

Attachment 1: Small Lot Cluster Development and Design Standards

ISSUE

- Should the City strike the text requiring that cluster development occur within 600 feet of the Residential Single Family land use designation, effectively allowing cluster development throughout the R-4 zone?
- Should text requiring special architectural features in small lot cluster development be placed in the building standards for development in the R-1, R-4, and R-8 zoning designations?
- Should the City expand the requirement for vertical façade modulation from the R-4 zone to also include the R-1 and R-8 zones?

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends adopting code amendments to allow small lot cluster development throughout the R-4 zone, require design standards in the R-1, R-4 and R-8 zones, and require vertical façade modulation in the R-1 and R-8 zones. These changes reflect recommendations of the East Renton Plateau Citizens Task Force and are intended to facilitate visually appealing residential development.

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The East Renton Plateau Citizens Task Force expressed a desire to protect open space and the more rural nature of the East Renton area. They also expressed an understanding of the pressure for development and the need of developers to achieve a reasonable rate of return on investment. Small lot cluster development is a means to achieve preservation of open space while also facilitating the ability to express the intended density in the R-4 zone. In order to be able to develop small lot clusters, it is required that 30 percent of the land be set aside permanently as “significant open space.” The amount of required open space can be reduced to 20 percent if all three of the following criteria are met: 1) public access is provided to the open space, 2) soft surface trails are provided within wetland buffers, and 3) storm water ponds are designed to eliminate engineered slopes that require fencing and are enhanced to allow passive and/or active recreation.

Additionally, the East Renton Plateau Citizens Task Force and citizens at public meetings regarding the East Renton area expressed concern about the outcome of the residential development that has occurred around the NE 4th St corridor. The general opinion was that the end result is unattractive to those who view the communities from the arterial roadway. Residents of the East Renton area are concerned that when the sewer moratorium for their area is lifted, there will be a significant amount of new development that will begin occurring on the plateau and that this new development will mimic the type they do not care for along NE 4th St. Currently, City code has simple design guidelines required for small lot cluster development. Implementation of these design standards in the R-1, R-4, and R-8 zones would likely help facilitate residential

development that is visually appealing. The standards seek to provide a varied appearance to residential units, so that there is less “cloned” or “cookie cutter” type development. There are three architectural standards that would be required: 1) decorative hip or gable roofs, 2) trim on windows and doors, and 3) projecting eaves. The City also has a requirement for vertical façade modulation in the building standards for the R-4 zone. The expansion of this requirement to the R-1 and R-8 zones help facilitate a varied residential product.

CONCLUSION

Implementation of design standards in the City would benefit all new residential development in R-1, R-4, and R-8 zones that occurs in the City by ensuring a varied product that is visually interesting. The standards are not extensive, but are a simple means to accommodate residents desire to see a varied residential product while not adding significant costs to builders and/or developers. Allowing small lot cluster development to occur throughout the R-4 zone is likely to help preserve open space while not limiting the density of the zone.