PROJECT OVERVIEW

Community Development Code (CDC) Assessment

Welcome to the Community Development Code Assessment!

The Community Development Code (CDC) sets the rules for how and where development happens in Washington County.

We're reviewing the CDC to make it more clear, more predictable, and more responsive to community needs.

Getting the CDC right matters for everyone: whether you're a homeowner, renter, developer, or someone looking for a place to live in Washington County.

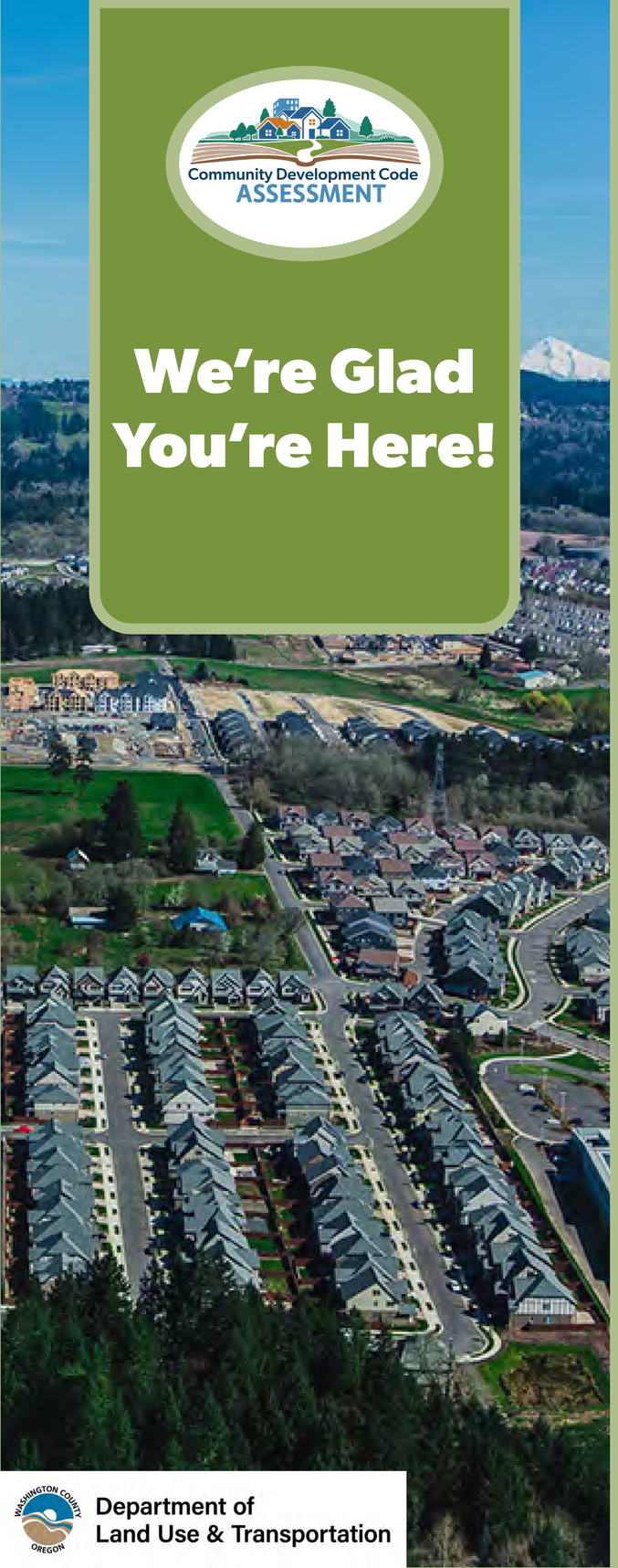
The Community Development Code shapes:

- What types of homes, businesses, and other uses can be built and where
- How land is developed across urban and rural areas of the County
- How neighborhoods access services and amenities
- How easy, or difficult, it is for property owners, developers, and community members to understand and navigate the development approval process
- Whether housing development is financially feasible for builders
- How the County balances growth with protecting natural resources and agricultural land

Department of
Land Use & Transportation

Community Development Code
ASSESSMENT

We're Glad You're Here!



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What We've Done

Over the past several months, the County has conducted a detailed review of the Community Development Code.

The review focused on three key areas:

1 Making sure the CDC complies with state laws.

The State of Oregon has passed several laws in recent years requiring counties to update their development codes across a range of topics from housing options to childcare facilities and more. We reviewed the CDC to make sure Washington County is up to date on these requirements.

2 Identifying barriers to building housing and other development.

Some CDC requirements, though well-intentioned, can make it harder or more expensive to build homes and other uses. We looked at where we can reduce unnecessary obstacles while still maintaining safe, quality development.

3 Making the code easier to use.

With many updates to the CDC over the years, the document has become bulky. At times similar rules are scattered across different sections. Streamlining and consolidating these rules can make it easier for everyone, including property owners, developers, and community members to understand what's required.

Community Development Code
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Your feedback will help us understand which changes matter most to the community, and how to approach them.

Your input, and input from other stakeholders, including County staff, the CDCTechnical Advisory Committee, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Commissioners, will help us develop future packages of CDC amendments that address high-priority issues.

