

Introduction

In 2007, Snohomish County Tomorrow, an inter-jurisdictional forum consisting of representatives from the County and each of the cities as well as from the Tulalip Tribes, successfully applied for a competitive Growth Management Act (GMA) planning grant from the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. The City of Lake Stevens is the fiscal administrator for the grant, which is managed by Snohomish County Planning and Development Services.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the potential to increase the supply of affordable housing in Snohomish County through intergovernmental collaboration. This report summarizes the findings and analysis of the study and proposes a program model that responds to the local conditions and preferences in Snohomish County. Snohomish County Tomorrow members can use this report to make informed decisions on potential inter-jurisdictional programs and opportunities.

The feasibility study was motivated by recognition that a shortage of safe, affordable housing affects an increasing number of families throughout each jurisdiction in Snohomish County. Existing private, nonprofit, and public efforts are struggling to keep pace with the growing needs in the community. In particular, SCT jurisdictions want to make better progress toward achieving the Fair Share Housing Allocation objectives they set for themselves in 1995 and again in 2005. Furthermore, SCT seeks to fulfill Countywide Planning Policy HO-3: “Strengthen inter-jurisdictional cooperative efforts to ensure an adequate supply of housing is available to all economic segments of the county.”

This feasibility study is guided by the Housing Subcommittee of the Snohomish County Tomorrow Planning Advisory Council (PAC). The Housing Subcommittee includes representatives from the planning departments of several Snohomish cities, one Mayor, County staff, and a representative from the nonprofit Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County. The complete subcommittee roster can be found in Appendix 6.

In June 2008, the Housing Subcommittee selected the consultant team of Building Changes and Cedar River Group to carry out the feasibility study under its direction, and provide this final report that summarizes the study’s findings and the consultants’ recommendations. The PAC will use the findings in this report to develop recommendations for Snohomish County Tomorrow.

This study included a review of relevant regional plans and policies related to housing; two rounds of interviews with key stakeholders in the county; research on best practices for inter-jurisdictional housing programs around the country; and direct feedback from the Snohomish County Tomorrow PAC and Steering Committee. More information on these components of the study follows in the sections below.

Feasibility Study of Inter-jurisdictional Housing Programs for Snohomish County

Based on the input from stakeholders and Snohomish County Tomorrow members, research on successful inter-jurisdictional collaborations, and local conditions in Snohomish County, the consultants developed a recommended program proposal and an outline of a Memorandum of Understanding that municipalities could use in developing such a collaboration.