March 19, 2018

Mr. Leonard Bauer  
Deputy Director  
Community Planning and Development  
601 4th Avenue East  
Olympia, Washington 98501

RE: Proposed amendments to provisions of Olympia’s Unified Development Code related to ‘Missing Middle’ housing - generally, multi-unit housing types - in low- and moderate-density zoning districts.

Dear Mr. Bauer:

Thank you for sending Growth Management Services the proposed amendments to Olympia’s development regulations related to “Missing Middle” housing that we received on January 08, 2018, and processed with Material ID No. 24524.

We especially like the following:

- Your “Missing Middle” project takes a broad look at ways to encourage the development of small scale housing into the community. As you say, missing middle housing, and many regulations allowing such forms of housing already exist in Olympia. These small scale changes to the zoning code allow more flexibility and encourage additional housing while providing more options for households looking for affordable housing, and ways for property owners to gain income from rentals.
- We really like the way the options are clearly laid out on the project web site showing the current regulation, the proposed change, and the purpose of the change for each housing type. This will help residents to more clearly understand the proposed changes, and their rationale. This engaging and broad public process is a great way to provide information about the expectations for incremental changes over time. We applaud this as a good approach that other communities may be able to use as a model.
- The general recommendations to study impact fees, sewer connection fees, and stormwater fees will be helpful to determine the impact of missing middle types of housing, and determine if there is a rationale to adjust the fees to match impact. A reduced fee structure should also provide further incentive to encourage the development of “missing middle” types of housing.
We have a suggestion for strengthening your plan and development regulation amendments that we encourage you to consider either in these or future amendments:

These regulations provide more flexibility for these “missing middle” types of housing, and are in line with similar provisions in other parts of the region. Olympia’s approach will allow property owners to consider a great range of housing developments on a given piece of property. However, given the limited uptake that many other jurisdictions see of these options, and the potential difficulty in financing them, it is clear that Olympia will have to depend on the more traditional multi-family apartments and single family housing to meet housing and population projections over time.

Congratulations to you and your staff for the good work these amendments represent. If you have any questions or concerns about our comments or any other growth management issues, please contact me at 360.725.3055 or Gary Idleburg at 360.725.3045. We extend our continued support to the City of Olympia in achieving the goals of growth management.

Sincerely,

Mark McCaskill, AICP
Managing Director
Growth Management Services

MM:AAF:lw

cc: David Andersen, AICP, Eastern Region Manager, Growth Management Services
Ike Nwankwo, Western Region Manager, Growth Management Services
Gary Idleburg, Senior Planner, Growth Management Services