

Good morning Erica,

Enclosed are some of my thoughts regarding the affordable housing issue in the islands. Some are merely general thoughts that may be helpful to keep in mind for the comp plan update. The notes on using density calculations, (parcels larger than 5 acres but less than 10 acres) and business built employee rental housingthink OPALCO... came from a workshop conducted by the SJC Builders Association.

The basic idea is to remove the cost of land from the cost of building a rental unit; the private home or business owner has already bought the underlying parcel for their personal use. The new rental unit can not be separated and sold because the density does not allow it.

I hope you will give the "no additional land cost and the potential for reasonable return on a person's private investment" concept as a comp plan addition. I firmly believe it can be a big help in our local affordable rental situation.

Please call if you would like more detail.

Respectfully,

John Evans
Executive Director
San Juan Builders Association
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S.J.C. DEPARTMENT OF
MAR 29 2018
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Do we really want more housing in the County that is affordable for those who work in our local economy? If the answer is yes, the allowable building density and regulatory structure now in place has to change.

The only focused affordability housing focus now in place is the government subsidized housing trust programs. The housing trusts that provide home ownership are an important. However, the Trusts alone can not meet the housing needs of working families. Aside from not being able to offer enough homes, the Trusts have a limited impact on the availability of rental housing.

The largest positive affect on housing would come from creating the conditions where local business and property owners can see building housing as a reasonable investment.

Here are some ideas on how to make investing in local housing attractive.

Allow businesses to build housing for their employees to rent on land the business owner already owns or leases, regardless of the otherwise allowed building density. This is a good option for the business, for the businesses employees and for the neighbors. The plus for the neighbors is that employee housing will be closely monitored by the business owner.

Allow a property owner who has more than 5 acres in a 5 acre zone to build a rental house with a density allocation transferred from the density surplus created by the Land Bank program. The property owner choosing to build a rental home as an investment under this program would be prohibited from offering the home as a short term rental.

Provide an avenue for a landowner who would like to build a mobil home or RV facility to get an approval. By their very nature, mobil home and RV facilities provide an affordable option. This is quite common in most areas of the Country. The additional density allowance would be generated by a TDR program using the Land Bank density surplus.

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Whereas the shortage of rental housing has reached a critical stage in San Juan County

Whereas this housing shortage is affecting the ability of employers to find employees because of the lack of available housing.

Whereas all segments of the island community, young working people, working parents with children, older working individuals and families, senior citizens are impacted by the severe shortage of rental housing.

Whereas the local, state and federal government do not offer assistance to build rental housing except for those people with very low incomes or severe disabilities.

Therefore, San Juan County is initiating the following actions to increase the availability of rental housing for all socio/economic groups in the islands.

- 1. A business, a non-profit organization or a government agency may provide housing for their employees at the employers work location independent of the housing density designations assigned to the property. The housing may be for seasonal or year round workers. Employer-built housing with an increased density allowance is restricted to occupancy by employees of the business, organization or agency.**

The housing provided by an employer may be "standard" construction, a fabric structure, a modular or "tiny" home or an RV

The employee housing shall be permitted and inspected for matters of life safety and shall comply with property line setback requirements.

The employee housing may be attached to exiting utilities. Combined usage may not exceed the designed utility capacity to the subject property.

(Often the design and installed capacity of utilities far exceeds the actual pattern of usage by the customer. For affordability within this program, the County should consider a pilot program that measures and evaluates how underused capacity of an existing installation can be used to increase housing affordability.

The employee housing shall have reasonable screening from adjoining properties and the street.

The employer shall keep occupancy records, subject to inspection by the County, to assure compliance with the occupancy requirements of this ordinance.

- 2. The owner of a parcel larger than the zoning requirements for the area (for example, 7 acres in a 5 acre zone) may construct a rental home available only for long-term (greater than 6 months) rental occupancy.**

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This exemption is for the construction of a residential structure, a yurt, a mobil home or a parking area for an RV for the purpose of providing 1.) a long term rental investment for the property owner or 2.) or to provide a residence for an employee or a care giver employed by the occupant of the primary residence.

3. A property owner may apply to develop a RV/modular home park if

The property owner can demonstrate that the necessary water and sewer capacity can be developed to serve the number of users scheduled for the park

the property can be developed in a manner to preserve the reasonable privacy of adjoining properties

the property can be reasonably screened from public rights of way.

(Examples for reference purposes are a park such as the Oaks on San Juan Island or the RV resort in Anacortes. with spaces used for long term RV rental.)

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To: Linda Lyshall and the VSP Committee,
cc. Rick Hughes, County Council member

November 7, 2016

Dear fellow islanders,

I am familiar with the background and varied interests at the State level in the VSP outcome. It is unlikely that a compromise between those interests is forthcoming which puts the issues in the County's lap.

