

Issues & Impacts

Seattle King County REALTORS® (SKCR) is working to ensure that public policies support homeownership and your business's bottom line. Please contact David Crowell, Director of Governmental & Public Affairs, at dcrowell@nwrealtor.com with any local legislative issues that may need our attention. **The next issue will be released in July 2021.**

In this issue:

[Bellevue eliminates "3-Year Rule" for ADUs](#) > Page 2

[Bothell to allow duplexes on any corner lot](#) > Page 3

[Renton: 1,360 New Housing Units Planned for The Landing](#) > Page 4

[SKCR urges regional commitment to housing supply](#) > Page 5

[King County Assessor: New senior exemption for property taxes](#) > Pages 7-8

HOUSING INVENTORY

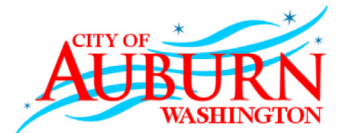
Auburn: Housing Deficit & Needed Increase in Construction of New Housing



The current Housing Supply Deficit in the city of Auburn is 2,361 units.

Starting now, and continuing through 2040, the city of Auburn will need to increase its annual housing production by 131 dwelling units each year - or 33.5% - from the current 10-year annual average of 390 units, to 521 units each year. The assessment was provided to the Auburn City Council at a study session on February 22nd by Tyler Bump, a Senior Economic Advisor with ECO-NW, the firm the city has hired to assist the Council with development of a Housing Action Plan.

According to Bump, in the 10-year period from 2010 to 2020, the city of Auburn has averaged construction of 390 units per year. That annualized figure of 390 units is higher than would otherwise have been the case except for two years of significantly higher-than-average construction of new dwelling units.





Issues & Impacts

Bump also provided the City Council with data indicating a significant decline in Auburn's housing affordability over the last 10 years. The change in income for renters over the last decade was a closer match for increases in market rents than was the case for households purchasing a home. Bump indicated the 2-bedroom average rental rate in the city of Auburn is currently \$2,200 per month for newly-constructed rental units, and \$1,400 per month for older units. The erosion of affordability was summarized as follows:

Erosion of Housing Affordability in Auburn 2010 - 2020			
	% Increase In incomes	% Increase In Rents & Sales Prices	Increase in the Affordability Gap
Renters (2-BR units)	46%	49%	3%
Homeowners	17%	88%	71%

Bellevue eliminates “3-Year Rule” for the construction and permitting of ADUs and allows Unit Lot Subdivision for townhouse development

The Bellevue City Council adopted two SKCR-supported land use code amendments relating to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Unit Lot Subdivision that will advance housing supply and affordability.

ADUs

Prior to the council action, the Bellevue code restricted the establishment of an attached ADU until three years after the final building permit inspection of new construction. Now, ADUs can be constructed and permitted at the time of new construction, making them more cost-effective and feasible to build.

SKCR encouraged the council to take this action to increase housing options and to ensure that long-term residents can remain in the City. Future amendments to ADU regulations are expected to include removing owner-occupancy requirements, adjusting minimum parking standards, and future changes to the City's restriction on detached ADUs.



Unit Lot Subdivision

The Unit Lot Subdivision code amendment will allow for the subdivision of townhouse dwellings while applying development standards, such as setbacks, lot coverage by structure, impervious surface coverage, and minimum lot area to the overall site or the "parent" lot instead of the individual unit lots.

The code amendment will reduce barriers for infill development and allow for individual townhouse units to be owned in fee simple as an alternative to condominium ownership.

Bothell to allow duplexes on any corner lot

In the 2019 session, the state legislature enacted House Bill 1923 to incentivize cities to adopt code amendments that increase residential capacity and encourage affordability. Cities could apply for grants to implement actions from a list identified in HB 1923. Bothell applied for and was awarded funding to amend the code to allow duplexes on corner lots in single family zones and to increase short plats from four to nine lots.

The Bothell City Council passed this SKCR-supported code amendments with a unanimous vote.

Kent: New Mixed-Use Housing Coming to Downtown

A new mixed-use Transit-Oriented-Development project in Downtown Kent will increase the region's lagging housing supply by constructing what is projected to be 157 new market-rate apartments, together with 1,232 square feet of retail space.

Known as Madison Plaza, the project will be located on the corner of

Meeker Street and Madison Avenue at the western edge of the city of Kent's high-density Downtown Commercial Enterprise Zone.



