



Community Development

2025 NE Kresky Ave

Chehalis, WA 98532

Phone: (360) 740-1146

Rural Housing Alternative Wide-Lens Perspective

BOCC Workshop

January 16, 2024



Presentation Agenda

1. Goals and origin of RHA proposal

- What is an RHA supposed to do?
- What motivated this proposal?

2. What is “rural character” for Lewis County housing?

3. RHA proposal

4. Density

5. Research results – allaying concerns

6. Guardrails

7. Status / What’s next?



RHA Goals

- 1. Provide flexibility for affordability (beyond large SFRs)**
- 2. Foster opportunities to both live and work in rural areas**
- 3. Maintain rural character**



RHA Origin/Impetus

- **There is less housing, and it is more expensive.**
 - In ten years, median home price rose 204%; less than 1/5 the homes for sale
 - Incomes rose 55% over the same period . . .
- **Rural home prices are rising faster.**

Median Sale Price (All Homes) – Select LC Zip Codes

ZIP Code	Character	March-May 2013	March-May 2023	Percent Increase
Centralia - 98531	Most Urban	\$127,000	\$358,333	182%
Mossyrock - 98564	Urban	\$144,000	\$565,667	293%
Curtis - 98538	Rural	\$129,333	\$533,333	312%
Packwood - 98361	Most Rural	\$112,000	\$481,667	331%

- **Rural houses are mismatched to our household size and increasingly unattainable.**
 - Around 69% of Lewis County's unincorporated population could not afford a median-price home at today's rates. ****That's 30,000 people.****



RHA Origin/Impetus

Ordinance 1346

Exhibit A

Table 1: Lewis County 2045 Population Allocations

City	2022 Total Population	2045 Population Allocation	20-Year Population Increase	20-Year Growth Rate
Centralia	22,376	24,000	1,624	7.26%
Chehalis	9,845	23,000	13,155	133.62%
Morton	1,302	1,351	49	3.75%
Mossyrock	906	1,058	152	16.78%
Napavine	1,969	2,978	1,009	51.24%
Pe Ell	658	680	22	3.30%
Toledo	747	2,537	1,790	239.63%
Vader	899	1,110	211	23.47%
Winlock	2,115	4,756	2,641	124.87%
Total City	40,817	61,469	20,652	50.60%
Onalaska UGA	562	700	138	24.56%
Packwood LAMIRDs	910	1,200	290	31.87%
Other Rural	41,157	41,582	425	1.03%
Total Unincorporated	42,629	43,482	853	2.00%
Total Lewis County	83,446	104,951	21,505	25.77%

Unincorporated Pop. = 51%

A huge portion of our population is rural.

("Unincorporated" here means outside of UGAs.)