Please note that not every issue will be addressed immediately and we are considering input from a variety of stakeholders. Some updates may require further study, coordination with other jurisdictions, or additional resources. We will continue to engage the community as specific amendments are developed and recommendations are made to the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about this work and share your perspective.

Your participation helps ensure that the Community Development Code serves our community today and in the future.

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YOUR INPUT MATTERS

Each station at today's open house presents specific findings from the assessment and asks for your input on whether and how the County should address them. The stations are organized around key themes:

Station 1: Leveling the Playing Field Between Housing Types: Should similar housing types be treated similarly, regardless of when the code provisions were written?

Station 2: Aligning Development Standards with Housing Goals: In areas planned for higher-density housing, do the code's own rules make it harder to achieve that goal?

Station 3: Making Affordable Housing Incentives Work for More Developers: Should the County modify incentives so private, for-profit developers are more likely to use them?

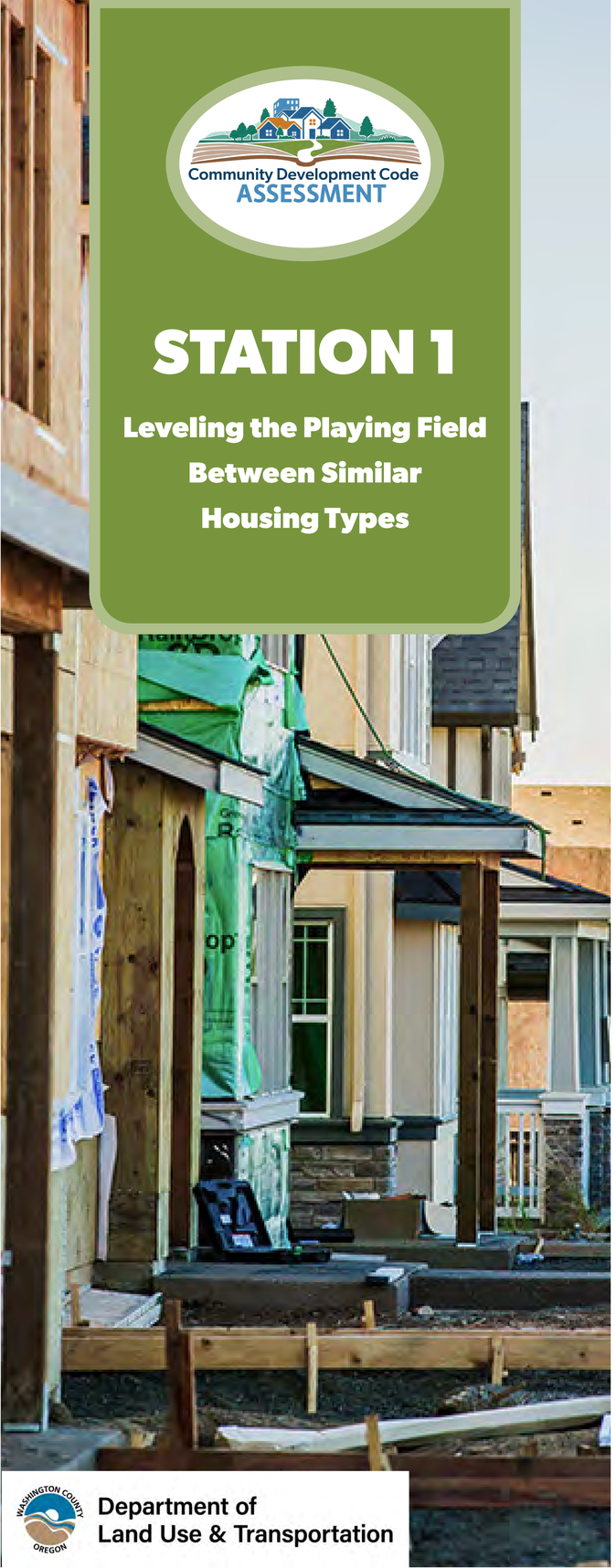
Station 4: Neighborhood Meeting Requirements: Should they be based on project impacts?

Sttion 5: Streamlining and Simplifying the Code: How can we make the code easier for everyone to understand and use?

Station 6: More Housing Opportunities in Mixed-Use Areas

Station 7: Keeping Up with State Law: What changes is the County required to make to comply with recent state legislation?

Station 8: Now That You've Seen It All: What matters most to you?



Community Development Code ASSESSMENT

STATION 1

Leveling the Playing Field Between Similar Housing Types

Department of Land Use & Transportation

THE ISSUE:

State law requires that “Middle Housing” (duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhouses, and cottage clusters) be allowed in residential districts subject to requirements that are no more restrictive than for a single house.

For a long time, the County has allowed similar housing types, even in districts where we are not required to allow Middle Housing today. Some of these similar housing types are allowed in more places and might be suited to larger lots and larger households than Middle Housing. Together Middle Housing and these similar housing types can contribute to housing choices for a wider variety of households.

We are looking at differences between processes and standards for Middle Housing and similar housing types and how these differences might be reduced to simplify development of housing.

How Important is this to you?

Add your dot sticker below!

