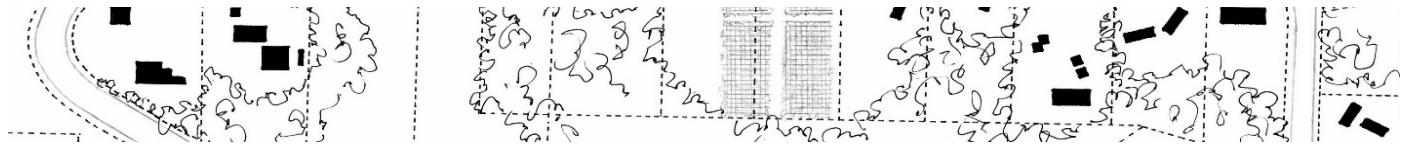


Lewis County

Rural Housing Alternative – Concept for Public Discussion



Background

Affordable housing means that a person spends no more than 30% of their income on rent or mortgage. A person making \$60,000 per year can afford something different than a person making minimum wage. Today in Lewis County, 48% of renters pay more than 30% of their income on housing and 24% pay more than 50% on housing. This means Lewis County residents increasingly cannot afford housing.

In Lewis County, 70% of the housing stock is single family residential, and the average sale price has increased from roughly \$150,000 in 2012 to over \$350,000 in 2021. In addition, between 2012 and 2021, there was a 69% decrease in the supply of homes for sale. In June 2021, the county had only a 1 month supply of housing. Typically, a region needs at least a 4 month supply to stabilize sale price. Rental unit vacancy is also low at 4.5%.

Goal: Increase Housing Options

The goal of the Rural Housing Alternative is to encourage development of housing types that are typically more affordable than single family residential, while fitting in the rural character of Lewis County. Single family residential housing is the most expensive type of housing because there is one person or family shouldering the cost burden of the house and land. Middle housing options like a duplex, triplex and quadplex distributes the cost of housing to more than one person or family.

Must Fit Rural Character

Most lots in rural Lewis County are 5 acres or larger and developed with a house and outbuildings like a barn or garage (Figure 1). All of the buildings are usually clustered within a small area of the lot and share a common access point. The structures are served by on-site well and septic, and stormwater is dissipated through the remaining open space.

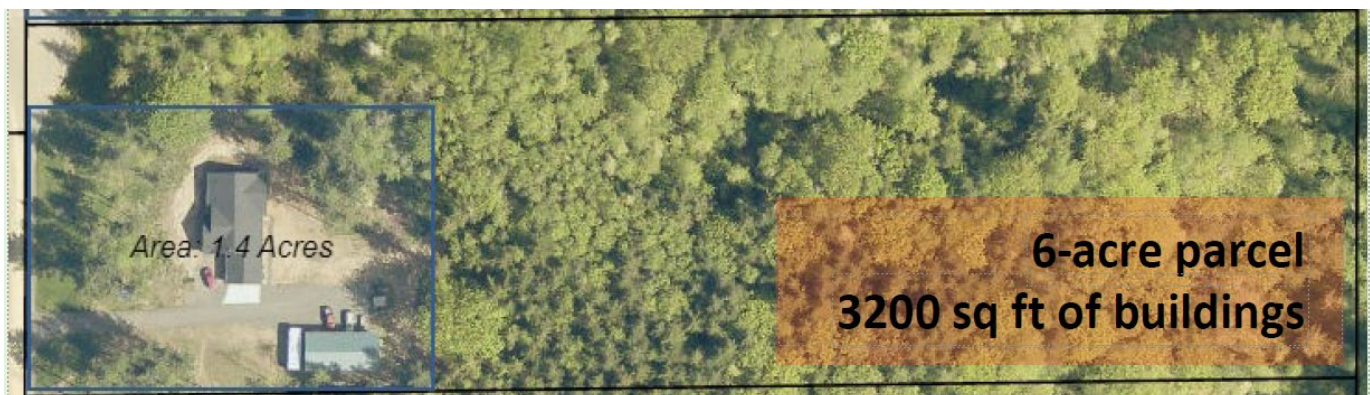


Figure 1: Example of Typical Rural Development

Rural Housing Concept

What if that single family house were divided into two, three or four units, but the overall size of development was the same as a single family house? If it were still served by on-site well and septic, then it could easily fit into the rural character of Lewis County. Figure 2 is an example of the concept and shows a duplex with attached accessory dwelling unit (ADU) that fits in the footprint of a typical single family house.

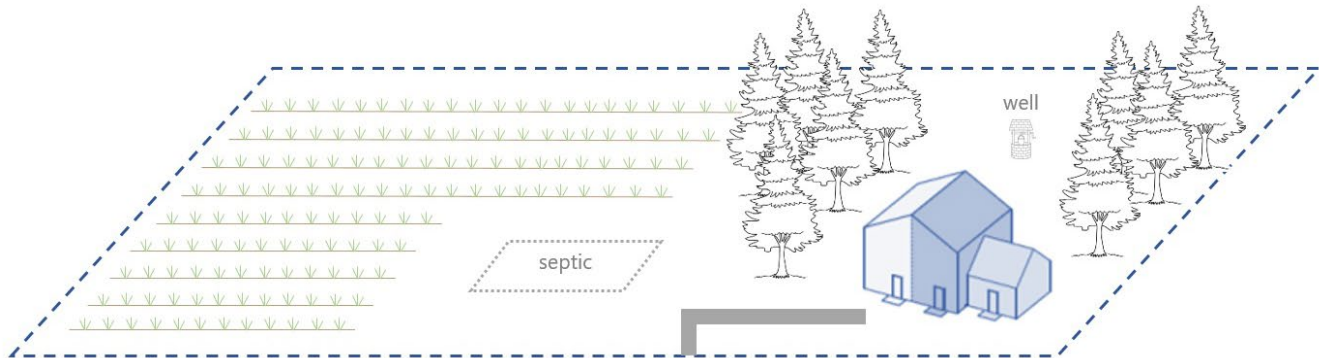


Figure 2: Rural Housing Concept Example - Duplex with Attached ADU (3 units of housing)

Constraining Impacts

Under the Growth Management Act, it is important to limit the impacts housing can have in rural areas. The new housing options would not be allowed on lands zoned Agricultural Resource Land, Forest Resource Land or Mineral Resource Land. The new housing would only be allowed on lands zoned for rural development including RDD-5, RDD-10 and RDD-20.

The new rules would have the following limitations to ensure that rural character is preserved:

1. The lot must be at least 5 acres in size.
2. All housing units must be clustered within 1.25 acres of the lot.
3. The total footprint of residential use must be less than 3,600 square feet.
4. The development must rely on rural water and wastewater services (usually well and septic).
5. All housing units must be accessed from one primary driveway.
6. The lot cannot be subdivided.
7. There must be adequate rural public facilities (e.g., fire, school) to serve the development.*

*Adequate public facilities is determined when a property owner proposes a new development. A form is sent to the provider, such as the Fire District, to determine if they can adequately serve the new development. If they cannot, the development cannot occur without mitigation.

In addition, using the new housing option as a short term rental would be prohibited. Short term rentals are lodging accommodations for tourists. While tourism is an important part of Lewis County's economy, the goal of the Rural Housing Alternative is to create affordable housing options for people to live in Lewis County.

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