HOUSING

The Countywide Planning Policies provide a framework for all jurisdictions to plan for and promote a range of affordable, accessible, and healthy housing choices for current and future residents. Meeting the county’s affordable housing needs will require actions by a wide range of private for profit, non-profit and government entities, including substantial resources from federal, state, and local levels. As part of this effort, all jurisdictions share the responsibility to plan for and encourage a sufficient stock of housing that is affordable to households of all income levels and demographic groups. The housing policies in this chapter encompass a full range of public actions including assessment of needs, setting targets, establishing implementation actions, and monitoring outcomes. More detailed guidance is provided in Appendix 4.

Overarching Goal: The housing needs of all economic and demographic groups are met within all jurisdictions.

Housing Supply and Needs Analysis

The Growth Management Act requires a housing inventory and needs analysis as part of the housing element of each jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan. Development of effective housing policies and programs requires adequate information on current and future conditions, local and countywide housing needs, and available resources. Assessing local housing needs includes reviewing the needs of a full range of income groups, among both current and expected future residents. The housing supply and needs analysis complements the affordable housing targets for each jurisdiction with a more comprehensive assessment to guide a full range of policies and regulations that influence housing. Further guidance on the elements of the assessment is provided in Appendix 4.

H-1 Include in each jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan an inventory and analysis of housing needs of all economic and demographic segments of the population, including individuals and families. Include in the inventory, at a minimum, relevant characteristics of housing supply and housing need, especially the needs of very-low, low- and moderate-income households, and special needs populations in the county, and changing demographic needs of the community. Address in the analysis each jurisdiction’s existing housing needs as well as its responsibility to accommodate a fair share of the projected future demand for affordable housing countywide over the planning period as expressed in the affordable housing targets described in policy H-2.

Affordable Housing Targets

Within King County, the most pressing unmet need for affordable housing is for households earning less than 80 percent of area median income. Households that fall below this threshold
include low-wage workers in services and other industries; persons on fixed incomes including many disabled and elderly residents; homeless individuals and families; and many other community members. The county and all cities share in the responsibility to increase the supply of housing that is affordable to these households. The Countywide Planning Policies assign Affordable Housing Targets to each jurisdiction in order to focus local plans, regulations, and programs on increasing housing choice and opportunity for households at the lower end of the income range, increasing the housing stock affordable to those households in areas of higher-cost housing, and increasing the range of housing choices and affordability levels in areas with existing concentrations of low-cost housing.

While neither the county nor the cities can guarantee that a given number of units at a given price level will be produced during the planning period, setting planning targets makes explicit the scope of the effort required in each jurisdiction. Progress toward affordable housing targets may be accomplished through the addition of newly constructed affordable units or existing units newly preserved or acquired and rehabilitated with a regulatory agreement for long-term affordability. Local governments may also achieve targets through the efforts of multijurisdictional organizations.

**H-2** Adopt in each jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan policies and strategies that accommodate at a minimum the affordable housing targets shown: in a) and b) below. Over time, progress toward achieving targets is measured as a percentage of overall housing growth within each jurisdiction and the county as a whole.

a. Housing affordable to moderate income households, with incomes between 50 and 80 percent of the area median household income, which is equal to 16 percent of the jurisdiction’s overall housing target; and

b. Housing affordable to low-income and very-low-income households, with incomes at or below 50 percent of area median household income, as described in Appendix 4.

**Strategies to Meet Housing Needs**

VISION 2040 encourages local jurisdictions to adopt best housing practices and innovative techniques to advance the provision of affordable, healthy, sustainable, and safe housing for all residents. No single tool is likely to be sufficient to meet the full range of needs in a given jurisdiction, and the county and cities are encouraged to adopt a range of housing tools, supported by land use, transportation, and other policies, regulations, and investments. Sufficient capacity for housing to meet targeted needs, provided in a variety of unit types and sizes, is the foundation for implementing the housing policies. More detailed guidance on the range of strategies for promoting housing supply and affordability is contained in Appendix 4.

**H-3** Provide zoned residential capacity within each jurisdiction in the Urban Growth Area for a range of housing types and densities, sufficient to accommodate each jurisdiction’s overall
housing targets, affordable housing targets, and, where applicable, its housing targets for designated Urban Centers.

