

HOUSING ELEMENT

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BACKGROUND

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires a housing element in all comprehensive plans, based on the following requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(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; (b) includes a statement of goals, policies, objectives, and mandatory provisions for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing, including single-family residences; (c) housing for low-income families, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, and group homes and foster care facilities; and (d) makes adequate provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community.”

The Growth Management Act includes thirteen planning goals that must be considered when preparing or updating a Comprehensive Plan. Each Plan element relates differently to each State goal but all elements must be consistent with each other and with the goals. The following State goals are most directly related to Lynnwood's Housing Element:

Housing: Encourage availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the jurisdiction.

Reduce Sprawl: Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.

Transportation: Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

Public Facilities and Services: Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

Urban Growth: Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.

SUMMARY OF HOUSING ISSUES

The following is a summary of major issues that were identified with the original adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in 1995 and supplemented with public input received through the citizen involvement process of the 5-year update in 2001.

- There is a limited amount of vacant land in the City on which to develop housing. Most of Lynnwood is already developed.
- The lack of large developable areas within the City may elevate the value of remaining lots and, in turn, become an economic incentive to maximize development potential through more efficient and creative design – within the limitations of the City's development codes.
- Preservation and improvement of the existing housing stock is one of the keys to meeting future housing needs and affordability targets.
- Higher density and mixed-use projects in activity centers will contribute to the City's projected housing needs as well as the success of the Subregional Center.
- Building on lots that were previously skipped over or are underdeveloped (infill), will be necessary to meet the projected housing demand and is a means to achieving the most efficient use of residential lands and infrastructure.
- Lynnwood will need to seek outside funding sources if it wants to create new fair share housing opportunities. It will also need to continue to work closely with the Snohomish County Housing Authority (HASCO) and other housing providers to ensure that all jurisdictions are striving to provide a fair share of needed housing.
- Design standards and guidelines will become increasingly important, particularly for higher density housing, to ensure residential compatibility between different types of housing. Usable private open spaces, generous landscaping, and buffering of potentially incompatible land uses will help to minimize conflicts.
- The demand for "special needs" housing, including housing for senior citizens, handicapped persons, etc., is likely to increase substantially in the foreseeable future as the "baby boom" generation approaches retirement.
- Mobile home parks remain an important housing resource for many Lynnwood residents. A number of issues need to be addressed in coming years, including long-term park maintenance, upgrading to meet current codes, replacement units for older mobile homes, and nonconforming use concerns.
- Available housing opportunities for people who work in Lynnwood is a growing concern. The City's abundance of lower-paying retail and service jobs raise issues of affordability and convenience in discussions of housing/jobs balance.
- Public education about housing availability and housing improvement opportunities in Lynnwood will help promote awareness and stability.
- The protection and improvement of residential neighborhoods is essential to the City's overall quality, character and image. The preservation of established single-family neighborhoods will continue to be a high priority of the City's Comprehensive Plan while it strives to satisfy a variety of housing needs.
- The City's ratio of single-family to multi-family homes was raised as an issue during the 1999 Comprehensive Plan amendment process. The City Council proposed and adopted a policy to *"...establish a balance between single-family and multi-family units that is more representative of the municipalities in south county."* That policy stirred considerable interest, comparisons

between Lynnwood and other cities, and discussions about what our City should be and how we can get there.

INVENTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

Population growth in Lynnwood has increased 50 percent over the last 20 years. The following table illustrates our population growth since 1960.

Table 1: Population Change				
Year	Lynnwood		Snohomish County	
1960	7,207		172,199	
1970	16,495	+129%	265,236	+ 54%
1980	22,600	+ 37%	337,720	+ 27%
1990	28,695	+ 27%	465,628	+ 38%
1996	29,110	+ 2%	538,100	+ 13%
1997	33,070	+ 12%	551,200	+ 2%
1998	33,110	+ <1%	568,100	+ 3%
1999	33,140	+ <1%	583,300	+ 3%
2000	33,847	+ 2%	606,024	+ 4%
2001	34,010	+1%	618,600	+ 2%
2002	33,990	-<1%	628,000	+ 2%
2003	34,500	+2%	637,500	+ 2%
2004	34,540	+<1%	644,800	+ 1%
2005	34,830	+<1%	655,800	+ 2%

Source: OFM Forecasting Division; Lynnwood Planning Department

Over the years, Lynnwood's housing has produced a near-even mix of multi-family and single family units. In 1990, 53% of the units were single family and 47% multi-family.

