

WHITE PAPER

Infill Housing Task Force

Planning Services Department

Contents

Introduction	1
Example Types of Infill Housing	2
Barriers to Infill Development	2
The Ten Essentials	4
Housing Market Analysis and Trends	5
Opportunities for Infill	8
Infill Housing Task Force Objectives	10
Appendix A: Comprehensive Plan Policy Review for Infill Housing	16
Appendix B: Alternative Version of White Paper By Jason Wheaton	19

DRAFT

Introduction

Communities across the country are increasingly recognizing that the spread out patterns of growth, which have shaped American communities for the past several decades, are difficult to sustain. Many communities are implementing programs designed to address inefficient patterns of low density residential growth. A renewed emphasis on infill development can help address the problems associated with this form of development. Infill refers to new development on vacant, bypassed, and underutilized land within built up areas of existing communities, where infrastructure is already in place.

The City of Spokane Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2001, supports residential infill development. The Comprehensive Plan was followed by the adoption of the Residential Land Use Standards of the Unified Development Code in 2006. In December of 2008 a representative task force of interested individuals and organizations was formed to look at our existing standards to determine the type of changes that should be made to encourage infill development.

There are multiple barriers that lie in the path of infill projects, which make infill difficult, uncertain and expensive. In the face of these barriers, many developers avoid infill projects in favor of development that contributes to low density residential growth. These barriers include land constraints, infrastructure, regulatory process and requirements, community opposition, financing and marketability.

The publication “Filling in the Spaces: Ten Essentials for Successful Urban Infill Housing” by The Housing Partnership (November 2003) provides local governments and members of the building industry with a framework for encouraging change and the cooperative environment that must advance for that change to happen. The ten essentials are: build public understanding and acceptance of GMA obligations, make innovation a positive outcome for current residents, make innovative housing the preferred choice for builders, make infill housing a profitable business, help new housing fit well into old neighborhoods, identify market demand and plan to meet it, design sites for livability and functionality, put aside the old stock plans and start over, write new development codes that promote good site and home design, and develop processes that promote rather than penalize innovation and infill.

According to the Spokane Association of REALTORS® Multiple Listing Service (MLS), in 2009 residential sales of single family homes on less than one acre totaled 4,664, down 5% from 2008 sales. 2,535 of those homes were sold in the City of Spokane. The average selling price in Spokane County in 2009 was \$187,585 down 9.1% from 2008 while the median price was \$169,000 down 8.2% for the year. In the City of Spokane the average sales price in 2009 was \$167,966 and the median was \$145,500. The decrease in median and average sales prices appears to be an indicator of the types of homes that are being sold; smaller, more affordable units.

In 2009 the population in Spokane County was 465,000 people with a growth rate of 1.3% over 2008, according to the Eastern Washington University’s Community Indicators. Also, according to the report, “Since 1981 (Spokane County) has gained 118,185 people, with most of the gains occurring in the 1990’s. Its annual rate of growth has ranged from a negative 0.5% to a high of 3.2% (1991). Since 2001, Spokane County growth rates have fluctuated around 1%. For the entire period, Washington growth rates have rested above Spokane’s although the gap has narrowed in recent years.” This means that, in general, our community is growing and will need an adequate housing supply to accommodate that growth.

The Comprehensive Plan defines “Infill Development” as “Development of vacant lots and parcels within an already built up area.” By itself, this definition appears to limit infill development in a way that is narrower than it is actually limited according to adopted city policy. For example, the goals and policies of the Comprehensive

Plan encourage infill on vacant land city-wide and in the urban growth area outside the city limits. In addition, the city zoning code allows residential use in most zoning categories. The zoning code is the regulatory tool that identifies where and how infill development is permitted.

Example Types of Infill Housing

- **Accessory Dwelling Units.** Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) are defined as a separate additional living unit, including separate kitchen, sleeping, and bathroom facilities, attached or detached from the primary residential unit, on a single-family lot. ADUs are usually subordinate in size, location, and appearance to the primary unit. Passed in 2006 by the Spokane City Council, Chapter 17C.300 of the SMC contains standards for ADU's.
- **Cottage Housing.** Cottage housing as defined in the SMC, are a grouping of small, detached, single family dwelling units on a commonly owned parcel clustered around a common open space or courtyard and having shared parking. Because cottage units are smaller than typical houses, the SMC allows a small bonus density to the RSF standards. It fills a niche between traditional choices of single family and multifamily housing. Passed in 2006 by the Spokane City Council, Section 17C.110.350 of the SMC contains standards for Cottage Housing.
- **Townhouse.** A dwelling in a row of units in which each unit has its own front and rear access to the outside, no unit is located over another unit, and each unit is separated from any other unit by one or more vertical common walls. In the City of Spokane, townhouse development is regulated under Section 17C.110.310 Attached Housing. Currently, in the RA and RSF zones a maximum of two houses may be with a common wall, up to eight may be attached in the RTF zone, and there is no limit in the RMF and RHD zones.
- **Multi-family Residential Housing.** A common wall dwelling or apartment house that consists of three or more dwelling units. Multi-family residential housing is permitted outright in the RMF, RHD, O, OR, NR, CB, GC, CC, and DT zones.
- **Planned Unit Development.** A planned unit development (PUD) is meant to provide flexibility from strict application of zoning and subdivision regulations in order to allow for projects that are better designed and offer greater public benefits. A PUD is a project permit for an overlay zone, approved by the hearing examiner, which does not fully comply with all of the development standards of the base zone in which it is located, but is approved based on superior or innovative design.



Barriers to Infill Development

Barriers to the development of infill housing are common among cities around the country. Some examples of barriers from Sacramento, California are provided below. According to the City of Sacramento Infill Strategy (2002), "some of the most significant constraints to infill development are found to be as follows:

- **Land Constraints.** While in total there is a substantial amount of land that is vacant or underutilized, in many respects much of the land is constrained due to size, shape, or other site conditions.

