

HOUSING ISSUES - LOT SIZE AVERAGING

HOUSING CHALLENGE:

- Counties and cities planning under the Growth Management Act are required to plan for the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments as part of their planning effort (RCW 36.70A.020, Goal 4).
- In addition, they are to “...promote a variety of residential densities and housing types.”
- Local jurisdictions need to implement a variety of housing types and densities in order to be flexible and responsive to ever-changing local demographics. Lot Size Averaging provides a housing alternative that jurisdictions should consider.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

- Each jurisdiction should adopt policies and regulations that ensure local governments have the capacity to accommodate housing and employment growth as required by the GMA.
- Lot size averaging is an approach to subdividing land that allows a parcel of land to be divided into unequally-sized lots as long as the average of all the lot sizes remains equal to or above the minimum zoned lot size.
- This approach can be used for both short plats (4-9 Lots) and subdivisions (10 Lots or more). The approach is similar to a cluster development which allows lots to be consolidated on a project site, leaving the remainder of the land for open space, agriculture, forestry or critical area protection. The density allowed is the same as the underlying zoning unless a community chooses to allow a density bonus under certain circumstances.
- Lot size averaging allows more efficient use of the land and adds additional units that might not be realized. It also adds variety to neighborhoods and provides different sized home choices.
- Creating additional buildable lots within existing single-family residential areas will increase affordable home ownership opportunities without requiring significant new public facilities.

Sample Ordinance – Lot Size Averaging

Policy: Adopt regulations that provide for lot size averaging.

Comment: This document is to be used to enact or amend a local ordinance relating to lot size averaging. The form is designed to be a starting place for discussion and negotiation. You may choose to use all or part of the suggested language. You are also encouraged to come up with additional language that fits your local circumstances.

Chapter 00.00 – LOT SIZE AVERAGING

00.00.00 Minimum lot size – Averaging in short plats and subdivisions - In approved short plats and subdivisions, the individual lots shall be considered in compliance with minimum area requirements if the average of the areas of all the lots in the short plat or plat meets the minimum requirement for the jurisdiction in which the short plat or plat is located, provided:

- (1) that no individual lot therein shall be reduced more than ___ percent from the minimum required area, except that lots in zones ___, ___, ___, ___, and ___ may be reduced by up to ___ percent from the district minimum;
- (2) a reduction of ___ percent in the required lot width may be applied to ___ percent of the lots, provided no reduction in the required area is applied to these lots.

The lot averaging described in this section shall not be allowed for conservation subdivisions or conservation short subdivisions where the required minimum lot size for such subdivision is reduced as allowed under _____.

00.00.00 Lot size averaging - (1) A subdivision or short subdivision will meet the minimum lot area of the zone in which it is located if the area in lots plus critical areas and their buffers and areas designated as open space or recreational uses, if any, divided by the total number of lots equals or exceeds the minimum lot area of the zone in which the property is located. In no case shall the density achieved be greater than the gross site area divided by the underlying zoning.

- (2) This section shall only apply within zones having a minimum lot area requirement of _____ square feet or less.
- (3) Each single lot shall be at least _____ square feet in area.
- (4) Lots in subdivisions and short subdivisions created under the provisions of this section shall have a maximum lot coverage of ___ percent;
- (5) Lots with less than the prescribed minimum lot area for the zone in which they are located shall have a minimum lot width of at least ___ feet, and right-of-way setbacks of ___ feet except that garages must be setback ___ feet from the right-of-way (with the exception of alleys) and corner lots may reduce one right-of-way setback to no less than ___ feet;

(6) Preliminary subdivisions approved utilizing lot averaging shall not be recorded by divisions unless such divisions individually or together as cumulative, contiguous parcels, satisfy the requirements of this section.

(7) Roadways and surface detention/retention facilities shall not count toward the calculations for lot size averaging. However, surface detention/retention facilities shall count toward calculations for lot size averaging if the detention/retention facility:(1) is designed to not require security fencing under applicable standards and (2) the facility is either (a) designed so as to appear as a natural wetland system, or (b) provides active or passive recreational benefits in a natural landscaped setting.