Community Development Code Assessment Priorities Report
Executive Summary

Introduction

Washington County, with Cascadia Partners, is undertaking a project to review the Community Development Code (CDC) and identify ways to improve its usability and support the development of needed housing. The first step of this project resulted in a CDC Assessment Summary Report, which identified a broad range of potential amendments to improve the CDC's compliance with state law, support housing production, and make the CDC easier to use and understand.

The potential amendments are complex and will require significant resources to complete. The purpose of this report is to assist the County in implementing the amendments in phases over time. This document provides a framework for how to organize the potential CDC amendments into packages and presents a set of criteria by which to evaluate the relative priority order for completion of each amendment package. Because this project is comprehensive in its review of the CDC, it includes some overlap with concurrent efforts to amend the CDC that are prioritized in the County's 2025-2027 Planning Work Program.

This document is informed by feedback from the project's Technical Advisory Committee and Planning Commission. Additionally, community feedback was gathered through an in-person community open house on March 17, 2026, and an online open house held from March 13 through April 5, which included a survey. The feedback received from these various stakeholders is reflected in the prioritization of amendments and phasing scenarios.

Summary of Recommendations

This document organizes the recommended CDC amendments into logical amendment packages and sets up a framework to guide their implementation. The document is organized into four sections:

1. **Summary of Amendment Packages** briefly describes the content of each proposed package of potential CDC amendments.
2. **Prioritization Criteria** describes the criteria used to evaluate and sequence the CDC amendment packages.
3. **Amendment Package Phasing** translates the prioritization criteria into a recommended order for implementing the CDC amendment packages.
4. **Detailed Profiles of Amendment Packages** provides a complete description of the objectives, scope, and evaluation of each CDC amendment package.

In addition to the proposed amendment packages, two ongoing or anticipated County processes will result in CDC amendments:

- **Housing Facilitation Ordinance (HFO).** The County is currently developing a series of changes to the CDC to facilitate residential development, for adoption later this year as a land use ordinance. This work was prioritized in the County's 2025-2027 Planning Work Program (Task 1.3). The ordinance will propose amendments to comply with several housing-related statutes, and other amendments to remove unnecessary barriers to housing review and approval. These include, but are not limited to, changes addressing

accessory dwelling units, middle housing, manufactured and prefabricated homes, single room occupancies, and affordable housing. Because the CDC Assessment covers the code broadly, it includes some topics also being addressed through the HFO.

- **Housing Capacity Analysis (HCA) and Housing Production Strategy (HPS).** The County must complete an HCA by the end of 2029 and an HPS by the end of 2030. The findings from the HCA and HPS may identify additional CDC changes needed to ensure sufficient housing capacity for a range of housing types and densities. Those changes cannot be defined until the analysis is done and are not included as a numbered package in this report, though a number of the proposed code amendment packages likely respond to the housing needs and regulatory issues identified through these processes.

Amendment Packages

The report organizes the recommended CDC changes into 13 amendment packages. Each package groups related changes that should be adopted together because they affect the same CDC sections, address the same policy goal, or depend on each other. The packages span a range of topics, from implementing recent state legislation and removing barriers to housing, to reorganizing the CDC for clarity and consolidating scattered definitions and procedures.

Prioritization Criteria

The CDC Assessment identified many recommended changes that vary in urgency, expected impact, and the resources needed to carry them out. Since they cannot all be done at once, a prioritization framework was developed to help inform the sequencing of this work.

Each amendment package was evaluated using three criteria:

- **Urgency.** How time-sensitive is the package? Certain packages have state-mandated deadlines or address areas where the County is already out of compliance, while others have no external deadline.
- **Impact.** What outcomes will the package achieve and what magnitude of impact can be expected? Impact is measured across five areas: Housing Production, Housing Affordability, Access to Opportunity, CDC Usability, and Legal Compliance.
- **Feasibility.** What resources and efforts are needed? This includes the level of staff and/or consultant effort, whether external processes must be completed first, and whether the package depends on other packages being done first.

Amendment Package Phasing

The phasing approach translates the prioritization criteria into a recommended order for implementing the amendment packages. Phasing is shaped by several fixed constraints that apply regardless of policy preferences: packages with state-mandated deadlines come first; packages that depend on outside processes (such as the Transportation System Plan update) are scheduled around those timelines; and the total workload in any phase must be realistic given available staff capacity. The County's 2025-2027 Planning Work Program will also be a factor considered in the phasing of the amendment packages. Beyond these fixed constraints, the phasing framework prioritizes reorganizing and simplifying the CDC in the short-term, so that future changes are easier to draft and adopt.