**H-4** Adopt strategies, at the local and countywide levels, that promote housing supply, affordability, and diversity. At a minimum, these strategies should address the following areas:

- New housing that increases the overall supply and diversity of housing, including both rental and ownership housing suitable for a range of household types and sizes;
- New housing that is affordable to very-low, low-, and moderate-income households;
- Provision of housing that is suitable and affordable for households with special needs;
- Preservation of existing housing units, especially affordable housing units;
- Acquisition and rehabilitation of housing units for long-term affordability;
- Universal design and sustainable development of housing; and
- Increased housing supply, including affordable housing and special needs housing, within Urban Centers and in other areas planned for concentrations of mixed land uses.

**H-5** Plan for housing that is accessible to major employment centers and affordable to the workforce in them so people of all incomes can live near or within reasonable commuting distance of their places of work. Encourage housing production at a level that improves the balance of housing to employment throughout the county.

**H-6** Promote housing development, preservation, and affordability in coordination with transit, bicycle, and pedestrian plans and investments and in proximity to transit hubs and corridors, such as through transit oriented development and planning for mixed uses in transit station areas.

**H-7** Plan for residential neighborhoods that protect and promote the health and well-being of residents by supporting active living and healthy eating and reducing the risk of injury and exposure to environmental toxins.

**H-8** Adopt comprehensive plan policies that promote fair housing and plan for communities that include residents with a range of abilities, ages, races, incomes, and other diverse characteristics of the population of the county.

**Regional Cooperation**

Housing affordability is important to regional economic vitality and sustainability. Housing markets do not respect jurisdictional boundaries. For these reasons, multijurisdictional efforts for planning and adopting strategies to meet regional housing needs are an additional tool for identifying and meeting affordable housing needs. Collaborative efforts, supported by the work of Puget Sound Regional Council and other agencies, contribute to producing affordable
housing and coordinating equitable, sustainable development in the county and region. Where individual cities lack sufficient resources, collective efforts to fund or provide technical assistance for affordable housing development and programs can help to meet the housing needs identified in comprehensive plans.

**H-9** Collaborate in developing new countywide housing resources and programs, including funding, with a focus on meeting the affordable housing needs of very-low, low-, and moderate-income households. Support countywide affordable housing programs, contribute resources and other in-kind assistance to local affordable housing development, and support countywide partnership efforts that encourage equitable and sustainable development.

**H-10** Work cooperatively among jurisdictions to provide mutual support in meeting overall housing targets and affordable housing targets.

**H-11** Work cooperatively with the Puget Sound Regional Council and other agencies to identify ways to expand technical assistance to local jurisdictions in developing, implementing and monitoring the success of strategies that promote affordable housing that meets changing demographic needs. Collaborate in developing and implementing a housing strategy for the four-county central Puget Sound region.

**Measuring Results**

Maintaining timely and relevant data on housing markets and residential development allows the county and cities to evaluate the effectiveness of their housing strategies and to make appropriate changes to those strategies when and where needed. In assessing efforts to meet affordable housing targets, jurisdictions need to consider public actions taken to encourage development and preservation of very low-, low- and moderate-income housing, such as local funding, development code changes, and creation of new programs, as well as market and other factors that are beyond local government control. Further detail on monitoring procedures is contained in Appendix 4.

**H-12** Monitor housing supply and affordability, including progress toward achieving affordable housing targets, both countywide and within each jurisdiction. Local and countywide monitoring should encompass:

- Number and type of new housing units;
- Number of units lost to demolition, redevelopment, or conversion to non-residential use;
- Number of new units that are affordable to very-low, low-, and moderate-income households;
- Number of affordable units newly preserved and units acquired and rehabilitated with a regulatory agreement for long-term affordability for very-low, low-, and moderate-income households;
• Housing market trends including affordability of overall housing stock;
• Changes in zoned capacity for housing;
• The number and nature of fair housing complaints; and
• Housing development and market trends in Urban Centers.

H-13 Report regularly on the results of the housing monitoring program and consider those data in evaluating progress in the county and cities toward achieving housing goals and targets, and in developing and updating countywide and local housing policies and strategies.