



Snohomish County

Planning and Development Services

MEMORANDUM

TO: Snohomish County Planning Commission

FROM: Amber Piona, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Housing Element

DATE: June 30, 2023

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Dave Somers
County Executive

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this staff report is to outline and provide information on staff recommended amendments to Snohomish County’s 2024 GMA Comprehensive Plan (“Plan” or “2024 Update”) Housing Element. A briefing on the recommended amendments will occur at the July 25, 2023, Planning Commission meeting.

BACKGROUND

The Housing Element is comprised of interrelated housing goals which form the basis of the county’s housing strategy. Each goal includes objectives and policies to carry out the housing strategy.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) is the central driver behind the Housing Element as it is a mandatory element pursuant to RCW 36.70A.070. The Housing Element has existed within the Snohomish County GMA Comprehensive Plan since its initial adoption in 1995 and has undergone amendments during each major update. The primary source for the amendments proposed for the 2024 Update include state law, regional policies, countywide policies, and public input.

In 2021 the state legislature passed House Bill 1220 (HB 1220), which amended the GMA planning goal for housing and substantially amended the requirements for housing elements. While previously jurisdictions were directed to encourage the availability of affordable housing, jurisdictions are now required to plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments, as well as to continue to promote a variety of residential densities and housing types and encourage the preservation of existing housing stock. The majority of the proposed amendments to the Housing Element are to meet the new housing element requirements from HB 1220.

Coordination with regional and local policies

The GMA requires that planning be coordinated across jurisdictional boundaries at regional and local levels. At the regional level, Snohomish County participates on the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) to develop multi-county planning policies (MPPs) for inclusion in the regional planning document, “VISION 2050.” This document is then used to inform local planning efforts between the county and the

cities within the county in a process referred to as “Snohomish County Tomorrow” (SCT). The SCT collaboration results in a set of countywide planning policies (CPPs). Additionally, in fulfillment of CPP HO-5, SCT collaborates on the development of the *Housing Characteristics and Needs of Snohomish County Report* which provides up-to-date housing data and information on current and projected future demands for housing in the county. This shared data is used by jurisdictions, including Snohomish County, to conduct updates to their housing elements.

PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS

Over 50 policies within the Housing Element are proposed to be amended in some way. The proposed changes within the Housing Element range from minor housekeeping changes, such as ensuring consistent formatting and renumbering policies, to the addition of entirely new policies, the proposed repeal of unnecessary policies, and the relocation of policies to other parts of the Comprehensive Plan. The county is also proposing a new objective (Objective HO 2.C) related to anti-displacement. Attachment A provides the proposed amendments to the narrative of the Housing Element, and Attachment B provides a table of the proposed major narrative amendments and the proposed amendments to the goals, objectives, and policies of the Housing Element with findings. The text below summarizes the proposed amendments and findings.

- Amendments to policies to include consideration for moderate-, low-, very low-, and extremely low-income households;
- A new anti-displacement objective and supporting policies;
- Amendments to policies to address racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing;
- Amendments to address moderate density housing types;
- New monitoring policies to track the affordability of existing and new housing, and to document programs and actions needed to achieve housing availability; and
- Housekeeping amendments to fix typos, improve language clarity, reorganize policies into other elements, and consider equity and inclusive language.

Narrative

The Housing Element includes proposed amendments to the narrative text of the element to remove outdated information and provide helpful context for the goals, objectives, and policies. Housing affordability and availability are also now specifically called out in the narrative as the major housing concerns for Snohomish County. The narrative includes a new section on the housing growth targets. In the previous update, housing targets were discussed with the population and employment targets in the population and employment chapter but are now included here for clarity. The narrative also includes the County’s housing need allocation by income band and a displacement risk map, both of which are now required to meet the changes to the GMA housing element requirements.

ANALYSIS

The following analysis provides a summary of the proposed amendments' compliance with state law as well as with regional and countywide planning policies.

Compliance with State Law

The GMA requires mandatory elements be included within comprehensive plans. The passage of HB 1220 in 2021 substantially amended both the GMA goal for housing, RCW 36.70A.020, and RCW 36.70A.070(2). The Housing Element of the Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan is in compliance with the housing planning goal in RCW 36.70A.020 and the requirements RCW 36.70A.070(2) for a Housing Element as displayed below.

GMA goals in RCW 36.70A.020:

GMA Goal 4: Housing. Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.

