

Langley  
Washington

**MULTIFAMILY  
FORM BASED  
QUICK START  
USERS GUIDE**

March 30, 2021 Draft

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## SUMMARY

The Multifamily Form-Based Code Overlay enables more affordable housing options, helps implement the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, and enables compliance with the Growth Management Act. The overlay permits context-sensitive gentle densification on all lots served by sewer within four existing Langley zoning districts: RS7200, RS5000, RM, and NB.

This code helps remove some of the barriers to affordability in these four existing districts and enables best practices of incentives to affordable housing. Goals of the new regulations include to permit at least one triplex on each parcel in a compatible manner that respects the scale of adjacent buildings, protects critical areas, and preserves specimen trees.

This guide provides the structure for how the new code is organized, an overview of how to use it, an application checklist, as well as context for the rationale behind the zoning regulations.

# CODE STRUCTURE

## ORGANIZATION GUIDE

THE MULTIFAMILY FORM-BASED CODE OVERLAY BEGINS WITH GENERAL REQUIREMENTS AND BECOMES MORE SPECIFIC, FROM LOT TO BUILDING.

## SUMMARY REGULATIONS

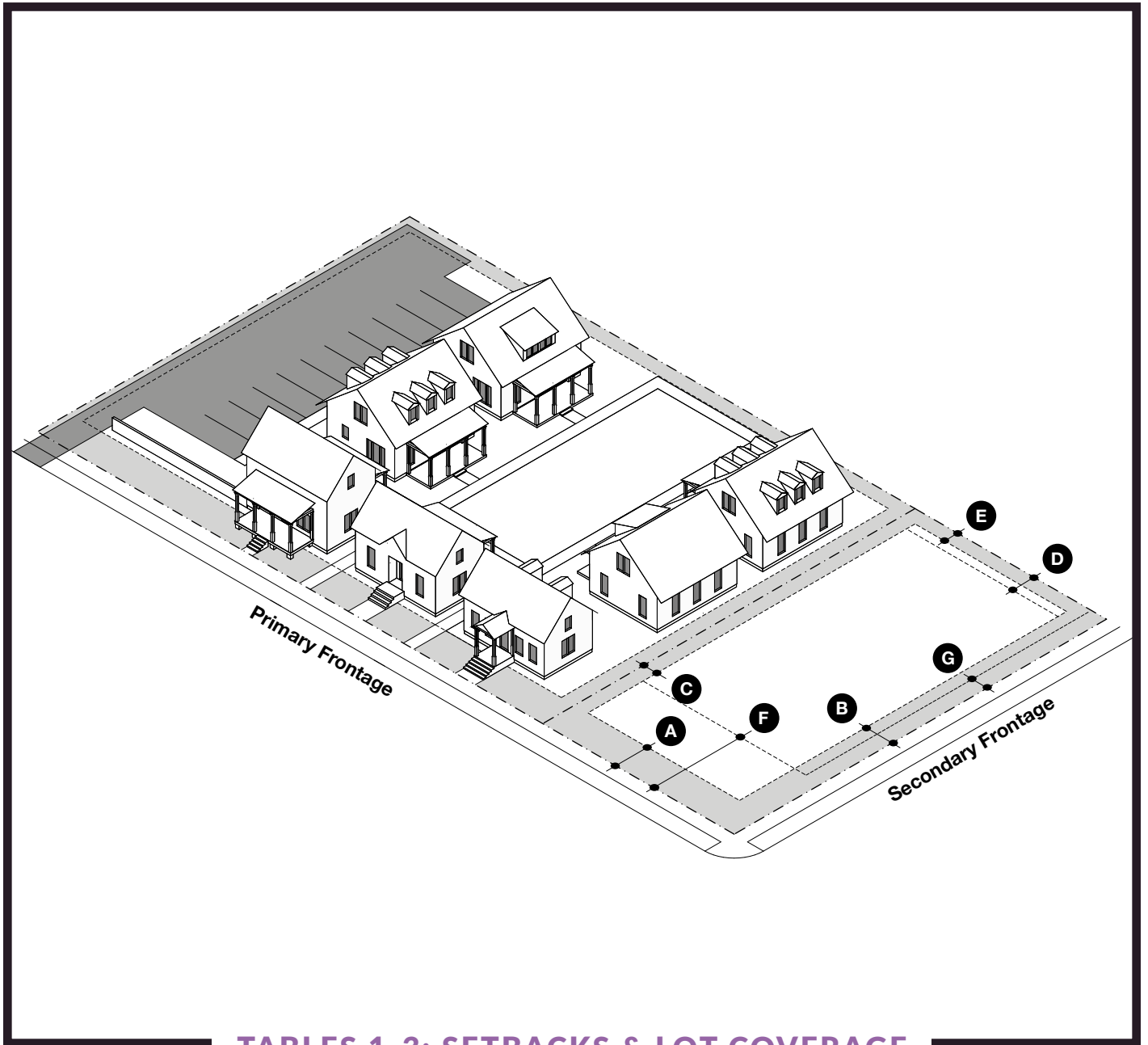
The Multifamily Form-Based Code Overlay reduces regulations that unnecessarily complicate applications and administration while efficiently regulating lots primarily using:

- **Setbacks**
- **Height**
- **Lot Coverage**

To reflect the historic character of Langley, these standards are modulated to produce types of multifamily buildings suitable locally. For this reason as well as to provide the flexibility required to protect critical areas and help increase affordability, front setbacks are reduced, lot coverage is increased, parking requirements are reduced, and maximum heights are increased in some districts, via bonuses for affordability. The code is organized by Purpose; Relationship to underlying zoning districts; Applicability; Streetscape Standards; Development Standards; and Process and Administration.

### ORGANIZATION SUMMARY

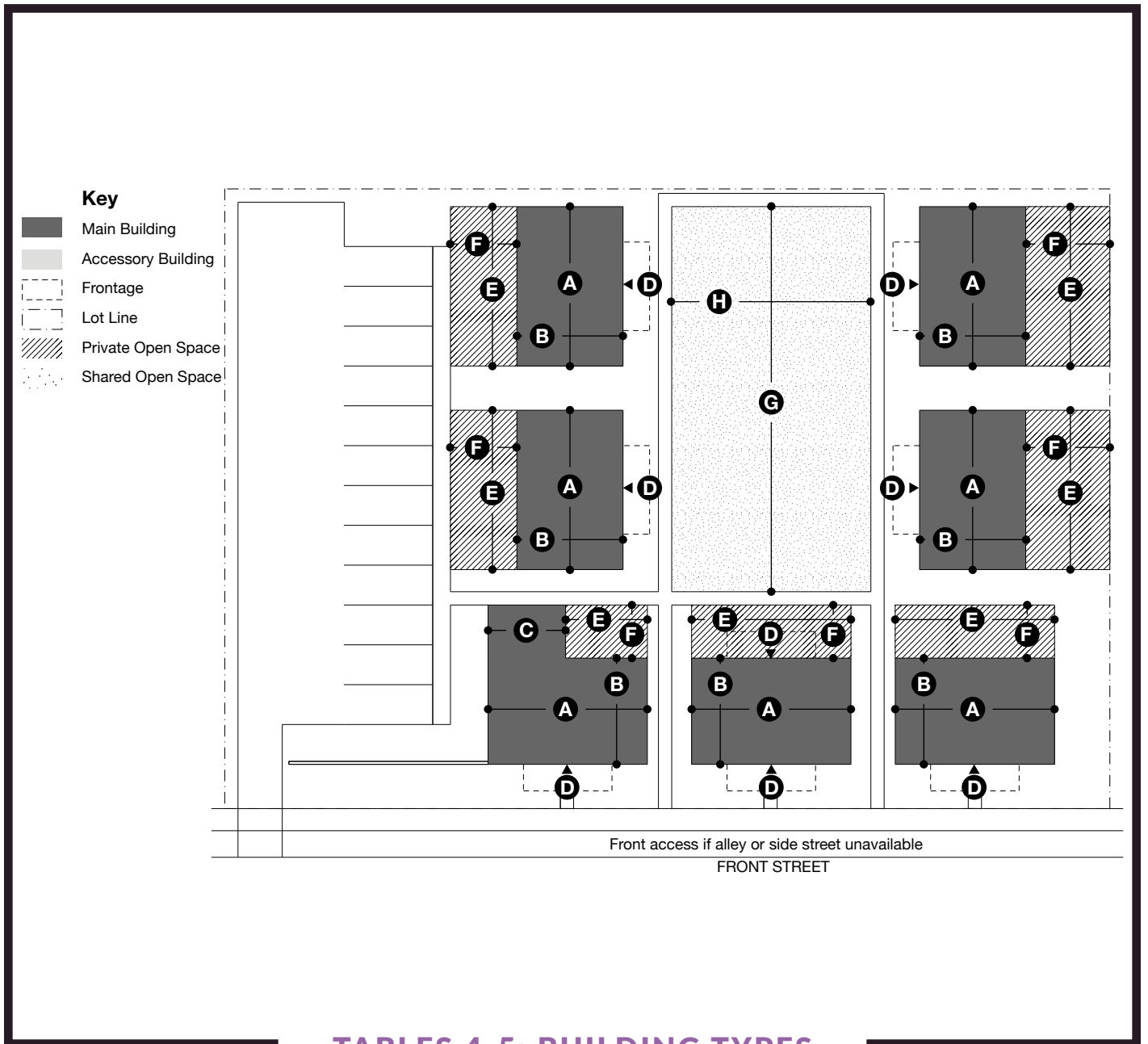
- **Setbacks and lot coverage** vary based on the underlying zoning in Tables 1 through 3.
- **Building types** are permitted per underlying zone per Table 4 and then regulated in Table 5.
- **Shared or private open space** required sizes are regulated by Table 5, which shows each unit must have 400 square feet of open space.
- **Encroachments** are regulated by Table 6.
- **Frontage types** are permitted per underlying zone in Table 7 and then regulated by Table 8.
- **Parking** is proposed as 1 per unit in all districts.



