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**HOUSE BILL 2228**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representative Christian

AN ACT Relating to decreasing the minimum density requirements for middle housing; amending RCW 36.70A.635; and reenacting and amending RCW 36.70A.030.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 36.70A.030 and 2023 c 332 s 2 and 2023 c 228 s 14 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Active transportation" means forms of pedestrian mobility including walking or running, the use of a mobility assistive device such as a wheelchair, bicycling and cycling irrespective of the number of wheels, and the use of small personal devices such as foot scooters or skateboards. Active transportation includes both traditional and electric assist bicycles and other devices. Planning for active transportation must consider and address accommodation pursuant to the Americans with disabilities act and the distinct needs of each form of active transportation.

(2) "Active transportation facilities" means facilities provided for the safety and mobility of active transportation users including, but not limited to, trails, as defined in RCW 47.30.005, sidewalks, bike lanes, shared-use paths, and other facilities in the public right-of-way.

(3) "Administrative design review" means a development permit process whereby an application is reviewed, approved, or denied by the planning director or the planning director's designee based solely on objective design and development standards without a public predecision hearing, unless such review is otherwise required by state or federal law, or the structure is a designated landmark or historic district established under a local preservation ordinance. A city may utilize public meetings, hearings, or voluntary review boards to consider, recommend, or approve requests for variances from locally established design review standards.

(4) "Adopt a comprehensive land use plan" means to enact a new comprehensive land use plan or to update an existing comprehensive land use plan.

(5) "Affordable housing" means, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, residential housing whose monthly costs, including utilities other than telephone, do not exceed thirty percent of the monthly income of a household whose income is:

(a) For rental housing, 60 percent of the median household income adjusted for household size, for the county where the household is located, as reported by the United States department of housing and urban development; or

(b) For owner-occupied housing, 80 percent of the median household income adjusted for household size, for the county where the household is located, as reported by the United States department of housing and urban development.

(6) "Agricultural land" means land primarily devoted to the commercial production of horticultural, viticultural, floricultural, dairy, apiary, vegetable, or animal products or of berries, grain, hay, straw, turf, seed, Christmas trees not subject to the excise tax imposed by RCW 84.33.100 through 84.33.140, finfish in upland hatcheries, or livestock, and that has long-term commercial significance for agricultural production.

(7) "City" means any city or town, including a code city.

(8) "Comprehensive land use plan," "comprehensive plan," or "plan" means a generalized coordinated land use policy statement of the governing body of a county or city that is adopted pursuant to this chapter.

(9) "Cottage housing" means residential units on a lot with a common open space that either: (a) Is owned in common; or (b) has units owned as condominium units with property owned in common and a minimum of 20 percent of the lot size as open space.

(10) "Courtyard apartments" means up to four attached dwelling units arranged on two or three sides of a yard or court.

(11) "Critical areas" include the following areas and ecosystems: (a) Wetlands; (b) areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water; (c) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas; (d) frequently flooded areas; and (e) geologically hazardous areas. "Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas" does not include such artificial features or constructs as irrigation delivery systems, irrigation infrastructure, irrigation canals, or drainage ditches that lie within the boundaries of and are maintained by a port district or an irrigation district or company.

(12) "Department" means the department of commerce.

(13) "Development regulations" or "regulation" means the controls placed on development or land use activities by a county or city, including, but not limited to, zoning ordinances, critical areas ordinances, shoreline master programs, official controls, planned unit development ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and binding site plan ordinances together with any amendments thereto. A development regulation does not include a decision to approve a project permit application, as defined in RCW 36.70B.020, even though the decision may be expressed in a resolution or ordinance of the legislative body of the county or city.

(14) "Emergency housing" means temporary indoor accommodations for individuals or families who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless that is intended to address the basic health, food, clothing, and personal hygiene needs of individuals or families. Emergency housing may or may not require occupants to enter into a lease or an occupancy agreement.

(15) "Emergency shelter" means a facility that provides a temporary shelter for individuals or families who are currently homeless. Emergency shelter may not require occupants to enter into a lease or an occupancy agreement. Emergency shelter facilities may include day and warming centers that do not provide overnight accommodations.

(16) "Environmental justice" means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Environmental justice includes addressing disproportionate environmental and health impacts in all laws, rules, and policies with environmental impacts by prioritizing vulnerable populations and overburdened communities and the equitable distribution of resources and benefits.

