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March 2, 2023

To: Representative Vandana Slatter, Representative Amy Walen and Senator Patty Kuderer
Washington State Capitol
Olympia, WA 98504

Sent via email only

Representative Vandana Slatter, Representative Amy Walen, and Senator Patty Kuderer:

I write today to express opposition to HB 1110 and SB 5190 and urge you to vote “**No**” on these bills.

HB 1110/SB 5190 if approved as currently amended, will authorize the development of at least four units **on all residential lots on Yarrow Point**, or up to six units if two are affordable. The bill language further authorizes the development of **up to six units within one half-mile of a major transit stop or community amenity** (public parks). This bill will not produce any meaningful amount of affordable housing, it fails to provide the resources and tools needed to plan for and address critical infrastructure needs, and by mandating one-size-fits-all regulations, usurps the long-held collaborative planning approach undertaken by counties, cities and towns under the Growth Management Act.

HB 1110/SB 5190 Fail to Meet 2021 Legislative Mandate to Plan for Affordable Housing

HB 1110/SB 5190, similar to legislation proposed last legislative session, are being marketed as an affordable housing bill to address the “missing middle.” This is a misnomer as the bill will produce almost exclusively market-rate housing. This means, especially in Yarrow Point, that housing produced under this bill will be out of reach for low-and moderate-income families.

The “supply” created under HB 1110/SB 5190 will likely be completely taken up by market rate housing by the time affordable housing policies are implemented and the funding to construct affordable housing becomes available.

HB 1110/SB 5190 Fail to Provide Resources to Plan for and Construct Critical Infrastructure

The upzoning of all single-family zones will force our small Town into an expensive and protracted planning process to study and right size infrastructure densities far beyond anything contemplated. The bill has no funding for these impacts, meaning the cost would fall on local taxpayers throughout Washington, as cities and towns face significant financial challenges in the near future. Our Town employs two FT staff in the office and one Public Works Coordinator. We do not have the staff to cover the demands of these bills.

The Yarrow Point sewer and stormwater infrastructure including the Wastewater Lake Line are complex and unique. Our roads are narrow and we have many single lane private streets throughout our Town with very limited street parking.

Our General Sewer Plan was updated to accommodate the Town's anticipated growth and was based on the 2013 Comprehensive Plan. The unplanned housing sprawl contemplated in HB 1110/SB 5190 would be unpredictable and difficult/impossible to model.

Other utility infrastructure impacts will result from this legislation, including water utility infrastructure issues, water storage capacity issues, and fire flow issues. Stormwater concerns are also anticipated.

Our community accommodates the State's Commerce Superhighway 520 and must use a significant portion of our small Town budget on Police and Fire service for our residents. These services will either suffer or significantly increase in cost as unplanned density happens.

Under HB 1110/SB 5190 Yarrow Point will be required to plan to provide infrastructure for all residential lots (more than 450) which will require multiple studies, modeling, significant work for an already strained small town staff of 2, and at a significant cost to the Town.

HB 1110/SB 5190 is a One Size Fits All Regulatory Overreach

HB 1110/SB 5190 places unworkable regulatory conditions on cities and towns. Using parking as an example, our small Town will be prohibited from requiring off-street parking for housing units built within one half-mile of a transit stop. This covers a significant portion of our entire Town. We do not have streets to accommodate this influx of cars.

A typical Yarrow Point single-family lot developed under HB 1110 with six units will have anticipated demand of six to twelve vehicles, depending on the size of the units developed.

It appears that cities and small towns will be left to problem solve and fund a parking shortage, borne by a regulatory process that overreaches and fails to acknowledge the unique circumstances of each community. The Growth Management Act (GMA) intends for local jurisdictions to plan for, and within their communities on a neighborhood level, to accommodate unique circumstances.

HB 1110/SB 5190 Removes the Ability of Towns, Cities and Counties to Carefully Steward Growth

Finally, there are longstanding processes in place to collaboratively plan for and accommodate growth, guided by the framework of the GMA.

Currently, Yarrow Point is working on its Comprehensive Plan periodic update, required by the GMA to be completed by December 2024. Concurrently, our Town is also planning for the affordable housing and racially disparate impact requirements prescribed by HB 1220. This bill already has missing middle-housing requirements, which would allow cities and towns to identify and zone areas with available infrastructure capacity and transit access without competing with market-rate housing.

HB 1110/SB 5190 mandates widespread market rate housing sprawl and completely disregards the long-held collaborative planning framework set forth by the GMA while creating yet another unexpected multi-year planning exercise for Washington cities and towns.

In Closing

As we always have been, the Town of Yarrow Point remains committed to sustainable and effective growth management, both for our community and our region. We understand that there is a lack of housing at all levels, and we are committed to working on and supporting solutions to address this issue. These efforts are best done at the local level and in collaboration with regional and statewide stakeholders, under the guidance of the Growth Management Act—a comprehensive planning framework. Washington is a diverse state, in many ways, and a one size fits all mandate will not yield positive results for Washingtonians.

Sincerely,

Katy Kinney Harris
Mayor, Town of Yarrow Point