



# DISCOVER COMMERCE WALLA WALLA'S HOUSING APPROACH TO MIDDLE HOUSING

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*Scott A. Bennett*

# 10 MOST BEAUTIFUL TOWNS IN WASHINGTON

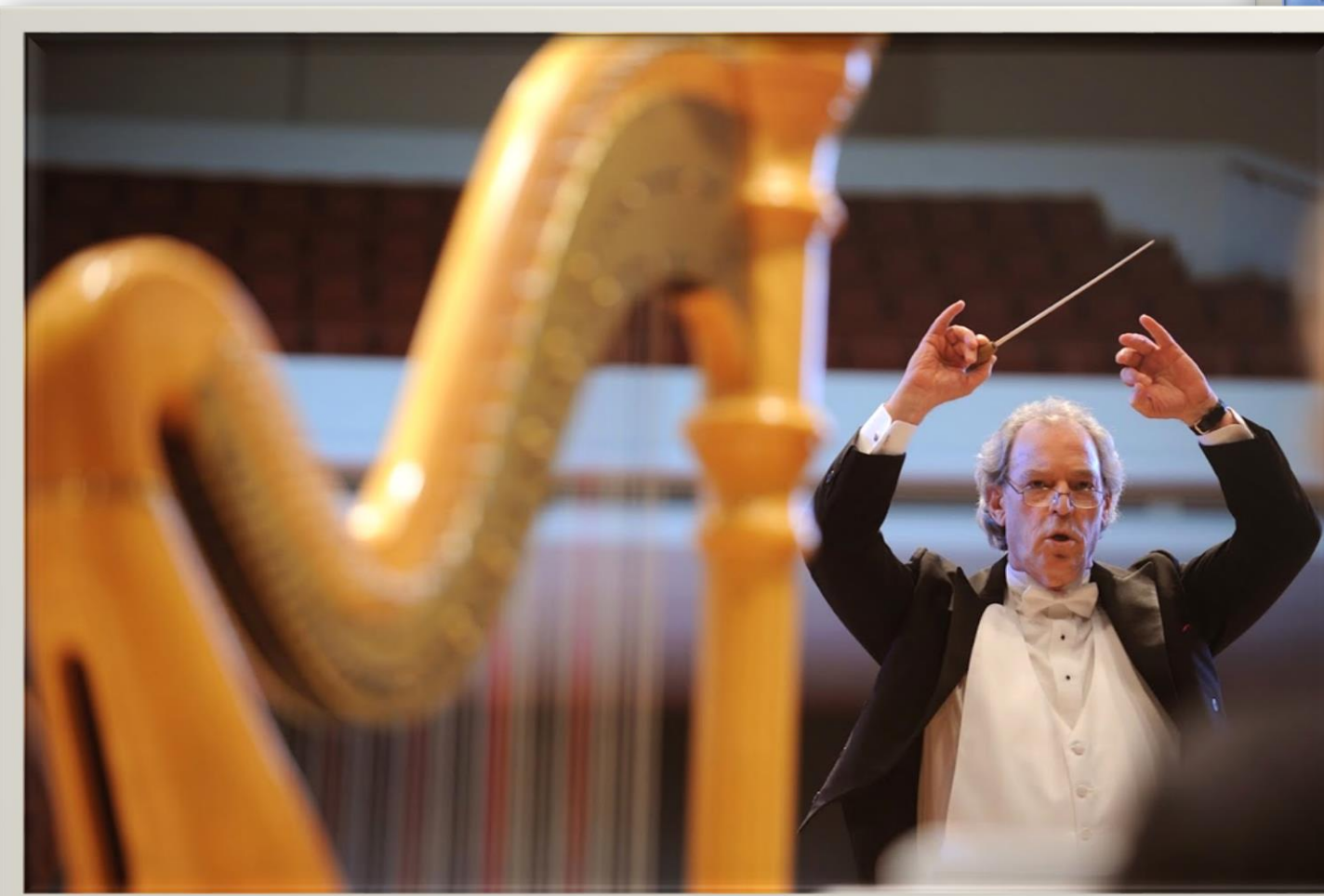
- Culture Trip, 2015

A WONDERFUL PLACE TO **LIVE WORK PLAY**



# THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT WALLA WALLA

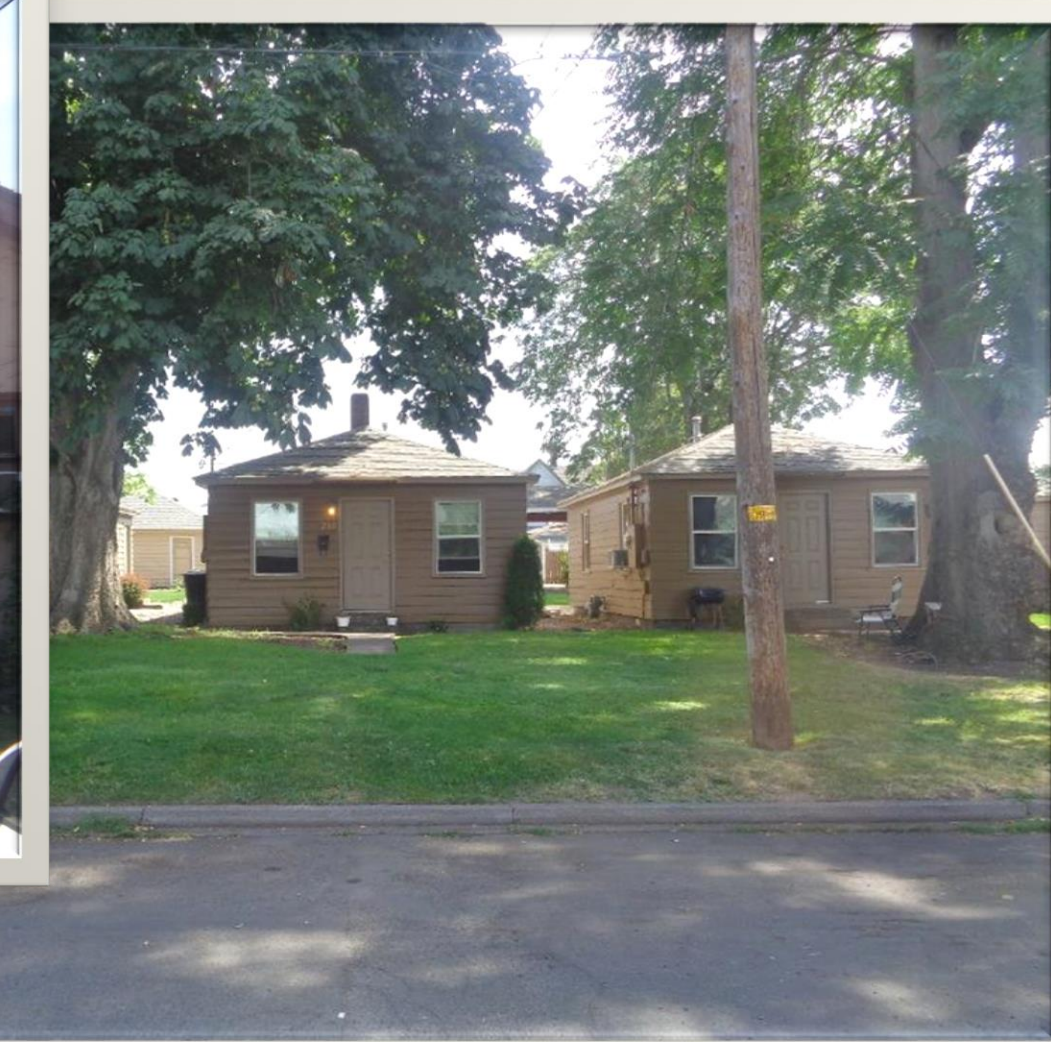
- City of Walla Walla –incorporated in 1862, seven years before Seattle. Current population -34,020.
- Walla Walla Sweet Onions are the State Official Vegetable
- Home to WW Community College, Whitman College and Walla Walla University, Regional Hospital, state penitentiary, USACE....
- In 2001 Walla Walla was a Great American Main Street Award winner for the transformation and preservation of its once dilapidated, vacant main street.
- Home of the Walla Walla Symphony since 1907, the oldest continually operating symphony west of the Mississippi.
- Sharpstein Elementary, the oldest continuously-operating school in Washington State. Opened in 1898