(17) "Extremely low-income household" means a single person, family, or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is at or below thirty percent of the median household income adjusted for household size, for the county where the household is located, as reported by the United States department of housing and urban development.

(18) "Forestland" means land primarily devoted to growing trees for long-term commercial timber production on land that can be economically and practically managed for such production, including Christmas trees subject to the excise tax imposed under RCW 84.33.100 through 84.33.140, and that has long-term commercial significance. In determining whether forestland is primarily devoted to growing trees for long-term commercial timber production on land that can be economically and practically managed for such production, the following factors shall be considered: (a) The proximity of the land to urban, suburban, and rural settlements; (b) surrounding parcel size and the compatibility and intensity of adjacent and nearby land uses; (c) long-term local economic conditions that affect the ability to manage for timber production; and (d) the availability of public facilities and services conducive to conversion of forestland to other uses.

(19) "Freight rail dependent uses" means buildings and other infrastructure that are used in the fabrication, processing, storage, and transport of goods where the use is dependent on and makes use of an adjacent short line railroad. Such facilities are both urban and rural development for purposes of this chapter. "Freight rail dependent uses" does not include buildings and other infrastructure that are used in the fabrication, processing, storage, and transport of coal, liquefied natural gas, or "crude oil" as defined in RCW 90.56.010.

(20) "Geologically hazardous areas" means areas that because of their susceptibility to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events, are not suited to the siting of commercial, residential, or industrial development consistent with public health or safety concerns.

(21) "Green infrastructure" means a wide array of natural assets and built structures within an urban growth area boundary, including parks and other areas with protected tree canopy, and management practices at multiple scales that manage wet weather and that maintain and restore natural hydrology by storing, infiltrating, evapotranspiring, and harvesting and using stormwater.

(22) "Green space" means an area of land, vegetated by natural features such as grass, trees, or shrubs, within an urban context and less than one acre in size that creates public value through one or more of the following attributes:

(a) Is accessible to the public;

(b) Promotes physical and mental health of residents;

(c) Provides relief from the urban heat island effects;

(d) Promotes recreational and aesthetic values;

(e) Protects streams or water supply; or

(f) Preserves visual quality along highway, road, or street corridors.

(23) "Long-term commercial significance" includes the growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land for long-term commercial production, in consideration with the land's proximity to population areas, and the possibility of more intense uses of the land.

(24) "Low-income household" means a single person, family, or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is at or below eighty percent of the median household income adjusted for household size, for the county where the household is located, as reported by the United States department of housing and urban development.

(25) "Major transit stop" means:

(a) A stop on a high capacity transportation system funded or expanded under the provisions of chapter 81.104 RCW;

(b) Commuter rail stops;

(c) Stops on rail or fixed guideway systems; or

(d) Stops on bus rapid transit routes.

(26) "Middle housing" means buildings that are compatible in scale, form, and character with single-family houses and contain two or more attached, stacked, or clustered homes including duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, ((~~fiveplexes, sixplexes,~~)) townhouses, stacked flats, courtyard apartments, and cottage housing.

(27) "Minerals" include gravel, sand, and valuable metallic substances.

(28) "Moderate-income household" means a single person, family, or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is at or below 120 percent of the median household income adjusted for household size, for the county where the household is located, as reported by the United States department of housing and urban development.

(29) "Overburdened community" means a geographic area where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts, and includes, but is not limited to, highly impacted communities as defined in RCW 19.405.020.

(30) "Per capita vehicle miles traveled" means the number of miles traveled using cars and light trucks in a calendar year divided by the number of residents in Washington. The calculation of this value excludes vehicle miles driven conveying freight.

(31) "Permanent supportive housing" is subsidized, leased housing with no limit on length of stay that prioritizes people who need comprehensive support services to retain tenancy and utilizes admissions practices designed to use lower barriers to entry than would be typical for other subsidized or unsubsidized rental housing, especially related to rental history, criminal history, and personal behaviors. Permanent supportive housing is paired with on-site or off-site voluntary services designed to support a person living with a complex and disabling behavioral health or physical health condition who was experiencing homelessness or was at imminent risk of homelessness prior to moving into housing to retain their housing and be a successful tenant in a housing arrangement, improve the resident's health status, and connect the resident of the housing with community-based health care, treatment, or employment services. Permanent supportive housing is subject to all of the rights and responsibilities defined in chapter 59.18 RCW.

