

October 14, 2022

Washington State Building Codes Council  
c/o Anthony Doan  
Chair, State Building Codes Council  
PO Box 41449 Olympia, WA 98504

Re: Proposed Changes to Washington State Building Codes, All Codes, Group 2

To the WA State Building Codes Council,

Olympia Master builders is a membership organization representing almost five hundred members affiliated with the building industry across five counties including Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, and Grays Harbor. Our publicly stated mission is to provide affordable housing for all economic segments of society. This is achieved by improving the construction industry and the business climate in which our members operate. We are writing to urge the State Building Codes Council to reconsider the proposed changes to our state building code, as the changes will inevitably put more obstacles in the way of solving the most immediate existential crisis of our time. That is the lack of affordable housing in our region and our state. And thus, the slow decay of the American dream for thousands of our neighbors.

Every proposed code change presented by this council adds to the cost of building a home. At a time when working Washingtonians face multiple ongoing existential crisis, we find these proposed changes to be the most egregious affront to our citizens. The fact of the matter is that only 15% of current Washington residents can afford to purchase a home. That is both existing and new construction. This number seems abysmal but will only become more dyer with the proposed changes. For every \$1,000 increase to the cost of buying a home, 2,200 Washington families are priced out. The total of these changes will add an estimated \$55,282 to the up-front cost of a new home. That is at the heart of the issues with these changes, but we also have several other concerns.

These proposals:

- Eliminate the ability for home builders to install natural gas cost-effectively in new homes, eliminating energy choice in the state and pushing cooking with natural gas into extinction for new homes after July 1, 2023.
- Require heat pumps as the preferred source for space and water heating in all new homes, increasing the up-front cost of a new home by \$8,350. Worse yet, the true cost to the homeowner over their 30-year mortgage will surpass \$25,000.

- Require existing homes to upgrade their current HVAC systems to heat pumps if they increase the size of their original HVAC equipment. Estimates show that could cost homeowners a minimum of \$23,000.
- Add another \$9,200 to the price of every new home for compliant windows and air leakage requirements.
- Require all new homes with carports and garages to have electric vehicle charging capabilities, regardless of the cost of upgrading electrical infrastructure, and without a direct mandate from the Washington State Legislature.
- Ban heat pump water heaters from being placed in your garage. Instead, large utility closets would have to be installed, taking up usable square footage of new homes.
- Cause building material costs to skyrocket due to the fire-resistive material required in the Wildland Urban Interface Code. Arbitrary limits on where homes can be built and how much vegetation can surround them would become regulation, even though this surpasses the rulemaking authority of the State Building Code Council.

The simple fact is Washingtonians cannot afford these proposals. Every \$1,000 added to the cost of building prices 2,200 of our neighbors out of the dream of homeownership. We at Olympia Master Builders do not oppose the idea that we must do better for the sake of the environment, but we seem to have different ideas of the word transition. We urge the council to reconsider the entire package of code changes and acknowledge the most important ongoing crisis in our state of the lack of affordable housing. Is now really the time to be weighing the right of our neighbors to have a roof over their head with the desire to be number 1 in the race to zero emissions?

Sincerely,



Angela White  
Executive Officer  
Olympia Master Builders