### TABLES 1-3: SETBACKS & LOT COVERAGE

Tables 1 through 3 govern setbacks and lot coverage: Table 1 for RS7200, Table 2 for RS5000 (excerpt pictured above, showing a cottage court), and Table 3 for RM and NB. Buildings and covered structures in RS5000 may cover 60% of the lot, as compared with 50% for RS7200 and 70% in RM and NB.

These tables do not regulate the building details. Greater detail is controlled by building type and frontage type in Tables 4 through 8.



## TABLES 4-5: BUILDING TYPES

Tables 4 and 5 govern building types: Table 4 permits buildings per zoning district and Table 5 regulates specific requirements of units per building, buildings per site, building width and depth, entrance requirements, and minimum private and shared open space. An illustration from Table 5 cottage court is pictured above.

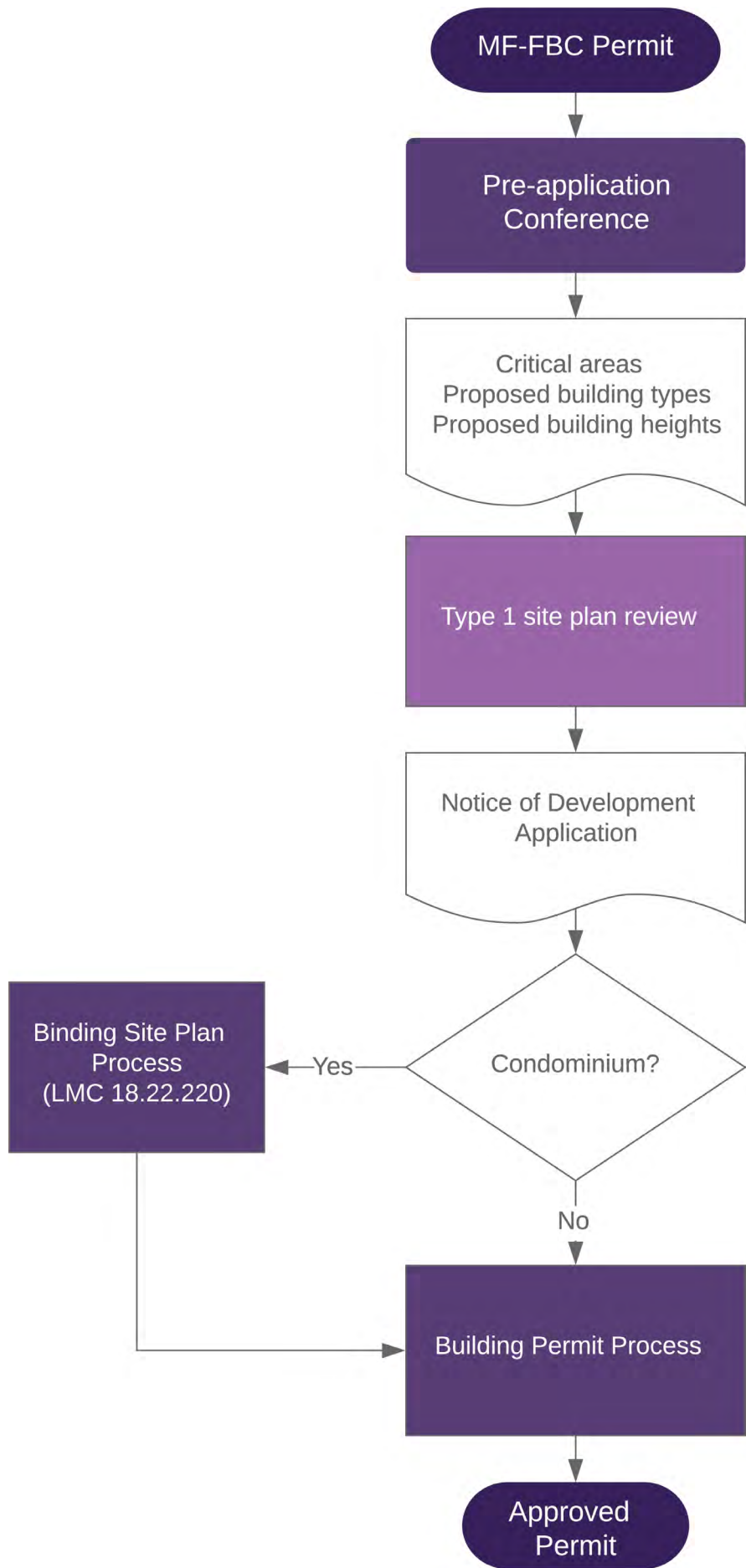
The regulations vary between building types, but are cumulative with the Tables 1 – 3 requirements. The regulations work together to provide the greatest flexibility across zones and building types.



