

From: [Phil Wuest](#)
To: [Susan Ellinger](#)
Cc: [Oliver Orjiako](#); [Jose Alvarez](#); steve.faust@3j-consulting.com; [Elizabeth Decker](#); [Amy Wooten](#)
Subject: RE: Clark County Technical Housing Code Forum
Date: Tuesday, October 3, 2023 12:05:42 PM
Attachments: [image005.png](#)
[image006.png](#)
[image007.png](#)
[image008.png](#)
[image009.png](#)

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Susan & Team-

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. My additional input, only responding to the items in the Memo, is below.

- Discussion of Affordability Issues
 - This section should include at least a brief discussion of the role of financing in setting market prices and demand for rental and for sale products. We are likely entering a longer period of higher interest rates on both the producer and consumer sides of the supply/demand equation.
 - On multifamily for-rent side of the market, from a producer perspective, new projects are very difficult to finance. Interest rates on construction loans typically float and are very, very high right now; and there is tremendous uncertainty on what the rates will be when a project is finished, stabilized and ready for permanent financing. While there is a glut in current MF deliveries in Clark County and nationally, all of the projects delivering now were underwritten and approved under very, very different financial conditions. Because of the difficulty of financing, there will be a lull in new starts, which will ultimately lead to another whipsaw. Right now, MF market rents are stagnant or decreasing in response to the current glut. As current projects are delivered and fewer new project start construction, supply will again be constrained and rental rates, in response, will go up.
 - On the for-sale side, we'll see a similar constraint, but more because of consumer capacity and mortgage interest rates. We are all aware that the cost of everything – materials, labor, land, fees, code compliance – have gone up. As the same time, finished new home sale prices have stagnated simply because consumers purchasing power has been severely eroded by higher mortgage interest rates. This effect has been somewhat masked by the large role of national builders in the local market that have leveraged good land positions, purchasing power, and the ability to offer interest-rate buy-down incentives to keep the market moving. However, we are starting to see a national slowdown in housing which is a natural outgrowth of the market forces currently at work.
 - In summary, forces beyond local control are driving the market right now on both the demand and supply side. While it's a very local issue in that it affects Clark County's citizens, local zoning and building policies, in my view, only impact affordability at the margin. We need to still try to do everything we can to encourage additional, attainably priced supply in both the rental and for-sale market, but it's important to recognize that we're really trying to chart a course for local housing policy that fits into much broader and impactful market forces.
 - At Ginn Group, we're trying very hard to figure out how to get new housing products to market that are attainably priced for working families – likely those earning between 80% and 120% AMI – probably households with at least 2 working adults. We feel that if we can better supply this portion of the market,

which also works well for first time home buyers, we'll play an important part in rebuilding the lowest rungs of the housing ladder, which will lead to a healthier overall market. This typically means small lot detached homes (cottage or other), small lot attached homes (duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, etc.) , townhome style apartments, and garden style apartments. In theory, any of these products provided on a site plan (not platted lots) could be condo platted for additional lower income ownership opportunities, but we haven't been able to crack the code on lower-cost condos. Between insurance and litigation risk, they still don't make financial sense (as far as we can tell).

- Detached ADU Height.
 - I recommend allowing 35' where the proposal includes a garage-under design. For non-garage under design, I think 25' should work. A 10% (minor variance) could get an applicant to 27.5' if particular conditions justify it. You might make that a quick ministerial review.
- Compact Lot Design Standards.
 - First, while this is not presented for discussion, we're not big fans of the 3 net acre limitation on this proposed code provision. It would be great to see that limit removed altogether or expanded to 5-6 acres. The age of large lot single family homes neighborhoods in sprawling urban areas is over. The sooner we come to grips with that as a matter of public policy, the better.
 - Second, from my perspective, the discussion/consideration of alleys is misplaced – they aren't a very efficient strategy. Because inclusion of alleys rarely reduces the amount of frontage roadway required, they are not often a financially practical option in smaller-lot developments that are targeting attainably priced housing for working families. I do like alley loaded homes with front porches and great street presence, but they are often complicated and expensive to work into smaller developments. One of the other drawbacks with alleys on small urban lots is that it means there's usually no back yard – nowhere to let the dog out or set up a swing for the kids in an enclosed, safe environment. While, as planners, we'd like to see the kids playing and adults hanging out in the front yard and interacting with their neighbors, families and parents in particular, typically value enclosed back yards for privacy and security, even if very small.
 - Third, car storage is always a challenge. We're currently building a 15' wide detached home with a side entry at our Parkhouse Vista project on NE 138th Avenue in Vancouver. We're working with the Vancouver Housing Authority, Evergreen Habitat for Humanity and Proud Ground on a pilot affordable home ownership program. The street front for the entire community is dominated by the garage doors. One option we discussed with our partners (VHA, EHFH & Proud Ground) we the potential to have a two-car parking pad in the front setback of the home, more of a front porch, no garage, but a significant unconditioned storage area in a portion of the current garage space. The feeling of the group was that, as long as there is room to park two cars in front of a 3 x 2 home, storage is what consumers really want and need (not necessarily somewhere to put their cars). EHFH's Johnson Village project in east Vancouver is taking this approach.
 - Finally, in response to the specific proposals presented in the Memo:
 - I agree with reducing minimum setbacks to 4'. In practice the buildings will still be close to 5' from the property line, the 4' setback would just provide for eave overhangs, which can help when we're working with small homes on small lots.
 - Rather than having a complicated standard, why not just set max garage door width at 9'? Whatever the end result, it's not going to be more than one car wide, so just put a maximum garage door width in place and don't worry about façade percentages.
 - Also, pursuant to the point I make above, I think allowing for a 2-car parking pad in front of a home could help with affordability by allowing designs that provide front porches and storage, but without alleys or

garages.