In so many ways, agriculture, lifestyles, history and our environmental dynamics are very different in the San Juans than the rest of the State. I encourage all of you to thoughtfully consider these differences and the possibility for unintended consequences.

I have three concerns; what we view as agriculture in the San Juans, how restrictions and regulations can change our historic rural character and how misreading how we think of our "natural environment" can impact the wildlife on our islands.

To the matter of what is "agricultural activity and island lifestyle" relative to the VSP program?

Example: The person has 5 acres; 2 acres is woodland, 1 acre is house and improvements, 2 acres is unimproved pasture that may or may not be fenced.

Their children decide to raise a 4-H cow on the two acres or the family chooses to do a market garden and grow berries and cut flowers on the two acres to supplement the family income.

Do you anticipate this family will be required to have some type of relationship with your program? If the level of activity outlined above meets a definition of "agricultural activity" will it be considered to be below a threshold that would require a property owner to interact with the County? I hope so.

Example: On a similar 5 or 10 acre parcel with woods and unused pasture, at what point is the growing of plants or raising animals not worth speculation that the environment on small parcels needs a regulatory oversight? The notion that we should put rules in place so as to return land to some vision of nature eliminates the varied landscapes and "edges" that are so important to all our animals and birds. It is a flawed policy direction.

Whatever the San Juan County VSP Committee eventually does will never be enough for the special interests. The promotion of more rules and regulations is a billion dollar industry. The jobs and political power of lawyers and environmental advocates depends on keeping the pot boiling.

I believe that maintaining a rural lifestyle in the islands is important. Property owners will tend to forgo the benefit and enjoyment of using their land rather than contend with the rigamarole and possible expense of getting the government involved in their lives. A rural island life style, small scale agriculture, the varied landscapes and the beneficial wildlife environments that come from traditional small parcel land use options are key to maintaining our special quality of life.

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To state the obvious, food, shelter, clothing and personal safety are basic human needs. In the islands we can generally meet the needs for food, clothing and safety. The seemingly intractable issue in San Juan County is the unavailability of a cross section of housing types that is affordable, adequate and appropriate for a variety of income levels and family configurations.

The issues are several; Those who do not have an adequate income that allows them to participate in the island's new home, pre-owned home or rental market. A severe shortage of even the most basic "starter homes" or house or apartment rentals. The seasonal availability of many rental situations. Those who can not find rental housing because they do not have the maturity, responsibility or track record where by a property owner is willing to allow them into their building.

Government/nonprofit initiatives such as OPAL on Orcas and similar programs on Lopez and San Juan have provided some housing and rentals that are "affordable" and appropriate for some families and individuals. This option is helpful. However, after 20 plus years of effort, this initiative is a long way from solving the housing problem. A way has to be found to make a housing investment by individuals and employers rational. Recruiting by major employers such as OPALCO or the school and fire districts could be far more productive if they could offer rental options for prospective employees.

The San Juan Builders Association is putting forward initiatives that will ask the County to modify the Comprehensive Plan as part of the Plan update and "docket." These suggestions come from a meeting round table that was held several years ago to generate concrete ideas that made economic sense.

Without going into great detail, the proposals would allow for changes to the density restrictions set in the current Comprehensive Plan, maintain the 5 acre rural farm forest density required by the Growth Hearing Board and maintain the rural character of our landscape that is important to many of us.

Other suggestions involve encouraging guest houses rules and allowances as approved in a County-wide referendum by over 70% of the voters, implementing a transfer of development right programs along the lines of what is being done in King County, and considering how to allow for modular home communities such as the Oaks on San Juan Island.

Unless we can come together and implement programs that eliminate or greatly reduce the underlying cost of land in the housing equation as well as reduce the cost of building basic utilities (both essential to making the investment in housing by private parties or businesses) we will continue to be largely "unaffordable" for the working middle income citizens who are the backbone of our community.

460 words

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MAR 29 2013

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WHAT IS THERE IN THIS UPDATED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN THAT WILL

MAKE HOUSING MORE AVAILABLE AND AFFORDABLE FOR THE WORKING FAMILIES IN SAN JUAN COUNTY?

REDUCE THE COST AND TIME REQUIRED FOR RESIDENTIAL PERMITS IN SAN JUAN COUNTY?

ALLOW FOR THE PERMIT APPROVAL OF ALTERNATIVE OR NON-TRADITIONAL HOUSING FOR CITIZENS IN SAN JUAN COUNTY?

ALLOW MANUFACTURED OR MODULAR COMMUNITIES TO BE PERMITTED AND BUILT SIMILAR TO THE OAKS ON SAN JUAN ISLAND?

ALLOW A SECOND RENTAL RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE TO BE BUILT ON EXISTING GMA COMPLIANT DENSITY LOTS BY ALLOWING THE TRANSFER OF LAND BANK AND PRESERVATION TRUST ENCUMBERED DESITY TO OTHER ISLAND PROPERTY.

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