Very Important:	
Important:	
Not At All Important:	
Unsure:	

WHY IT MATTERS

Lower-density residential districts: The R-5, R-6, R-9 and R-15 districts all allow both Middle Housing and similar housing types. Under state law, the density of Middle Housing ends up largely the same regardless of land use district. Similar housing types not under the state’s Middle Housing provisions, however, still face more meaningful density differences between districts. Consolidating some or all of these districts could help level the playing field by bringing density standards closer together across housing types.

Building facade standards: Specific requirements for street-facing appearance and garage design do not apply to Middle Housing but do apply to similar housing forms.

Setback and buffer requirements: Extra setbacks, screening and buffering do not apply to Middle Housing but are required for similar housing types built next to existing pre-1998 homes.

Approval process: A more intensive, less predictable approval process applies to similar housing types, as compared to procedures for Middle Housing.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS?

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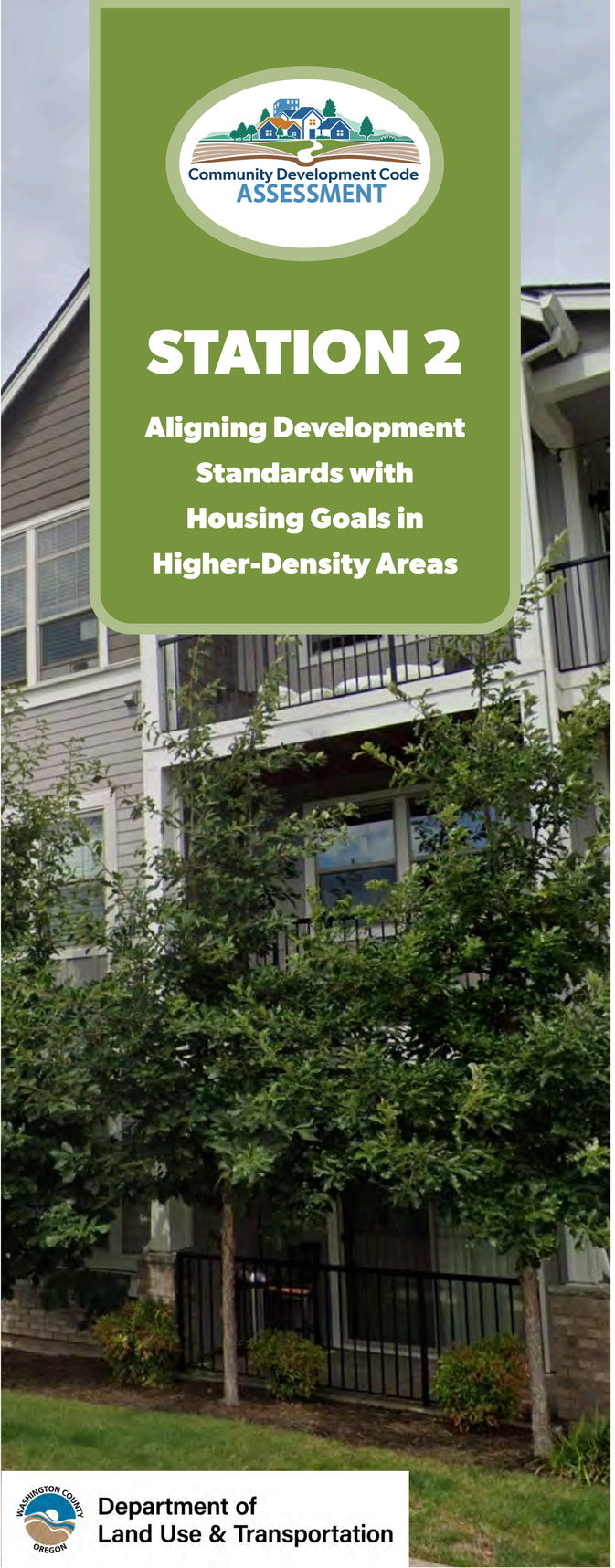

Community Development Code ASSESSMENT

STATION 2

Aligning Development Standards with Housing Goals in Higher-Density Areas

Department of Land Use & Transportation

THE ISSUE:

The County has areas specifically designated for apartment-style and higher density multi-unit housing near transit and services. CDC standards, when combined together, can make it harder to build the amount of housing these areas were meant for. This can mean fewer homes and higher costs. These standards could be updated to better match the goals of these higher density districts.

How Important is this to you?

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Very Important:	
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Not At All Important:	
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WHY IT MATTERS

Density limits are complicated and unclear. The number of homes allowed depends on multiple overlapping factors and aren't consistently applied, making it hard to know how much housing can be built on a given site.

Lot coverage limits, setbacks, and landscaping requirements limit buildable space. Buildings can occupy less than half of the lot, setbacks double once a building exceeds 35 feet tall, and landscaping and open space requirements shrink the area available for homes – all working against taller and denser buildings these areas are meant to encourage.

Height step-downs push buildings away from property edges. Near district boundaries, building heights must be reduced, which reduces the buildable area and limits how many homes can fit on a site.

Bicycle parking requirements may be higher than needed. Requiring more bicycle parking than what residents actually need uses up space that could otherwise be used for additional homes.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS?