1. *Size.* Many infill sites are single or small parcels. Due to their size, they cannot benefit from the economies of scale that larger new developments enjoy.
 2. *Shape and existing parcel.* Existing parcel sizes may be very small, oddly shaped, narrow or deep lots, or require aggregation or remapping to accommodate new projects.
 3. *Site conditions.* Infill sites often face other conditions that make development difficult, including lack of access to roadways, basalt outcropping or other geological constraints, or potential critical areas.
- **Infrastructure.** Popular understanding on infill development is that it is more efficient because it is built in areas where infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, drainage, streets, sidewalks, alleys) already exists. While this is certainly true in many respects, at the project level, infill development frequently requires upgraded or expanded infrastructure due to the age of the existing infrastructure, the higher density or intensity of the new infill project over what the original infrastructure was built to serve, or to meet current building, fire, or other codes that have changed since the infrastructure was originally developed. The total costs and requirements may not be fully known until late in the development process, adding to the uncertainty associated with infill development.
 - **Regulatory Process and Requirements.** The time and related holding costs associated with processing infill development projects serve as a significant deterrent to its development. In general, all proposed development in the city is required to go through the same regulatory process and meet the same requirements, regardless of its location. In fact, infill development often must undergo additional review through design review and redevelopment processes. Proposed infill projects may often require modifications to standard regulations due to unique site constraints or desired development objectives, and these generally are addressed on a case-by-case basis. As a result, projects are also subject to multiple layers of review and potential appeals.
 - **Community Opposition.** Proposed infill projects, particularly higher density projects, often face neighborhood opposition based on concerns over the impacts of the new development, particularly related to traffic and parking, effects of additional population, and design of the project. Such opposition can extend the review process and require multiple modifications to the development proposal or lead infill developers to abandon the project.
 - **Financing and Marketability:** An important aspect of infill development is whether a project will be desirable and profitable as a residential or commercial venture. Many infill areas are difficult to market, especially when compared with newly developed neighborhoods. Real or perceived issues of public safety, the appearance of the neighborhood, the availability and quality of public and neighborhood facilities and services, including parks, community facilities, grocery stores, and particularly the quality of public schools, are major factors affecting the desirability and marketability of areas. In addition, lenders are frequently more cautious to lend money for infill projects without a demonstrated local track record for the specific kind of infill development, making financing more difficult. Depending on the neighborhood in which it is located, infill development is often not be able to command the same market prices as comparable development in newer areas, reducing or eliminating any potential profit margin.”

The Ten Essentials

Early on in the discussions of the task force, an already-prepared set of guiding principles was identified to help guide the work of the group. The publication “Filling in the Spaces: Ten Essentials for Successful Urban Infill Housing” by The Housing Partnership (November 2003) provides local governments and members of the building industry with a framework for encouraging change and the cooperative environment that must advance for that change to happen. The ten essentials are:

1. Build public understanding and acceptance of GMA obligations.

Political support for infill and innovation begins with the recognition by the public that communities within urban growth areas have an obligation to accept infill and higher densities in exchange for preservation of rural and resource areas in the region.

2. Make innovation a positive outcome for current residents.

Crucial to building political support for infill and innovation is ensuring that new development brings benefits to the community as a whole, not just to builders and newcomers.

3. Make innovative housing the preferred choice for builders.

Because innovative housing carries higher risks, local governments must take action to offset or mitigate those risks so that builders find that building innovative housing is a more attractive business proposition than building more conventional products.

4. Make infill housing a profitable business.

Although some builders are having success with infill and redevelopment, it must become a more profitable business for the bulk of the single family industry which is still working on the periphery.

5. Help new housing fit well into old neighborhoods.

A neighborhood is like an ecosystem, with a “character” defined by a complex web of interactions within the neighborhood, and between the neighborhood and the region. Introducing new housing must be done with care to ensure that both the neighborhood and the new transplants thrive.

6. Identify market demand and plan to meet it.

The for-profit housing industry is driven completely by demand. “Build it and they will come” does not work. Local governments need to understand the demand in their communities and adjust their plans to accommodate that demand.

7. Design sites for livability and functionality.

To achieve both livability and functionality, higher density infill sites must be designed with great care and imagination. The old rules of subdivisions do not apply.

8. Put aside the old stock plans and start over.

House plans intended for large conventional subdivisions will not work well in infill and higher density settings. Builders should use new designs intended for the different look, feel and functionality of infill developments.

9. Write new development codes that promote good site and home design.

Most approaches to housing innovation are difficult or impossible under current zoning and development codes that underlie infill sites. Jurisdictions need to write new codes that clearly outline how builders can achieve GMA density goals and make the best use of infill opportunities

10. Develop processes that promote rather than penalize innovation and infill.

By requiring innovative projects to jump through far more hoops than conventional projects, local governments may be discouraging rather than encouraging innovation. An experienced builder should find that the costs of permitting an innovative project do not cancel out the financial benefit of innovation.

Housing Market Analysis and Trends

According to the Spokane Association of REALTORS® Multiple Listing Service (MLS), in 2009 residential sales of single family homes on less than one acre totaled 4,664, down 5% from 2008 sales. 2,535 of those homes were sold in the City of Spokane. The average selling price in Spokane County last year was \$187,585 down 9.1% from 2008 while the median price was \$169,000 down 8.2% for the year. In the City of Spokane the average sales price in 2009 was \$167,966 and the median was \$145,500. The decrease in median and average sales prices are an indicator of the types of homes that are being sold; smaller, more affordable units.

The following housing market analysis is from The Draft Consolidated Community Development and Housing Plan for the City of Spokane (March 2010).

“The total housing stock in the City of Spokane was estimated (The Real Estate Report, Vol. 33, No. 2) to be 94,233 in April of 2009. Of these, 66.8% are single-family residences, 1.7% are mobile homes, 22.4% are five or more unit structures, and the balance (9.1%) are duplexes, triplexes, or fourplexes. Of the occupied housing units, approximately 58.8% are owner-occupied (2000 census). The housing stock grew 46.5% between 1970 and 2009, while the population grew 20.5%, indicating a strong trend toward smaller household size, and also the ability of the housing market to respond to population growth. The apartment housing stock (5 or more units per structure) has risen from 15.9% of total housing stock in 1970 to 22.5% by 2009. Single-family residences have shown a consistent downward trend from 75.6% of total housing stock in 1970, to 66.8% of the housing stock in 2009. Approximately 20% of the occupied single-family residences are renter-occupied, according to the 2000 Census.