The table below summarizes how the Housing Element addresses the GMA requirements found in RCW 36.70A.070(2):

RCW 36.70A.070(2) Housing Element Requirements	How the Housing Element addresses these requirements
(2) A housing element ensuring the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods that: (a) Includes an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs that identifies the number of housing units necessary to manage projected growth, as provided by the department of commerce, including: (i) Units for moderate, low, very low, and extremely low-income households; and (ii) Emergency housing, emergency shelters, and permanent supportive housing;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The full inventory and analysis is a part of the <i>SCT Housing Characteristics and Needs in Snohomish County Report</i>. This report will be included as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan and is referenced in the Housing Element narrative and policies.• The narrative text of the Housing Element includes the SCT adopted Housing Need Allocations for unincorporated Snohomish County by income level. Also included in the narrative text of the Housing Element are numbers for the emergency housing (which includes emergency shelters) and permanent supportive housing needs. The County Council is anticipated to adopt the initial Housing Targets in July. Adjustments to the narrative text may be required depending on future Council action.

RCW 36.70A.070(2) Housing Element Requirements	How the Housing Element addresses these requirements
(b) Includes a statement of goals, policies, objectives, and mandatory provisions for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing, including single-family residences, and within an urban growth area boundary, moderate density housing options including, but not limited to, duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Housing Element includes goals, policies, and objectives, as well as mandatory provisions for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing. • Several policies (HO 1.B.1, HO 1.B.4, HO 1.D.2) are proposed to be amended to include consideration of moderate density housing options (duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes).
(c) Identifies sufficient capacity of land for housing including, but not limited to, government-assisted housing, housing for moderate, low, very low, and extremely low-income households, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, group homes, foster care facilities, emergency housing, emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing, and within an urban growth area boundary, consideration of duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Residential Land Use Needs Analysis addresses the capacity of land. This analysis is a part of the <i>Housing Needs Analysis</i>, a technical report which will be included as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan and is referenced in the Housing Element narrative. This report is currently in development and will be sent to the Planning Commission ahead of the hearing on the Comprehensive Plan. • Land capacity for housing is also considered as a part of the EIS for the Comprehensive Plan. • Several policies are proposed to be amended to include the new requirements for the land capacity analysis (Objective 1.D, Policy HO 1.D.1, Policy HO 1.D.2, Policy HO 4.A.1).

RCW 36.70A.070(2) Housing Element Requirements	How the Housing Element addresses these requirements
<p>(d) Makes adequate provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community, including:</p> <p>(i) Incorporating consideration for low, very low, extremely low, and moderate-income households;</p> <p>(ii) Documenting programs and actions needed to achieve housing availability including gaps in local funding, barriers such as development regulations, and other limitations;</p> <p>(iii) Consideration of housing locations in relation to employment location; and</p> <p>(iv) Consideration of the role of accessory dwelling units in meeting housing needs;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsections (i)-(iv) are new to RCW 36.70A.070(2)(d). There are a number of proposed amendments to policies that address considerations for moderate-, low-, very low-, and extremely low-income households (Policy HO 1.C.1, Policy HO 1.C.2, Policy HO 1.C.4, Policy HO 1.C.5, Policy HO 1.C.6, Policy HO 1.C.10, Policy HO 1.C.11, Policy HO 1.D.1, Policy HO 1.D.2, Policy HO 2.B.1 Policy HO 3.A.1, Objective 4.B, and Policy HO 4.B.1). • The documentation of programs and actions needed to achieve housing availability is included within the <i>Housing Needs Analysis</i>. Policy HO 4.B.3 is proposed to be amended to include this documentation as part of the Housing Element. • The consideration of housing locations in relation to employment locations is addressed in existing policy (Policy HO 1.C.2), and in greater detail in the housing policies in the Urban Core Subarea Element. • Several policies are proposed to be amended to include consideration of accessory dwelling units (Policy HO 1.B.1 and Policy HO 1.B.4).
<p>(e) Identifies local policies and regulations that result in racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing, including:</p> <p>(i) Zoning that may have a discriminatory effect;</p> <p>(ii) Disinvestment; and</p> <p>(iii) Infrastructure availability;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a new requirement. The analysis of racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing is incorporated as part of the <i>Housing Needs Analysis</i>, a technical report which will be appended to the Comprehensive Plan and is referenced in the Housing Element narrative.
<p>(f) Identifies and implements policies and regulations to address and begin to undo racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing caused by local policies, plans, and actions;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a new requirement. There are a number of proposed amendments to Housing Element policies to address and begin to undo racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing (Policy HO 1.A.3, Policy HO 1.B.2, Policy HO 1.C.7, Policy HO 1.C.8, Policy HO 1.C.9, Goal 2, Objective HO 2.A, Policy HO 2.A.1, Policy HO 2.A.2, Policy HO 2.A.5, Objective HO 2.B). • Additionally, within the housing policies for the Urban Core Subarea Element, further policies are proposed.

