

Port Susan Commons – Project Narrative

Stanwood, Washington

Encouraged by Washington States House Bill 1110, the Port Susan Commons brings a variety of small affordable housing options to a small agricultural Western Washington, town.

Most of the original settlers of the area relied on subsistence living through logging, fishing and farming. The remoteness of the area at this time meant that early populations settled near rivers in small communities giving easy access to the abundant rich soils of the Stillaguamish and Skagit river delta and pristine timber found throughout this part of Puget Sound.

Today the City of Stanwood is one of the fastest growing small towns in Snohomish County, with over 20% increase in population since 2020. Accommodating this influx of people without sacrificing the towns intimate feel or its precious agricultural land is paramount for preserving the future of Stanwood. This project is an exercise in achieving these goals, bringing density without ignoring the neighbors or surrounding context.

Although compact, the Port Susan Commons site offers much connection to the town's history and landscape. The site is set adjacent to Old Pacific Highway, a major artery in and out of town, with expansive protected farmlands to the north and east.

Despite the proximity to farmland, this site is less than half a mile from the western center of Stanwood, where you can find shops and restaurants. This project is also just 0.3 miles away from a bus station, that will take you to east Stanwood, where you can find grocery stores, pharmacies, dental offices, hardware stores and more.

Though the site is small for 5 single family units, 214 feet deep by 70 feet wide, or 14,980 square feet, the units were carefully designed to with individual fenced yards, offering each resident private outdoor space.

The units are each between 900 and 1,200 square feet. They each contain 2-3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, open living areas over 1-2 car garages with at home shop or work areas. All these features are important for supporting individual and young families seeking housing in the region.

To keep the project affordable, all of the construction utilizes conventional methods and materials designed into simple but unique forms and striking color schemes to bring life and interest to the area.

Each unit also offers access to sustainability through their use of compact spaces, tightly insulated homes, ductless heat pumps, heat recovery ventilators (HRVs) and efficient doors and windows.

The efficient use of small open spaces used throughout the Stanwood Commons keeps the project cost down. Although small, a feeling of openness is created through the use of vaulted ceilings and windows strategically positioned towards distant views of the farmlands and distant mountains.

Embracing the regions Scandinavian roots the architecture of Stanwood Commons uses a variety of roof forms, façade modulation and colors providing a solution that not only links it to the past but gestures to the future.