The 2000 Census displayed a slight decrease in the percentage of renter-occupied units within the City. It shows that 41.1% of all occupied housing units were renter-occupied (42.8% in 1990) and that 58.9% (57.2% in 1990) were owner-occupied. Comparative numbers from the 1980 Census were 38.5% renter-occupied and 61.5% owner-occupied.

There was a sharp rise in the “high end,” or expensive home market during the last 20 years, which was driven, to some extent, by the in-migration of affluent residents, particularly in the early years of the 1990s decade. The general strength of the market can be seen in the volume of home sales, which averaged about 2,500 per year in the City of Spokane during the period of 1981 to 1989, rose to over 5,000 per year from 1990-1993, averaged approximately 4,700 per year from 1994 to 2000, soared to over 7,500 in 2005, then has declined to 4,333 in 2008 (The Real Estate Report, Vol. 33, No. 2). The average and median sales prices of homes in the Spokane market (county-wide) rose rapidly between mid-1989 and 1994. Prices rose slowly in the 1995-2000 period (between 1% and 2% per year), grew more like 6% to 8% per year from 2003 to 2007, but with actual

decline in value in latter 2008 and 2009 (perhaps 10% off the peak value). Housing prices in Spokane have historically been low compared to other West Coast markets.

Home construction increased markedly in the early 1990s over the very low production figures of 1980 through 1989. However, new home construction slowed in the second half of the decade (particularly in the City of Spokane), and was well below the levels experienced in the late 1970s. Building activity soared from 2004 through 2007 (though not to the peak of 1977), declining sharply in 2008 and further in 2009 (now matching the 1981/1982 recession figures).

Residential subdivision development rose somewhat during the 1990s, partly due to the decrease in lot inventory due to the large percentage increase in construction from 1989 through 1993, and partly due to concerns over the ability to subdivide once Growth Management is fully in effect. Lot creation grew dramatically from 2004 through 2006 in response to the active market. It slowed substantially in 2008 and 2009. The vast majority of new lot development is outside the Spokane city limits in areas where less expensive land is available.

Existing undeveloped lots have been rising rapidly in value since the late 1990s. This was apparently due to speculative pressure due to concerns over the eventual impact of the Growth Management Act, and also due to increased absorption, particularly by non-profit housing developers, of many existing in-fill lots.

There was little new apartment construction during the recession years of 1981, 1982, and 1983. With a recovering economy, lower interest rates, increasing rental rates, and increased occupancy levels, apartment construction rebounded in 1984. The Washington State Housing Finance Commission offered relatively low interest financing beginning in 1984, which also spurred new construction. The period from 1984 to 1994 saw about 600 apartment units built in an average year in Spokane County as a whole. Those numbers reached over 1000 per year in 1995 and 1996, then slowed back to 600 from 1997 to 2003. 2004 saw a surge in apartment construction to over 1600 units, with production falling under 1000 units per year since 2007.

Substantial new construction, coupled with slower than anticipated recovery from the recession, led to greatly increased vacancies in 1985 and 1986. With the resurgence in the local economy, coupled with less new apartment development, occupancy levels and rental rates in existing projects increased substantially through 1992. Vacancy levels rose to another peak in 1997, and have generally been in the 5% to 7% range since then. However, vacancies started up in the second half of 2008, and were close to 8% in the third quarter of 2009 (usually the lowest quarter for vacancy). Rental rates were quite stable from 1993 to 2000, and have increased only modestly since then, except for the middle years of the decade, which showed higher rent rates. These have stabilized since the fall of 2007.

The rental market in Spokane has been relatively stable and affordable compared to most West Coast markets. Of course, low-income households still struggle to make their monthly rent.”

In 2009 the population in Spokane County was 465,000 people with at growth rate of 1.3% over 2008 according the Eastern Washington University’s Community Indicators. Also, according to the report, “Since 1981 (Spokane County) has gained 118,185 people, with most of the gains occurring in the 1990’s. Its annual rate of growth has ranged from a negative 0.5% to a high of 3.2% (1991). Since 2001, Spokane County growth rates have fluctuated around 1%. For the entire period, Washington growth rates have rested above Spokane’s although the gap has narrowed in recent years.” This means that, in general, our community is growing will need adequacy housing supply to accommodate that growth.

1. Wage Rate.

According to Community Indicators, in Spokane County, the median household income in 2009 was \$42,195 which is low when compared to Washington State's median household income of \$52,413. In 2008 the overall average annual wage was 36,800 in Spokane County. Understanding wages in our area is an important consideration when pricing a home. A diverse housing supply is needed to accommodate all different housing needs and wants at a price our community can afford.

2. Unemployment Trends.

In 2009 the unemployment rate in Spokane County was 8.9%. As unemployment increases fewer people can afford to purchase a home and the supply goes up. According to the Spokane Association of REALTORS® MLS Spokane county is currently experiencing record high inventory numbers which will have an impact on pricing.

3. Home Trends.

The National Association or REALTORS® report titled, "[Home Trends 2010: Consumers' Most Sought-after Features](#)" to review some recent facts about the residential construction industry.

Here are some of the findings:

- a. "Among the new homes that have been built, at least through the first half of 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau confirms that no matter how you look at the data, new homes are definitely smaller:
 - Average size of single-family homes: flat in 2008 and down in 2009
 - Homes with at least three bedrooms: down in 2009, for the first time since 1992
 - Homes with four or more bedrooms: falling since 2007
 - Homes with two or more stories: peaked in 2006, then began downward trend.
- b. Even though today's homes are smaller, consumers are reluctant to give up full-featured master bedrooms. Builders have signaled their intentions to continue meeting this demand by including walk-in closets and a separate shower and tub in new master bedroom suites.
- c. Also count on walk-in closets to remain. In fact, they are the number one feature cited by homebuilders for inclusion in new construction this year.
- d. What's not on the list? Builders say that an outdoor kitchen is first to go. Other features that they cite as being least likely to include in 2010 are an outdoor fireplace, a sunroom, a butler's pantry, and a media room.
- e. Perhaps the most interesting area of new home trends centers on the over-55 market. Aging Baby Boomers certainly hold significant consumer buying power. And while builders are very interested in catering to Boomers, to a large extent, this segment remains underserved. nearly 70 percent of 55+ buyers say they want the master bedroom on the first floor, compared to just 16 percent of all buyers. Smaller, space-efficient homes are especially important to these near retirement homebuyers. And their most important design features? At the top of the list: washer/dryer in the unit, storage space, and windows that open easily."

