



CITY OF WHITE SALMON
Planning Commission Meeting - Wednesday, July 9, 2025

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Commission Members:

Carl Trabant, Chair
Erika Price
Michael Morneault (Zoom)
Brendan Brown (Zoom)
Nate Loker

Staff:

Rowan Fairfield, Planner
Erika Castro Guzman, Project Coordinator
Kelly Hickok, Legal Counsel

CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Chair Carl Trabant called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. A quorum of planning commissioner members was present. One member of the community attended the meeting in person.

Presentation

1. Short Course Video

a. Summary of “Comprehensive Planning Basics” (WA Dept. of Commerce)

Why comprehensive planning? Washington’s 1990 Growth Management Act (GMA) was adopted to curb uncoordinated sprawl and protect the state’s environment, economy, and quality of life. It sets out 14 statewide goals that guide how counties and cities must plan for growth.

Three mutually-exclusive land designations the GMA requires every county to map:

1. Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) – enough land at urban densities for the next 20 years of population and job growth.
2. Rural Areas – places outside UGAs that retain rural character and limited services.
3. Natural-Resource Lands – commercially significant farm, forest, and mineral lands that must be conserved.

Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs):

- Counties, working with their cities, adopt CPPs to create a county-level framework so all city and county plans are “mutually consistent.”
- CPPs typically allocate population & employment targets, spell out how UGAs can expand, and may address regional issues such as climate, transit, or growth centers.

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Required elements of every comprehensive plan:

ELEMENT	PURPOSE
Land Use	Future land-use map, population and employment allocations, policies for critical areas and resource lands
Housing	Inventory, analysis of current and projected needs, policies and capacity for all income levels
Transportation	Multimodal plan (roads, transit, bike/ped), level-of-service standards, 6-yr financing strategy
Capital Facilities	Inventory of public facilities, 6-yr funding plan aligning growth with infrastructure
Utilities	Water, sewer, stormwater, and private utilities coordination
Rural (For Counties)	Protect rural character, limited densities and services
Shoreline	Integrate shoreline master program (where applicable)

Counties and cities often add optional chapters—parks, economic development, climate, urban design, etc. to reflect local priorities.

Consistency rules:

- *Internal consistency* – all elements of one jurisdiction’s plan must agree with each other and its development regulations.
- *External consistency* – each plan must align with state law, CPPs, regional plans, and the plans of adjoining jurisdictions.

Essential Public Facilities (EPFs): Facilities such as airports, prisons, and regional transit centers are classed as EPFs; local plans/regulations cannot preclude them outright but must follow a fair siting process.

Role of the Department of Commerce: Commerce’s Growth Management Services unit provides technical help, grants, and the Short-Course trainings (including this video) to assist jurisdictions in meeting GMA requirements and updates.

PUBLIC HEARING

2. Unit Lot Subdivision

Chair Carl Trabant opened a public hearing to review proposed Unit Lot Subdivision Ordinance, Chapter 16.66 – Unit Lot Subdivision at 5:42 p.m.

Presentation

City Planner Rowan Fairfield explained the purpose of Unit Lot Subdivisions (ULS): to enable builders to create fee-simple lots for both detached and attached dwellings while applying zoning standards to the parent lot, allowing for greater design flexibility. Unlike condominium ownership, ULS allows each homeowner to hold title to both the structure and the land beneath it. The draft ordinance draws on language from Port Townsend’s municipal code and the Washington Department of Commerce’s model ordinance.

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Timeline and Key Milestones:

- The ordinance was initially drafted by consultant Dr. Michael Mahaffey, funded through a Department of Commerce grant.
- The project was prompted by a 2023 state law requiring cities to allow Unit Lot Subdivisions (ULS) through the short-plat process.
- Planning Commission hearings were held on March 12, 2025 (public hearing opened), and April 9, 2025 (workshop and continuation of the public hearing with a motion).
- The City Council reviewed the draft on May 21, 2025, and remanded it with three directives: reconsider the exclusion of the RL zone, revise the purpose statement, and include additional clarifications.
- Staff and Planning Commission work sessions on June 11 and 25, 2025, led to the development of the current draft.

