

Issues & Impacts

First Quarter Edition
January–March 2026

In this Issue:

Advancing Co-Living Housing	2
Burien Down-Zoning “Off the Table”	3
Infrastructure Exemptions for Infill Development	3
More Housing in More Places	4
Federal Way Reforms Parking Requirements	6
Bellevue Elects REALTOR®-Supported Mayor	6
City of Kent Begins Phase 3	7

A quarterly publication produced by Seattle King County REALTORS® to inform members about currently issues and successes within the Government Affairs Department.



Advancing Co-Living Housing

Seattle King County REALTORS® (SKCR) has been closely monitoring and supporting city efforts to comply with new co-living housing mandates adopted by the legislature in 2024. The 2024 co-living housing amendments to state law—now codified as Section 535 of the state’s Growth Management Act—require that cities change their development regulations to allow co-living housing units on any urban lot that allows at least six multi-family residential units, including on lots zoned for mixed-use development. One of the reasons the issue is important to REALTORS® is that the availability of co-living housing units can help to reduce demand for larger family-sized homes that can then be available to larger households.

Cities were required to amend their development codes by December 31, 2025, to comply with the state’s new co-living housing rules. Some cities in King County have not met the deadline, and SKCR remains committed to monitoring the progress of cities like Enumclaw, that continued their work in the first quarter of 2026.

In early December 2025, Enumclaw adopted an interim ordinance that provided the city with technical compliance while allowing the city to evaluate impacts on traffic, parking, utilities, emergency services, and neighborhood compatibility. The

city will assess building, fire, and life-safety code requirements for co-living structures, complete required State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental reviews of proposed permanent rules, and ensure public engagement and Planning Commission review consistent with the City’s legislative procedures.

Co-living housing means a residential development with sleeping units that are independently occupied and lockable. The units provide personal living and sleeping space, but residents share kitchen facilities with other sleeping units in the building. The stated objectives of the new law include providing additional housing options for people who:

- wish to lower their housing expenses
- prefer a living arrangement that facilitates social connections,
- wish to live in a high opportunity neighborhood they could not otherwise afford, or
- want a low-cost, more private alternative to having a roommate in a traditional rental.

Additionally, co-living housing provides a good option for seniors, especially those who want to downsize, or those who desire a living arrangement that is more social than a standard apartment.



Interurban Lofts, Shoreline, WA



The Roost, Seattle, WA

Burien Down-Zoning Is “Off the Table”

Pushback from Burien residents against city ordinances increasing density have largely been put to rest following a review of city ordinances.

In 2025, the Burien City Council approved density increases that exceeded the minimum requirements of HB 1110 and included a reclassification of the exclusive single-family legacy neighborhoods of Seahurst, Lake Burien and Three Tree Point from low-density residential zoning (R1) to high-density residential zoning (R3).

Property owners in Seahurst, Lake Burien and Three Tree Point objected, and advocated aggressively for the city to down-zone to the minimum densities required under HB 1110, claiming the density increases were not aligned with the city’s Shoreline Master Program. They sought the assistance of State Senator Tina Orwell who arranged for a review of the matter by the Department of Commerce. State officials confirmed that although Burien’s ordinance exceeded the state

minimums, the additional density allowed under the city ordinance did not violate HB 1110.

In the meantime, a new city council majority was elected, and they voted to reject a proposed down-zone on January 26, 2026. One Councilmember indicated the issue is now “off the table.”

Subsequently, city staff indicated they would prepare separate proposals to address any inconsistencies with shoreline regulations, which the City Council could consider. Under those proposals, density classifications remain largely the same with these additions:

- Several commercial lots in shoreline neighborhoods would be reclassified as residential.
- Only properties along the north shore of Three Tree Point would be down-zoned from R3 to R1, while the rest of Three Tree Point, Seahurst, and Lake Burien would remain zoned in the higher density category.

Infrastructure Exemptions for Infill Development

Seattle King County REALTORS® successfully supported code changes in the City of Kent to exempt small infill housing projects of four or fewer units from requirements to expand infrastructure as a pre-condition of construction. The action is part of a city initiative to remove barriers to small-scale infill development while also advancing other city goals, such as implementing transportation multi-modal level of service.