The following is a summary of ideas related to the emerging housing market given the financial and lending crisis we now face. Infill Housing Task Force Co-Chair Len Zickler provided the following predictions for emerging housing market trends. The task force used this list as guidance in developing their work plan.

1. The demand for large (7,000 SF+), single family lots will decrease.
2. There is a surplus of platted lots that will need to be absorbed over the next 3 to 5 years.
3. Lot prices will be lower in response to the high supply and lower demand.
4. Buyers will demand smaller and higher quality homes.
5. Location close to services and shopping will be key.
6. Energy costs will increase, resulting in a demand for smaller houses, yards, cars, garages, etc.
7. Water shortages will increase, resulting in a demand for smaller, efficient, and centrally located housing product.
8. Buyers will demand sustainable "Green" houses and neighborhoods.
9. Commute trips will be fewer and shorter.
10. Cars will be smaller and more fuel efficient. The demand for plug-in electric and hybrid cars will increase.
11. Buyers will demand greater access to more walkable and bikeable neighborhoods.
12. Home sizes will continue to decrease in response to smaller family sizes and the increase of empty nesters.
13. The demand for rental product will continue to increase.
14. Young adults will find it increasingly more difficult to purchase a home and many are simply not choosing home ownership.
15. Credit will remain tight for a long time.
16. Debt will decrease with tighter credit.
17. Savings will increase with tighter credit.
18. Buyers will demand amenities in homes and neighborhoods.

Opportunities for Infill

The Comprehensive Plan defines "Infill Development" as "Development of vacant lots and parcels within an already built up area." By itself, this definition appears to limit infill development in a way that is narrower than it is actually limited according to adopted city policy. For example, the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan encourage infill on vacant land city-wide and in the urban growth area outside the city limits (see Appendix A). In addition, the city zoning code allows residential use in most zoning categories.

The zoning code is the regulatory tool that identifies where and how infill development is permitted. The tables below show the city zoning categories that permit residential uses and the allowed residential density in each category.

Residential Density in Residential and Commercial Zones										
	RA	RSF	RTF	RMF	RHD	O	OR	NR	CB	GC
Maximum Residential Density in units per acre	10	10	20	30	No maximum density.	No maximum density.	No maximum density.	No maximum density.	No maximum density.	No maximum density.
RA; Residential Agricultural; RSF: Residential Single Family; RTF: Residential Two Family; RMF: Residential Multifamily; O: Office; OR: Office Retail; NR: Neighborhood Retail; CB: Community Business; GC: General Commercial.										

Residential Density in Center and Corridor and Downtown Zones							
	CC1	CC2	CC4	DTC	DTU	DTG	DTS
Maximum Residential Density	No maximum density. Maximum floor area ratio	No maximum density. Maximum floor area ratio	No maximum density. Maximum floor area ratio	No maximum density.	No maximum density.	No maximum density.	No maximum density.
CC1: Center and Corridor Category 1; CC2: Center and Corridor Category 2; CC4: Center and Corridor Category 4; DTC: Downtown Core; DTU: Downtown University District; DTG: Downtown General; DTS: Downtown South.							

Residential Density in Industrial Zones			
	LI	HI	PI
Maximum Residential Density	No maximum density. Residential use allowed within ¼ mile of river.	No maximum density. Residential use allowed within ¼ mile of river.	No maximum density. 50% of site must be in an industrial use
LI: Light Industrial; HI: Heavy Industrial; PI: Planned Industrial.			

Subject to development standards of the zoning code such as maximum building height and setbacks as well as limitations on where residential uses may locate in the industrial zoning categories, the zoning code allows residential infill development in all zoning categories. Density of residential uses is limited in accordance with the planned intensity of the various zoning categories. The RA and RSF zones are the most restrictive categories because they allow the least density and have greater limitations on the types of permitted uses. In the high density residential zones and in all of the commercial zoning categories density is not regulated.

Other opportunities for infill housing allowed by the zoning code include accessory dwelling units (ADU), attached housing, cottage housing and multifamily dwelling units.

Infill Housing Task Force Objectives

The Infill Housing Task Force has identified the following list of topics that should be addressed by the Infill Housing Task Force.

- **Zoning/Land Use Changes.** Development regulations (zoning code and zoning map) contained within the Spokane Municipal Code (SMC) are required to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Plan Map. It is also important to note that there is a need for early and continuous public process whenever changes are proposed to the Comprehensive Plan, Spokane Municipal Code and the zoning map. The discussion of the Infill Housing Task Force focused on the necessary adjustments to the Spokane Municipal Code to improve the standards for infill housing. It is not a role of the Infill Housing Task Force to propose changes to the Land Use Plan Map of the Comprehensive Plan and the official zoning map. Such changes require following the Comprehensive Plan amendment process.
- **Townhouse (Attached Housing) Regulations.** Section 17C.110.310 of the Spokane Municipal Code allows “Attached Housing” in the RSF, RTF, RMF and RHD zones. This form of development would also be allowed in the Commercial and Industrial zones (limited to areas described earlier). The numbers of attached units are as follows:
 - RA and RSF Zones.
A maximum of two houses may be with a common wall. Structures made up of three or more attached houses are prohibited unless approved as a planned unit development.
 - RTF Zone.
Up to eight attached houses may have a common wall. Structures made up of nine or more attached houses are prohibited unless approved as a planned unit development.
 - RMF and RHD zones.
There is no limit to the number of attached houses that may have common walls.