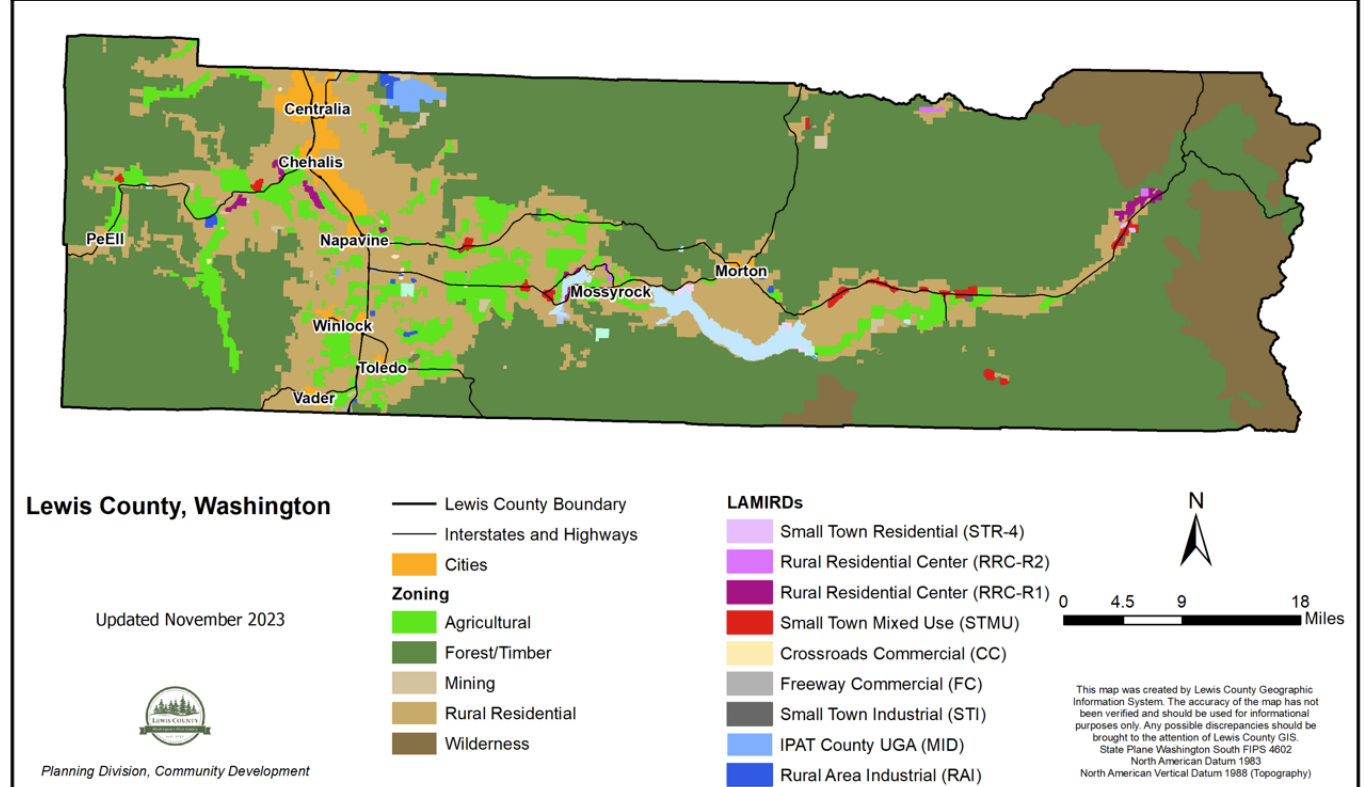
RHA Origin/Impetus

70% our county is
working resource /
tourism land.

There are lots of reasons
to live and work rural!

Example
Morton → Packwood = 35 miles

70% working resource / tourism land



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RHA Wide-Lens Perspective

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RHA Origin/Impetus

2020 – Strategic Plan aims to increase housing availability and affordability

2021 – Housing Study and Housing Summit

2022 – Housing Initiative and Work Plan

“Action Item H: Multi-Family Housing Proof of Concept

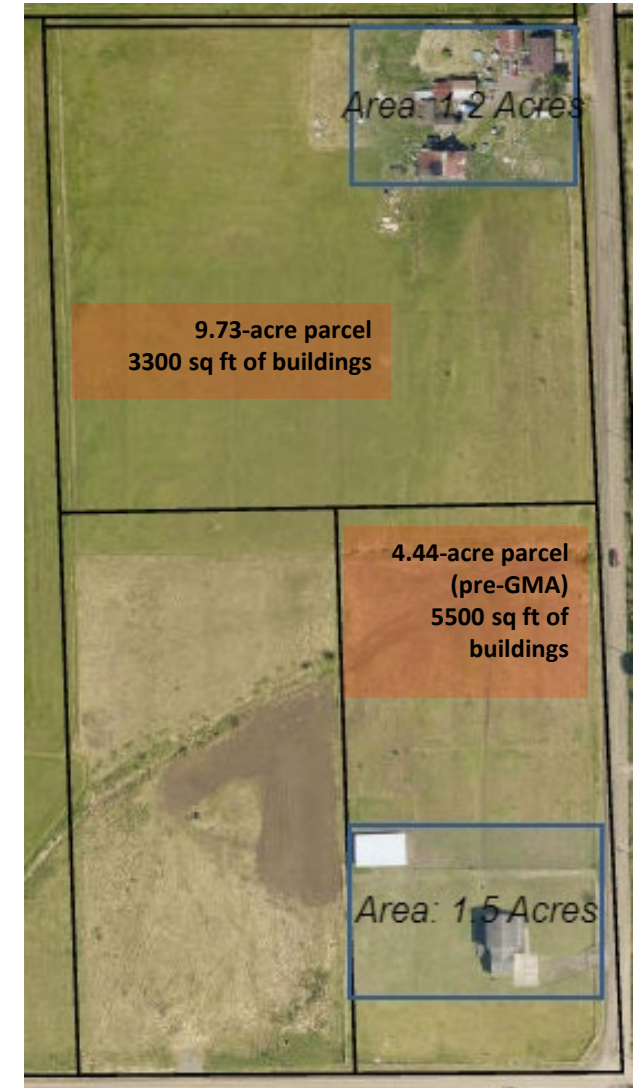
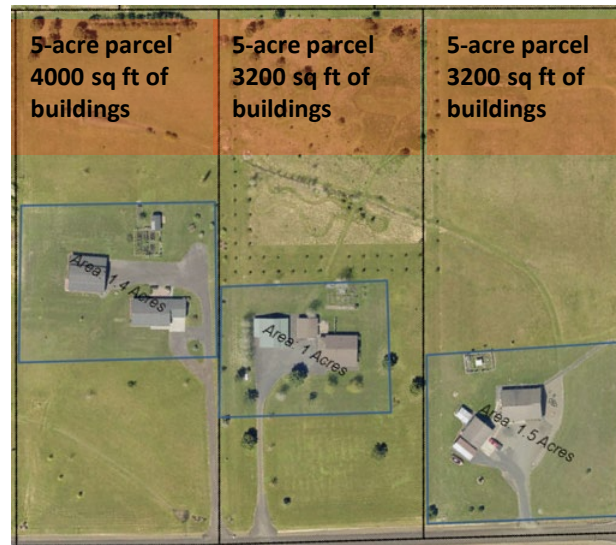
Create one or more rural multi-family housing concepts that are vetted to generally meet county and state codes and rules.”