The proposed changes for development of four or fewer units will help lessen financial hurdles for small-scale infill development, ultimately working to help keep middle housing construction more

affordable, and thereby help to make small-scale infill development more attainable to a broader range of residents throughout the city.

In evaluating this potential infrastructure exemption, city staff evaluated more than 15 years of applications for the division of land. Their assessment disclosed that applicants for smaller-scale developments frequently do not complete the permitting process, and the housing projects are not developed. One reason is the high costs associated with right-of-way, which can best be absorbed when more units are proposed.

More Housing in More Places

Seattle King County REALTORS® (SKCR) has played a vital role throughout the region in encouraging policymakers to prioritize housing supply, transit-oriented growth, and permitting reform. We are eager to see the fruits of our labor in the form of:

- More listings with redevelopment potential
- Increased activity from small builders and infill developers
- Shifting buyer expectations as new housing types enter the market
- Greater focus on permitting timelines, design standards, and neighborhood engagement

The regional direction is clear: more housing in more places.

KING COUNTY

Countywide Permitting Modernization

The Department of Local Services is advancing a multi-year permitting modernization effort for unincorporated King County. Key components include digitizing legacy records, streamlining ADU approvals, and reducing review timelines for subdivisions. A draft plan is expected in late spring, with Council action likely in Q3.

Transit-Oriented Development at County Facilities

King County is evaluating TOD opportunities at several Metro-owned sites, particularly in South King County. RFPs are expected for mixed-income housing and commercial partnerships later this year.

SEATTLE

Centers & Corridors Legislation Heads to Council

Mayor Wilson has transmitted the Centers & Corridors zoning package to the City Council, marking the next major step in Seattle's multi-phase land-use overhaul. The proposal would create 30 new Neighborhood Centers and expand density along key transit corridors—opening more areas for apartments, mixed-use buildings, townhomes, and small-scale infill.

SKCR supports this effort to unlock redevelopment potential in areas previously limited to single-family or low-intensity uses and attract more interest from small builders and infill developers.

More Housing in More Places

BELLEVUE

Housing Opportunities in Mixed-Use Areas (HOMA) Code Amendment

The City Council has passed the Housing Opportunities in Mixed-Use Areas (HOMA) land use code amendment, designed to encourage housing development by allowing higher density, taller buildings, and by removing obstacles to building more homes.

Building on the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan, the HOMA amendment changes the Land Use Code to:

- Remove barriers to housing development
- Encourage housing in mixed-use areas where residential and commercial uses coexist
- Increase affordable housing opportunities throughout the city

Downtown & BelRed Strategy Refresh

Bellevue is beginning a refresh of its Downtown and BelRed growth strategies, with a draft scope expected in summer 2026.

REDMOND

Redmond 2050 Implementation Continues

Redmond is advancing zoning and transportation updates tied to Redmond 2050, including increased capacity around new light-rail stations and expanded allowances for missing-middle housing. Draft code language heads to the Planning & Public Works Committee in April.

SHORELINE

Station-Area Housing Pipeline Expands

Shoreline continues to experience strong housing activity around the 145th and 185th light rail stations. The city is evaluating additional height and density allowances, with Planning Commission hearings in June and Council action expected in early fall.

Cottage Housing & ADU Updates

Shoreline is preparing updates to its cottage housing and ADU regulations, with a draft of the ordinance anticipated in Q2.

ISSAQUAH

Central Issaquah Plan Refresh

Issaquah is updating its Central Issaquah Plan, focusing on residential capacity, mixed-use standards, and mobility improvements. The Land & Shore Committee will review alternatives in May, with a preferred option expected by late summer.

Housing Capacity & Affordability Tools

The city is evaluating new tools to support housing production, including incentives for multi-family development and streamlined permitting for townhomes. A staff report is expected in Q3.

Federal Way Reforms Parking Requirements

City parking requirements can have significant impacts on the cost of bringing new housing units to the market. Seattle King County REALTORS® is closely monitoring how cities are working to modify their development codes to comply with a 2025 state law that limits how much parking cities can require (SB 5184). One of the first cities to take up the issue is Federal Way, whose Planning Commission has begun work on the issue in anticipation of the City Council adopting changes to the city's parking requirements by October.