RCW 36.70A.070(2) Housing Element Requirements	How the Housing Element addresses these requirements
(g) Identifies areas that may be at higher risk of displacement from market forces that occur with changes to zoning development regulations and capital investments; and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a new requirement. Information on displacement risk in Snohomish County is a part of the <i>SCT Housing Characteristics and Needs in Snohomish County Report</i>. • Amendments to the narrative of the Housing Element include the overall displacement risk map for Snohomish County.
(h) Establishes antidisplacement policies, with consideration given to the preservation of historical and cultural communities as well as investments in low, very low, extremely low, and moderate-income housing; equitable development initiatives; inclusionary zoning; community planning requirements; tenant protections; land disposition policies; and consideration of land that may be used for affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a new requirement. A new anti-displacement objective (HO 2.C) is proposed in the Housing Element with supporting policies. A number of policies are proposed to be amended to address displacement (Policy HO 1.B.3, Policy HO 1.C.6, Policy HO 1.C.7, Policy HO 1.C.8, Policy HO 3.A.1). • Additionally, within the housing policies for the Urban Core Subarea Element, which is an area identified as having a higher risk of displacement, further anti-displacement policies are proposed.

As in previous GMA updates, some requirements for the Housing Element are met through technical reports (the *Housing Needs Analysis* and the *Snohomish County Housing Characteristics and Needs Report*) that will be included as appendices to the Comprehensive Plan.

Compliance with the Multi-County Planning Policies (MPPs)

The proposed amendments to the Housing Element are consistent with the VISION 2050 MPPs. The Housing Element goals, objectives, and policies all support planning for a variety of housing densities to meet the county’s projected housing needs, as well as a focus on middle density housing. The new anti-displacement objective and policies also support the MPP goals of mitigating potential housing displacement. The amendments to the Housing Element are specifically in compliance with the following list of MPPs:

- MPP-H-1: Plan for housing supply, forms, and densities to meet the region’s current and projected needs consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy and to make significant progress towards jobs/ housing balance.
- MPP-H-2: Provide a range of housing types and choices to meet the housing needs of all income levels and demographic groups within the region
- MPP-H-3: Achieve and sustain – through preservation, rehabilitation, and new development – a sufficient supply of housing to meet the needs of low-income, moderate-income, middle-income, and special needs individuals and households that is equitably and rationally distributed throughout the region.
- MPP-H-4: Address the need for housing affordable to low- and very low-income households, recognizing that these critical needs will require significant public intervention through funding, collaboration, and jurisdictional action.

- MPP-H-5: Promote homeownership opportunities for low-income, moderate-income, and middle-income families and individuals while recognizing historic inequities in access to homeownership opportunities for communities of color.
- MPP-H-7: Expand the supply and range of housing at densities to maximize the benefits of transit investments, including affordable units, in growth centers and station areas throughout the region.
- MPP-H-8: Promote the development and preservation of long-term affordable housing options in walking distance to transit by implementing zoning, regulations, and incentives.
- MPP-H-9: Expand housing capacity for moderate density housing to bridge the gap between single-family and more intensive multifamily development and provide opportunities for more affordable ownership and rental housing that allows more people to live in neighborhoods across the region.
- MPP-H-12: Identify potential physical, economic, and cultural displacement of low-income households and marginalized populations that may result from planning, public investments, private redevelopment, and market pressure. Use a range of strategies to mitigate displacement impacts to the extent feasible.

Compliance with the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs)

The CPPs establish a countywide framework for developing and adopting county, city, and town comprehensive plans. The proposed amendments to the Housing Element are consistent with the CPPs and help implement them within the county. The amendments to the Housing Element are specifically in compliance with the following list of CPPs:

- CPP-HO-1 The county and cities shall make provisions in their comprehensive plans to accommodate existing and projected housing needs, consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy and Snohomish County Growth Targets. Plans must include a specific assessment of housing needs by economic segment, as described in the housing report prescribed in CPP HO-5. Those provisions should consider the following strategies:
 - Avoid further concentrations of low-income and special needs housing.
 - Increase opportunities and capacity for affordable housing in Regional, Countywide, and local growth centers.
 - Increase opportunities and capacity for affordable housing close to employment, education, shopping, public services, and public transit.
 - Increase opportunities and capacity for affordable and special needs housing in areas where affordable housing is currently lacking.
 - Support affordable housing opportunities in other Snohomish County jurisdictions, as described below in CPP-HO-3.
 - Support the creation of additional housing options in single-family neighborhoods to provide for more diverse housing types and choices to meet the various needs of all economic segments of the population.
- CPP-HO-2 County and city comprehensive plans shall include policies to meet affordable housing goals consistent with VISION 2050. Jurisdictions should demonstrate within their land use and housing elements that they can accommodate needed housing consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy and Snohomish County Growth Targets. These efforts should include

facilitating the regional fair share of affordable housing for very low, low, moderate, and middle-income households and special needs individuals. Housing elements of comprehensive plans shall be periodically evaluated for success in facilitating needed housing.

