

Amy Phelps

From: Suzanne Wrede <swrede@innercore.net>
Sent: Monday, February 9, 2026 12:07 PM
To: Amy Phelps
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT – TA-25-01 Cleanup Amendment

Council Members,

This comment addresses the proposed “cleanup” amendment, TA-25-01 Cleanup Amendment. While I appreciate the intent to improve clarity and consistency in the code, several provisions in this ordinance go beyond housekeeping. They introduce material financial obligations, expanded administrative authority, and density-increasing mechanisms that deserve full public discussion before adoption.

I want to highlight three areas of concern.

1. Financial Burdens on Residents and Small Businesses

The ordinance introduces or clarifies several significant financial impacts:

Full water and sewer capitalization fees for ADUs

The ordinance states that ADUs must pay:

- A separate water and sewer capitalization fee, and
- A monthly user fee equal to a primary residence

This is a substantial cost increase for homeowners. Many cities reduce or waive these fees to support small-scale infill; Bellevue is choosing the most expensive path. This change alone will make ADUs financially inaccessible for many families, seniors, and workers.

Mandatory administrative design review for ADUs

Design review is a fee-bearing process. Requiring it for every ADU adds cost, delay, and complexity — again disproportionately affecting residents who are trying to create modest housing options.

New screening requirements for contractor storage yards

The ordinance mandates either:

- A 6-foot solid fence, or
- 8-foot evergreen trees spaced 15 feet apart with irrigation

This is a significant capital cost for small contractors, and those costs will ultimately be passed on to residents.

These are not clerical edits. They are meaningful financial policy decisions.

2. Increased Density Through Reduced Lot Sizes and Setbacks

The ordinance materially increases development intensity:

- Minimum lot sizes can be reduced from 6,000 sq ft to 3,000 sq ft (or 2,950 sq ft in one section).
- Front setbacks can be reduced to 10 feet.
- Side and rear setbacks can be reduced to 4 feet.
- ADUs are allowed across more zones, with sizes up to 1,200 sq ft.

These changes effectively double the number of units that can be built on a block and allow structures to be placed much closer together. That has real implications for parking, traffic, privacy, and neighborhood character.

If the City intends to increase density — which may be appropriate in some contexts — that should be discussed transparently, not embedded in a cleanup ordinance.

3. Shift of Oversight Away From Public Bodies

The ordinance expands administrative authority in several ways:

- The Administrator can approve ADU design review.
- The Administrator can approve reduced setbacks.
- The Administrator can approve “minor modifications” to previously approved projects — and also determine what counts as “minor.”

These decisions used to involve public hearings or commission review. Moving them behind the counter reduces transparency and limits opportunities for residents to participate in shaping their neighborhoods.

Again, this is not cleanup. This is a governance change.

I respectfully urge the Council to separate the true clerical corrections from the substantive policy changes. The financial burdens, density increases, and oversight shifts in this ordinance deserve their own public process, with clear intent and community engagement.

Thank you for your consideration.

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