

Key Questions/Comments from Participants of the 10/8/2020 Residential Multi (RM) Project Virtual Open House

- It was noted that areas with multi-family uses should be part of this project.
 - **Staff response:** Some multi-family uses may be located in other zoning districts, but this project is focused on existing RM zones only.
- A question was asked about whether the single-family uses that were previously designated for an area where a new park is located in the King Mountain neighborhood were replaced elsewhere. It was noted that the community should accept a diversity of housing forms throughout the city.
 - **Staff response:** Regarding the parkland, this was factored into the latest land capacity analysis, so the single-family homes do not need to be replaced elsewhere. Regarding diverse housing options, staff agrees. Existing RM zones, which allow a variety of housing types, such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs), townhomes, cottages, and multi-unit apartment buildings, are located throughout the community. Accessory dwelling units and the infill toolkit are also allowed in other areas throughout the community, and urban villages allow mixed uses.
- Sometimes density isn't necessary. The land use code is outdated and should be updated.
 - **Staff response:** Densities in existing RM zones are being evaluated with this project. Underdevelopment in these zones is one of the main impetuses for the RM project. Regarding updates to the land use code, the RM project will update and simplify the RM code. Specifically, the "ranged zoning" component aims to provide a range of density options, instead of a specific prescribed density number. Other portions of the code will continue to be updated and revised as needed and when staff resources are available to implement other goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
- The King Mountain neighborhood includes quite a bit of multi-family zoning. What about areas in south Bellingham that don't have much multi-family zoned land?
 - **Staff response:** No rezones for single-family zones are proposed with the RM project, as it pertains to multi-family zones only.
- In the past, there have been discussions about a potential urban village in the King Mountain neighborhood. How can we encourage an urban village and not just houses?

- **Staff response:** The property owner had the option of developing a mixed-use urban village when the property was annexed in 2009. Much of the King Mountain neighborhood includes RM and Residential Single (RS) zoning. It does not include urban village zoning; however, neighborhood commercial uses are allowed in some areas.
- Concerns were expressed about the form of apartments and the fact that people can't own a home in these zones.
 - **Staff response:** The infill housing toolkit includes ownership housing forms, such as townhomes and cottages. All toolkit forms are allowed in all RM zones, except that limited forms are currently allowed in RM duplex zones. The RM project proposes to allow all toolkit forms in all RM zones. It's important to note that the City cannot dictate owner-occupied or renter occupied housing.
- Concerns were expressed about minimum densities, nonconformities, and whether staff is considering unintended consequences.
 - **Staff response:** Staff is currently analyzing and evaluating all project components, including minimum densities. Minimum densities will be important in ensuring that development in RM zones meets intended densities. If minimum densities are not included as part of the proposal, RM zones, which are intended for some of the city's highest densities, may continue to see underdevelopment and low densities. Staff is sensitive to nonconformities and will continue to consider this issue as the project moves forward.
- Concerns were expressed about accessory dwelling units, including retaining the owner occupancy requirement and additional cars that may accompany these units.
 - **Staff response:** The RM project does not include any changes to the ADU ordinance, as this ordinance was updated in 2018 and will be reviewed in the upcoming months as part of a separate project.
- A question was asked about the interdependence of the RM and Family definition projects.
 - **Staff response:** The RM and Family definition projects are two distinct projects. The RM project is evaluating densities and uses in existing RM zones, while the Family definition project is evaluating alternatives to the limitation of no more than three unrelated people in a dwelling unit to address the changing nature of families. Both projects are seeking public input and no specific amendments have been proposed for approval yet.

- Concerns were raised about rising housing costs and potentially requiring a certain percentage of new units to be affordable.
 - **Staff response:** All solutions are being considered as staff continues to evaluate the components of the RM project. Requiring a certain number of affordable units may be an option to pursue in relation to the potential density bonus system.
- It was suggested that more be asked of developers regarding infrastructure in RM zones.
 - **Staff response:** Consistent with state law, new development can only be required to pay its fair share of infrastructure costs directly attributable to the proposal. Similarly, new development cannot be required to remedy pre-existing deficiencies, only to pay a proportionate share attributable to the proposal.
- Co-housing was referenced as a solution.
 - **Staff response:** The City currently allows co-housing in certain areas, but it has not been used widely. This section of the code is slated for evaluation in the future as part of a separate project.
- What's the difference between multi-family and Residential Multi (RM)?
 - **Staff response:** "Multi-family" and "Residential Multi (RM)" are terms that are used interchangeably throughout the City's plans and land use code to describe areas that are able to support higher concentrations of people while providing a compatible mixture of housing types.