# 2018 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE

- Developed a new Comprehensive Plan with 2018 Periodic Update
- Focus on housing diversity “Make Housing Diverse Again”
- Set framework for density-based zoning to eliminate minimum lot size
- Set framework for the new Neighborhood Residential Zone concept
- Extensive public engagement on transition away from traditional single-family zoning





# 2019-PRESENT ZONING CODE UPDATES

- Removed owner-occupancy requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units
  - Increased Max ADU size
  - Eliminated off street parking requirement
  - ADU allowed with a duplex
- 4 units per net acre density
- Combined all residential zoning districts into one Neighborhood Residential Zone
- No minimum lot size
- Allow SFR, duplex, tri-plex, four-plex, cottage housing, and townhomes in Neighborhood Residential Zone
- Adopted ICC building code appendix for Tiny Homes.



Photo by: Celeste Noché





# REGIONAL HOUSING ACTION PLAN

- Thank you, Department of Commerce, for supporting options for cities and providing grant funding
- Walla Walla Regional Housing Action Plan (HAP) effort with cities of College Place, Waitsburg, and Dayton
- Housing Needs Assessment: 3700 new housing units needed over the next 20 years
- Established Housing Ad-Hoc Committee to assist with implementing RHAP recommendations.
  - Updating Multifamily Property Tax Exemption Code – focus on affordable housing
  - Streamline State Environmental Policy Act Exemptions through a Commerce HAP Implementation Grant. (ie no SEPA review)
  - Exploring Capital Facility Charge reductions/exemptions for affordable housing
  - Exploring surplus city owned property for affordable housing
  - Other zoning code amendments



# HUMBLE BRAG

- Featured in the American Planning Association Fall 2022 quarter publication titled:

Zoning Reform Creates New Model for Smart Growth in Walla Walla, Washington – How the rural city eliminated single-family-only zoning, legalized ADUs, and relaxed parking minimums to promote housing diversity.

<https://www.planning.org/planning/2022/summer/zoning-reform-creates-new-model-for-smart-growth-in-walla-walla-washington/>



# RESULTS IN NUMBERS

## 2018

- New SFR: 121 units/lots
- **ADU: 4**
- Duplexes: 0
- Multi-family (4+ units): 0

## 2020

- New SFR: 31 units/lots
- **ADU: 5**
- **Duplexes: 2**
- Multi-family (4+ units): **1 four plex**

## 2022 (TO DATE)

- New SFR: 29 units/lots
- **ADU: 1**
- **Duplexes: 14**
- Multi-family (4+ units): 105

