

THE MOD POD | REPURPOSE AND REVITALIZE

INTRODUCTION

Mod Pod serves two complementary purposes: creating attainable, sustainable middle housing responsive to residents' needs, and using housing as a tool for interim activation. At WTA's soon-to-be-vacant Bellingham Station, adaptive reuse and relocatable modular homes transform land awaiting redevelopment into a connected downtown community. The concept meets immediate housing needs while bringing activity, eyes on the street, and everyday stewardship to the neighborhood.

Homes built from recovered mass timber remnants are assembled off-site and arranged around shared outdoor spaces. The existing bus terminal canopy organizes the community, frames the homes, and provides shelter. The ticket office and station building become the Commons: a resident-run café and shared amenity hub.

Relocatable homes and reversible site improvements create a productive "placeholder," strengthening downtown while preserving future development opportunities. When redevelopment proceeds, homes can move to another interim or permanent site, with opportunities for residents to relocate together and maintain community connections.

AFFORDABILITY AND CONSTRUCTABILITY

Mod Pod creates affordability through interim land use, material reuse, modular construction, and shared resources. A proposed agreement allowing WTA property to accommodate housing at little or no land cost would reduce acquisition expenses typically passed on through rents or home prices.

Mass timber remnants recovered from larger projects are inventoried by dimension and condition, then coordinated into repeatable floor, wall, and roof assemblies. This approach limits additional cutting and waste, with engineering review establishing suitability for structural reuse. Off-site assembly allows fabrication and site preparation to proceed simultaneously, followed by crane placement. Standardized connections and fixtures simplify installation and maintenance, while reusing existing structures reduces new construction.

Durable finishes, efficient electric heat pumps, low-flow fixtures, and an insulated, airtight envelope help manage ongoing expenses. Nearby transit, groceries, and bicycle networks support a car-free lifestyle, reducing transportation costs.

The Commons provides centralized laundry, study and co-working spaces, social areas, secure bicycle storage, and a tool and appliance lending library, complemented by an outdoor dog run. Shared services allow private homes to remain compact, reducing duplicated space, equipment, construction, and maintenance costs. A resident-operated café could provide jobs and contribute revenue toward shared utilities and upkeep.

SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Sustainability shapes the homes' entire life cycle: material sourcing, daily operation, maintenance, and eventual relocation. Recovered timber and adaptive reuse extend the life of existing resources while reducing demand for new materials. Tracking the quantity of timber incorporated into the homes would document the project's material recovery.

Design for disassembly reinforces this approach. Reversible mechanical connections and accessible service connections allow components to be repaired, replaced, and reused. Relocation preserves the homes' value beyond their initial site and supports continued use as housing needs and land availability change.

Compact homes and shared amenities reduce duplicated rooms, appliances, and household purchases. Window placement, daylight, and seasonal shading respond to the existing canopy, complementing insulation and efficient systems to support comfort with lower energy demand.

Proposed green roofs, garden boxes, and rainwater collection support planting, food growing, and irrigation. Solar panels on the Commons help offset purchased electricity. Shared spaces and an intergenerational community strengthen resilience through skill exchanges, everyday assistance, and mutual support during disruptions.

INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Mod Pod offers a repeatable model for activating underused public-agency property while delivering attainable urban housing. Adaptable modules can serve different sites across Bellingham, connecting immediate housing needs with long-term redevelopment.

A mix of home types welcomes different life stages. Compact, accessible layouts suit seniors, students, and young professionals, while family homes offer larger plans with universally accessible first floors.

For seniors, single-level layouts, step-free entries, curbless showers, reachable storage, and adaptable fittings support independent living. Clear circulation, thoughtful lighting, and visual connections to shared spaces promote comfort, orientation, and social interaction while maintaining privacy. Shared services reduce household responsibilities.

For students and young professionals, flexible living areas, integrated workspaces, reliable internet, acoustic privacy, and efficient storage support work and study. The Commons provides collaborative and social spaces without enlarging every home. Intergenerational relationships create opportunities for mentoring, technology assistance, and shared activities. Together, these features make compact urban living adaptable, connected, and generous.

PARKING

Mod Pod prioritizes walking, cycling, and transit while recognizing that some residents rely on vehicles, including residents with accessibility needs. We propose exploring designated resident parking in the closest row of spaces on Railroad Avenue, including accessible spaces and convenient routes to the homes, subject to City approval.