The property is within walking distance of the Sound Transit commuter rail station near Kent Station, restaurants, retail shopping, Green River College's Kent campus, movie theaters and other entertainment. The project's proximity to the commuter rail station will provide residents with the possibility of commuting by transit to employment opportunities in both Tacoma and Seattle.

According to the developer, DMG Capital Group, when built-out, Madison Plaza project amenities available to residents will include secured underground parking, and a rooftop terrace with

BBQ area, fireplace and gathering area. In addition, the project is anticipated to include a game room and lounge area, a full fitness center, and a dog run with dog-wash areas. GIS International Group, which built the GIS Plaza in Bellevue's Downtown, is building Madison Plaza, which was designed by Imad Bahbah of IHB Architects.

Lake Forest Park Continues Work on Town Center Plan



For many years, Lake Forest Park has been working on a plan for the redevelopment of its Town Center.

Affordable housing strategies are a part of the Town Center plan. SKCR is encouraging the city to tread carefully regarding the creation of mandatory affordable housing requirements, noting that the cost of the inclusionary requirement can make a project too expensive, if the cost of finished market-rate units exceeds what the market is willing to bear. In such cases, projects would be delayed or shelved, which would compromise both the city's development vision and its ability to meet demand for housing as prices increase.

At the same time, SKCR is strongly encouraging the creation of a multi-family residential property tax exemption program (MFTE). MFTE provides financial incentive for the private sector to create income-qualified/affordable housing without the risk of transferring the cost burden to the market-rate units. For every property tax dollar the City elects to forgo over the 12-year or 8-year tax exemption duration, the investor experiences a savings of approximately eight dollars on its property taxes. This provides the trade-off necessary to allow for 20% of the units to be sold or rented to low and moderate-income households.



Issues & Impacts

Renton: 1,360 New Housing Units Planned for The Landing

Bay West Development, a California real estate development firm, appears to be considering a major multi-family housing project of more than 1,000 units at The Landing in Renton.



Photo courtesy of camknobs

According to Marc Stiles, a Senior Staff Writer who reported the story for the PSBJ, city of Renton public records indicate that new housing units might be built on an 11.5-acre site at 800 Garden Ave. N, just east of The Landing mixed-use development. Brian Miller, the real estate editor for DJC, said Bay West met with the city of Renton in December regarding “the phased construction of a seven-story apartment complex that could have 1,360 units in three buildings.”

Since 2003, the property has been home to Fry's Electronics' only Washington store. Before that, the property was owned by The Boeing Company which sold the property to Bay West for \$15.2 million in 2000.



Photo courtesy of Bryce Edwards

The developer, Bay West, has reportedly retained Seattle architect Carrier Johnson + Culture to assist with the Renton project, as well as expressed interest in redevelopment of Fry's flagship store and corporate headquarters in San Jose, California.

Sammamish Modifies Moratorium

In a 5-2 vote, the Sammamish Council extended its current and aging development moratorium for another six months. This new moratorium offers a modest silver lining for the real estate community in that exempts/allows single family development on existing lots, ADUs and public agency projects.

Councilmembers Stewart and Ritchie voted against the extension reflecting their support for eliminating the moratorium and moving forward with Town Center.

In a surprise move at the close of the council meeting, Councilmember Ritchie resigned. He said, “...Sammamish has an incredible opportunity in the Town Center development that should bring services and diversity of housing the city desperately needs... we have an obligation to find solutions not roadblocks, it is unfair and inappropriate in my opinion that this council chose a path of obstruction in the form of continuous moratorium.”



Photo courtesy of Benaroya

SeaTac: City Council Restricts Additional King County Homeless Shelters

The SeaTac City Council has approved temporary restrictions on additional permanent homeless shelters in the city in an effort to pre-empt King County from using Regional Homeless Sales Tax Funding to set up additional shelters in motels in the city.



The Council's moratorium appears - at least in part - to have been a reaction to King County taking action last year that established a shelter in the Quality Inn near the airport, and the fact that there is a large number of motels and hotels in the city that King County might decide to also target using new regional homeless sales tax revenues. According to the city, the results of the County's actions in connection with the Quality Inn caused concerns about increasing crime, drug use, littering and police calls.