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Visualizing barriers to housing in **high density districts**

R-25+
DISTRICT

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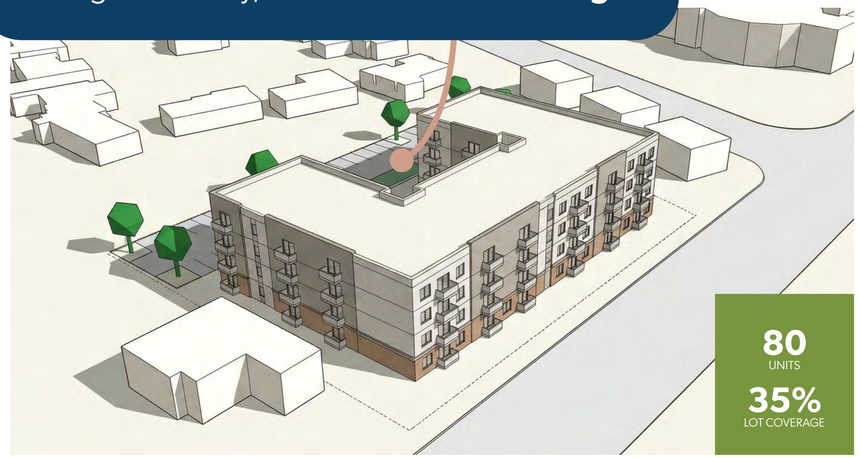
1. Low density, **high lot coverage allowed**

Low density of 32 units/acre may not be economically feasible

2. If higher density, must **reduce lot coverage**

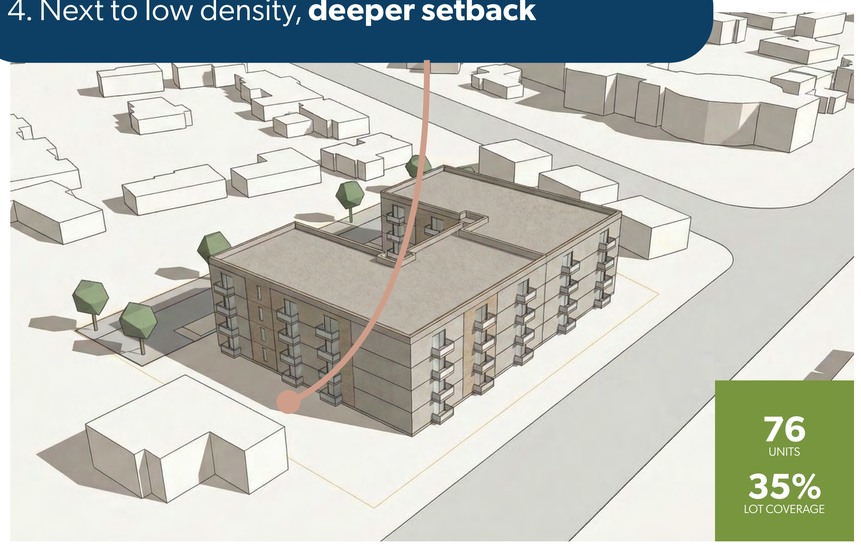


More units allowed, but constrained by lot coverage → limits feasibility

3. If next to low density, must **step down height**

Height step down reduces density, adds costs → limits feasibility

4. Next to low density, **deeper setback**



Can place building outside step-down area, but only gain 4 units → limits feasibility

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS?

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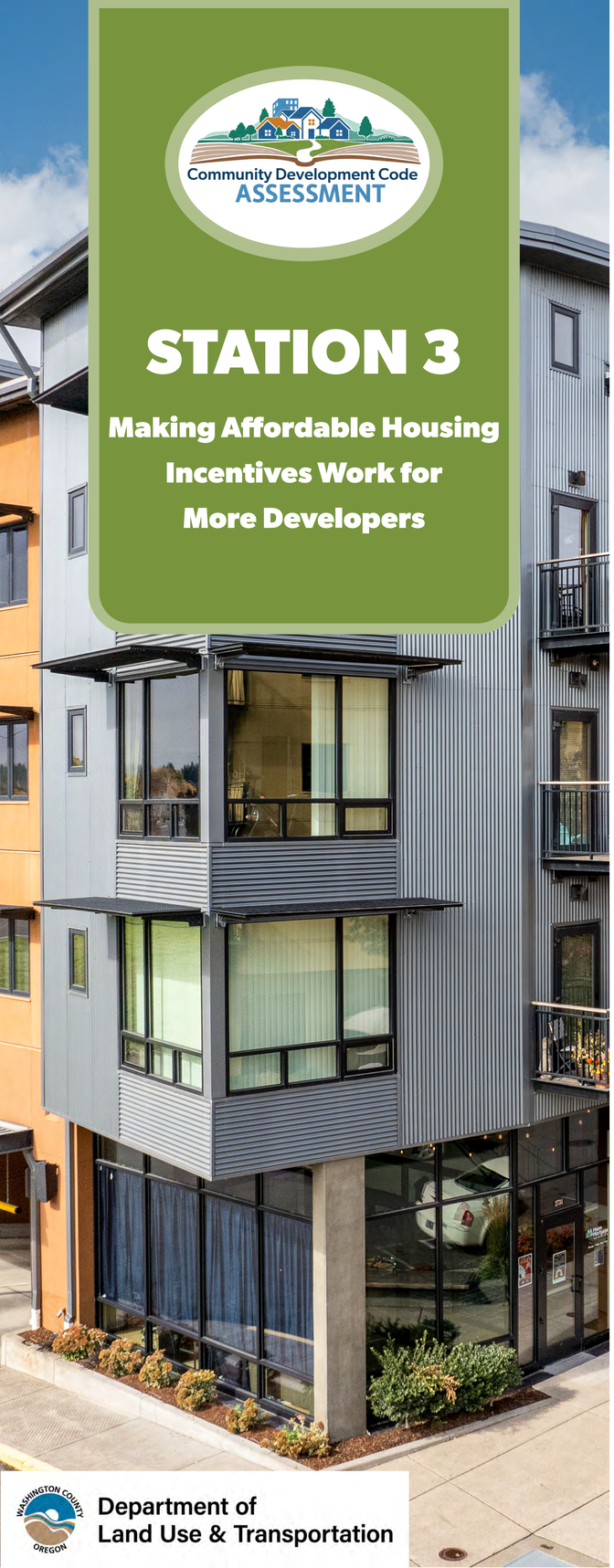

