

# Anacortes adjusts zoning to allow for affordable housing project

By BRANDON STONE Feb 6, 2018



**ANACORTES** — The Anacortes City Council paved the way Monday for 20 units of affordable housing by adjusting zoning in a portion of the city.

The ordinance provides “development regulation flexibility in exchange for affordable rental units,” according to city Planning, Community & Economic Development Director Dan Measamer.

Before the ordinance was passed, the area between 22nd and 29th streets from M Avenue to just west of Commercial Avenue had a housing limit of 18 units per acre and a building height limit of 35 feet.

But now nonprofits or housing authorities can build in the area without density caps and up to 50 feet in height, as long as every unit is affordable for someone making 50 percent of the area median income, which is about \$33,000 for a family of four.

“The whole idea is to secure safe, affordable housing for the community,” Measamer said. “Density shouldn’t be an issue.”

The ordinance was inspired by a 20-unit housing complex planned by the Anacortes Family Center, said Dustin Johnson, the nonprofit’s executive director.

Johnson said he was aware new development regulations were being discussed, but said in order to keep his project on track and to help address the city’s affordable housing problem he needed to push if he was to break ground in May.

Four years ago, he said, the nonprofit had about 150 families come in for services.

“(In 2017) we had 398 families apply for services (and) we were only able to serve 75 of them,” he said. “The acuity of the need is increasing at a fever pitch.”

The nonprofit already operates an emergency shelter and a transitional house on the block where it plans to build the 20 units of housing.

Johnson called this new project the final piece of the nonprofit’s campus, making it easier for staff to help residents progress through their services.

“It’s the last step on our continuum of care,” he said.

Measamer said projects such as the Anacortes Family Center’s will still be required to abide by certain design standards, so the projects match the look of the neighborhood.

The loosening of development regulations Monday is a prelude of what to expect when the city finalizes its forthcoming development regulation amendments.

Measamer said the city plans to pass new regulations this summer, and it aims to provide similar incentives to high-density housing developers in other areas of the city.

Johnson said the Anacortes Family Center has raised \$2 million for the new project, meeting its fundraising goals.

On Thursday, the nonprofit will hold its fourth annual Dine Out to End Homelessness fundraiser, which Johnson called its flagship event.

Seventeen Anacortes restaurants will donate a portion of their profits that day to the nonprofit, and Anacortes Family Center staff will offer raffle tickets.