King County took the divisive action in the spring of 2020, acting under the broad powers of the local health officer pursuant to RCW 70.05.070, and established temporary "de-intensification" shelters in a number of South King County cities, including SeaTac, Renton and Kent. According to King County, the actions to target local motels without cooperating with the cities early-on was intended to temporarily decrease shelter intensity, increase social distancing, and prevent or slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Evan Maxum, Director of Community and Economic Development for the City, was pointedly critical of King County's heavy-handed approach because County officials failed to "coordinate with the city prior to establishing (the Quality Inn) de-intensification shelter, except at the very last moment." SeaTac residents also told City Councilmembers they had witnessed both prostitution and loitering on the property.

The temporary moratorium established by the ordinance applies to the creation of Overnight Shelters, Transitional Housing, or similar uses intended to create permanent, standalone, affordable housing or mental and behavioral health-related facilities.

SKCR urges regional commitment to housing supply

Recognizing that more aggressive steps are needed to correct the housing supply imbalance in our region, SKCR sent this [letter](#) in coordination with the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties and Associated General Contractors of Washington to every city in King County as well as the county.



February 22, 2021

The Honorable Dow Constantine
King County Executive
Via electronic mail

Dear Executive Constantine,

We are writing on behalf of the Associated General Contractors, Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties, and the Seattle King County REALTORS®.

The past year has been a tremendous challenge for our region and the entire world. We want to thank you for your work during this trying time to keep the people of King County safe. We hope 2021 allows us to round the corner on COVID-19 and begin to bring life back to normal.

The current robust residential real estate market in the midst of COVID-19's devastating economic disruption has a troubling dimension. Home prices in King County have continued their sharp rise while inventory has remained extremely low. The middle class and all those earning below the median income face severe obstacles to home ownership and rental housing that's affordable for their household.

No amount of subsidy or set-aside can counter this condition. What's needed is more housing choices at every price point. Urgent steps must be taken to bring housing supply into balance with housing demand to ensure a healthy, sustainable future and high quality of life for the people of King County.

In our view, quality of life is equity, economic opportunity, a healthy and easily accessible natural environment, and safe, affordable communities with strong schools.

Currently, the Growth Management Planning Council is working on housing target allocations for 2024. At the same time, the Urban Land Capacity analysis is coming into completion.

We implore King County and its cities to engage fully in this process and update its comprehensive plan with the goal of bringing housing supply into balance with actual demand.

Correctly balancing jobs and housing will yield solutions. And the outcomes need not be disagreeable. The sort of housing choices created by greater multifamily density can offer options for empty nesters who want to remain in their neighborhood without the responsibilities of a large house or options for younger people, setting out on their professional lives.





Issues & Impacts

HOUSING REGULATIONS

Seattle City Council Pass Natural Gas Ban

The Seattle City Council passed a ban on natural gas space and water heating in new construction on apartments, hotels, and commercial buildings.

The citywide ban on natural gas space heating will take effect for qualifying new buildings on June 1, 2021, with the gas water heating ban going into effect in 2022 to “allow time for the market to adapt.” A 2019 version of the proposal by then-Councilmember Mike O’Brien would have banned the implementation of natural gas in all new single-family home construction in Seattle starting in July of 2020. That would have included gas ranges in addition to natural gas space and water heating.

SKCR worked with PSE, BOMA and others to oppose the ban due to concerns about consumer choice, cost and practicality. While we succeeded in narrowing the ban to avoid single family, it is likely that future amendments will attempt to include single family.

Shoreline requires fire sprinklers in new single family and duplex projects

The Shoreline City Council passed an expansion of mandatory fire sprinkler installation coverage to include all new single family and duplex projects.

SKCR coordinated with the Master Builders Association to oppose the proposal. SKCR told the city we viewed the proposal as a departure from the excellent work Shoreline has done to increase housing supply and bring more affordable housing options to the city as sprinkler mandates will increase the cost of construction.



If fire sprinklers saved lives, our view would be that the life safety is worth the added cost; unfortunately, that is not the case. Hardwired smoke detectors with battery back-up save lives. Sprinklers save buildings.

The National Association of Home Builders estimates for every \$1,000 increase in the price of home in the Seattle/Bellevue/Tacoma market, 1,161 people are priced out and can no longer qualify for a mortgage after the price increase. At a time when housing far exceeds the reach of many families in our region, we argued mandates that increase housing costs in order to mitigate property damage caused by fire are not warranted.