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STATION 3

Making Affordable Housing Incentives Work for More Developers

THE ISSUE:

The CDC offers incentives, such as allowing more units and flexible design to encourage affordable housing, but the way the program is set up, only nonprofit developers can realistically use it. A few changes could open the door for more developers, and ultimately, more affordable homes.

How Important is this to you?

Add your dot sticker below!

Very Important:	
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Not At All Important:	
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WHY IT MATTERS

The current 'all or nothing' incentives limit who can participate. Right now, every unit in a building must be income-restricted to qualify for the incentive. Most for-profit developers need a mix of market-rate and affordable units to make a project work financially. Allowing developers to make just a portion of units affordable would likely bring more developers to the program and result in more affordable units overall.

Raising the income threshold from 80% to 100% of the Area Median Income (AMI) could expand the program's reach. A higher threshold would make the incentive available to more project types and developers, while still helping people who earn below the local median income.

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QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS?

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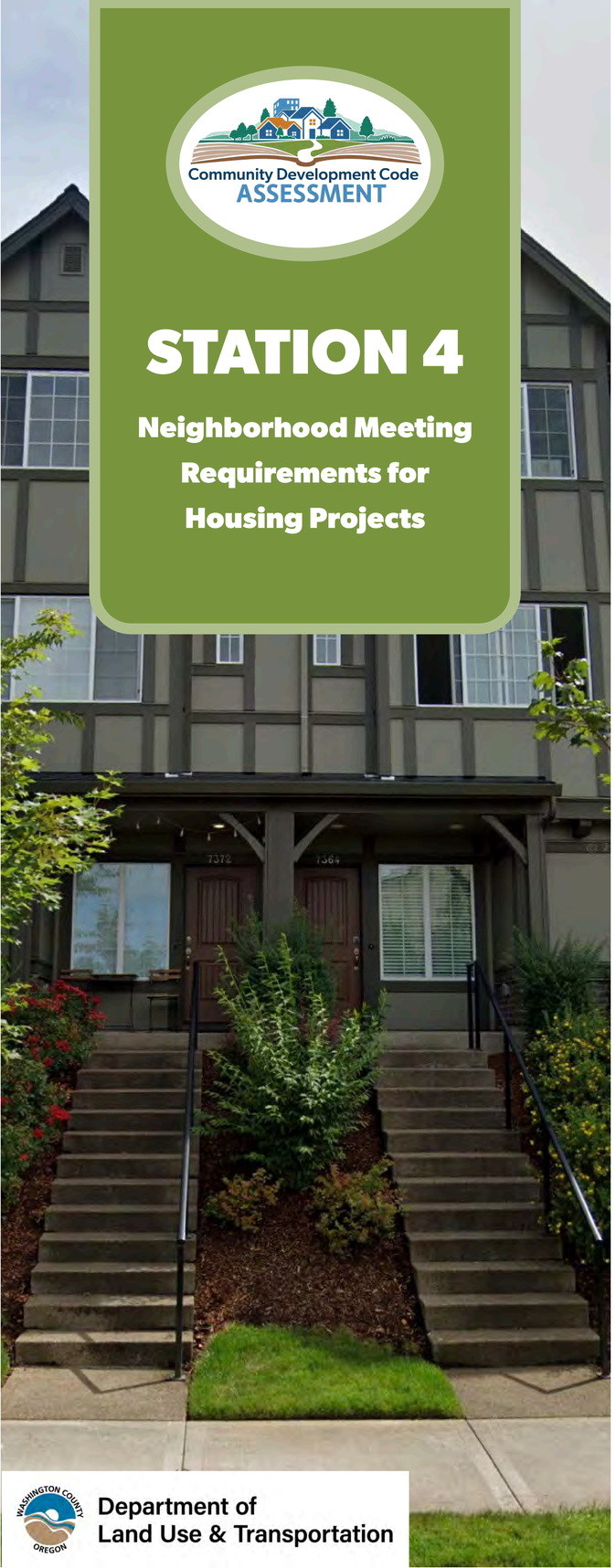