(32) "Public facilities" include streets, roads, highways, sidewalks, street and road lighting systems, traffic signals, domestic water systems, storm and sanitary sewer systems, parks and recreational facilities, and schools.

(33) "Public services" include fire protection and suppression, law enforcement, public health, education, recreation, environmental protection, and other governmental services.

(34) "Recreational land" means land so designated under RCW 36.70A.1701 and that, immediately prior to this designation, was designated as agricultural land of long-term commercial significance under RCW 36.70A.170. Recreational land must have playing fields and supporting facilities existing before July 1, 2004, for sports played on grass playing fields.

(35) "Rural character" refers to the patterns of land use and development established by a county in the rural element of its comprehensive plan:

(a) In which open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment;

(b) That foster traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in rural areas;

(c) That provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities;

(d) That are compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat;

(e) That reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;

(f) That generally do not require the extension of urban governmental services; and

(g) That are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and groundwater and surface water recharge and discharge areas.

(36) "Rural development" refers to development outside the urban growth area and outside agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170. Rural development can consist of a variety of uses and residential densities, including clustered residential development, at levels that are consistent with the preservation of rural character and the requirements of the rural element. Rural development does not refer to agriculture or forestry activities that may be conducted in rural areas.

(37) "Rural governmental services" or "rural services" include those public services and public facilities historically and typically delivered at an intensity usually found in rural areas, and may include domestic water systems and fire and police protection services associated with rural development and normally not associated with urban areas. Rural services do not include storm or sanitary sewers, except as otherwise authorized by RCW 36.70A.110(4).

(38) "Short line railroad" means those railroad lines designated class II or class III by the United States surface transportation board.

(39) "Single-family zones" means those zones where single-family detached housing is the predominant land use.

(40) "Stacked flat" means dwelling units in a residential building of no more than three stories on a residential zoned lot in which each floor may be separately rented or owned.

(41) "Townhouses" means buildings that contain three or more attached single-family dwelling units that extend from foundation to roof and that have a yard or public way on not less than two sides.

(42) "Transportation system" means all infrastructure and services for all forms of transportation within a geographical area, irrespective of the responsible jurisdiction or transportation provider.

(43) "Urban governmental services" or "urban services" include those public services and public facilities at an intensity historically and typically provided in cities, specifically including storm and sanitary sewer systems, domestic water systems, street cleaning services, fire and police protection services, public transit services, and other public utilities associated with urban areas and normally not associated with rural areas.

(44) "Urban growth" refers to growth that makes intensive use of land for the location of buildings, structures, and impermeable surfaces to such a degree as to be incompatible with the primary use of land for the production of food, other agricultural products, or fiber, or the extraction of mineral resources, rural uses, rural development, and natural resource lands designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170. A pattern of more intensive rural development, as provided in RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d), is not urban growth. When allowed to spread over wide areas, urban growth typically requires urban governmental services. "Characterized by urban growth" refers to land having urban growth located on it, or to land located in relationship to an area with urban growth on it as to be appropriate for urban growth.

(45) "Urban growth areas" means those areas designated by a county pursuant to RCW 36.70A.110.

(46) "Very low-income household" means a single person, family, or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is at or below fifty percent of the median household income adjusted for household size, for the county where the household is located, as reported by the United States department of housing and urban development.

(47)(a) "Vulnerable populations" means population groups that are more likely to be at higher risk for poor health outcomes in response to environmental harms, due to: (i) Adverse socioeconomic factors, such as unemployment, high housing and transportation costs relative to income, limited access to nutritious food and adequate health care, linguistic isolation, and other factors that negatively affect health outcomes and increase vulnerability to the effects of environmental harms; and (ii) sensitivity factors, such as low birth weight and higher rates of hospitalization.

(b) "Vulnerable populations" includes, but is not limited to:

(i) Racial or ethnic minorities;

(ii) Low-income populations; and

(iii) Populations disproportionately impacted by environmental harms.

(48) "Wetland" or "wetlands" means areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas. Wetlands do not include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from nonwetland sites, including, but not limited to, irrigation and drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, canals, detention facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, farm ponds, and landscape amenities, or those wetlands created after July 1, 1990, that were unintentionally created as a result of the construction of a road, street, or highway. Wetlands may include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from nonwetland areas created to mitigate conversion of wetlands.