Photo courtesy of HomeSpot HQ



*Shoreline City Council
Photo courtesy of City of Shoreline*

TAXATION

New Seattle “payroll expense” tax includes real estate brokerage firms

In July of 2020, the Seattle City Council approved a “payroll expense” tax on businesses in Seattle with annual payrolls in excess of \$7 million. The objective of the tax was to have large employers, with employees who earn more than \$150,000 per year, pay more to the city to fund various housing and assistance programs.

The Seattle Finance Department completed its review of the tax in December and issued a Director’s final rule which clarified that the tax applies to real estate brokerage firms. The rule defines “payroll expense” to include sales commissions paid to independent contractors.

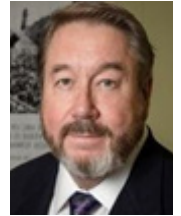
Seattle King County REALTORS®, with the assistance of legal counsel, has developed an FAQ to answer questions about how and when the tax applies to real estate brokerage firms. Although the tax is only paid by a brokerage firm with a payroll of \$7 million or more, the tax may apply to real estate brokers earning more than \$150,000 who perform more than 50% of their duties within Seattle, and to real estate brokers who do not perform 50% of their services in Seattle but reside in Seattle. (FAQ is available on the SKCR website.)

“The Seattle Council clearly cast a wide net in an attempt to tax businesses which have any sort of footprint in the city,” said Seattle King County REALTORS® CEO Russ Hokanson. “Business owners deserve certainty from the City, so we will seek clarification of key definitions in the tax related to real estate.”

The tax went into effect on January 1, 2021, but the first payments aren’t due until January of 2022. The Seattle Chamber of Commerce has filed a lawsuit challenging the legality of the new tax.



King County Assessor: New Senior Exemption for Property Taxes Is Producing Big Savings on Property Taxes for Qualifying Seniors - Averaging up to \$4,334.14



*John Wilson
King County Assessor*

As seniors begin making April property tax payments, those qualifying for a more generous Senior Exemption can save thousands on property taxes this year.

Recognizing the need to help senior homeowners, in 2019 King County Assessor John Wilson spearheaded a collaborative effort in which he, and other county assessors in Washington, asked the Legislature to reform the Senior Property Tax Exemption program contained in state law. They won the fight to help seniors!

Now, as some seniors prepare to pay their first property tax bill since the beginning of the pandemic, the amount of income seniors in King County are allowed to earn while still qualifying for the Senior Property Tax Exemption has increased by more than \$18,000, from \$40,000 to \$58,423.

King County Assessor John Wilson and his assessor colleagues were able to obtain the property tax relief for seniors by getting the Legislature to agree to repeal the income eligibility requirements that were a uniform fixed amount throughout the state. Instead, eligibility for the exemption is now tied to a percentage of the “Area Median Income” (or AMI) in each individual County, instead of having a single fixed statewide income limitation.

Wilson and the other assessors argued that just like property values are different in each county, so are household incomes. If the exemption is going to truly reflect the ability of seniors to pay property taxes, they said the law needed to change.

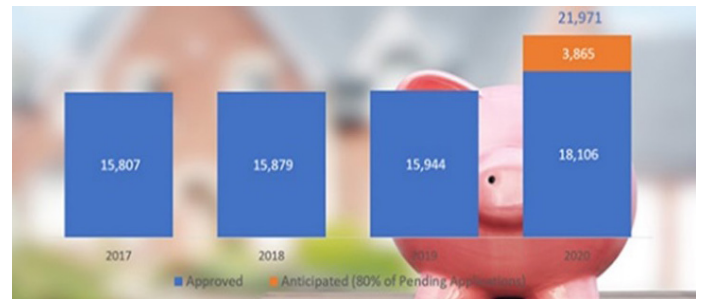
The Legislature changed the law, but according to King County Assessor John Wilson, the law wasn’t the only thing that changed. According to the Assessor’s office, the number of applications for the exemption received from seniors in King County increased 300% last year!



Issues & Impacts

Assessor John Wilson says his department was able to design an efficient, streamlined workflow that allowed them to approve 18,106 applications last year - an average of one every 9 minutes (8 hours/day, 5 days/week, 52 weeks/year). Seniors qualifying for the full exemption average a savings of \$4,334.14 on a \$600,000 home. Seniors qualifying for a partial exemption saved an average of \$3,414.49. And, seniors who received the standard exemption saved an average of \$2,681.51.