2024 – RHA Proposal



Rural Character

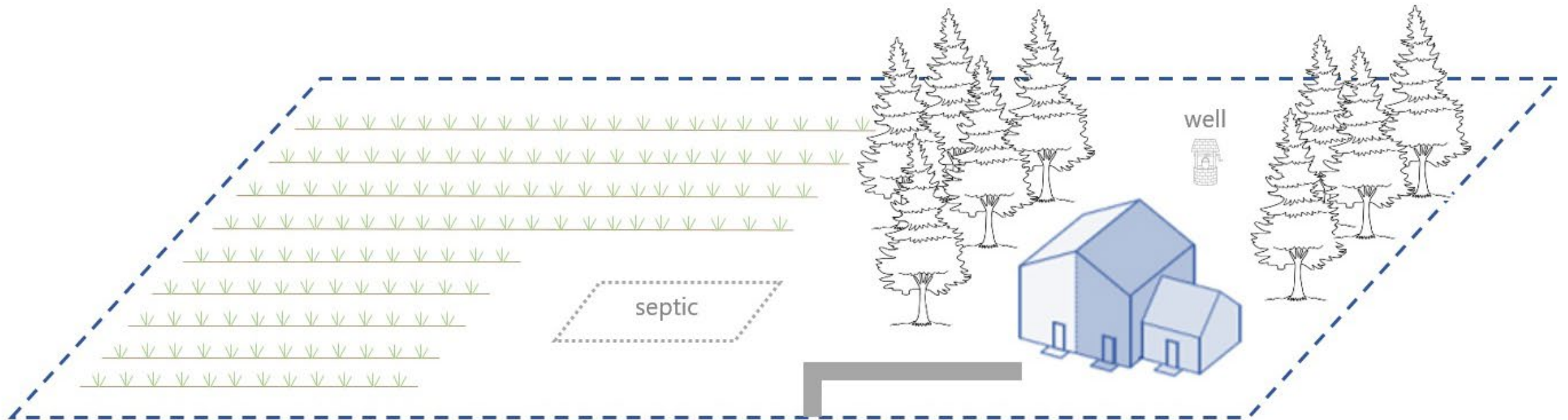
5+ acre lots
Clustered
Well and septic
Rural services only



