

# MEMORANDUM

**To:** Whatcom County Council members  
**Through:** Satpal Sigh Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive  
**From:** Tyler Schroeder, Deputy Executive  
**Subject:** Transfer Option Agreement – 1000 N. Forest Street  
**Date:** November 10, 2020

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Enclosed for your review and consideration is a Transfer Option Agreement between Whatcom County and the Opportunity Council for the purposes of agreeing to an exclusive option to transfer the property at 100 North Forest Street (Forest Street Annex) to the Opportunity Council for the purpose of developing an affordable housing complex.

## **Background and Purpose**

Whatcom County has been in discussion and collaboration with the Opportunity Council to re-develop the County owned property located at 100 N. Forest Street into an affordable housing complex. Over the last few years in review of the County's facilities it has been determined that the "buildings age and current condition deem major renovations or improvements to building are unwise and other options should be explored." As Council is very well aware, it is very important to provide additional affordable housing inventory in Whatcom County. This project is intended to build at least 60 permanently affordable homes for seniors, along with a child care center, at the corner of North Forest Street and Laurel Street in Bellingham.

This proposal and agreement are recommended for council consideration prior to the end of the year, to afford the Opportunity Council the opportunity to apply for an initial capital grant from the Bellingham Home Fund for the project. The project will be funded through the Home Fund, Washington Housing Trust Fund, the Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits from Whatcom State Housing Finance Commission, and other private and public sources.

One important factor to consider is the timing of this project. Staff and WSU Extension offices currently located in the facility will need to be relocated prior to the third quarter of 2022, if not sooner. That will allow for the pursuit of project funding in 2021, with construction ready to begin in the third quarter of 2022. Although ambitious, the Administration believes that the relocation of staff within this timeline can be achieved with the collaboration and coordination of the department leaders.

**Funding Amount and Authorization**

Whatcom County has not committed to any funding for this project at this time. This agreement does propose to invest this underutilized property to leverage more than \$20,000,000 for construction from private and public sources. This County land transfer is authorized by RCW 39.33.115 and WCC 1.10.340.

**Conclusion**

The County Executive recommends that the County Council approve this transfer agreement to invest in this underutilized property for the purpose of very needed affordable housing units.

Please feel free to contact me with any question you may have regarding this important Transfer Agreement.

Thank you.