Senior Exemption Approved by Tax Year



18,106 Senior Exemptions Approved

PUBLIC SAFETY



Photo courtesy of City of SeaTac Blog



SEATAC: City Gives King County Notice to Terminate Police Services Contract

More than a dozen of the 39 cities in King County don't have their own police department. Instead, each of them contracts for police services with the King County Sheriff's office. The Sheriff's office provides staffing and a variety of services based on what individual cities prefer, and can afford. The deputy sheriffs

who provide police services wear a city police department patch on their uniforms, even though they remain employees of the Sheriff's office.

But in November, voters approved two amendments to the King County Charter. The first (Charter Amendment #5) changed the position of the Sheriff - with whom cities had been contracting - from an elected position to one appointed by the King County Executive, subject to confirmation by the King County Council. The second (Charter Amendment #6) vested the County Council with the authority to prescribe by County ordinance the duties and

functions of the Sheriff's office. Those duties were not specified in the charter amendment the County Council submitted to voters.

Reaction among the cities was varied, but some, such as SeaTac, became concerned about the potential for changes by the County that could be inconsistent with the city's police services priorities and practices, as well as the potential for costs to increase. The County Executive has already begun pushing for reductions in Sheriff office spending, and the cities provide the largest portion - over 60% - of the funding for the Sheriff's office. In explaining concerns raised by the newly-approved charter amendments, SeaTac City Manager Carl Cole advised the City Council that SeaTac's "local control of policing priorities may be in jeopardy." One of the original appeals of contracting with King County was the "breadth and depth" of benefits the cities would receive at no additional cost, but those benefits have diminished significantly, according to a briefing city staff provided to the City Council.

IN OTHER NEWS

Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs): Local Planning Group Submitting New or Updated Plans to Dept. of Ecology to Mitigate Impacts of Domestic Water Exempt Wells on In-stream Flows

In 2016 the Washington State Supreme Court handed down its errant policy decision authored by Justice Charles Wiggins in the Hirst case. The majority opinion of the sharply divided court largely stopped the construction of any new housing that needed a well for potable water. Eventually, in 2018, the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed, the bipartisan *Streamflow Restoration Act* (RCW 90.94) to begin to mitigate the damaging effects of the decision.

The law required “committees” of local planning groups for 15 of the state’s 62 watersheds to develop and/or update plans designed to offset the effects on instream flows from the impacts of exempt water wells (water wells that are exempt from permitting requirements) which provide water for domestic uses. The 62 watersheds are referred to as “Water Resource Inventory Areas”-or WRIAs.



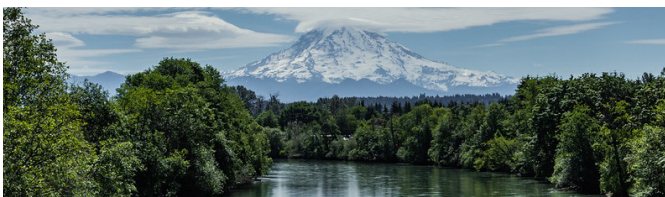
In the Central Puget Sound Region, most of the attention has been focused on:

WRIA 7: Snohomish, Snoqualmie and Skykomish River Basins (Snohomish County),

WRIA 8: Cedar and Sammamish River Basins, Lake Union, Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish (**King County**),

WRIA 9: Green/Duwamish River Basin (**King County**), and

WRIA 10: White-Puyallup River Basin (Pierce County)



WRIA 8 (King County) - Specifics:

The WRIA 8 Committee has prepared a consensus draft plan that is being reviewed prior to the document being submitted to the Department of Ecology for final approval. Looking forward, the review draft of the WRIA 8 Local Plan for the watershed anticipates:

- 967 Permit-Exempt Wells over the 20-year planning horizon, with a consumptive use estimate of 425.4 acre-feet of water per year.
- The Committee identified 11 “water offset projects” that would offset 1,762.18 acre-feet of water consumption per year.
- Projects have been prioritized into two groups: Tier 1 and Tier 2
 - Tier 1 projects are those already under discussion for water rights acquisition.
 - Tier 2 projects will require additional work in order to fully acquire water rights.

Tier 1 projects would likely provide sufficient water acquisitions to fulfill offset requirements.

