minimum net density of six dwelling units per acre in all residential zones, where the residential development capacity will increase within the city.**

This option is applicable where net density in residential zones is less than six dwelling units per acre. Net density is the gross acreage minus public right of ways, divided by the number of units. Where areas are encumbered by critical areas, clustering can help achieve the target density.

2. Cities may instead adopt a Housing Action Plan

The goal of any such housing plan must be to encourage construction of additional affordable and market rate housing in a greater variety of housing types and at prices that are accessible to a greater variety of incomes, including strategies aimed at the for-profit single-family home market. The housing action plan should:

- (a) Quantify existing and projected housing needs for all income levels, including extremely low-income households, with documentation of housing and household characteristics, and cost-burdened households; and c) Analyze population and employment trends, with documentation of projections;**

Data should document the type and age of housing within the community, and the demographics of the households within the communities. It should look across income segments and identify how many households in each income segment are paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing costs. The analysis should also project population demographics and income levels for the planning period and identify the types and densities of housing that are needed for housing suitable and affordable for all demographic and economic segments. This analysis should specifically consider multifamily and attached housing types. For more information see WAC 365-196-410.

- (b) Develop strategies to increase the supply of housing, and variety of housing types, needed to serve the housing needs identified in (a) of this subsection;**

Data gathered in the previous section should point to the types of housing that should be allowed by local zoning, and the types of incentives and regulations that will be needed to encourage the development of appropriate housing affordable to all income segments of the community. Trade-offs in parking requirements, setbacks, and open space considerations may be reviewed as they affect the yield in housing. Strategies to encourage and support the development of subsidized housing, such as fee waivers and free land should be considered, along with options for creating more

housing. For a full menu of strategies, see www.ezview.wa.gov (Affordable Housing Planning Resources). Policy actions can be evaluated on the whether they are short term, or long term, how effective they are, or whether they have a fiscal impact.

(d) Consider strategies to minimize displacement of low-income residents resulting from redevelopment;

Economic displacement occurs where low-income residents are forced out of traditional low-cost areas as redevelopment occurs and rents rise. Strategies to minimize displacement include preserving existing affordable housing, encouraging greater housing development, including, but not limited to affordable housing (so more housing is available for all income segments), using collective ownership of housing, engaging existing residents in identifying strategies, and taking a broader look using regional rather than localized strategies. For more information consider US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) resources such as: www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/DisplacementReport.pdf

(e) Review and evaluate the current housing element adopted pursuant to RCW 36.70A.070, including an evaluation of success in attaining planned housing types and units, achievement of goals and policies, and implementation of the schedule of programs and actions;

The housing element of the comprehensive plan should be evaluated for how well development is implementing policies, specifically whether the community is on track to accommodate the portion of the countywide population allocated to the community within the planning period, and whether the housing types are affordable to all economic segments. If these metrics are not met, new comprehensive plan policies should be proposed to support zoning that allow the size and types of housing that can be affordable to most economic segments of the population. Policies may also encourage or incentivize the development of subsidized affordable housing. Action strategies or housing metrics can help the plan stay on track over time.

(f) Provide for participation and input from community members, community groups, local builders, local realtors, nonprofit housing advocates, and local religious groups; and

Broad participation from all parts of the community can help to understand and communicate the housing need. Members of the public can provide information and perspective on how the community can meet the state requirements to plan for housing affordable to all economic segments.

(g) Include a schedule of programs and actions to implement the recommendations of the housing action plan.

The housing action plan should cumulate in a broad array of potential programs and actions that the jurisdiction has committed to pursue, or can partner with other organizations to implement. The actions should include an update to policies in the comprehensive plan, along with actions to update regulations to implement selected strategies. The schedule should include a timeline for actions and funding, if required to implement the plan.

Actions protected from appeal

If adopted between July 28, 2019, and April 1, 2021, ordinances, amendments to development regulations, and other nonproject actions taken by a city are not subject to administrative or judicial appeal under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).³ This excludes the adoption of a sub-area plan adopted pursuant to RCW 43.21C.420.

In addition, any action taken by a city prior to April 1, 2021 to amend their comprehensive plan, or adopt or amend ordinances or development regulations to enact any of the twelve actions to increase residential building capacity is not subject to appeal to the Growth Management Hearings Boards.⁴

³ E2SHB 1923, Section 1(3)

⁴ E2SHB 1923, Section 1 (4)