

# Family Center one step closer to new facility with regulation updates

By BRIANA ALZOLA Feb 6, 2018



The Anacortes Family Center will move forward on a new development with affordable housing units after the Anacortes City Council voted unanimously Monday to approve new Affordable Housing Demonstration Program Regulations.

The regulations, an amendment to Anacortes Municipal Code, will be in place for one year until the final development regulations update is completed this summer or it is removed by council resolution, whichever comes first, said city Director of Planning, Community and Economic Development Don Measamer.

The update means the center is a step closer to building its new facility, Executive Director Dustin Johnson said.

There was no way these units would have gotten built with the existing regulations, he said.

“The city is taking a bold step in allowing us to maximize the use of these lots,” Johnson said.

Councilman Ryan Walters talked about what a big step this is.

“I just wanted to say how incredibly important this is to real people who will live in that building,” Walters said. “People that lose their place to live in Anacortes are frequently in really dire straights, because you might have been able to afford something with some locked-in rent, but if you want to go find something else, it might be very, very difficult. ... It is just incredible important, the work the Family Center is doing. This building is a huge opportunity to expand the services they offer.”

The regulations apply to all developers who are putting in affordable housing, Measamer said.

The update was approved by the planning commission in January, and edits after concerns from the public were made before bringing it to the council Monday, Measamer said.

The process included public comment and feedback from staff, as well as from Planning Commission, City Council and various committee members, Measamer said.

The language has been written in a way that will mean that only affordable housing projects can use the regulations update, and it should encourage other groups to pursue affordable housing projects in the future, Councilwoman Liz Lovelett said.

The City Council first heard about the Anacortes Family Center project in September 2017. At that time, Johnson asked the council to consider some amendments to its

code for a new facility. Mainly, it needed changes to parking requirements, density maximums and height requirements.

Those are all in the amendments. The regulations call for one parking space per unit, a 50-foot height limit and an exemption from maximum density standards.

Instead of approving the amendments for just the family center, city staff drafted amended regulations that would apply to all developers seeking to install affordable housing, one of the things the city has listed as a top need.

The center plans to break ground on its new units in May. Strandberg Construction donated design work, Brooks Middleton donated architectural work and Dale Herringstead provided the civil engineer.

Construction will take about a year, and units could be occupied by next summer, Johnson said.

The family center's proposed three-story, 20-unit complex would be made up of studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments. Tenants would need to qualify as low income (less than 50 percent the median income) and will pay rent based on U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development rent guidelines, though the housing will not be government funded.

A family of four would need to make less than \$33,000 a year, Johnson said.

The building will cost around \$2 million and is already mostly funded, Johnson said. The center also owns the land where the facility will be built.

The center is waiting to hear back about Skagit County funds it applied for, which could go toward development upgrades like an elevator.