October 10, 2023

RHA Wide-Lens Perspective

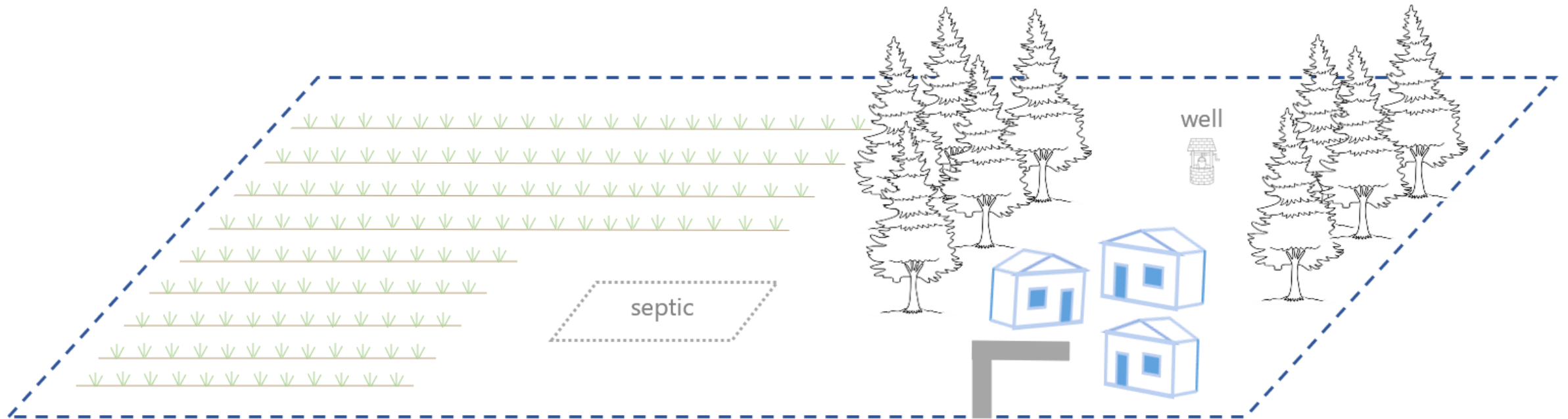
Proposal: the RHA



Example only – Duplex with Attached ADU (3 units of housing)

- Clustering
- Interdependency (ADUs)
- Form/Impacts-based

Proposal: the RHA



Example only – Three Detached Manufactured Houses

- Clustering
- Interdependency (ADUs)
- Form/Impacts-based

Proposal: the RHA

New option for 5-acre or larger lots:

- Allow up to 4 housing units within a 1.25-acre cluster
- Residential square footage must total less than 3,600 sq ft

Constraints

- Rural water and wastewater services (well and septic)
- Share one primary driveway
- Units cannot subdivide the lot
- Adequate rural services; no urban services
- One RHA per lot, max
- Five RHAs per year per fire district



Density

**Four units?!?!
Are we going to turn
everything into the city?**



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Density

Rural Density (various places in rural Lewis County)



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RHA Wide-Lens Perspective

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Density

Urban Density (Chehalis)





Density

Urban Density Buildout

25 acres of quarter-acre lots. 1-3 units per lot allowed; assume 2 per lot.

Total units: 200

8 units/acre

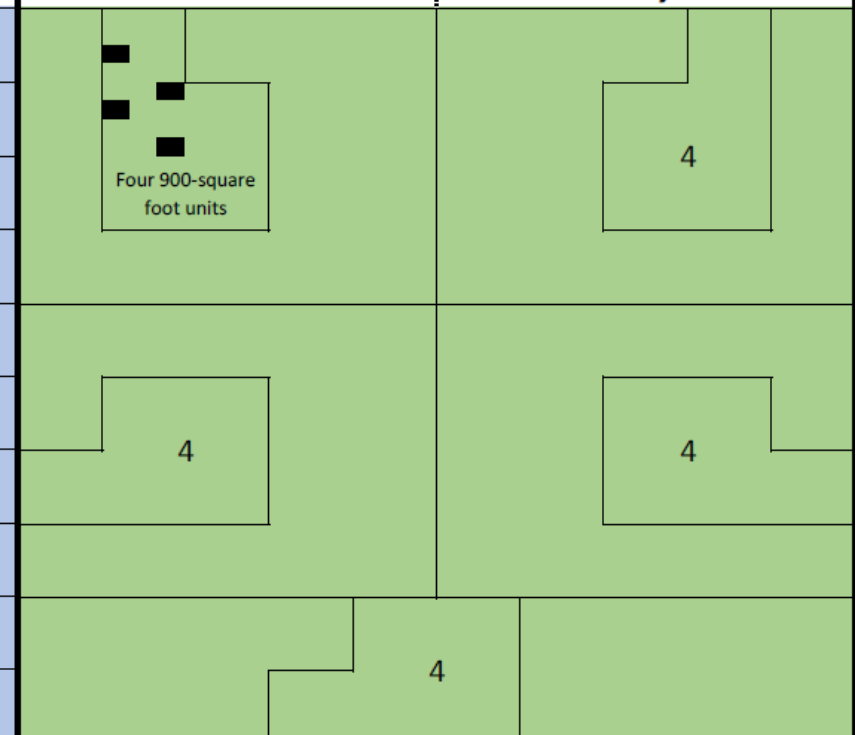
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3267 sq ft									
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3267 sq ft, 2-story									
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2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

