

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Eatonville Town Council  
FROM: Nicholas Bond  
SUBJECT: Base Plan Option for Stimulating Construction  
DATE: May 23, 2010

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### **At issue**

At the last meeting of the Town Council, Council-member Pierce suggested that the town look into adopting the Pierce County policy of allowing a builder to pay plan review fees for a base plan. This would allow a builder to come to town hall to pull permits for their base plan without having to redo plan review or wait for plan review to take place.

Pierce County provides a guide to base plans online. It can be viewed at:

<http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/xml/abtus/ourorg/pals/docs/devctr/bldgbulletin6.pdf>

After reviewing this document, the town began to identify some challenges to administering this type of program locally.

1. The first problem is that the cost of a base plan at the county requires that a builder build at least 4 of the same units to break even or achieve some savings. Considering the town's design guidelines which seek housing variety, staff feels that it is unlikely, even in good times, that 4 houses constructed from same housing plans would be constructed during any one 3 year building code cycle. The proposal which was put forward and passed at the last meeting allows a builder to save money after building only two of the same unit without having to pay upfront plan review costs.
2. The county only allows base plans to be used for single family residences. The market for multifamily housing is currently stronger than that for single family housing. By allowing savings on duplicate multifamily housing plans, the town is going above and beyond what Pierce County is doing under the resolution passed last week.
3. The last obstacle to implementing a base plan ordinance is cost. To modify and adopt the Pierce County ordinance would likely cost more than \$500 in attorney fees with no structural changes and closer to \$800 if significant research was required to look into expanding the program for multifamily housing. These are funds which would have to come from the general fund for a program which may not get used and which doesn't do much more than the resolution passed last meeting.

### **Recommendations**

Town staff does not recommend pursuing a base plan ordinance at this time. If a majority on council would like to pursue such an ordinance, town staff will gladly proceed with its development, however there will be some cost associated with developing the proposal.