

## **Approach to Selecting Alternatives and Studying of Residential Density**

The City has been asked why an alternative with a lower residential density is not being studied in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Below is an explanation of the purpose of an EIS, the rationale of studying only No Action and Action/Proposal alternatives, and the approach in the EIS to studying residential density.

### **Alternatives**

An EIS document provides an impartial discussion of significant environmental impacts, and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. For a proposal like Potala Village, the EIS is to look at the proposal and analyze its impacts on the issues identified in the scope of the EIS. **An EIS for a specific private proposal is not a planning document to look at what should be developed on the site. It is a study of what is being proposed.**

The EIS will study two alternative developments:

1. No Action, the existing development of 1 single family home and approximately 2,460 square foot commercial space, and
2. Action/Proposal of 143 residential units and 6,200 square feet of commercial space.

Comments have been made that 12 units per acre (existing zoning of surrounding area) or 24 units per acre (some surrounding developments are built at about this density) should be studied. The SEPA rules state that "reasonable alternatives" that meet the "proposal's objectives" are to be studied. For the 1.2 acre site, 12 units per acre would result in 15 units and 24 units per acre would be 30 units for the property. The City concluded that these alternatives have significantly less density than the proposal and thus would not be consistent with the SEPA test of meeting the proposal's objective.

In addition, looking at another alternative with less density does not provide any new information about the impacts of the proposed development. A development with less density can fill the same building size as proposed by making the units larger or providing more amenities. The proposed development meets the City's adopted level of service (LOS) for traffic which means that a development with less density would also meet the City's LOS standards. Construction impacts and environmental remediation measures would be the same.

### **EIS Approach to Study of Residential Density**

The EIS will look at bulk and mass "alternatives" for the building:

- Breaking the proposed building into three buildings;
- Reducing the number of floors from four to three stories;
- Considering the City's design review standards (not required by code for the project site) for building modulation; and
- Redesigning the rectangular building into other configurations, including U- and H-shaped buildings

With each of these alternative development scenarios, a reduced density would be determined based on the average size of the units in the proposal imposed on the reduced building square footage of each "alternative".

The EIS will look at the neighborhood land use patterns (size and scale of buildings, number of units, landscaping and other elements) of the surrounding area to identify mitigating measures that would make the proposal blend into the neighborhood more effectively. Mitigation could include number of floors, façade modulation, balconies, landscaping, building setbacks or other identified measures.

The traffic study will look at impacts in the neighborhood with possible opportunities where a reduced density could provide improvement to traffic level of service. Any required mitigation must be based on adopted policies or standards.