- Narrow Driveway Standards
 - A 10' minimum driveway width is fine. I don't have any concerns with the reduction in the minimum. All three of my kids learned how to drive maneuvering in/out of a narrower driveway on a narrow street parked on both side in NE Portland. It's not that complicated. Engineering turning templates might not work at 10' but, as a practical matter, the driveways do.
 - As noted above, I think there is a case to be made for wider driveways/parking pads on narrow lots, particularly if the home is designed without a garage.
 - I'm good with the 2.33 spaces per unit ratio. I think that is sufficient as a minimum standard and will provide more flexibility for increased density with attached and detached SF homes.
- Lot coverage
 - I think you've all heard my perspective on this before. We have setbacks all around all buildings and we have to accommodate utilities, trees, etc. on every parcel. For me, lot coverage standards seem both arcane and arbitrary. If there must be an upper limit, I would set it at 62.5% or more. The setbacks and other requirements will take care of the rest.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate.

Phil Wuest | President | Chief Development Officer

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Licensed to practice law in Washington and Oregon



Building Something More

This e-mail message may contain confidential or legally privileged information and is only for use of intended recipient.

From: Susan Ellinger <Susan.Ellinger@clark.wa.gov>

Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2023 5:53 PM

Cc: Oliver Orjiako <Oliver.Orjiako@clark.wa.gov>; Jose Alvarez <Jose.Alvarez@clark.wa.gov>; steve.faust@3j-consulting.com; Elizabeth Decker <edecker@jetplanning.net>; Amy Wooten <Amy.Wooten@clark.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Clark County Technical Housing Code Forum

Hello Technical Housing Code Forum Members –

Please find materials for the October 5 meeting attached. Please note item F of the memo:

We are looking to forum members to identify any additional outstanding topics related to the draft code for further review and refinement prior to Council reconsideration. Please share any specific topics with staff in advance, if possible, to ensure we can fully address the issue in our discussion.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you!



Susan Ellinger

She/her/hers

Planner III

COMMUNITY PLANNING

564.397.4516



From: Susan Ellinger

Sent: Monday, September 18, 2023 4:09 PM

Cc: Oliver Orjiako <Oliver.Orjiako@clark.wa.gov>; Jose Alvarez <Jose.Alvarez@clark.wa.gov>; 'steve.faust@3j-consulting.com' <steve.faust@3j-consulting.com>; 'Elizabeth Decker' <edecker@jetplanning.net>; Amy Wooten <Amy.Wooten@clark.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Clark County Technical Housing Code Forum

Hello Technical Housing Code Forum Members –

A meeting on October 5 from 12 to 2 pm works for the majority of members. Please block that time out on your calendar. We will send a meeting request soon. Please note the meeting request will come from Zoom.

We plan to send meeting materials one week before the meeting. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks so much!



Susan Ellinger

She/her/hers

Planner III

COMMUNITY PLANNING

564.397.4516



From: Susan Ellinger

Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2023 1:00 PM

Cc: Oliver Orjiako <Oliver.Orjiako@clark.wa.gov>; Jose Alvarez <Jose.Alvarez@clark.wa.gov>; 'steve.faust@3j-consulting.com' <steve.faust@3j-consulting.com>; 'Elizabeth Decker'

<edecker@jetplanning.net>; Amy Wooten <Amy.Wooten@clark.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Clark County Technical Housing Code Forum

Hello Technical Housing Code Forum Members –

As outlined below, the phase 1 (middle housing/single-family) batch of code and comprehensive plan amendments were presented to the council on July 25. At the hearing, council requested staff and our consultants to complete additional work on the phase 1 proposal with review and consideration by the Technical Housing Code Forum.

To get started, we would like to schedule a two-hour forum meeting in late September or early October. Please let us know your availability during the following time periods:

- 9/28: 9:30am-2:30pm
- 9/29: 9:30am-2:30pm
- 10/4: 9:30am-2:30pm
- 10/5: 12-2pm
- 10/6: 10-12pm

Please reply to this email by **Friday, September 15, 2023.**

Thank you,



Susan Ellinger

She/her/hers

Planner III

COMMUNITY PLANNING

564.397.4516



From: Susan Ellinger

Sent: Tuesday, August 1, 2023 9:19 AM

Cc: Oliver Orjiako <Oliver.Orjiako@clark.wa.gov>; Susan Ellinger <Susan.Ellinger@clark.wa.gov>; Jose Alvarez <Jose.Alvarez@clark.wa.gov>; steve.faust@3j-consulting.com; Elizabeth Decker <edecker@jetplanning.net>

Subject: Clark County Technical Housing Code Forum

Hello Technical Housing Code Forum Members –

The phase 1 (middle housing/single-family) batch of code and comprehensive plan amendments were presented to the County Council on July 25. At the hearing, council requested staff and our consultants to complete additional work on the phase 1 proposal with review and consideration by the Technical Housing Code Forum.

To meet this request, staff is working with the consultant to prepare additional materials for your discussion, based on Council direction. We will contact you to schedule another phase 1 forum meeting once that work is complete.

To allow time to accomplish the work on the phase 1 portion of the project, we are pausing work on phase 2 (multi-family and regulated affordable housing strategies) for the moment. We plan to schedule the next phase 2 meeting of the Technical Housing Code Forum later this year.

We truly appreciate your work on the forum and look forward to the next meeting. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks!



Susan Ellinger
She/her/hers
Planner III
COMMUNITY PLANNING

564.397.4516



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