## TABLES 6-8: ENCROACHMENTS & FRONTAGE TYPES

Tables 6 regulates how much major facade elements may encroach into the setback. Tables 7 allows frontage types in specific zoning districts. Table 8 provides frontage standards for frontage depth and height above grade. An excerpt of the porch frontage type is pictured above.

These regulations are the final level of detail in the code. They regulate the issues with buildings that may differ from the lot, along with other building regulations, such as encroachments.





# QUICK START

## PROCESS

COMPLY WITH ALL ADOPTED POLICIES, STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS.  
MITIGATE SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL & FINANCIAL IMPACTS.

# 01

## Preapplication Conference

Applicants schedule a pre-application conference with the City's planning official before submitting an MFI-FBC permit application to familiarize the City with proposed application.

The applicant presents:

- **Critical area** locations and description;
- Proposed **building types**; and
- Proposed **building heights**.

City planning official presents:

- **Submittal requirements** and **processing procedures** for MFI-FBC permit approval.

# 02

## Type 1 Site Plan Review

After the pre-application conference, a **Type 1 site plan review** is required according to LMC 18.27.030:

[www.codepublishing.com/WA/Langley/html/Langley18/Langley1827.html](http://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Langley/html/Langley18/Langley1827.html)

After the Type 1 review has been approved, the applicant may proceed with required **permits** according to LMC Title 15:

[www.codepublishing.com/WA/Langley/#!/Langley15/Langley15.html](http://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Langley/#!/Langley15/Langley15.html)

# 03

## Binding Site Plan / Building Permit Process

**Binding site plan** must comply with LMC 18.22.220: [www.codepublishing.com/WA/Langley/#!/Langley18/Langley1822.html#18.22.220](http://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Langley/#!/Langley18/Langley1822.html#18.22.220)

**Building permit application** must comply with LMC 18.13 Multifamily Form Based Code Overlay:

Item	Per LMC
Building placement	18.13.050B
Parking placement	18.13.050C
Building types	18.13.050D
Building height	18.13.050E
Frontage types	18.13.050F
Use	18.13.050G
Open space	18.13.050H
Lighting	18.13.050I
Parking	18.13.050J

# APPLICATION CHECKLIST

MFI-FBC BUILDING PERMIT

STANDARD	COMPLIANCE		COMMENTS
	YES	NO	
<b>Preapplication</b> <b>18.13.060.A.1</b> Confirm the Preapplication Conference is complete.			
<b>Type 1 Site Plan</b> <b>18.27.030</b> Confirm the Type 1 Site Plan is approved.			
<b>Binding Site Plan</b> Is any building a condominium? If so, confirm Binding Site Plan conforms with <b>LMC 18.22.220</b> .			
<b>Building Placement</b> Confirm setbacks & lot coverage conform with <b>LMC 18.13.050B</b> .			
<b>Parking Placement</b> Confirm parking setbacks conform with <b>LMC 18.13.050C</b> .			
<b>Building Types</b> Confirm building types conform with <b>LMC 18.13.050D</b> .			
<b>Building Height</b> Confirm building height conforms with <b>LMC 18.13.050E AND TABLES 1-3</b> as adjusted by height bonuses enabled by providing affordable housing per <b>LMC 18.13.050E.1</b> .			