During the decade of the 90s, the balance changed by about one percentage point – to 54% single family and 46% multi-family.

A total of 1,767 single-family dwellings were either constructed in or annexed into the City since 1990. Approximately 4% of the single-family units consist of Mobile Homes.

The peak construction period for residential dwellings occurred during the 1960's and 1970's when more than half of Lynnwood's housing stock was constructed. The 1980's saw a moderate increase in multi-family construction followed by a slight increase

in single-family units during the 1990's.

As the City grew during its first four decades, its rate of homeownership declined. The most dramatic decline was during the 1960's when the percentage of dwellings that were occupied by their owners dropped from 90% in 1960 to 57% in 1970. Since 1970, owner-occupancy continued to decline but at a much slower rate until the rate reversed itself during the 1990's. The 2000 Census shows 53% of our households are now owners and 47% renters.

Table 2: Housing Tenure: 1960 - 2000					
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Owner Occupied	1,588	2,963	4,688	5,607	7,062
Proportion	90%	57%	54%	49%	53%
Renter Occupied	184	2,192	4,040	5,724	6,266
Proportion	10%	43%	46%	51%	47%

Source: U.S. Census, 1960-2000 (includes all housing types)

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The 1990 Census found the median income of Lynnwood households to be \$30,512, which was slightly lower than Snohomish County's median of \$36,847. Similarly, the 2000 Census reported the 1999 median income of Lynnwood households to be \$42,814, which was lower than the County's median of \$53,060. However, Lynnwood was only slightly lower than Washington State's 1999 median household income of \$45,776.

When household incomes are compared to the increasing values of homes in the southwest Snohomish County area, it becomes difficult for the average homebuyer within our Western Washington region to purchase a home. It is generally accepted that a household should pay no more than 3 times its income for housing. The median sales price for a single-family home for 1998 was \$180,000 and \$120,000 for a condominium. When Lynnwood was tested for affordability, approximately 36% of the sales in 1998 were indeed affordable to lower-income households. Only Mountlake Terrace and Everett had higher percentages of homes sold that were affordable.

As with homeowners, rental households should not pay more than 3 times their incomes for rents for their housing to be considered affordable. The current rental housing in Lynnwood ranges from \$468 for a studio apartment to \$950 for a 3 bedroom, 2 bath apartment. The average rent for Lynnwood is approximately \$710 per month. This falls in the middle of the neighboring southwest Snohomish County communities.

Lynnwood's Housing Background Report has identified housing assistance opportunities related to the special needs of different groups and individuals including, but not limited to, age, physical or mental disability, or economic circumstances. The age of our community is increasing, as are the numbers of elderly housing units. Housing costs gets considerably more expensive as the level of assistance increases. For those unable to care for themselves, or in stages of recovery from an accident or illness, a more expensive form of housing, senior citizen care (nursing home), is available to those in need of the 24-hour care supplied by such a facility.

Support services and shelters also support a benefit to those who need a form of assistance with housing costs. These include but are not limited to the Trinity Lutheran Church, the Kiwanis Club, and Pathways for Women. These programs and facilities provide for motel vouchers for families/individuals and beds for homeless teenage mothers.

FUTURE NEEDS AND FAIR SHARE

Lynnwood's housing stock is reasonably diverse, well maintained and of good quality. Overall quality and level of maintenance has not changed significantly over the past five years since the 1995 Comprehensive Plan was adopted.

Homebuyers and renters typically look at a number of criteria when selecting a home. Most would like to live in a comfortable neighborhood that is relatively quiet, safe and that provides a sense of community. Such a place results from a combination of qualities, including convenience to the places people need to go, availability of good traffic circulation patterns, the least possible congestion, a minimum of commercial vehicles and bypass traffic,

attractive trees and landscaping, availability of parks and recreational facilities, good schools and, of course, the availability of affordable housing.

