

Fehr&Peers

SB 5412: SEPA Residential Infill Exemptions and Navigating the Adoption Process

Raising SEPA Thresholds for Housing in Urban Growth Areas

Thursday, October 9th

9 AM



INTRODUCTION

Meet your Presenters



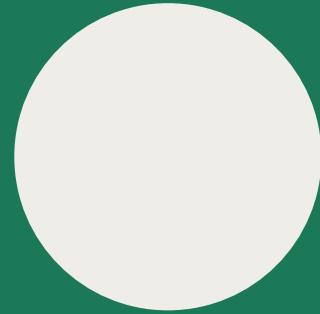
Maan
Sidhu

Fehr & Peers



Lisa
Grueter

Berk Consulting



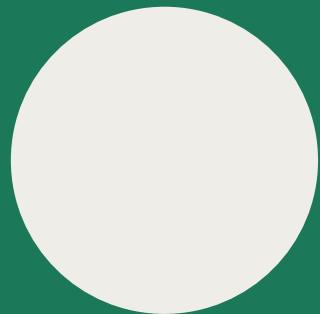
Tirrell
Black

City of Spokane



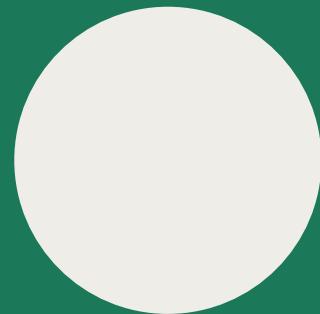
Beckye
Frey

Role



Cole
Kopca

WSDOT



Jessica
Brackin

Fehr & Peers

Audience Poll

“What is the #1 barrier to housing in your community?”

Political support, Other

(Poll options: Land cost, Infrastructure, SEPA process,

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Why SB 5412?



Housing shortage & affordability challenges



How to encourage higher density housing in urban growth areas?



Streamline permitting process by pre-planning for development



What it does

-  Pre- application
-  Submit Applications
-  Agency Review
-  **SEPA Threshold Determination and EIS**
-  Public Notice / Comment / Hearing
-  Permit Approval or Additional Conditions
-  Permit Issuance and Project Implementation

What it does :

Amends RCW 43.21C.229 to expand SEPA categorical exemptions for residential infill.

Goal: Encourage middle housing where planning work already accounts for impacts.

How cities use it : Adopt higher exemption thresholds by ordinance

It's a tool, not a mandate .

