

EAST YORK VILLAGE

Scalable family flats for Whatcom's missing middle.

Located in Bellingham's historic York Neighborhood, East York Village demonstrates how thoughtful, high-density infill can honor traditional community character while maximizing lot efficiency. Designed as a stacked flat housing three family-sized units within a single compact volumetric footprint, the proposal balances urban density with human-scale charm. The building's profile features a pitched roofline designed to mirror the steep gables of York's historic housing stock, subtly lifted at the roofline in a design gesture reminiscent of the agricultural structures of the nearby Skagit Valley.

Respecting local context, the building maintains a twenty-foot front setback aligned with adjacent properties. The primary circulation and exterior staircase are consolidated within an expanded side yard, preserving site depth and allowing landscaping, streetscape enhancements, and natural drainage features to thrive. Crucially, East York Village serves as a repeatable prototype across Whatcom County. By proving full spatial, functional, and aesthetic viability on a narrow forty-foot lot while leaving parcel depth underutilized, this scheme can seamlessly adapt to standard, shallow, or irregular infill parcels countywide.

East York Village addresses the Affordability and Constructability criteria by prioritizing economic viability through simple structural geometries, standard construction assemblies, and operational cost savings. Stacking three family-sized residential footprints over a single foundation reduces excavation costs, foundation wall length, and total roof surface area. Simple framing lines and standard floor-to-floor heights minimize material waste and labor complexity during construction. Aligning wet walls for kitchens and bathrooms vertically throughout the three stories dramatically reduces plumbing runs, mechanical ductwork, and electrical pathways, driving down initial build costs while simplifying long-term maintenance. Universal design standards are integrated on the ground floor, featuring step-free entry via an exterior pathway, zero-step thresholds at the front patio, wide internal hallways, and accessible bathroom turn radii to ensure long-term accessibility for residents of all ages and abilities. While vehicle parking is not mandated, an alley-accessed garage provides two EV-charging stalls along with a secondary roll-up sectional door facing the internal courtyard. This multi-purpose garage space efficiently doubles as secure storage for cargo bikes, outdoor gear, and shared residential equipment, eliminating the need for separate storage structures.

Environmental stewardship and Sustainability and Resilience are embedded into the core orientation, enclosure, and landscape strategy of the design. The compact, stacked form inherently minimizes the exterior surface area exposed to thermal loss compared to detached single-family or horizontal triplex designs. High-performance insulation, high-efficiency glazing, and continuous exterior air barriers significantly reduce heating and cooling loads year-round. Unbuilt site depth and an expanded side yard are dedicated to over fifteen hundred square feet of open green space and low-impact stormwater infrastructure. Rainwater runoff from the steep roof is directed into side-yard rain gardens and bioswales to assist local aquifer recharge and mitigate urban street flooding. Furthermore, the high-pitch roof surface is oriented to maximize solar exposure, rendering the structure fully solar-PV ready to power domestic heat pumps and electric vehicle charging stations.

Exemplifying Innovation and Creativity, East York Village transforms a compact forty-foot lot into a dynamic, private, and collaborative living community. Every family is provided with one hundred square feet of dedicated private outdoor space thoughtfully arranged to avoid direct line-of-sight overlap between units. The ground-floor unit

utilizes a front patio screened by native landscaping; the second-story unit enjoys a covered deck overlooking the shared central courtyard; and the third-story unit features an elevated covered balcony interacting with the street canopy. Rather than concealing circulation within an interior corridor, the open exterior stairwell serves as an architectural highlight along the widened side yard. This design choice eliminates conditioned common space, lowers ongoing operational and energy expenses, and encourages natural neighborly interaction in a light-filled outdoor setting. Intentionally designed multi-functional interiors and integrated storage solutions allow spaces within each family-sized unit to adapt effortlessly as household needs evolve over time.