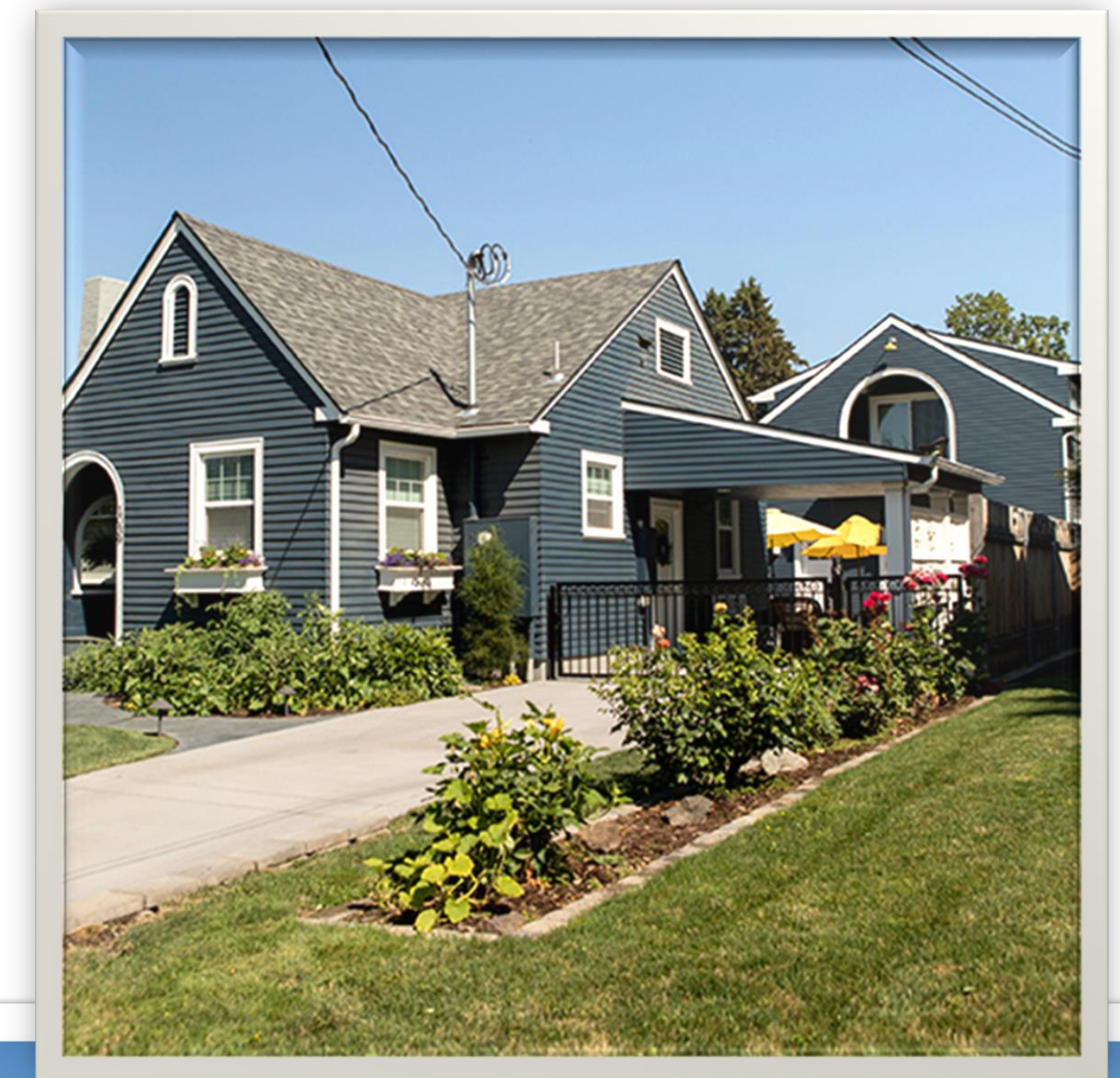


## 2019

- New SFR: 31 units/lots
- **ADU: 5**
- **Duplexes: 3**
- Multi-family (4+ units): 121

## 2021

- New SFR: 39 units/lots
- **ADU: 11**
- **Duplexes: 8**
- Multi-family (4+ units): 125







# IMPRESSIONS AND NON-TANGIBLE EFFECTS

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- Walla Walla didn't do this because it was trendy, and because it was the latest planning tool taught at a planning conference. It really was a shift back to how our thriving community was originally built.
- There has been a shift in the thinking of builders and developers to what is traditionally built
  - Innovative duplex designs,
  - Smaller lots. Smaller units. (ie duplexes - 600 sq ft units.)
- Developers/building are looking at creative ways to subdivide lands,
  - Planned Unit developments, cottages, building for rentals
  - Adding dwelling units to existing homes and adding ADU's.
  - Builders and code officials are learning the nuances of the building codes for multi-unit dwellings, fire protection, separation walls.
- SFR homeowners are seeing value in dividing their large lots for infill as they age, they can generate income have less property to take care of.
- Code provides property owners with flexibility to use their greatest asset in different ways. Promoting multi-generational use of property. (ie large property subdivided to allow grown children to live close and something they can afford)
- Its enjoyable to be innovative and educate the importance of diversity of housing types.
- New development is still met with certain levels of concern, but residents generally understand how middle housing is currently spread throughout our most beautiful and historic parts of town.
- We can see greater value in existing housing stock and helps place an emphasis on revitalizing neighborhoods.



**THANK YOU**

**QUESTIONS??**

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