



## NEWS RELEASE

For Release: January 27, 2009

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The Snohomish County Council on Wednesday took action to adopt groundbreaking regulations that will improve the design and appearance of developments in many urban areas within the county. The new urban residential design standards will affect all residential development in unincorporated urban areas of the county. They do not affect development in rural areas or within incorporated cities.

The effort to implement urban residential design standards (URDS) was spearheaded by County Councilmember Dave Gossett whose district includes many of the areas that will be impacted by the regulations. "With this vote we will continue to provide affordable housing while causing as little impact as possible on existing neighborhoods and the environment," said Gossett. "There will be more open space, tree retention and replacement, and improved buffering requirements."

Over a period of two years representatives from the County Council, Planning Commission, and County Planning Department worked with neighborhoods and stakeholders to develop regulations that would improve the appearance of residential developments without passing on significant cost to home buyers. Councilmember Dave Somers commented, "I am pleased with our process, we initiated an open exchange of ideas between stakeholders that has resulted in practical solutions and sustainable design principles."

The new regulations will take effect in late March 2009.

The new regulations include:

- New height regulations to reduce impact of development on existing homes.
- Incentives for using low impact development techniques to reduce runoff.
- Regulations for compatibility with neighborhoods.
- An extensive menu of optional design elements to improve the variety and appearance of new homes.
- Requirements to reduce the visual impact of garages.
- Standards for walkways, parking configuration, and lighting for apartments, townhouses and condominiums.
- Requirements for recreational open space in large developments.
- New requirements for landscaping, including tree retention and replacement.
- Landscaping requirements.
- Requirements for most utilities to be located underground.
- Flexibility for autocourts, alleys and other ways to provide for walking and driving through developments.
- Enhanced provisions for transit facilities.
- Improved requirements for off-street parking.
- Limiting townhouse density to 9 dwelling units per acre.
- New regulations for cottage housing and other innovative developments.