

## Affordable Hometown Port Townsend

### For Immediate Release

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On July 7, the Washington State Growth Management Hearings Board heard oral arguments in Affordable Hometown Port Townsend's (AHPT) appeal of the city's 2025 Comprehensive Plan update and related development regulations. AHPT is challenging the city on policies involving: public participation; major density increases in the R-II zone; the absence of sufficient road and transportation analysis, and inadequate provisions to ensure housing affordability across all income levels.

Under the adopted regulations, six-unit buildings are now allowed on standard 5,000-s.f.residential lots—up to 48 units per block—along with reduced, minimal setbacks, increased height and lot coverage, and zero parking requirements. The R-II zone covers more than 40% of Port Townsend's land area. AHPT's attorney, Bryan Telegin, argued that the city's staff analysis misrepresented the real-world impacts of these changes.

Key issues in AHPT's appeal include a lack of "truth in labeling" in the code amendments, limited transparency, and insufficient public participation during the City Council's last minute presentations and deliberations. Most significantly, the sixfold density increase contains no mandates or incentives for developers to include affordable units. As AHPT's attorney noted, it "blows the doors open to 6–12 plexes anywhere in town" for market-rate development, with the city's own analysis showing that it could allow up to 34,920 dwelling units in the R-II zone over the next 20 years.

The Hearing Board members were well-prepared, demonstrating familiarity with the briefs and the record and asking pointed clarifying questions. Board members questioned the city attorney about documents showing that the city had not met state-mandated affordability requirements for adequately planning for the lowest income band—an omission that recently led to a non-compliance finding in another GMA case. The Board also asked whether the city's Capital Improvement Plan was out of date and therefore not compliant with GMA.

A final decision is expected by August 19, 2026. If the Plan is found out of compliance, it will be remanded to the city for amendment and then reviewed by the GMHB for sufficiency and compliance with GMA requirements. AHPT will urge the city to have a robust public hearing process before making revisions to the Plan.

AHPT supports thoughtful, well-planned increases in density that consider potential unintended impacts. We endorse the Planning Commission's recommendation of four units per lot (32 units per block). Our goal is a Comprehensive Plan that provides affordable housing for workforce and lower-income residents while avoiding the gentrification and displacement seen in other small communities. We welcome collaboration with the City Council, staff and other community members to refine the Plan and development regulations to better meet Port Townsend's long-term needs.

AHPT's and the city's legal briefs are available at [AffordableHometownPT.org](https://AffordableHometownPT.org) on the Appeal page.