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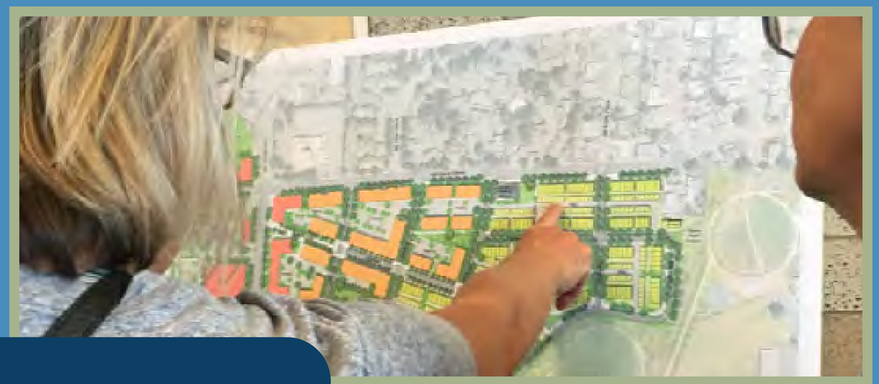
STATION 4

Neighborhood Meeting Requirements for Housing Projects

Department of Land Use & Transportation



THE ISSUE:

The County currently requires most housing projects to hold a neighborhood meeting before an application can be submitted to the County. While neighborhood engagement is valuable, there's an opportunity to balance when neighborhood meetings are required with the types of projects where early community input is most useful.

How Important is this to you?

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WHY IT MATTERS

The requirement applies broadly, even to smaller projects. Most nearby cities, including Beaverton, Hillsboro, and Forest Grove limit neighborhood meetings to larger or more complex projects. The County's approach casts a wider net.

Meetings can influence project outcomes even though they don't formally change decisions. Community expectations raised during meetings can shape conditions of approval, which can add uncertainty to projects that otherwise meet objective standards.

A more targeted approach could focus input where it matters most. Rather than requiring neighborhood meetings for most development projects, the County could set thresholds for when meetings are required, based on project size, intensity, or type.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS?

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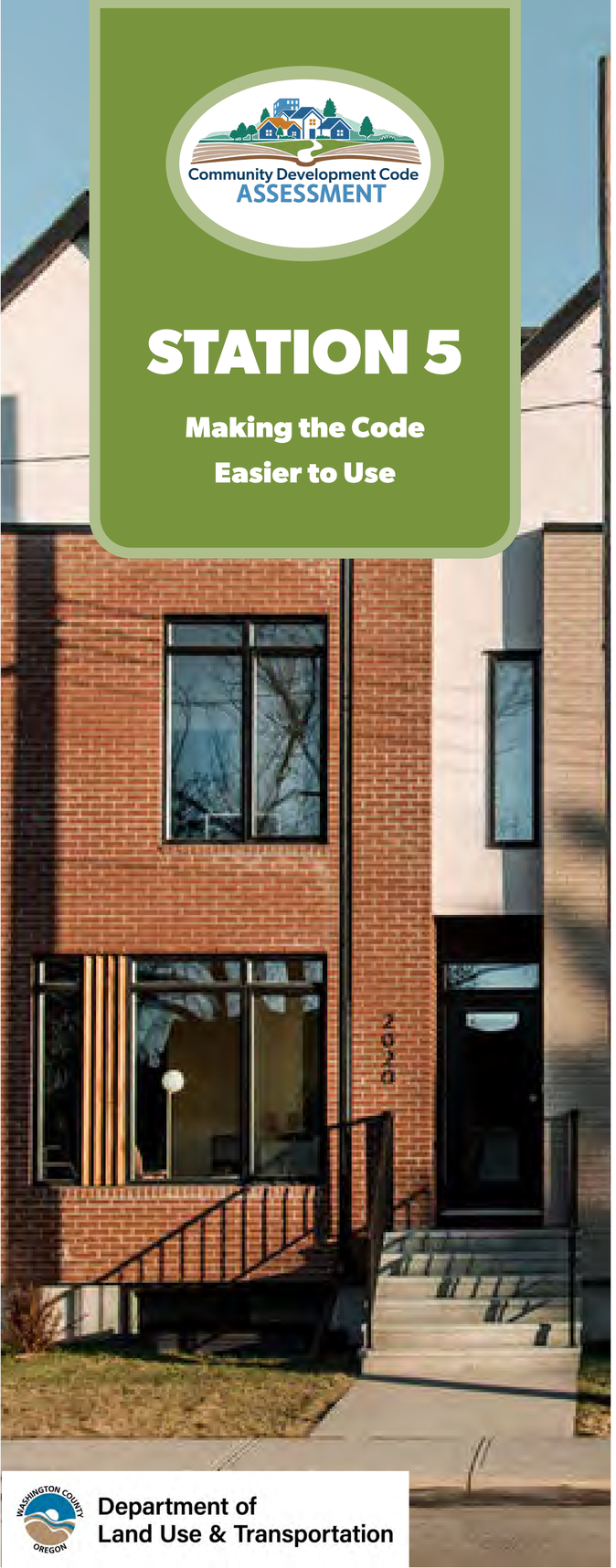

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STATION 5

Making the Code Easier to Use

Department of Land Use & Transportation

THE ISSUE:

The CDC has been updated many times but never fully reviewed for ease of use. Experienced users can navigate it, but newer applicants and community members often find parts of the code harder to navigate than it needs to be. Better organization and formatting could reduce confusion and speed up permitting processes.