STANDARD	COMPLIANCE		COMMENTS
	YES	NO	
<b>Frontage Types</b> Confirm the frontage types conform with <b>18.13.050.F</b> .			
<b>Use</b> Confirm the uses conform with <b>LMC 18.13.050G</b> .			
<b>Open Space</b> Confirm the public and private open space sizes conform with <b>LMC 18.13.050H</b> .			
<b>Lighting</b> Confirm the lighting conforms with <b>LMC 18.13.050I</b> .			
<b>Parking</b> Confirm the parking placement and counts conform with <b>LMC 18.13.050J</b> .			
<b>Administrative Waivers</b> Confirm any requested administrative waivers conform with <b>LMC 18.13 TABLE 9</b> .			

# WHY IT MATTERS?

## SOME POINTERS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS DURING THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PERIOD MAY HELP TO GUIDE THE USE OF THE MULTIFAMILY INFILL CODE.

### HOW DOES THIS CODE RESPECT THE VILLAGE CHARACTER OF LANGLEY?

When the **MASSING** of the an infill building replicates the neighborhood form, the density may only be identifiable because of the parking. The Multifamily Infill Form Based Code assigns appropriate building types to contexts to assure compatibility. **BUILDING TYPES** enabled include townhouse, duplex (side-by-side or stacked), triplex (side-by-side, stacked, or a combination), cottage courts, multi-family (4 to 6 units) and multi-family (8 units max).

### WILL THIS MAKE HOUSING AFFORDABLE?

**GENTLE DENSITY** and **REDUCED PARKING** enable naturally-occurring affordable housing. Additionally, height bonuses are available as an incentive for developers to provide affordable dwelling units. Because of the time cost of money, a clear and predictable approval process is crucial. The City is also in ongoing conversations with Island County to incentivize affordability at the County level. Because of being a community of less than 5,000 people, we are ineligible for many of the incentives available for affordable housing funds like multi-family tax exemptions.

### WHY THE SMALLER FRONT SETBACKS?

The 10 to 12' front setbacks give room for a little garden, which provides both **PRIVACY** and street **NOISE REDUCTION**. This also gives more room to be able to put parking behind the building, so that it is friendlier to the pedestrians.

### WHY CAN'T PARKING BE BETWEEN THE BUILDING AND THE SIDEWALK?

Parking location matters. Parking goes in back and buildings go in front. From a public safety perspective, this **REDUCES PEDESTRIAN-AUTO CONFLICTS**. It also increases and incentivizes **ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION**, which reduces obesity rates by facilitating pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The location of parking is a primary focus across all four districts. While it must be adequate and accessible, it is critical not to be aesthetically detrimental to the surrounding neighborhood.

### DOES ON-STREET PARKING COUNT TOWARD THE REQUIRED PARKING MINIMUM?

The required parking is **ONE SPOT PER UNIT**, which may be located in the parking lane associated with the parcel, if a parking lane exists.

## DOES THIS MEAN ALL PROPERTIES WITHIN RS7200, RS5000, RM, AND NB ZONING DISTRICTS ARE LIKELY TO REDEVELOP?

No, the lots likely to redevelop:

1. Have sewer;
2. Are undeveloped or underdeveloped; and
3. Do not have significant critical areas.

## WHAT HAPPENED TO FLOOR AREA RATIOS?

Density and floor area limits are artificial regulations that do not reflect local character and frequently contradict other standards. They are also redundant and make the delivery of housing a challenge. To assure harmony, these abstract regulations have been replaced with predictable ones like **HEIGHT, SETBACKS, LOT COVERAGE, AND BUILDING TYPES**. One goal of the multi-family form based code is to assure the community can reliably predict the outcomes.

## ARE THERE NEW PROTECTIONS FOR TREES?

The **REDUCTION IN PARKING** and **SMALLER SETBACKS** allow greater flexibility in preserving existing trees, protecting topography, and locating parking in a manner that is not aesthetically detrimental to the neighborhood.

## WHY IS HEIGHT GOVERNED IN STORIES, NOT IN FEET LIKE BEFORE?

Height measured in stories rather than feet allows more flexibility for the designer to do something creative. If the max is 25', and a developer crams 3 stories in, buildings will have reduced **DAY-LIGHTING AND AIRFLOW**, and squatty **PROPORTIONS** on doors and windows. For these reasons, best practice discourages regulating in feet, and instead governs by number of stories.

## WHAT WERE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CONCERNS HEARD DURING THIS PROCESS?

Concern between balancing an increase of **GENTLE DENSITY** to foster housing **AFFORDABILITY** while not getting out of **CHARACTER FOR LANGLEY**. It's a fine balance. The community helped the code writers find that balance through drafts of the code.

Primary goals: help eradicate systemic racism, increase affordability, and foster environment stewardship.



City of  
**Langley** Washington



## Questions?

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