The task force has recommended changes to the standards for attached housing. Some of the issues that have been addressed include proposed adjustments to the minimum lot width, lot size and other standards as shown in the draft amendments to SMC 17C.110 for Infill Housing, the draft Pocket Residential Development code, and the draft PUD code amendments.

- **Zero Lot Line.** Section 17C.110.340 of the Spokane Municipal Code allows “Zero Lot Line” development in the RSF, RTF, RMF and RHD zones. The proposed changes to the attached housing standards are also beneficial to the development of zero lot line development.
- **Fee Simple for townhouse development.** The Infill Housing Task Force has proposed adjustments to the zoning code to support fee simple ownership of townhouse style projects. Proposed code changes are intended to allow higher density smaller lot development with fee simple ownership in the residential zones at densities that are supported by the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Follow Through with Centers and Corridors.** A task force was formed in 2009 to work on this topic. Work of the Infill Housing Task Force addressed proposed amendments to the Spokane Municipal Code in the city’s residential zoning categories. These include the higher density residential zones that are typically located adjacent to areas designed as Center and Corridor Core on the Land Use Plan

Map of the Comprehensive Plan. Such adjustments are intended to help facilitate higher density smaller lot development with fee simple ownership.

- **Involve Neighborhood Planning to Provide an Avenue for Land Use and Zoning Changes.** The neighborhood planning process may be used to adopt changes to the Land Use Plan Map of the Comprehensive Plan and zoning map. As discussed above, the Infill Housing Task Force did not take on the role of designating new areas for infill development. This should be completed through an appropriate Comprehensive Plan amendment process.

- **Densities.**

Comments have been made regarding the minimum and maximum density requirements of the Comprehensive Plan and the Spokane Municipal Code.

- Residential 4-10 land use plan map designation: This land use plan map designation prescribes a minimum density of 4 and maximum density of 10 units per acre. The zoning category that is used to implement this designation is the RSF zone. The minimum lot size in the RSF zone is 4,350 square feet.

In 2006, during the residential zoning code adoption process, there was a significant amount of discussion and debate around the proposal to implement the Residential 4-10 designation with two different zoning categories. And when the residential zoning code was adopted, the minimum lot size in the Residential Single Family (RSF) zone was established as a minimum of 7,200 square feet for five neighborhood council areas. This limitation was put into place on an interim basis for nine months. The affected neighborhood council areas were: Five-Mile Prairie, North Indian Trail, Grandview/Thorpe, Latah/Hangman Valley, and Southgate.

After several months of discussion, neighborhood involvement and public hearings, the City Council decided that the 4,350 square foot minimum lot size requirement was appropriate in all residential areas of the city. To address the compatibility issues associated with developing smaller lots in areas that are developed with larger lots; the zoning code requires a lot size transition (see discussion below).

- Residential 10-20 land use plan map designation: This land use plan map designation prescribes a minimum density of 10 and maximum density of 20 units per acre. The zoning category that is used to implement this designation is the RTF zone which allows single family and two-family dwelling units. The minimum lot size in the RTF zone is 4,350 square feet for a single dwelling unit or a duplex and 2,500 square feet for attaching housing. There has been a comment that the density range in this designation is too great.
- Residential 15-30 land use plan map designation: This land use plan map designation prescribes a minimum density of 15 and maximum density of 30 units per acre. The zoning category that is used to implement this designation is the RMF zone which allows single family, two-family and multifamily dwelling units. The minimum lot size in the RMF zone is 2,500 square feet and the minimum lot area per dwelling unit 1,450 square feet. There has been a comment made that it is difficult to comply with the minimum density of 15 units per acre as prescribed by this land use plan map designation.

The task force is not proposing changes to the density ranges that are found in the Comprehensive Plan and regulated as a part of the zoning code.

- **Review of Lot Size Transition Requirement.**

The Residential 4-10 land use plan map designation allows 4 to 10 units per acre for residential development. While reviewing the draft residential zoning code, the Plan Commission was concerned about density in the 7-10 units per acre range, specifically small lot development next to existing subdivisions developed with larger lots. To address this, the Plan Commission created a “transition requirement” for all new residential subdivision in the Residential Agricultural (RA) and Residential Single Family (RSF) zones. For sites two acres or greater, transition lot sizes are required to be included as a buffer between existing platted land and new subdivisions. The purpose is to transition lot sizes between the proposed and existing residential developments in order to facilitate compatible development and a consistent development pattern. Lots proposed within the initial eighty feet of the subject property are required to transition lot sizes based on average lot sizes of existing subdivisions (See SMC 17C.110.200.C.). Once the transition is established, the lots may be as small as 4,350 square feet in the RSF zone.

There has been a comment that this transition requirement is too restrictive. Also, it has been suggested that there be two low density residential zones in the Residential 4-10 land use plan map designation. The task force discussed the lot size transition standards and determined that they provide a reasonable tool that improves the compatibility of new smaller lot subdivisions in areas where the existing development pattern consists of larger sized lots. The task force has recommended a new single family residential zoning category called Residential Single Family-Compact (RSF-C). This proposed classification allows smaller lots in appropriate higher intensity locations and encourages new development to move closer to achieving the maximum density of the residential 4-10 designation.

- **Education.** The Infill Task Force discussed the need to provide information to citizens, boards and commissions and elected officials regarding the needs for and benefits of infill housing. This is discussed in more detail in the “Essentials” publication referenced above.
- **Possible Infill Overlay (around C&C and downtown core).** The idea for an infill overlay zone was discussed by the task force. Any overlay zone would need to be consistent with the density provisions of the Land Use Plan Map of the Comprehensive Plan and would require amendments to zoning code as well as a subarea planning effort. The approach of the task was to propose changes to the zoning code to improve the existing residential zoning categories. The existing zoning categories that surround downtown Spokane already provide significant opportunity for higher density infill development. In most cases, there are no density limitations for residential uses in these zoning districts.
- **Mid-Range Zoning (around C&C).** Amendments to the land use plan map of the Comprehensive Plan and a public process are required as a part of the rezoning process. A significant amount of rezoning has occurred as a result of the neighborhood planning process over the past 7 years. As an example, focused center and corridor planning processes including land use plan map and zoning changes have been completed for the following center and corridor areas: Indian Trail and Barnes; South Perry; Garland; West Broadway; Grand District; East Sprague – Sprague and Napa; Maxwell and Elm; Holy Family; North Monroe Street; Hillyard Business Corridor; Hamilton Street Corridor; and, Downtown Spokane.