The Committee also recommended several optional policies and programs to help achieve net ecological benefit, monitoring, and/or water conservation.

WRIA 9 (King County) - Specifics:

The WRIA 9 Committee has also prepared a draft plan that is being reviewed prior to the document being submitted to the Department of Ecology for final approval.

Looking forward, the review draft of the WRIA 9 Local Plan for the watershed anticipates:

- 632 Permit-Exempt Wells over the 20-year planning horizon, with a consumptive use estimate of 247.7 acre-feet of water per year.
- The Committee identified six water rights acquisition projects that would offset 1,075 acre-feet of water consumption per year.

Photo courtesy of [David Seibold](#)



Issues & Impacts

- In order to achieve Net Ecological Benefit, the Committee draft also proposes to recommend a number of habitat projects, but no projection of the offset likely to be achieved has been quantified in the draft.

The WRIA 9 Committee was unable to reach a consensus on identifying policy and regulatory recommendations in the plan. Among those recommendations is a proposal that exempt wells be metered, and that fees be increased. The Masterbuilders joined others in opposing the metering and fee increase recommendations.

For more information, see:

www.ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-supply/Streamflow-restoration

Auburn: Potential Annexation of Stranded City of Kent Lands Inside Auburn City Limits

Two years ago, the cities of Kent and Auburn began talking with each other - and with property owners in "The Bridges" PUD - about the possibility of the community being de-annexed by Kent, and then annexed into the city of Auburn. The idea has not yet come to fruition.



In response, Kent Mayor Dana Ralph sent a letter to residents of "The Bridges" community indicating Auburn has rejected the idea of transferring the property out of the Kent city limits, and into the Auburn city limits.

Mayor Ralph's letter prompted Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus and Auburn city staff to make a point at the Auburn City Council meeting on February 22nd to publicly reaffirm that the city of Auburn remains interested in annexing the property, despite the considerable complexities presented by the situation.

The Bridges Community on Lea Hill is part of the city of Kent, but is located in an area that is now completely surrounded by the city limits of Auburn.

The city of Kent annexed the area in 1987, prior to the city of Auburn's annexation of Lea Hill in 2008. Prior to Auburn's annexation, The Bridges was simply a portion of Kent that was not contiguous to Kent's city boundaries. Auburn's

annexation of Lea Hill is the action that created this "island" of Kent that is surrounded by Auburn.

The Bridges Community is defined as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) that includes 386 single family residential lots, 55.87 acres of open space and active recreation space, and a 13.21 acre yet-to-be-developed area that allows for an assisted living facility, retail, commercial and office uses. Of the 386 single family residential lots, there only remain 2 to 3 dozen undeveloped properties.

The Bridges Community receives sewer service from the city of Auburn, and water service from the city of Kent. The community also receives direct police service from the city of Kent and fire service from Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority (although mutual aid agreements exist that might result in a response by the Auburn Police Department or Valley Regional Fire Authority).

In early 2019, the cities of Kent and Auburn began discussing the merits of annexing The Bridges Community into the city of Auburn. The discussions expanded to also include representatives of Oakpointe, the owner of the yet-to-be-developed 13.21 acres in the southeast corner of the PUD. That acreage is currently designated for a future mix of non-residential activity.

According to Jeff Tate, city of Auburn Director of Development, the list of issues remaining to be resolved to complete the Kent De-Annexation/Auburn Annexation process includes differences in zoning and development standards between the two cities, treatment of existing vesting under city of Kent codes, reconciling utility services for the area (which currently include city of Kent water supplies, and Auburn storm water management systems), management of the open space areas currently owned by the city of Kent, the condition of existing infrastructure for the undeveloped portion of the community, and how the 13.21 acres owned by Oakpointe will be developed.

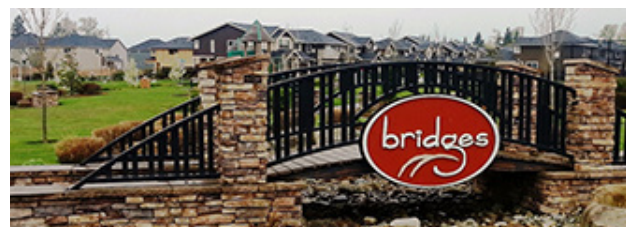


Photo courtesy of Oakpointe Communities

KENT: To Address Backlog, Permit Applications Only Allowed by Virtual Appointment

Kurt Hanson, Kent's Director of Economic and Community Development, has announced that permit applications submitted to the city will only be allowed by virtual appointment. The change became effective January 4th. Hanson said the new requirement is necessary in order to address the growing backlog of permit approvals.



