



STEP and Deeply Affordable Housing in Port Townsend

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Housing Pressures in Port Townsend



High Cost of Living



Wide range of incomes



Geographic isolation



High cost of building housing (materials and workers)



All pressures increased by COVID-19 pandemic



Pandemic reduced the capacity of congregate shelters

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Shelters in Early COVID

- Housing service providers significantly increased their efforts to house and shelter people outside of congregate shelters.
- The Community Build started creating “wooden tents,” one-room structures that are effective shelter but do not meet the legal definition of a dwelling unit.

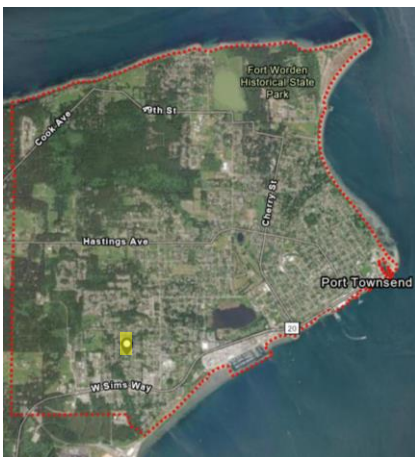


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Photos provided by [Community Build](#) ³

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Challenges of Permitting Encampments



Location of Pat's Place, the first Tiny Shelter Village in Port Townsend



Encampments were permitted through a temporary Conditional Use Permit.



Managing agencies had to extend the permit or move to a new location every six months. This was high cost and inefficient.



Based on community feedback and recent legislation, Port Townsend Planning and Community Development created new code to support STEP, including wooden tent villages.

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Drafting 2024 STEP Code: Current Practices



Reviewed Port Townsend Municipal Code 17.60 Temporary Uses

Compared current regulations with other jurisdictions. Focused on cities with similar population size, level of development, or geographic features.



Discovery Rd and Rainier St roundabout in Port Townsend

Drafting 2024 STEP Code: Initial Review



Compared Port Townsend's current codes with RCW 35.21.683 and RCW 35A.21.360

Joint agreement on housing and shelter definitions by Jefferson County and Port Townsend Planning Commissions.

Jefferson County and Port Townsend Joint Planning Commission Meeting

Item	City	Priority	Notes/Action Items
1. Review and update the current definition of 'Temporary Shelter' per RCW 35.21.683 and RCW 35A.21.360.	Port Townsend	High	Review current definition and update to align with state law.
2. Review and update the current definition of 'Shelter' per RCW 35.21.683 and RCW 35A.21.360.	Port Townsend	High	Review current definition and update to align with state law.
3. Review and update the current definition of 'Housing' per RCW 35.21.683 and RCW 35A.21.360.	Port Townsend	High	Review current definition and update to align with state law.
4. Review and update the current definition of 'Residential' per RCW 35.21.683 and RCW 35A.21.360.	Port Townsend	High	Review current definition and update to align with state law.



Drafting 2024 STEP Code: What Works and Can We Improve?



Met with Planning Commission and housing service providers to identify issues and successes within the existing permitting process.

Worked with service providers, advocates, and Planning Commission to write minimum specifications for successful housing and shelters. These minimum specifications built on the state's requirements

Drafting 2024 STEP Code: Writing from Community Feedback



Drafted code based on minimum specifications.

Reviewed and edited draft code with service providers, Planning Commission, and housing advocates.

Drafting 2024 STEP Code : Creating Clear Code



City staff reviewed the draft to clarify implementation and the permitting process.

- Re-confirmed building and inspection requirements
- Clarified permit types and review process
- Edited for consistency

Ensured cross-jurisdiction consistency by sharing drafts with Jefferson County Department of Community Development

Reviewed with East Jefferson Fire and Rescue and Port Townsend Police Department reviewed and approved the draft code, confirming that they can safely provide emergency services to facilities that comply with these regulations.



Drafting 2024 STEP Code: Creating Clear Code



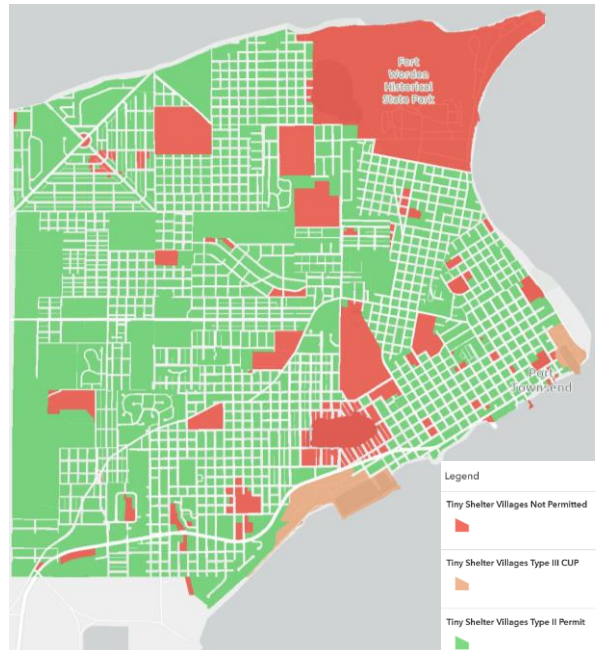
Returned to Planning Commission to compare goals of the amendment with edits supporting implementation

Completed Department of Commerce Review (whew)

Drafting 2024 STEP Code: Creating Clear Code

Public Hearing with City Council.
Amended proposal to include more
options for safe parking

Adopted PTMC Chapter 17.62
SHELTER AND EMERGENCY
HOUSING PERFORMANCE
STANDARDS



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Takeaways from 2024 STEP Code

- Partner with local service providers. They are your applicants, and your allies.
- Partner with neighboring jurisdictions so your regulations are consistent.
- Your local housing and service providers may be interested in shelter methods that do not meet your current codes or international building code. You can develop reasonable safety standards for nontraditional shelters like tent encampments and wooden tents villages.
- Regulations for emergency shelters alone cannot solve the lack of deeply affordable housing. STEP housing needs to be paired with density increases, more options for multifamily tax exemptions, and other regulations supporting transitional housing and permanent affordable housing.

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