As a part of these planning efforts there has been a significant amount of rezoning in and around centers and corridors including higher density residential zoning as well as expansion of mixed-use zoning.

- **Variety of Infill Projects, not Just Townhouses.**

The zoning code allows a wide variety of infill development. These code provisions promote housing diversity, affordable housing options, and encourage the efficient use of available land.

Attached housing allows for row houses in all zones ranging from a maximum of two attached units in the RSF zone, eight units in the RTF and no limit on the number in the RMF and RHD zones.

PUD's allow flexibility in the application of the development standards of the underlying zoning category. The current PUD code does not permit multifamily type structures in the RSF zone.

Transitional housing density is a type of density bonus. For existing housing or vacant lots that share a property line with commercial or industrial zoned property, an existing house may be converted or a house built that provides for density above that is allowed in the base zone.

Zero lot line allows for the reduction of the interior side property line to 0 feet for a series of houses, allowing more efficient use of the property such as shared driveways. These houses are not attached to another house.

Cottage housing is series of smaller housing units that are developed on a site with a common open space, shared parking and reduced building footprint.

- **Incentives.**

The range of economic incentives the city has to offer is very limited. Obviously, the multifamily tax exemption program is one of the incentives that is currently being used in many areas of the city. However, before expansion of this incentive is implemented, there should be an analysis of the impact of doing so, including any impact on the city budget.

- **Design Standards.**

In the residential zoning categories, the zoning code applies design standards to multifamily development involving three or more units. There is also design standards required for cottage housing development. Design review is completed through the building permit process and does not require consideration by the design review board. For multifamily development, the building and site features that are addressed by the design standards include: sidewalks, pedestrian connections, outdoor spaces, landscaping and screening, building articulation and details, front Yards and entrances, roofs, base-middle-top and windows. New design standards are proposed for attached housing that will improve its compatibility with existing neighborhoods as infill projects are developed.

- **Definition of Infill.**

This is discussed under "Where are the opportunities for Infill?" above.

- **Support Transit Oriented Corridors.**

The comprehensive plan recognizes that centers and corridors are the most appropriate venue for the location of commercial and higher density residential uses. All of the centers and corridors are located

on streets that are served by public transit. A basic theme of the comprehensive plan is directing higher density residential, office, and retail uses to centers and corridors designated on the land use plan map.

- **Neighborhood Compatibility.**

SMC Section 17C.110.400A, Multifamily Design Standards, states the purpose of the standards as: "The multifamily zones contain uses that are more intensive than the single-family and two-family zones. Due to the increased floor area, reduced setbacks and increased height, these uses may not complement the neighboring residential development. These standards are intended to mitigate impacts to light, air, visual intrusions, noise and assist these buildings in blending with surrounding development. These standards may also be used to make higher density housing more livable communities."

The zoning code does not contain design standards for single family residences.

The task force has discussed other potential design standards for townhouses and duplexes. These design standards are a part of the proposed code revisions.

- **Construction Quality.**

The multifamily design standards do not extend to the point of specifying actual construction materials. However, they do contain requirements that a project address important building features so that they are a better fit in existing residential neighborhoods.

- **Encourage Sustainable Solutions.**

The city "Sustainability Action Plan: Addressing Climate Mitigation, Climate Adaptation, And Energy Security" was developed by the Mayor's Task Force on Sustainability and was adopted in March 2009. Strategy 4.1.4 states: "Enable optimal land use Land use choices affect energy consumption, carbon sequestration and overall community resilience. The manner in which land is used significantly drives how, how far and how often people and goods must travel. Land use determines how well natural processes that clean the air and water can function, and how much local production of food and other goods is possible. For these reasons, we recommend that the City:

4-A: Encourage compact communities by amending land use policies and regulations to eliminate barriers and incentivize mixed-use, sustainable development (e.g. natural landscaping, transit-oriented development, fuel and energy efficiency, community composting and recycling, urban agronomy)."

- **Administrative design review:** The zoning code requires administrative design review as a part of multifamily projects in multifamily residential zones subject to the design standards. All of the design standards for the residential zones are considered as a part of the building permit review process and do not require any process involving meetings or hearings before the Design Review Board.

- **Streamline the entitlement process:** The residential zoning code that was adopted in 2006 accomplished significant improvements in the entitlement process. For example, the previous zoning code required a public hearing process for projects larger than a 4-unit building on a lot. The current code allows multifamily development as an outright permitted use in multifamily residential zones. It is a goal of the Infill Task Force to use appropriate tools to streamline the permitting process and accomplish infill in a way that is appropriate in various neighborhood settings. Policy directives of the

comprehensive plan also encourage improved design of higher intensity development to reduce negative impacts on city neighborhoods.

DRAFT

Appendix A

Comprehensive Plan Policy Review for Infill Housing

LAND USE

LU 1.3 Single-Family Residential Areas

Protect the character of single-family residential neighborhoods by focusing higher intensity land uses in designated centers and corridors.

LU 1.4 Higher Density Residential Uses

Direct new higher density residential uses to centers and corridors designated on the land use plan map.

LU 2.1 Public Realm Features

Encourage features that improve the appearance of development, paying attention to how projects function to encourage social interaction and relate to and enhance the surrounding urban and natural environment.

LU 3.2 Centers and Corridors

Designate centers and corridors (neighborhood scale, community or district scale, and regional scale) on the land use plan map that encourage a mix of uses and activities around which growth is focused.

LU 3.3 Planned Neighborhood Centers

Designate new centers or corridors in appropriate locations on the land use plan map through a neighborhood planning process.

