



Rad Cunningham, Chair  
Olympia Planning Commission  
PO Box 1967  
Olympia, WA 98507-1967  
Sent via email to: [missingmiddle@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:missingmiddle@ci.olympia.wa.us)

June 7, 2018

**RE: Missing Middle Housing Code Amendments**

Dear Chair Cunningham and the Olympia Planning Commission,

Washington Environmental Council and Puget Soundkeeper would like to express our strong support for Olympia's Missing Middle Housing proposed code changes. As our region grows and home prices continue to rise, it is critical that we support the housing needs of the whole community. Missing Middle Housing policies support our working class with more affordable housing options and encourage density to protect the natural resources we so heavily rely on just beyond our urban boundaries.

Washington Environmental Council (WEC) is a nonprofit, statewide advocacy organization driving positive change to solve Washington's most critical environmental challenges since 1967. WEC has over 3,000 members within the City of Olympia and Thurston County. Puget Soundkeeper is a grass-roots non-profit organization focused on protecting and preserving water quality in Puget Sound. Soundkeeper represents the interest of over 2,500 members, supporters and volunteers who care deeply about having local waterways that are safe for swimming and fishing.

Recently, our organizations spoke before your city council about [Nature's Scorecard](#), a tool to assess how cities and counties are embracing low-impact development practices to safeguard a healthy future for everyone in their communities. We were happy to present the City of Olympia with our 'Green Star' recognition for going above and beyond with their low-impact development code updates. In our assessment of 81 communities within Puget Sound the City of Olympia was truly a leader in this area.

However, we have heard about recent comments questioning the compatibility of low-impact development and stormwater regulations with Missing Middle policies. To pit the Clean Water Act against the Growth Management Act is a false narrative. With updates to the NPDES municipal stormwater permits, new and redevelopment in the city of Olympia will be required to infiltrate runoff on-site using low-impact development best management practices. These requirements are just as achievable with increased density and will ensure any new infill housing provides even better treatment and flow control than past developments, even previously constructed single-family houses.

In fact, your 'Green Star' designation supports the fact that the City of Olympia is more than ready to take on these code changes. As infill housing is designed, development codes will prioritize permeable surfaces and bioretention. When infill housing is built, your construction codes will help protect the native soils, plants, and



trees on site that do a lot of the heavy lifting for infiltration. Your community has made comprehensive updates to your codes already that ensure new development will continue to support a thriving, vibrant community – with a smaller footprint.

Our organizations understand the stress of change. However, with 20,000 additional residents expected in Olympia over the next 20 years, change is inevitable for our region – so let's get it right. Let's make sure this change avoids the loss of our forest and agricultural lands, reduces the cost of infrastructure, and limits our carbon impact.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these policies and code amendments. Both our organizations care deeply about the Puget Sound region and, as the Puget Sound Partnership has made clear, infill development is a critical mechanism to protect our outlying habitat and protect the Puget Sound ecosystem as a whole.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Danielle Shaw".

Danielle Shaw  
Government Affairs Manager  
Washington Environmental Council

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sophia Ressler".

Sophia Ressler  
Staff Attorney  
Puget Soundkeeper

cc: Olympia City Council via email to: [citycouncil@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:citycouncil@ci.olympia.wa.us)  
Joyce Phillips, Staff Liaison, via email to: [jphillip@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:jphillip@ci.olympia.wa.us)  
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