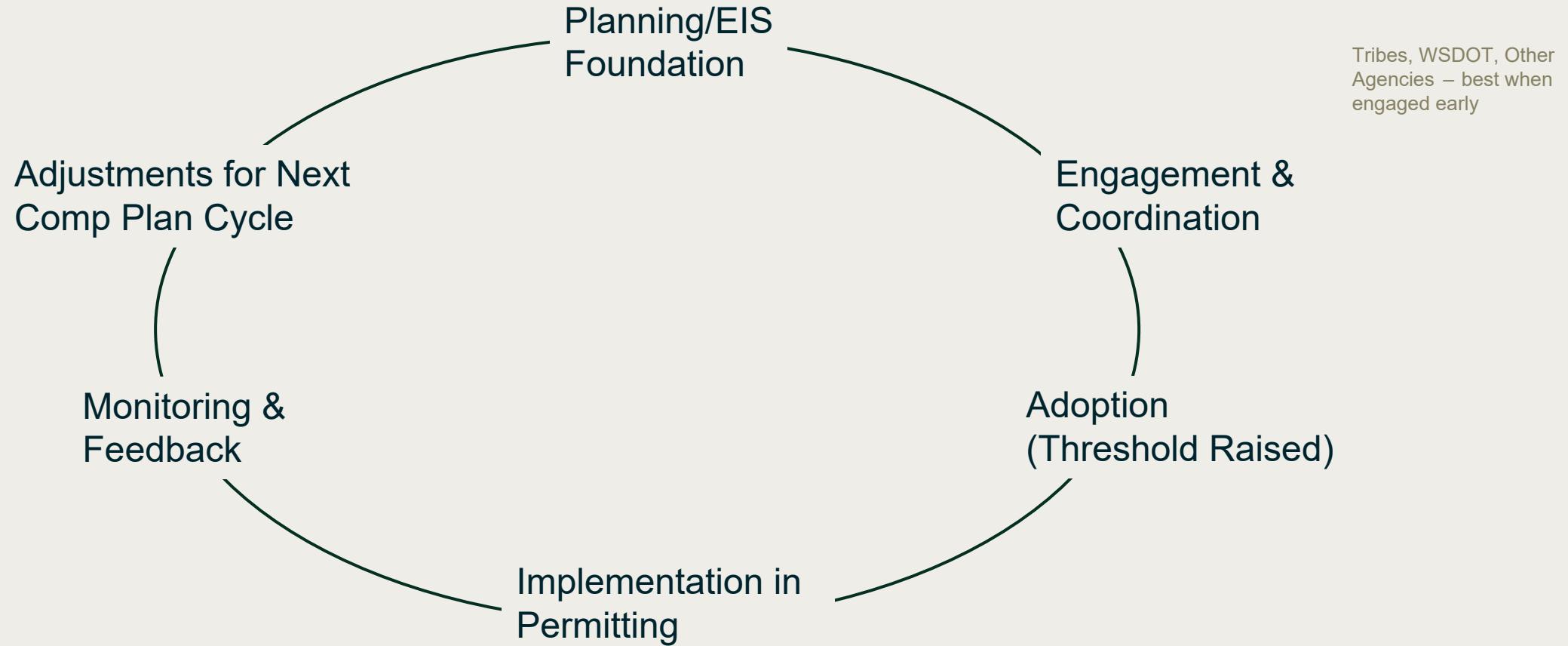
Broader Regulatory Context

SEPA baseline (WAC 197-14800):
defines categorical exemptions

Amended RCW 43.21C.229 (SB 5412):
allows cities to raise residential infill thresholds.

Amended RCW 43.21C.501 (HB 1491):
ties mitigation more directly to adopted
plans and impact fee programs

Adoption Process



Audience Poll

“If your city raised SEPA infill exemptions, which stakeholder would be the hardest to engage?”

(Options: City Council, Planning Commission, WSDOT, Neighborhood groups, Developers, Other agencies)

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Local Government Perspectives

Tirrell Black - City of Spokane

- Current zoning and thresholds
- Why Spokane wants higher exemptions
- Lessons learned so far



Local Government Perspectives

Beckye Frey - City of Redmond

- Paired SB 5412 with Comp Plan and EIS process
- Navigated WSDOT comments and notification requirements.
- Lessons learned: integrate with long-range planning, such as an EIS with a comp plan or planned action.



