



The Bellingham Municipal Code includes 94 RM zones, each with their own unique densities that align with the Low, Medium or High density ranges in the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan.

Goals and Policies
(Comprehensive Plan)



Regulations
(BMC Title 20)

Bellingham Comprehensive Plan **2016**
Land Use Chapter

III. Goals and Policies

Residential Development

Policy LU-2 The Multi-Family Residential designation is intended for areas that are able to support higher concentrations of people, while encouraging a desirable living environment within and adjacent to these districts. This zoning also provides a compatible mixture of residential housing types, typical accessory uses, public and semi-public uses, office uses and limited neighborhood commercial uses in appropriate areas.

Policy LU-3 Residential densities are permitted as follows:

Residential, Low Density - 7,201 or more square feet per dwelling unit (5 or less units per acre). The Low-Density Residential designation should be used for land that is not suited for more intense urban development because of environmentally-sensitive areas and/or public facility or utility capacity limitations.

Residential, Medium Density - 3,600 to 7,200 square feet per dwelling unit (6 to 12 units per acre). The Medium-Density Residential designation should be used for land that is suitable for moderate density development.

Residential, High Density - 0 to 3,599 square feet per dwelling unit (more than 12 units per acre). The high-density residential designation should be used for land near existing or potential high-frequency transit service and/or adjacent to or near employment and commercial areas.



Area	Zoning	Use Qualifier	Density	Special Conditions	Prerequisite Considerations	Special Regulations
4	Residential Multi	Planned	4,000 sq. ft. per unit	Buffer from I-5; maintain open space corridor along Railroad Trail	Access to the nearest neighborhood collector should be developed.	None

PROPOSED CHANGES:

Staff is evaluating whether to allow development at any density within each RM zone's comparable Comprehensive Plan range (Low, Medium or High).

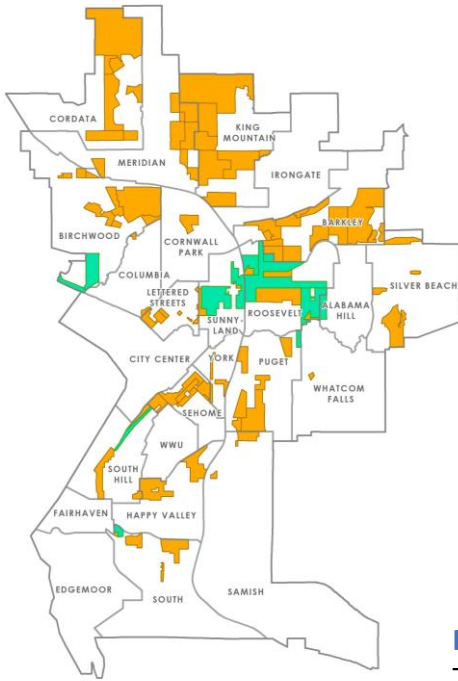
EXAMPLE:

4,000 sqft/unit falls within the "MEDIUM" range. Under the proposal, development could occur at a density between 3,600 sqft/unit and 7,200 sqft/unit.

Area	Zoning	Use Qualifier	Density	Special Conditions	Prerequisite Considerations	Special Regulations
4	Residential Multi	Planned	4,000 sq. ft. per unit Medium	Buffer from I-5; maintain open space corridor along Railroad Trail	Access to the nearest neighborhood collector should be developed.	None



All Infill Toolkit forms are currently allowed in multi-family zones, except that only small houses, smaller houses, cottages, and duplexes are allowed in multi-family zones with a “duplex” qualifier.



- RM Zones that allow all Toolkit forms
- RM Zones with the Duplex Qualifier

The Infill Housing Toolkit ([BMC 20.28](#)) represents seven traditional housing forms that use a limited amount of residential space. In general, these forms include small homes that provide low-impact housing options. Each toolkit housing type includes design standards that are intended to help them architecturally blend into existing neighborhoods through careful attention to building design, parking and landscaping. Their flexible design and smaller size makes them suitable for a variety of households, from graduates to aging parents.

PROPOSED CHANGES: Staff is evaluating whether ALL Infill Toolkit forms should be allowed in ALL RM zones.

Smaller Lot

Allows for affordable, detached single family development at greater density than typical single family zones

- Lot sizes: 1,800 to 3,000 sq ft
- Max FAR of 0.4
- 600 sq ft max per floor
- Min 60% Open Space required



Small Lot

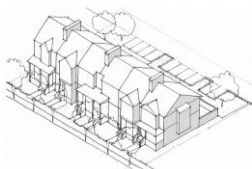
- Lot sizes: 3,001 to 5,000 sq ft
- Max Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.35
- 800 sq ft max per floor
- Min 60% Open Space required



Townhouse

A home in a row of attached homes. Intended to include the best amenities of a single family home in a denser alternative.

- Min FAR of 0.75 (Min Green Factor Score of 0.6 required)
- architecturally compatible design required when within established neighborhoods

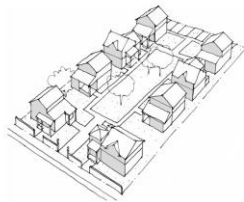


Green Factor Scoring system of landscaping and low-impact development techniques.

Cottages

Smaller detached single family houses clustered around shared open space

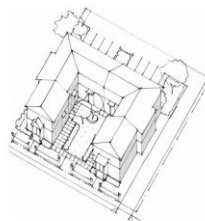
- 1,000 sq ft max per unit
- Max FAR of 0.4
- 600 sq ft max per floor
- Min 60% Open Space required
- 1 parking space per unit



Garden Courtyard

6 to 8 dwelling units (separate or attached) arranged around a common garden courtyard

- 2,000 sq ft max per unit
- Max FAR of 0.6 (or 0.75 with Green Factor)
- each unit has a main entrance on the courtyard

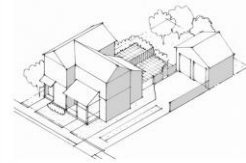


Green Factor Scoring system of landscaping and low-impact development techniques.

Duplex/Triplex

A building containing 2 or 3 dwelling units on a single lot

- 1,000 sq ft max per unit
- Max FAR of 0.5
- Min 75 sq ft private open space per unit
- Min 40% Open Space required
- 1 parking space per unit



Shared Courtyard

4 to 6 dwelling units (separate or attached) arranged around a common driveway/courtyard.

- 2,000 sq ft max per unit
- Max FAR of 0.5 (or 0.7 with Green Factor)
- each unit has a main entrance on the courtyard



Green Factor Scoring system of landscaping and low-impact development techniques.



The RM zoning designation is primarily intended to accommodate higher concentrations of people within the city.

While the zoning table designates the maximum density, it does not currently include a minimum density or "floor." This means that development can occur at intensities much lower than the intent of the zone. The current regulations may result in RM zones that don't include multi-family and small-scale housing forms as intended.

PROPOSED CHANGES:

Staff is evaluating whether to require development to meet at least the lowest density within each RM zone's comparable Comp Plan range (Low, Medium or High).

Comprehensive Plan Residential Densities (Policy LU-3):

Range	Minimum	Maximum
Low Density	7,201 sf/unit	7,201 sf/unit
Medium Density	7,200 sf/unit	3,600 sf/unit
High Density	3,599 sf/unit	-none-

↑
Minimum Density
 (must build at least
 to this density)

↑
Maximum Density
 (must not build higher than
 this density unless
 through bonus systems)