City of Kent - Economic and Community Development

According to a letter Hanson prepared for permit applicants, a backlog of new applications has grown in Kent's permitting system since his department shifted to a virtual platform last year. Hanson said, "I understand it's immensely frustrating for our customers. Unfortunately, this stems from unanticipated consequences from moving our permitting from a paper to an electronic process."

"While COVID sped up the implementation of the online permit system, it also 'opened' our permit intake to a 24-hours-per-day, 7-days-a-week operation. Since each application needs to be addressed by a person, the result is a backlog of nearly 500 permit applications forcing a review delay for even the simplest of them. Complicating matters, the system we have in place allows the submittal of multiple applications at once, and some larger customers have submitted upwards of 40 applications at one time. It's an unsustainable situation."

To mitigate the situation, Hanson said the department is implementing a "digital permit counter" that will allow city staff to review and process applications during a scheduled telephone appointment. The action necessitated

Kent closing its Permit Center between December 28th and January 1st to implement the new program, and allow staff to have the time to address the backlog. Hanson said, "Our team can't do this work with more and more permit applications coming in."

Beginning January 4th, the city of Kent began asking applicants for new permits to schedule an "intake appointment" through the City's new QLess on-line appointment system.

Hanson said that if city staff need additional information, they will reach-out to folks who have already submitted applications that are in-process.

Looking forward, Hanson thanked applicants and said, "While this is temporarily inconvenient, this change will ultimately result in a more-timely permit process for our customers. I hope this sheds a bit of light on the challenge. I ask please for your patience as my team works through this backlog and brings on this new system."

City staff provided the following link that can be used to make an online virtual appointment for submitting an application:

www.kentwa.gov/doing-business/permit-center?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Permit Center

Font Size: [Share & Bookmark](#) [Print](#)

New International Building and Fire Codes

Per the [State Building Code Council](#), the 2018 International Codes become effective on February 1, 2021. Complete building permit applications received before this date will be reviewed under the 2015 codes. [More info here.](#)

[NEW PERMIT APPLICATIONS REQUIRE AN INTAKE APPOINTMENT. CLICK HERE TO SCHEDULE YOURS.](#)

[MORE INFORMATION HERE](#)



Issues & Impacts

BURIEN: Historic Neighborhood

The city of Burien is looking to resurrect opportunities for corner store retailers in residential neighborhoods. To make it happen, the Burien City Council adopted ordinance #752 in early February. According to Burien Community Development Director Susan McLain:



“The intent of this Zoning Code amendment is to allow small historic storefronts located in residential zones to legally operate under limited circumstances. While these businesses were legal under past codes, current residential zoning prohibits new or re-established retail uses. The provisions would enable productive use of structures that are part of Burien’s historic fabric to operate in a manner that is roughly consistent with home occupations businesses.”

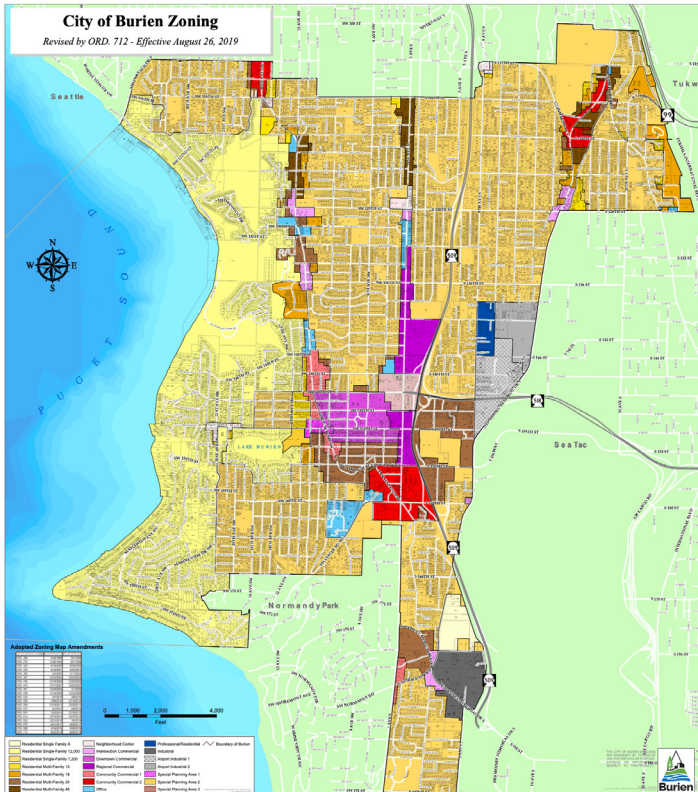
The only available example of such use is a store in the Three Tree Point area, although McLain indicated in January that there might be other

