

Planning Commission Workshop



Community Development • 2025 NE Kresky Ave, Chehalis, WA 98532 • Phone: (360) 740-1146

STAFF REPORT

RURAL HOUSING ALTERNATIVE

Date: January 12, 2024

Staff: Eric Eisenberg, Housing and Infrastructure Specialist
Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner

Attachments: A – LCC 17.42 Table 2 Land Use Summary
B – NEW LCC 17.143 Rural Housing Alternative
C – LCC 15.45.100 Stormwater Management
D – LCC 12.60 Road Development Standards

SUMMARY

This memo includes proposed draft development regulation amendments associated with the Rural Housing Alternative (RHA). The draft development regulations have been updated based on discussion with the Planning Commission. As a reminder, the attachments include code and commentary. If you read the attachments in 2-page format, the development regulations are on the right and the commentary that explains the regulations is on the left. The development regulations are what may be adopted; the commentary is legislative intent.

BACKGROUND

Beginning with the Lewis County Strategic Plan in 2020 that identify housing affordability as a high priority and the Lewis County Housing Initiative in 2021, the Board of County Commissioners directed staff to explore options to encourage and support a diversity of affordable housing options throughout the county. Beginning in September 2022, staff have evaluated a form-based approach to housing with the goal of encouraging creation of housing types that are typically more affordable than single family residential. Below is a list of Planning Commission meetings. The presentations and materials for each meeting are found on the webpage <https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/rezones/comprehensive-plan-and-development-regulation-amendments/rural-housing-update/>

Planning Commission Meetings

- September 9, 2022 – Introduction to Rural Housing Alternative (RHA)
- January 24, 2023 – Existing Conditions and Draft RHA Proposal
- April 11, 2023 – Rural Character, Lot Size and Affordability
- July 25, 2023 – Industrial Stakeholder Group Progress Report 1
- August 22, 2023 – (memo only) Industrial Stakeholder Group Progress Report 2
- October 10, 2023 – Industrial Stakeholder Group Final Results
- December 12, 2023 – Draft Development Regulations

At the October 2023 meeting, Planning Commission directed staff to develop “sandbox regulations” that would provide an example of how RHA would be permitted and the constraints that would be placed on new development. Those were the subject of the December 2023 meeting and the draft development regulations have been updated to reflect that discussion. The draft development regulations have been shared with internal partners including Public Works and Public Health & Social Services, as well as with the Fire Chiefs. Comments provided have been addressed and staff will provide a summary of the comments at the presentation at the January 23rd workshop. Staff will continue to coordinate with stakeholders to address any concerns raised.

DEVELOPMENT REGULATION SUMMARY

Attachment A – D are draft development regulations. Below is a summary of the main topics. There have been two substantive changes (highlighted below) based on the Planning Commission discussion in October. There have been other non-substantive changes to the form or wording of the code.

1. Zoning. The RHA would be a permitted use in the Rural Development District zones only (RDD-5, RDD-10 and RDD-20) and only on lots at least 5 acres in size. Substandard lots, less than 5 acres in size, would not be allowed to use the RHA option. RHA would not be allowed on resource lands (ARL, FRL or MRL).
2. Limit on Total Number. The proposal includes a new limit of no more than five (5) RHA developments per Fire District per year. This will limit the total number of RHAs that may occur each year and ensure those are dispersed across the county. When an RHA development application is submitted, the Fire District will receive the Adequate Facilities Form to determine if they are able to provide services. In addition, a Road Approach is necessary and allows Public Works an opportunity to determine if there are impacts to Level of Service to the specific road.
3. Maximum Size. The cumulative size of housing may not exceed 3,600 square feet. This is based on the average size of a single family house plus accessory dwelling unit in Lewis County today.
4. Number of Dwelling Units. The proposal has been changed. Previously there was no limit on the number of dwelling units. The proposal now limits the number of dwellings per RHA to four (4). The intent is to limit the number of residents and associated vehicles to guard against potential impact to the transportation system.
5. General Standards. The lot may not be subdivided; however, each dwelling unit may be owned separately (e.g., as a condominium). The dwelling units must be clustered within 1.25 acres of the property and share a common driveway. Maximum occupancy must meet water and septic capacity limitations and may not require urban services. At the time of development there must be adequate public facilities (e.g., fire, EMS, school), as determined by the service provider, to serve the new housing. The dwelling units may not be used as short term rental.
6. Private Roads. An RHA development will be treated like a single-family residence for purposes of driveway and private road standards.

NEXT STEPS

Staff continue to solicit feedback from key stakeholders. Staff will update the draft development regulations based on any such feedback and on the recommendations from the Planning Commission as discussed on January 23, 2024. The updated draft development regulations will be the subject of the public hearing on February 27, 2024 to receive testimony from the community. Following the hearing, the Planning Commission will deliberate and vote on a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). The recommendation to BOCC could be to approve the proposal as presented, approve the proposal with specific amendments or deny the proposal. The recommendation is provided to BOCC via a Letter of Transmittal. If there is a split vote, the recommendation will be based on the majority vote; however, the minority opinion will be represented in the Letter of Transmittal. It is important to provide all concerns related to the proposal to the BOCC for consideration.