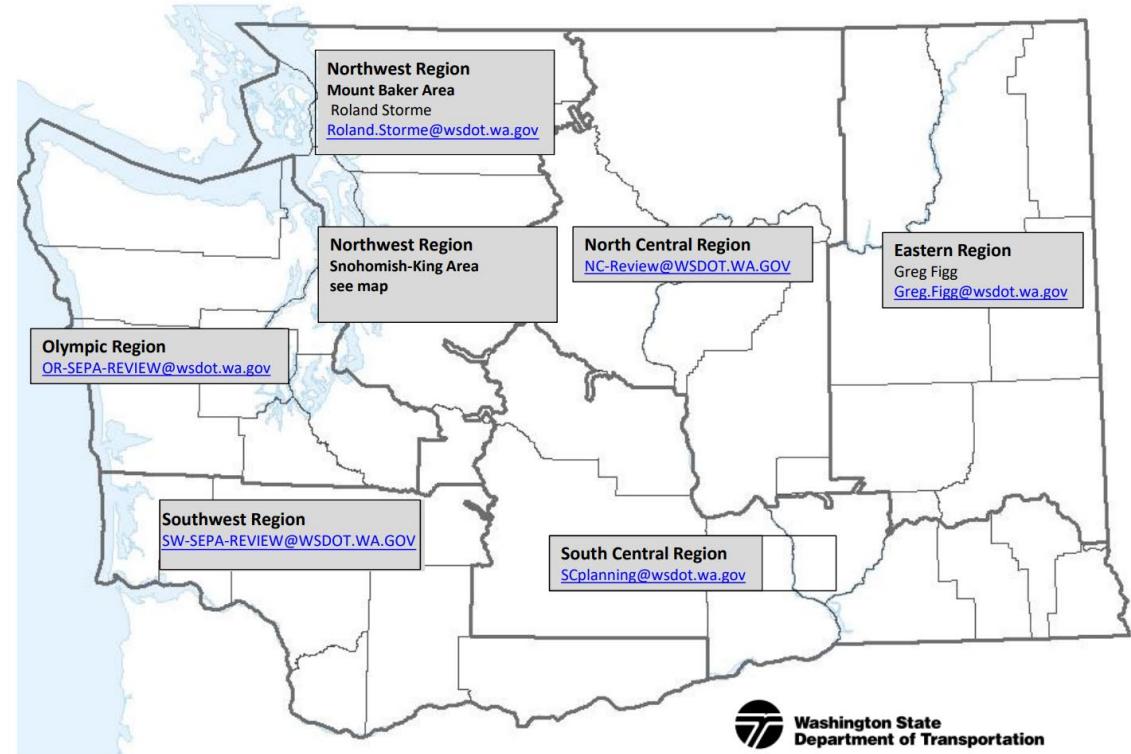
› REDMOND 2050
From suburb to city

WSDOT's Role

Cole Kopca - WSDOT

- WSDOT regions = decentralized
- Priorities: safety, facility preservation, system efficiency
- Collaborate early

Region WSDOT SEPA Document Reviewers



Audience Poll

“How similar are Spokane/Redmond’s challenges to your own city?”

(Quick poll: Very similar, Somewhat similar, Not at all)

“What process would your city most likely use to implement higher exemption thresholds? Comp Plan, Planned Action, or neither?”

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Audience Poll

**“Which is the bigger risk in your city:
pace of affordable housing or financing
supporting infrastructure?”**

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Impacts on Planning & Development

Funding alignment: Capital Improvement Programs must support planned growth.

Funding tools

Monitoring: Did growth occur where we expected? Did city processes work as planned?

Development review changes: Less project - level SEPA → more reliance on upfront planning/EIS.



S 160th Street in Burien, WA, WSDOT

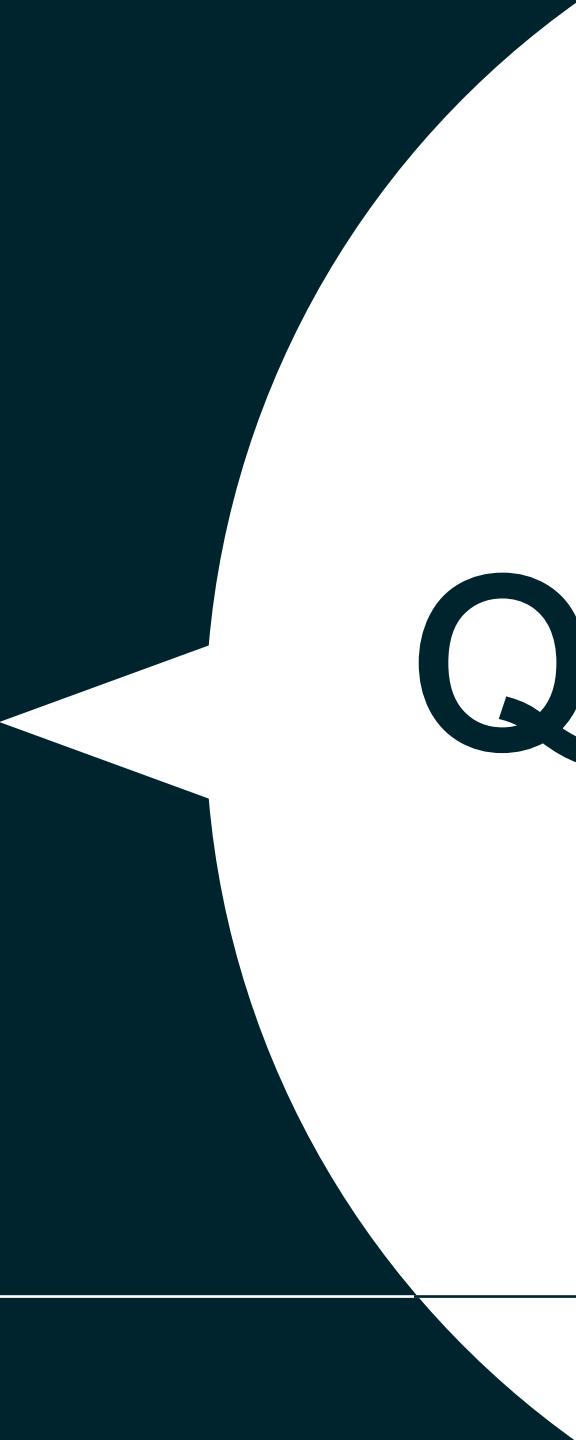
What to Consider

- **Benefits** : Faster permitting, reduced duplication, supports housing goals
- **Risks**: Requires strong upfront planning; close agency coordination, robust monitoring, & frequent review of improvement programs

Is your city positioned to adopt this?

- Future EIS work to rely on?
- Planning for growth and density?
- Staff/consultant capacity?





Questions?