(49) "Wildland urban interface" means the geographical area where structures and other human development meets or intermingles with wildland vegetative fuels.

**Sec.**  RCW 36.70A.635 and 2023 c 332 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Except as provided in subsection (4) of this section, any city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 must provide by ordinance and incorporate into its development regulations, zoning regulations, and other official controls, authorization for the following:

(a) For cities with a population of at least 25,000 but less than 75,000 based on office of financial management population estimates:

(i) The development of at least two units per lot on all lots zoned predominantly for residential use, unless zoning permitting higher densities or intensities applies;

(ii) The development of at least four units per lot on all lots zoned predominantly for residential use, unless zoning permitting higher densities or intensities applies, within one-quarter mile walking distance of a major transit stop; and

(iii) The development of at least four units per lot on all lots zoned predominantly for residential use, unless zoning permitting higher densities or intensities applies, if at least one unit is affordable housing.

(b) For cities with a population of at least 75,000 based on office of financial management population estimates((~~:~~

~~(i) The~~)), the development of at least four units per lot on all lots zoned predominantly for residential use, unless zoning permitting higher densities or intensities applies((~~;~~

~~(ii) The development of at least six units per lot on all lots zoned predominantly for residential use, unless zoning permitting higher densities or intensities applies, within one-quarter mile walking distance of a major transit stop; and~~

~~(iii) The development of at least six units per lot on all lots zoned predominantly for residential use, unless zoning permitting higher densities or intensities applies, if at least two units are affordable housing~~)).

(c) For cities with a population of less than 25,000, that are within a contiguous urban growth area with the largest city in a county with a population of more than 275,000, based on office of financial management population estimates the development of at least two units per lot on all lots zoned predominantly for residential use, unless zoning permitting higher densities or intensities applies.

(2)(a) To qualify for the additional units allowed under subsection (1) of this section, the applicant must commit to renting or selling the required number of units as affordable housing. The units must be maintained as affordable for a term of at least 50 years, and the property must satisfy that commitment and all required affordability and income eligibility conditions adopted by the local government under this chapter. A city must require the applicant to record a covenant or deed restriction that ensures the continuing rental of units subject to these affordability requirements consistent with the conditions in chapter 84.14 RCW for a period of no less than 50 years. The covenant or deed restriction must also address criteria and policies to maintain public benefit if the property is converted to a use other than which continues to provide for permanently affordable housing.

(b) The units dedicated as affordable must be provided in a range of sizes comparable to other units in the development. To the extent practicable, the number of bedrooms in affordable units must be in the same proportion as the number of bedrooms in units within the entire development. The affordable units must generally be distributed throughout the development and have substantially the same functionality as the other units in the development.

(c) If a city has enacted a program under RCW 36.70A.540, the terms of that program govern to the extent they vary from the requirements of this subsection.

(3) If a city has enacted a program under RCW 36.70A.540, subsection (1) of this section does not preclude the city from requiring any development, including development described in subsection (1) of this section, to provide affordable housing, either on-site or through an in-lieu payment, nor limit the city's ability to expand such a program or modify its requirements.

(4)(a) As an alternative to the density requirements in subsection (1) of this section, a city may implement the density requirements in subsection (1) of this section for at least 75 percent of lots in the city that are primarily dedicated to single-family detached housing units.

(b) The 25 percent of lots for which the requirements of subsection (1) of this section are not implemented must include but are not limited to:

(i) Any areas within the city for which the department has certified an extension of the implementation timelines under RCW 36.70A.637 due to the risk of displacement;

(ii) Any areas within the city for which the department has certified an extension of the implementation timelines under RCW 36.70A.638 due to a lack of infrastructure capacity;

(iii) Any lots designated with critical areas or their buffers that are exempt from the density requirements as provided in subsection (8) of this section;

(iv) Any portion of a city within a one-mile radius of a commercial airport with at least 9,000,000 annual enplanements that is exempt from the parking requirements under subsection (7)(b) of this section; and

(v) Any areas subject to sea level rise, increased flooding, susceptible to wildfires, or geological hazards over the next 100 years.