LU 3.5 Mix of Uses in Centers

Achieve a proportion of uses in centers that will stimulate pedestrian activity and create mutually reinforcing land uses.

LU 3.11 Compact Residential Patterns

Allow more compact and affordable housing in all neighborhoods, in accordance with neighborhood-based design guidelines.

LU 3.12 Maximum and Minimum Lot Sizes

Prescribe maximum, as well as minimum, lot size standards to achieve the desired residential density for all areas of the city.

LU 4.1 Land Use and Transportation

Coordinate land use and transportation planning to result in an efficient pattern of development that supports alternative transportation modes consistent with the transportation chapter and makes significant progress toward reducing sprawl, traffic congestion, and air pollution.

LU 5.5 Compatible Development

Ensure that infill and redevelopment projects are well-designed and compatible with surrounding uses and building types.

TRANSPORTATION

TR 3.1 Transportation and Development Patterns

Use the city's transportation system and infrastructure to support desired land uses and development patterns, especially to reduce sprawl and encourage development in urban areas.

TR 3.3 Walking and Bicycling-Oriented Neighborhood Centers

Incorporate physical features in neighborhood centers to promote walking, bicycling, and other non-motorized modes of transportation to and within the centers, reducing the need for driving.

TR 3.4 Increased Residential Densities

Increase residential densities, as indicated in the land use element of the City of Spokane's Comprehensive Plan, to support the efficient functioning of transit and mass transit.

HOUSING

H 1.4 Use of Existing Infrastructure

Direct new residential development into areas where community and human public services and facilities are available and in a manner that is compatible with other Comprehensive Plan elements.

H 2 HOUSING CHOICE AND DIVERSITY

Goal: Increase the number of housing alternatives within all areas of the city to help meet the changing needs and preferences of a diverse population.

H 2.1 Distribution of Housing Options

Promote a wide range of housing types and housing diversity to meet the needs of the diverse population and ensure that this housing is available throughout the community for people of all income levels and special needs.

H 2.2 Senior Housing

Encourage developments that provide a variety of housing options so that seniors may stay within their neighborhoods.

H 2.3 Accessory Dwelling Units

Allow one accessory dwelling unit as an ancillary use to single-family owner-occupied homes in all designated residential areas as an affordable housing option.

H 3.5 Housing Goal Monitoring

Provide a report annually to the City Plan Commission that monitors progress toward achieving the housing goals and includes recommended policy change if positive direction toward achieving the housing goals is not occurring.

NEIGHBORHOODS

N 2.3 Neighborhood Redevelopment

Identify specific areas in neighborhoods where redevelopment is appropriate, and program the manner in which those changes are to occur, consistent with the neighborhood planning process.

N 2.4 Neighborhood Improvement

Encourage rehabilitation and improvement programs to conserve and upgrade existing properties and buildings.

N 2.6 Housing Options

Provide housing options within neighborhoods to attract and retain neighborhood residents, consistent with the neighborhood planning process.

URBAN DESIGN AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DP 1.4 New Development in Established Neighborhoods

Ensure that new development is of a type, scale, orientation, and design that maintains or improves the character, aesthetic quality, and livability of the neighborhood.

DP 3.8 Infill Development

Ensure that infill construction and area redevelopment are done in a manner that reinforces the established neighborhood character and is architecturally compatible with the surrounding existing commercial and residential areas.

DP 6.2 Access to Housing Choices

Encourage building and site design that allows a variety of housing forms while being compatible with the character of the immediate surrounding area, thereby generating community support for development at planned densities.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

PRS 1.4 Property Owners and Developers

Work cooperatively with property owners and developers to preserve open space areas within or between developments, especially those that provide visual or physical linkages to the open space network.

Appendix B

Alternative Version of White Paper

By Jason Wheaton

Comprehensive Plan Background

In May 2001 the City of Spokane adopted a new Comprehensive Plan. This followed the requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act, setting a new urban development “vision” for Spokane. The Plan articulated a strategy for reversing the consequences of suburban sprawl development by encouraging urban infill development and strengthening Spokane’s urban neighborhoods.

This vision and Plan was the result of the work of a broad base of community organizations and thousands of citizens. The Spokane Horizons process, which began in 1995 and ended in 2001, involved the community in unprecedented numbers to establish the goals and policies that would guide the future growth and development of the City. As a part of that process, a strategy for growth was formulated by the Horizons Committee and in 2001 incorporated into the City Comprehensive Plan. This urban development vision is referred to as Centers and Corridors. The Plan states: “The intent of center and corridor regulations is to implement the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. These areas are intended to bring employment, shopping, and residential activities into shared locations and encourage, through new development and rehabilitation, new areas for economic activity.”

In 2006 the City of Spokane undertook a major review of the Comprehensive Plan and in December 2006 readopted the Plan. At this same time development regulations were adopted by the City to implement the urban development vision of the comprehensive plan, Although the vision was to strengthen urban neighborhoods, the consequences of many of the code revisions were inconsistent with the policies and principles established in the Comprehensive Plan. In many specific instances the land use regulations and the supporting municipal code revisions have moved us further away from the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and have created obstacles to the effective development of urban neighborhoods.

Development Patterns since Plan Adoption

In the nearly 10 years that have intervened since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan what have been the results and how have development patterns changed? There is nearly universal agreement, both inside and outside government that the Plan and implementing development regulations have not fostered the intended balance of growth between our suburban and urban neighborhoods. Building permits and development is still dominated by growth in suburban areas. Areas such as Indian Trail, Five Mile Prairie, Glenrose, Hangman Valley and West Plains dominate new private investment. Revitalization and private investment in urban neighborhoods has been minimal. The reality is that most of the urban neighborhoods in Spokane suffer from a cycle of disinvestment that is diminishing the quality of life in those neighborhoods. Public and private infrastructure expenditures to support suburban growth have far exceeded the expenditures within our urban core. This must be reversed. Urban neighborhoods must receive as high a level of investment in physical and social infrastructure in order to accomplish the same level of neighborhood appeal as that in their suburban counterparts. Attached as exhibit “A” are the results of the review of the past nine years of the City’s residential building permits.

