

GOOD NEIGHBOR FLATS

Six Homes, One Stair, One 50' x 100' Lot

Project Overview

Good Neighbor Flats is a three-story, six-unit stacked-flats building that brings missing middle housing to existing Bellingham neighborhoods at house scale. The design starts from maximum development potential, then carves away, piece by piece, until the building sits comfortably beside its neighbors. We call this Non-Maximization.

The proposal is sized for the 50' x 100' (5,000 sf) mid-block lot, the most common size among 19,457 residentially zoned Bellingham parcels; 79% of those parcels are interior lots. The same kit of parts adapts to larger, corner, and alley lots. Two schemes are shown: a primary scheme with alley parking and an alternate with no parking.

Key site figures:

- **Units:** 6 in either scheme, in 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom sizes
 - Three 2 Bed/2 Bath at 945 sf, two 3 Bed/2 Bath at 1,185 sf, one 1 Bed/1 Bath at 605 sf
- **Zoning:** meets BMC base requirements for FAR, density, height, lot coverage, and setbacks
- **Height:** three stories at 10'-0" floor-to-floor
- **Setbacks:** 20' front (10' required), 10' rear, 5' sides
- **Open space:** meets the 30% minimum and achieves a 0.3 Green Factor score
- **Usable space:** a shared front amenity area and courtyard, a ground-floor patio, and private upper-floor balconies
- **Parking:** not required; the primary scheme provides four alley-loaded stalls under the building
- **Accessibility:** ground-floor units are Type B accessible per ICC A117.1

Affordability and Constructability

Good Neighbor Flats keeps cost down through repetition. Compact, repeated-plan units stack floor over floor, with shared walls and utilities aligned vertically. The building uses the code's single-stair provisions, which greatly reduce circulation space and simplify construction.

Every major system favors what local builders already know:

- **Standard wood framing:** 2x6 walls with stacking bearing lines keep materials conventional and trade sequencing easy.
- **Stacked plumbing:** wet rooms stack against a common or exterior wall for easy routing.
- **Slab-on-grade foundation:** a standard concrete slab.
- **Limited window and door types:** three window types and three door types simplify procurement.
- **Simple roofs:** low-slope shed roofs with no roof decks avoid complex waterproofing.
- **Planned for sprinklers:** space is identified for sprinkler risers.
- **Optional parking:** builders can include alley stalls or put that land and budget into homes and open space.

Living areas and bedrooms sit at the perimeter for natural light, while baths, laundry, closets, and risers hold fixed plan locations, so units can grow on a larger lot without reworking the core.

Sustainability and Resilience

Good Neighbor Flats is designed to comply with the 2021 International Building Code and the Washington State Energy Code, using standard systems with targeted upgrades.

- **Envelope:** an R-10 insulated slab, R-21 batts in 2x6 walls, R-38 floors over unconditioned space, and an R-49 hybrid roof. Exterior poly-iso over batt-insulated trusses manages the dew point for roof longevity.
- **Sound separation:** sound-attenuating batts between units, with Type X gypsum board over parking.
- **All-electric systems:** ductless mini-split heat pumps provide zoned heating and cooling without duct losses, and hybrid heat pump water heaters sharply cut water heating energy.
- **Fresh air:** an energy recovery ventilator (ERV) supplies balanced ventilation.
- **Landscape:** the deep front setback and planted courtyard leave room for planting and street trees.
- **Outdoor living:** balconies and a patio extend living space outdoors without adding conditioned floor area.

Innovation and Creativity

Good Neighbor Flats works as a kit of parts rather than a single building.

- **Non-Maximization:** the massing is carved back from maximum potential to open a courtyard, deepen the front yard, and step down to its neighbors.
- **Lot adaptability:** the plan flexes horizontally and vertically to fit typical, large, corner, and alley lots.
- **Unit diversity:** 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units serve singles, couples, families with children, and multigenerational households.
- **Shared courtyard:** residents circulate through a planted courtyard, with balconies layering private and common outdoor space.
- **Contextual roof form:** a contemporary take on the shed and gable roof respects the scale of neighboring homes.
- **Exchangeable materials:** each volume carries one primary material, such as burnt cedar or antique oak composite siding or corrugated metal, so builders can swap in a palette suited to their site.

The architecture pairs modern massing with familiar residential elements: a deep front yard, balconies, planted edges, and textured Pacific Northwest materials. Good Neighbor Flats shows how six homes can fit on one ordinary lot, street by street, across Bellingham.