Corner Storefronts Re-Authorized

properties in the Boulevard Park area that could possibly satisfy the requirements of the new ordinance.

In the wake of COVID restrictions that have resulted in more people working from home and telecommuting, corner storefronts provide access to goods and services in closer proximity to where people are spending their time, and also minimize the necessity to commute longer distances to obtain a variety of shopping opportunities.

Even though corner storefronts at historical locations would be allowed in zoning areas depicted as yellow and brown on the city’s zoning map seen here, a number of additional requirements must also be met regarding the age of the structure, restoration of historical architectural details, together with restrictions on sales of alcohol, the amount of outdoor dining, the total square footage devoted to retail space, limits on the number of employees, parking requirements and restrictions on delivery vehicles.



*Three Tree Point Store, circa 2021
Photo courtesy of B-Town Blog*

PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS

Elections in 2021

Laws govern the way in which you conduct your business and affect your bottom line. Laws are made by elected officials. This year's election will be conducted for local races – city councils and the county council. The primary election is on August 3, and the general election is on November 2. Candidate filing occurs from May 17 through May 21.



REALTORS® don't just sell homes. We sell neighborhoods and Quality of Life.

REALTORS® know that Quality of Life begins with a good job in a company that has a great future. Homes are where those jobs go at night. That's why it's so important to have elected officials who understand the key contribution that jobs and housing make to healthy, vibrant communities.

We need elected officials who share our REALTOR® values, and who appreciate the hard work you do as a real estate professional. So, members of the Association will review voting records of elected officials. And it's why your REALTOR® colleagues will conduct candidate endorsement interviews with candidates running for office.

This year, Seattle King County REALTORS® will act to protect and enhance your business by supporting candidates for local office (city councils, county council) who share our REALTOR® values.





Issues & Impacts

REALTORS® Political Action Committee (RPAC)



NEW! An Easy, Quick Way to Protect Your Business - REALTOR® PAC ONLINE

Introducing a new secure, online REALTOR® PAC (RPAC) investment site making it easier than ever for busy REALTORS® to protect their business. We can't all go to Washington D.C., the state Capital, or even our City Halls while government leaders are making decisions that affect our industry; but while we are busy, REALTOR® PAC can fight for us and for our clients. Please make an investment of **\$50, \$100, or \$500** to ensure that when government acts, there is no harm to real estate, no new taxes, and no added unnecessary complications to the real estate transaction.

As of end of March 2021 (most recent information available), Seattle King County REALTORS® has raised \$211,125 for the REALTOR® PAC with a participation rate of 16%.

Please invest in REALTOR® PAC at: www.warealtor.org/government-affairs-main/rpac

Garrett Nelson, local REALTOR® PAC chairperson, was pleased to report that our REALTOR® PAC Wine, Spirits & Experiences auction was a huge success as the event raised \$52,407 for RPAC. Thanks to everyone who donated items for the auction, as well as to those who invested in RPAC at the auction!

Issues & Impacts is a quarterly publication produced by Seattle King County REALTORS® to inform members about current issues and successes within your Governmental Affairs Department. We will release our next publication in July 2021.

Our **2021 VP of Governmental & Public Affairs** is **Eddie Chang** - eddie@changgroup.com

Our **VP-Elect of Governmental & Public Affairs** is **Garrett Nelson** - garrett@exre.com

Our **Staff Director** is **David Crowell** - dcrowell@nwrealtor.com

Our **Local Legislative Housing Advocates** are

Sam Pace - sam@sampace.com and **Randy Bannecker** - randy@bannecker.com

Please call David at 425.974.1011 ext. 704 if there are any local legislative issues that need our attention.