Senate Bill 5184—the Parking Reform and Modernization Act (PRMA)—requires cities with populations over 50,000 to reduce minimum parking requirements by January 27, 2027. Cities must base parking requirements on market conditions, not one-size-fits-all regulations. The WA legislature said the changes are intended to reduce the

cost of development, encourage walking and multimodal transportation, improve health, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by discouraging excessive reliance on automobiles.

Under the new law, the minimum number of parking spaces cities can require varies (between 0.5 and 2.0) for multi-family, single-family and commercial development. Additionally, cities cannot impose parking requirements for a variety of land uses, including affordable housing, childcare centers, and ground level non-residential spaces in mixed-use buildings, among others.

The WA Department of Commerce is developing guidance for cities that will be finalized by June 2026 to assist cities and complying with the new law.

Bellevue Elects REALTOR®-Supported Mayor

The Bellevue City Council elected REALTOR®-supported councilmembers Mo Malakoutian and Dave Hamilton as mayor and deputy mayor, respectively, in January. Malakoutian and Hamilton will serve in these roles for the next two years.

Malakoutian, still in his first term, succeeds Councilmember Lynne Robinson, who served as mayor the past six years. Malakoutian was deputy mayor in 2024 and 2025. Hamilton, like Malakoutian, was also first elected to the council in 2023.

Bellevue operates under a council-manager form of government, with the council hiring a city manager to oversee all city operations. The council is made up of seven members elected at large who serve staggered four-year terms. The council members, in turn, select a mayor and deputy mayor from among themselves every two years.



Dave Hamilton (left) and Mo Malakoutian, the Deputy Mayor and Mayor of Bellevue, respectively.

City of Kent Begins Phase 3



Since adopting code changes in the comprehensive plan that were required by the WA legislature in 2025, the city of Kent launched an additional regulatory reform initiative called ReCode Kent – Phase 2. That effort, which is nearly concluded with support from Seattle King County REALTORS®, involves significant additional reforms including, but not limited to:

- Allowing more types of housing in the city’s Community Commercial zone by providing flexibility for ground-floor residential uses in commercial property, as well as revising other limitations that limited residential uses.
- Increasing residential density within a quarter-mile of 104th Ave SE.
- Revisions to multifamily residential design standards, and
- Increasing site-coverage ratios to and increasing building heights to 5 stories.

Now, Mayor Dana Ralph has announced Kent is moving forward with **ReCode Kent – Phase 3**. Seattle King County REALTORS® will continue to be

involved because the initiative will continue to update city development regulations to support more housing, and a sustainable and vibrant Kent.

Phase 3 includes a plan for Downtown Kent, aimed at encouraging the reuse of vacant land, mixed-use and mixed-income development, and improving public safety. City leaders hope to revitalize the identity of the downtown core and promote it as a regional destination for shopping and events.

Phase 3 will also update the city’s Critical Areas Ordinance and continue efforts to clean up brownfields, which are vacant or underused properties where redevelopment is complicated by potential environmental concerns. The City of Kent received a \$500,000 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant to identify potential sites, assess environmental risks, and develop cleanup and reuse plans with property owners and community members to move challenging properties toward redevelopment, while protecting public health and supporting economic growth.

SKCR Advocacy Leadership

Matthew Huddleston

2026 VP of Governmental & Public Affairs
matthewhu@zillowgroup.com

Craig Walker

2026 VP-Elect of Governmental & Public Affairs
craig@cwregroup.com

Taylor Shanaman

Director of Governmental and Public Affairs
tshanaman@nwrealtor.com

Legislative Housing Advocates

Sam Pace

South King County Specialist
sam@sampace.com

Randy Bannecker

Seattle/King County Specialist
randy@bannecker.com

Please call Taylor at 425.974.1013 for questions or comments.



REALTOR® Political Action Committee

Scan the code to invest in RPAC—a quick and easy way to protect your business.

Issues & Impacts

Seattle King County REALTORS® (SKCR) is working to ensure that public policies support homeownership and your business's bottom line.

Please contact Taylor Shanaman, Director of Governmental and Public Affairs, at tshanaman@nwrealtor.com with any local legislative issues that may need our attention.

The next issue will be released in July 2026.