- CPP-HO-4 The county and cities should implement policies that allow for the development of moderate density housing to help meet future housing needs, diversify the housing stock, and provide more affordable home ownership and rental opportunities. This approach should include code updates to ensure that zoning designations and allowed densities, housing capacity, and other restrictions do not preclude development of moderate density housing.
- CPP-HO-6 The county and cities should implement policies and programs that encourage the rehabilitation and preservation of existing legally established, affordable housing for residents of all income levels, including but not limited to mobile/manufactured housing and single - room occupancy (SRO) housing.
- CPP-HO-8 Each jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan should reconcile the need to encourage and respect the vitality of established residential neighborhoods with the need to identify and site essential public residential facilities for special needs populations, including those mandated under RCW 36.70A.200.
- CPP-HO-9 In order to improve the jobs-to-housing balance in Snohomish County, jurisdictions shall adopt comprehensive plans that provide for the development of:
 - A variety of housing choices, including affordable housing, so that workers at all income levels may choose to live in proximity to existing and planned employment concentrations and transit service; and
 - Employment opportunities in proximity to existing and planned residential communities.
- CPP-HO-10: Jurisdictions should encourage the use of environmentally sensitive housing development practices and environmentally sustainable building techniques and materials in order to minimize the impacts of growth and development on the county's natural resource systems. This approach should also consider the potential costs and benefits to site development, construction, and building maintenance to balance housing affordability and environmental sustainability
- CPP-HO-12 The county and cities should minimize housing production costs by considering the use of a variety of infrastructure funding methods, such as existing revenue sources, impact fees, local improvement districts, and general obligation bonds.
- CPP-HO-14 The county and cities should incentivize and promote the development and preservation of long-term affordable housing through the use of zoning, taxation, and other tools, including height or density bonuses, property tax incentives and parking requirement reductions. The incentives should apply where feasible to encourage affordable housing
- CPP-HO-15 Metropolitan cities, Core cities, and High Capacity Transit Communities, as defined by the Regional Growth Strategy in VISION 2050, shall develop and implement strategies to address displacement of historically marginalized populations, including residents identified in the report prescribed in HO-5, and neighborhood-based small business owners.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The GMA requires early and continuous public participation (GOAL 11 and RCW 36.70A.140). Public participation for the Housing Element has been provided to date through:

- Providing an opportunity through SEPA Scoping which began on November 1 and ended on December 3, 2021.
- Making draft policies available for a 30-day early public comment period which began on March 1, 2023, and ended on March 31, 2023; and
- Continuously through the 2024 Update project website.

The county received 13 comment letters during the Housing Element's 30-day comment period. The comments reflect a variety of concerns regarding housing density, with some commenters in favor of more housing density and different housing types (more housing choices, smaller lot single family, rural co-operatives, tiny houses, inclusionary zoning, supportive housing for people who are homeless, anti-displacement policies) and other commenters raising concerns about increasing density (infrastructure needs, environmental impacts, concerns regarding potential changes to their property). Many of the themes discussed in the public comment letters were already incorporated into the draft policies, which seek to increase housing choice while also implementing the regional growth strategy of increasing growth in urban areas over rural ones. Comments made by the building industry regarding potential policies related to building permit timelines were referred to the project manager for the Economic Development Element, where existing policies on building permit timeliness reside. All public comments can be found in the index of record.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The County issued a Determination of Significance (DS) for the 2024 Update to the Plan on November 1, 2021. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will likely be issued in September 2023. A Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will be issued before adoption of the 2024 Update to the Plan.

NOTIFICATION OF STATE AGENCIES

Pursuant to RCW 36.70A.106, a notice of intent to adopt the proposed regulations and standards will be transmitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce for the entirety of the 2024 Update to the Plan in September 2023.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the proposed comprehensive plan amendments and findings contained in this staff report.

ACTION REQUESTED

The Planning Commission is requested to hold a public hearing, consider the proposed comprehensive plan amendments, and provide a recommendation to the County Council. The Planning Commission can recommend approval of the amendments with supporting findings of fact as proposed or modified, deny the proposal with findings, or amend the proposal with appropriate findings.

cc: Ken Klein, Executive Director
 Mike McCrary, PDS Director
 David Killingstad, PDS Long Range Planning Manager
 Ryan Countryman, Legislative Analyst

Attachments:

Attachment A: Housing Element Introduction

Attachment B: Summary Table of Proposed Amendments