RDD-5 RHA Buildout

Five 5-acre lots (25 acres). 4 units per lot allowed, 5 RHAs per fire district. Assume max all right next to each other!

Total units: 20

< 1 unit/acre



*See handout for
RDD-10 & RDD-20*



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RHA Wide-Lens Perspective

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Density

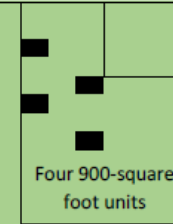


RDD-5 RHA Buildout

Five 5-acre lots (25 acres). 4 units per lot allowed, 5 RHAs per fire district. Assume max all right next to each other!

Total units: 20

< 1 unit/acre



4

4

4

4

Density

Urban Density



Rural Density



RHA Wide-Lens Perspective

Research Results – Allaying Concerns

Why not just do RDD 2.5?

- Looks less like our character than RHA would!
- Permissible under the GMA only if it is to reflect existing smaller-lot areas' character, not to mint new 2.5-acre lots
- Produces less affordability than RHA would
 - No incentive to reduce unit size
 - Land value → \$20,000 less, plus benefit of increased supply
 - Small unit → \$100,000 less, plus benefit of increased supply



Research Results – Allaying Concerns

Won't there be a million of these? Or conversely, would anybody actually do this?

- Critical area + well & septic issues
- Industry Stakeholder Workgroup
 - Viable but not a big money maker; can't scale
- Most workable: high equity / improve one's own property
 - Family compounds
 - Aging in place
 - Rental income / "two-flats"
 - Small condo properties
- Real estate conditions are right for the RHA to work



Research Results – Allaying Concerns

Won't this overwhelm our rural roads and services?

- Cramming people into small units?
 - **Median house size is low and stable.**
- How much impact?
 - **ADU data suggests modest impacts, distributed across a large area – unlike concentrated urban growth impacts.**
- Service concerns about new or different residents?
 - **Market-rate housing at a more obtainable price point or family compounds are more likely to serve existing rural population.**
 - **69% of existing rural residents (77% in Packwood ZIP code!) . . .**



Guardrails

Guardrails in the Draft Code Itself

- Large lots that can't be subdivided
- Max of 4 clustered units
- Residential square footage cap
- Shared access
- Occupancy limitations
- Increased setbacks
- Prohibition on short-term rentals
- Adequate public facilities review
- Prohibition on demand for urban services
- Max of 5 RHAs per fire district per year



Guardrails

Guardrails not Mentioned in the Draft Code but Present

- **Building, fire, and L&I code compliance**
- **Well and septic regulations**
- **Critical areas regulations → really affect local feasibility**
- **Cost and lending constraints**
- **Profit motive (risk vs. return)**

ADU permitting data helps model the constraints above

- Even with aggressive growth assumptions that will not hold, will not “break the bank”



Status / What's Next?

- **Code Draft**

- Under review by Planning Commission, staff, key stakeholders
- May be further revised based on their feedback

- **Planning Commission**

- workshop January 23
- More code revisions based on stakeholder, public, and PC feedback
- Tentative hearing February 27 – PC can recommend approval, approval with amendments, or denial

- **SEPA; send to Commerce**

- **BOCC hearing perhaps in April or May**

- Pass, pass with amendments, do not pass, or send back for more work



Things to Remember

- **This is an innovation.**
 - The GMA encourages rural land-use innovations.
 - Anything new and different is hard.
 - Anything new and different is scary.
- **We have done our homework.**
 - Grounded in local data about local rural character.
 - Tailored to that character, the housing need in our community, and GMA requirements.
- **We have been intentionally conservative.**
 - The innovation itself is enough envelope-pushing. Significant constraints are added to demonstrate how this is GMA-compliant.



Questions, Reactions, Discussion

Question?
Reactions?
Discussion?





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