How Important is this to you?

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WHY IT MATTERS

Similar rules are repeated across dozens of separate sections. With 38 different land use districts and design standards spread across at least five different code sections, finding the right rules takes a lot of effort. Grouping similar districts together and consolidating overlapping standards would make the code much shorter and easier to navigate.

Application information is scattered, making it hard to know what's required. Submittal requirements, review steps, approval criteria, and definitions are spread throughout the code rather than collected in one place. This makes it especially difficult for first-time applicants.

The code could be easier to understand with better visuals and formatting. Complex standards are mostly described in text with few diagrams. Adding more graphics and organizing permitted uses in simple tables would help everyone understand the rules more quickly.

Design rules are scattered throughout the code, making them hard to follow. A single project might need to juggle requirements from multiple different code sections written at different times. Bringing these together in one place would reduce confusion and make the code more user-friendly, especially for smaller developers.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS?

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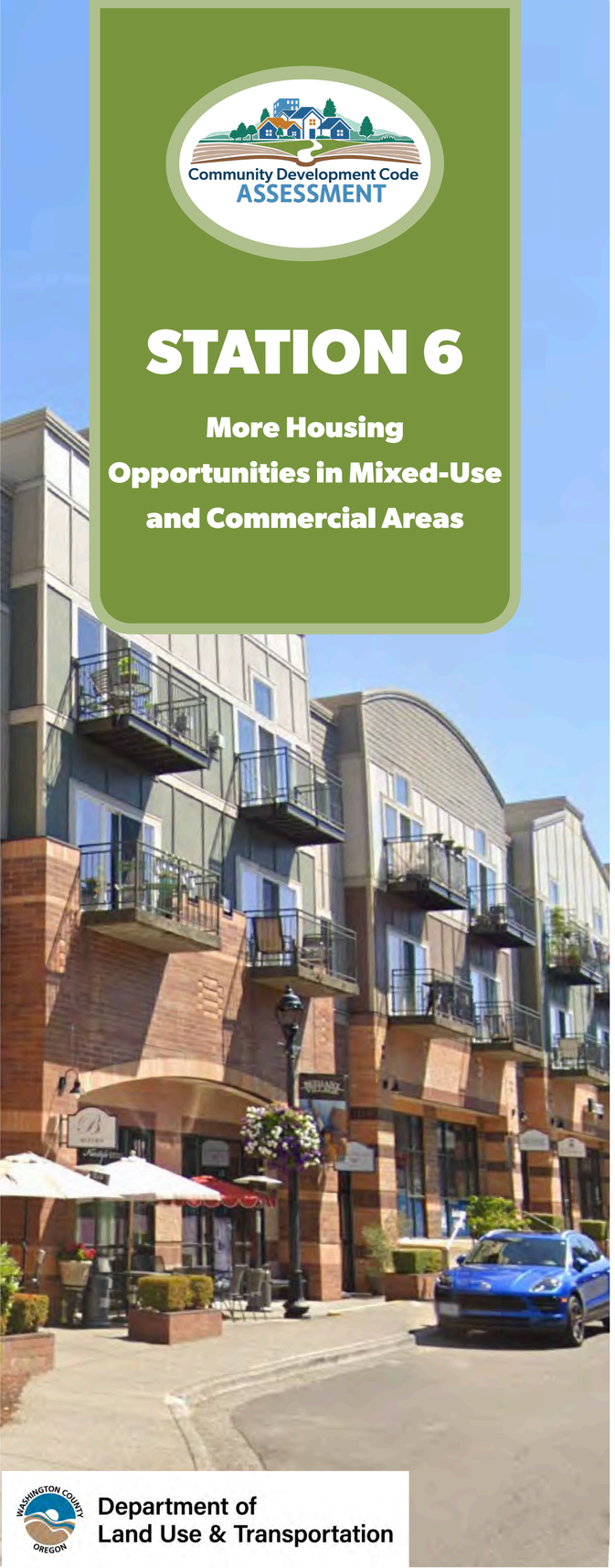
STATION 6

More Housing Opportunities in Mixed-Use and Commercial Areas



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THE ISSUE:

The County has areas designated for a mix of housing and businesses, but current rules limit where and how much housing can be built there. Updates to these rules could allow more homes in areas that are already set up for it.

WHY IT MATTERS

Ground-floor commercial requirements and density caps make housing in mixed-use districts financially difficult. In several commercial and transit-friendly districts, housing is either prohibited on the ground floor or limited to upper floors only, while businesses are required at street level. Add in low density caps (as low as 15 units per acre in some areas), and it becomes hard for developers to make these projects work financially.