(c) Unless identified as at higher risk of displacement under RCW 36.70A.070(2)(g), the 25 percent of lots for which the requirements of subsection (1) of this section are not implemented may not include:

(i) Any areas for which the exclusion would further racially disparate impacts or result in zoning with a discriminatory effect;

(ii) Any areas within one-half mile walking distance of a major transit stop; or

(iii) Any areas historically covered by a covenant or deed restriction excluding racial minorities from owning property or living in the area, as known to the city at the time of each comprehensive plan update.

(5) A city subject to the requirements of subsection (1)(a) or (b) of this section must allow at least six of the ((~~nine~~)) seven types of middle housing to achieve the unit density required in subsection (1) of this section. A city may allow accessory dwelling units to achieve the unit density required in subsection (1) of this section. Cities are not required to allow accessory dwelling units or middle housing types beyond the density requirements in subsection (1) of this section. A city must also allow zero lot line short subdivision where the number of lots created is equal to the unit density required in subsection (1) of this section.

(6) Any city subject to the requirements of this section:

(a) If applying design review for middle housing, only administrative design review shall be required;

(b) Except as provided in (a) of this subsection, shall not require through development regulations any standards for middle housing that are more restrictive than those required for detached single-family residences, but may apply any objective development regulations that are required for detached single-family residences, including, but not limited to, set-back, lot coverage, stormwater, clearing, and tree canopy and retention requirements to ensure compliance with existing ordinances intended to protect critical areas and public health and safety;

(c) Shall apply to middle housing the same development permit and environmental review processes that apply to detached single-family residences, unless otherwise required by state law including, but not limited to, shoreline regulations under chapter 90.58 RCW, building codes under chapter 19.27 RCW, energy codes under chapter 19.27A RCW, or electrical codes under chapter 19.28 RCW;

(d) Shall not require off-street parking as a condition of permitting development of middle housing within one-half mile walking distance of a major transit stop;

(e) Shall not require more than one off-street parking space per unit as a condition of permitting development of middle housing on lots smaller than 6,000 square feet before any zero lot line subdivisions or lot splits;

(f) Shall not require more than two off-street parking spaces per unit as a condition of permitting development of middle housing on lots greater than 6,000 square feet before any zero lot line subdivisions or lot splits; and

(g) Are not required to achieve the per unit density under chapter 332, Laws of 2023 on lots after subdivision below 1,000 square feet unless the city chooses to enact smaller allowable lot sizes.

(7) The provisions of subsection (6)(d) through (f) of this section do not apply:

(a) If a local government submits to the department an empirical study prepared by a credentialed transportation or land use planning expert that clearly demonstrates, and the department finds and certifies, that the application of the parking limitations of subsection (6)(d) through (f) of this section for middle housing will be significantly less safe for vehicle drivers or passengers, pedestrians, or bicyclists than if the jurisdiction's parking requirements were applied to the same location for the same number of detached houses. The department must develop guidance to assist cities on items to include in the study; or

(b) To portions of cities within a one-mile radius of a commercial airport in Washington with at least 9,000,000 annual enplanements.

(8) The provisions of this section do not apply to:

(a) Lots designated with critical areas designated under RCW 36.70A.170 or their buffers as required by RCW 36.70A.170;

(b) A watershed serving a reservoir for potable water if that watershed is or was listed, as of July 23, 2023, as impaired or threatened under section 303(d) of the federal clean water act (33 U.S.C. Sec. 1313(d)); or

(c) Lots that have been designated urban separators by countywide planning policies as of July 23, 2023.

(9) Nothing in this section prohibits a city from permitting detached single-family residences.

(10) Nothing in this section requires a city to issue a building permit if other federal, state, and local requirements for a building permit are not met.

(11) A city must comply with the requirements of this section on the latter of:

(a) Six months after its next periodic comprehensive plan update required under RCW 36.70A.130 if the city meets the population threshold based on the 2020 office of financial management population data; or

(b) 12 months after their next implementation progress report required under RCW 36.70A.130 after a determination by the office of financial management that the city has reached a population threshold established under this section.

(12) A city complying with this section and not granted a timeline extension under RCW 36.70A.638 does not have to update its capital facilities plan element required by RCW 36.70A.070(3) to accommodate the increased housing required by chapter 332, Laws of 2023 until the first periodic comprehensive plan update required for the city under RCW 36.70A.130(5) that occurs on or after June 30, 2034.

**--- END ---**