Main Revisions Since April 2025:

- Reorganized sections for clarity, corrected cross-references, shifted language to active voice, and replaced specific housing terms with the more inclusive term “dwellings.”
- Clarified that plats proposing five or more unit lots must go through the long-subdivision process.
- Added final plat notes as required by SB 5559, which takes effect later in July 2025.
- Removed the one-dwelling-per-unit-lot restriction to allow for current or future Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).
- Chose not to exclude the Single-Family Large-Lot (RL) zone from the ordinance.

Planner Fairfield concluded that, with the recent refinements, the ordinance is ready for reconsideration by the City Council, pending the Commission’s recommendation this evening.

Public Testimony

Chair Carl Trabant opened the Public Testimony portion of the hearing at 5:46 p.m.

Brad Gearheart, Inside City Limits

City resident Brad Gearhart expressed support for the ordinance and offered no further comments.

Chair Trabant noted that one written comment had been submitted to the Planning Commission and was entered into the official meeting record.

Chair Carl Trabant closed the Public Testimony portion of the hearing at 5:49 p.m.

Discussion

Chair Carl Trabant opened the public hearing by inviting comments from the commission. The discussion focused on a proposed ordinance establishing procedures for unit lot subdivisions.

Commissioner Michael Morneault began by identifying an internal reference issue in subsection 16.66.050(A). He noted that the phrase describing how the “parent lot is divided into unit lots” should be revised to say “depending on the number of unit lots.” Chair Trabant directed him to the correct subsection, and with that clarification accepted, Commissioner Morneault indicated he had no further concerns.

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The discussion then focused on sections 16.66.060(C and D) and 16.66.070(C). Commissioner Brendan Brown observed that these sections address environmental impact findings and broader development review criteria, topics that extend beyond the ordinance's focus on ownership division. He questioned whether these provisions were still appropriate. Chair Trabant noted that written public comment had raised similar concern and suggested the commission revisit those sections collectively.

Returning to the most recent draft revisions, Chair Trabant questioned the removal of a sentence in section 16.66.040 that had prohibited "stacked" dwellings within separately owned unit lots. He felt this language was important for distinguishing the ordinance from condominium regulations by ensuring that each fee-simple parcel was tied to ground-based ownership.

Commissioner Erika Price and Planner Rowan Fairfield explained that the deletion aimed to prevent unintended consequences, such as prohibiting a single-family home with an internal or basement ADU. In such cases, the dwelling units may be vertically stacked, but only one would qualify as a unit lot eligible for separate ownership. The commission agreed that the intent is to prohibit separately owned stacked dwellings, not vertical stacking itself, and explored alternative wording to clearly convey that.

Commissioner Morneault then inquired whether a unit lot created from a parent lot could be further subdivided. Chair Trabant and Planner Fairfield clarified that while the ordinance limits most R-1 and RL parcels to three dwellings, future re-plats could create additional unit lots only from the original parent parcel, not from already-sold child parcels. Any such changes would need to comply with building separation requirements and could involve a homeowners association (HOA) if common areas are shared. In some cases, HOA covenants may govern whether further subdivision is allowed.

With the substantive discussion concluded, the commission turned to potential next steps. Several members had not yet reviewed the written public comment, including a redlined draft generated with AI. It was noted that the commenter's long-standing engagement with the issue warranted a review. While there was some openness to adopting the ordinance as written and addressing procedural refinements later, the general consensus favored a detailed, line-by-line analysis at the next meeting.

Action

Moved by Michael Morneault. Seconded by Brendan Brown.

Motion to table the Unit Lot Subdivision Ordinance Public Hearing and continue it to the next meeting [on July 23, 2025].

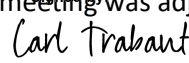
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
Price – Aye, Morneault – Aye, Brown – Aye, Loker – Aye, Trabant – Aye.

Chairman Trabant tabled the public hearing for continuation at 6:09 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Signed by:

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Carl Trabant, Chair

Signed by:

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Erika Castro Guzman, Project Coordinator