Findings from the Centers and Corridors Committee

In 2008, the City convened a Citizens committee to review the Centers and Corridor strategy and recommend changes necessary to align current regulatory standards with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. While we

can point to many factors, including lower suburban land costs, poor economic conditions over the past several years, and a relative lack of land availability, there is no question that changes are necessary to the Development Code to align the current Land Use Regulations with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Changes to the development code since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, while ostensibly intended to implement the Comprehensive Plan urban vision, have in reality created significant barriers to the revitalization of our urban neighborhoods. The layering of these different code adjustments has had significant unintended negative impacts on the ability to develop a wide range of medium density residential and neighborhood based commercial uses that constitute the core of urban infill development. Urban infill development product that are common and have had wide spread success in many of the urban markets like Seattle, Portland, Salt Lake and Boise are restricted by current City development regulations.

Under the Growth Management Act, the City was required to implement development Code provisions consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Put simply, the Development Code should both allow and encourage the development patterns envisioned by the Comprehensive Plan. The development Code and process should encourage urban infill development, pedestrian friendly streets, and compact mixed use development. They do not. Instead they have created barriers to the development patterns encouraged by the Comprehensive Plan. In the past 10 years the City of Spokane has created a layering of development regulations that have moved us farther from the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Here are just a few of the shortcomings:

1. **Townhome Site Standards:** The City Development Standards are designed for suburban development. It is essentially a suburban code that does not include provisions for compact urban development forms. Townhomes are a perfect example. Under current city land use regulations, Townhomes are simply impossible to develop due to lot frontage, lot width, site coverage and other dimensional standards. These standards are a barrier to the development of urban townhomes and cottage clusters. The current code encourages the development suburban communities at the expense of our urban centers. In addition there is a double standard in relationship to Multi-Family housing. "For Rent" apartments are not required to meet the unit by unit site standards required by their "For Sale" counterparts. It has been demonstrated a property that would allow only 13 Multi-Family "For Sale" Townhomes would allow a 60 unit rental apartment complex. This inequity is unacceptable, and has encouraged rental versus owner occupied housing in urban neighborhoods. What matters is density, open space, building height, and quality. Without regulatory change, development in the City of Spokane will continue to be dominated by suburban fringe single family homes on large lots and suburban large scale apartment development. The site dimensional standards in all residential zones must be modified to encourage and allow urban development forms.
2. **Lot Size Transition Buffer:** The development code provisions that require lot size buffering could not be more effective in eliminating the potential for any infill development within the City. Instead of introducing proactive transitional housing standards through additional zoning designations, a reactive standard was implemented. It is an example of a "good thought" carried to such an extreme that the goal of the Comprehensive Plan to encourage infill development is defeated. This is made worse by the provision that the buffering standards cannot be modified even in a PUD development which is subject to both design review and Plan Commission public hearing. The effective transitioning of housing types and densities is imperative in establishing an effective infill strategy. A proactive approach must be implemented that encourages not discourages increased infill density. Our primary concern needs to be "density" transition, not "lot size" transition.

3. **Innovative Residential Development:** The Comprehensive Plans talks extensively about the value of “innovative residential development” forms in helping to meet the Plan urban infill vision. These include developments such as townhomes, clustered housing, zero lot line homes, patio homes and cottage communities. The current development code simply does not encourage nor allow many of these development types. The code should be modified to allow outright a variety of development forms. Development should be governed by zoning density and building height, not lot size or lot dimensional standards that are base on suburban development patterns.
4. **Neighborhood Commercial:** Most small scale neighborhood commercial uses are either not permitted or are made non-conforming by the current Development Standards. For example, small urban neighborhood retail uses are subjected to the same off-street parking, landscaping and development standards imposed on suburban strip development. So even though the Comprehensive Plan encourages such small scale mixed-use and commercial services within walking distance of homes, the code discourages or prohibits such use by setting impossible to meet parking and development requirements. For most small scale neighborhood commercial uses less than 3000 square feet on-street parking is sufficient to meet the needs of the community. It is imperative that small scale neighborhood retail be a part of our urban residential environment. Inconceivably the 2006 revised PUD ordinance disallowed any commercial development.
5. **The PUD Ordinance:** In most communities the PUD Ordinance serves to encourage innovative development and provide a pathway to development in urban neighborhoods. The revisions to the City PUD ordinance adopted in 2006 rendered the PUD process useless. It imposes lot transition standards, excludes commercial development from the PUD process and allows no variation in road standards. Each of these undermines the very purpose of a Planned Unit Development. The recent revisions to the PUD ordinance removed all flexibility and have rendered the tool ineffective. The result is a PUD Ordinance that has not been used since it was adopted and those hoping to invest in urban neighborhoods have no pathway.
6. **Road Standards:** The City failed to adopt road standards that meet the “Walkable Community” and “Narrow Street” goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Contrary to the Comprehensive Plan, current road development standards require wider streets and less opportunity for narrow street development than was available before the Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The Comprehensive Plan is clear. Pedestrian oriented streets are mandated in the Comprehensive Plan. They create the kind of neighborhood environment that is cherished in many of our most desirable neighborhoods. The city road standards should be modified to reflect the clear and specific direction provided in the Comprehensive Plan.

While development regulations are not the only obstacle to the development of our urban neighborhoods, regulatory tools must be in place that both encourage and allow urban development patterns. We must allow the type of development that is envisioned by the Comprehensive Plan. The development regulations that implement the Comprehensive plan must both accommodate and encourage investment urban neighborhoods. They must provide the investment “pathways” for creating desirable urban neighborhoods.

We must create a regulatory environment that not only allow, but encourage and support the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, our urban neighborhoods must be recognized for their unique attributes and we must support and capitalize on our individual neighborhood uniqueness. Urban development forms are inherently different than their counterpart suburban forms and the differences must be adequately addressed in our land use regulations. Most important, Infill development is not just about housing, it is about creating

desirable neighborhoods that our citizens will want to live in. In order for this to occur, there must be integration of development standards and regulatory codes with public infrastructure that encourage comprehensive urban development forms as envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan.

DRAFT