Adding housing in commercial and office areas triggers extra hurdles. In Office Commercial districts, adding homes requires a high level of review that includes a public hearing and limits housing to no more than half the building. In some transit areas, including the required commercial space creates a more complex approval process. These extra steps discourage building in areas already close to jobs and transit.

Visualizing barriers to housing in **mixed use districts**

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1. Mixed use allowed, but **low density**

NC DISTRICT

NCCNB DISTRICT

NCMU DISTRICT

- **This amount of commercial space may be difficult to lease up**
- **Low residential density (1 story, 15 units) limits feasibility**

2. High density allowed, but **no housing on ground floor**

TO:RC DISTRICT

CCMU DISTRICT

NMU DISTRICT

- **Higher density improves feasibility**
- **But, high amount of commercial space may be difficult to lease**
- **No option for housing on the ground floor, which could meet needs of some residents**

Department of Land Use & Transportation

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS?

Community Development Code
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Community Development Code ASSESSMENT

STATION 7

Keeping up with State Law

Already Complies: The CDC already meets this state requirement.

In Progress: County staff plans to address this requirement in an upcoming Housing Facilitation Ordinance.

Planned: The County plans to address this requirement in the future.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Several recent Oregon laws require updates to the County's CDC. State law requires clear and objective standards for housing development, and recent legislation adds specific new requirements with defined deadlines.

Requirement	County's Action
Restrictions on Density or Height as Condition of Approval Counties cannot reduce the number of housing units or building height as a condition of approval unless needed to address a health, safety, or habitability issue.	✓
Occupancy Limit Based on Familial Relationship Counties cannot limit how many people can live in a home based on whether they are related to each other.	✓
Accessory Dwelling Units (Urban Area) Counties must allow at least one ADU on each single-detached lot without requiring the owner to live in either unit or provide extra parking.	✓
Middle Housing Counties in the Portland metro area must allow duplexes on every single-detached lot and allow middle housing (like townhomes and small apartment buildings) in residential areas. Rules cannot make middle housing unreasonably costly or slow to build.	◔
Middle Housing Land Divisions When middle housing is built (like townhomes), counties must allow owners to divide the property to create separate lots for each unit through a faster approval process. Counties cannot require separate driveways, parking, or street frontage for each lot.	◔
Manufactured Homes and Prefabricated Structures Counties must allow manufactured homes in single-detached residential zones within urban growth boundaries (UGBs). Design standards cannot be stricter than those for traditional single-detached homes.	◔
Single Room Occupancies (SRO) Counties must allow SRO housing (where residents have private rooms but share kitchens or bathrooms) in areas zoned for single-detached homes, with at least 4 units and density consistent with higher-density residential zones.	◔
Occupancy of Recreational Vehicles (RV) Counties must allow people to live in RVs in RV parks and manufactured home parks with no time limit, as long as they're connected to water, electricity, and sewer.	◔
Manufactured Home Parks Counties must allow manufactured home parks on enough land to meet identified housing needs in areas zoned for 6–12 units per acre. Counties must also allow prefabricated structures (like tiny homes) in these parks and cannot require parks to be larger than one acre.	◷
Residential Homes and Residential Facilities Counties must allow small residential care homes (serving 5 or fewer people) in any area where single-detached homes are allowed, with the same standards as single-detached homes. Counties must allow larger residential care facilities (serving 6–15 people) in any area where multi-unit housing is allowed, with the same approval process.	◷
Affordable Housing: General Siting Allowances Counties must allow affordable housing (where all units are affordable to households earning 80% or less of area median income) on publicly owned land, land zoned for commercial or religious use, or when converting existing commercial buildings, without requiring a zone change or special permit.	◷
Affordable Housing: Redevelopment of Commercial Land Counties must allow affordable housing on commercial land if all units are affordable to households earning 60% or less of area median income, or if it's a mixed-use building with ground-floor commercial and units affordable to moderate-income households (80–120% of area median income).	◷
Affordable Housing: Density and Height Bonus Counties must provide density and height bonuses for affordable housing projects (where 100% of units are affordable to households earning 80% or less of area median income). Bonuses must allow at least 50% more units and at least 20 additional feet of height.	◷
Clear and Objective Standards for Housing Local governments must adopt clear and objective standards, conditions, and procedures when regulating the development of housing, including needed housing, on land within a UGB. Outside the UGB, clear and objective standards are required for rural residential districts and farmworker housing.	◷
Opting-In to Affordable Housing Regulations Counties must let applicants choose to use newer, more favorable housing standards adopted after they submitted their application, without having to withdraw and resubmit.	◷

Community Development Code ASSESSMENT

STATION 8

What are the Two Most Important Issues for the County to Address?

Your Input Matters!

Your feedback, in addition to input from other stakeholders including County staff, the CDC Technical Advisory Committee, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Commissioners, will help us to develop future packages of CDC amendments addressing high-priority issues.

Please note that not every issue will be addressed immediately and we are considering input from a variety of stakeholders. Some updates may require further study, coordination with other jurisdictions, or additional resources. We will continue to engage the community as specific amendments are developed and recommendations are made to the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners.

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