Projections were made in 1992 for the number of housing units that would be constructed by the year 2012 throughout the City, including within the Subregional Center, which is generally described as the property incorporating the Alderwood Mall and the future Central Business District (Lynnwood Triangle area). The following table lists those projections and also shows the number of existing units in the year 2000.

Table 3: Housing Units			
TYPE	1992	2000	2012*
City Total	12,593	13,638	14,326
Subregional Center	1,206	1,206	1,882
Remainder of City	11,283	12,432	12,444
* Projected			

Source: Lynnwood Planning Department, 1994

It becomes apparent that Lynnwood is approaching the intended number of units projected in the year 2012. The total number of units currently within the sub-regional center is 676 dwelling units short of the projected number in 2012.

Fair Share Housing

In 1990 the Snohomish County Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) of Snohomish County Tomorrow developed "fair share" guidelines to provide an equitable distribution of lower and moderate-income housing among the cities and unincorporated portion of Snohomish County. The intent of this legislation was to keep lower income housing and job opportunities from concentrating in certain areas of the county. The legislation stated that Lynnwood would need to provide an additional 570 units of affordable housing by 2012.

Of these units, one third (190 units) was to be directed toward those with "extremely low" incomes – not more than \$10,500. One third was to meet the needs of those with "very low" incomes – up to \$17,500, and the remaining units were to be made available for "low-income" households with incomes between \$17,500 and \$28,000.

Lynnwood has been a leader in providing affordable housing in Snohomish County. During the 1990s, 43 percent of Lynnwood's new housing has been multiple-family – primarily lower-cost apartments. And, Lynnwood is second only to Mountlake Terrace and Everett in the numbers of "affordable" homes sold. Lynnwood has been exceeding its "fair share" of affordable housing and now needs to focus more attention on the preservation and maintenance of established single-family neighborhoods.

Lynnwood also recognizes that its nearly 600 mobile homes in 17 mobile home parks play an important role in the City's efforts to ensure a variety of housing diversity and affordability for all economic segments of the community. Many are older pre-1976 mobile homes that no longer conform to today's HUD Code standards. As these parks continue to age, they become more vulnerable to redevelopment pressures. In an effort to reduce those pressures

and ensure the continuing presence of manufactured and mobile homes within our community, the City Council has directed a study of our existing mobile home parks, plans and regulations, to determine the most appropriate method of regulation of these important housing assets.

Single-family home neighborhoods are among Lynnwood's most important assets and must be preserved. However, not everyone has the interest, financial ability or need to live in a single-family home. Lynnwood recognizes the importance of continuing to provide housing opportunities for diverse income and interest groups and will continue to be a community in which housing of virtually all sizes, types and costs can be found.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

GOAL:

Provide for sufficient availability and a variety of opportunities for safe, decent, and affordable housing in strong, cohesive neighborhoods to meet the needs of present and future residents of Lynnwood.

SUBGOALS, OBJECTIVES & POLICIES:

Subgoal: Neighborhood Preservation

Preserve, protect, and enhance the quality, stability and character of established neighborhoods in Lynnwood.

Objectives:

- H-1:** Establish and manage a citywide program for neighborhood preservation and improvement.
- Policy H-1.1:** Recognize the efforts of neighborhood groups and associations and coordinate their efforts with appropriate city functions and programs.
- Policy H-1.2:** Develop an education program to inform residents and homeowners about housing and neighborhood improvement programs.
- Policy H-1.3:** Provide opportunities that assist middle- to low-income households in the maintenance and rehabilitation of their homes.
- Policy H-1.4:** Allow uses that will be compatible with the existing (or most desirable) character of surrounding properties, or that can be effectively buffered or screened if they have problem potential.
- Policy H-1.5:** Establish a street, trails, and sidewalk improvement program that promotes an effective and safe neighborhood circulation and transportation system.

- Policy H-1.6:** Adopt and apply code enforcement regulations and strategies that will promote neighborhood protection, quality redevelopment, preservation, property maintenance, public safety and welfare.
- Policy H-1.7:** Recognize the role of mobile and manufactured housing as an important component of Lynnwood's single-family housing stock by creating a more stable planning and zoning environment for their continuation and by providing flexible and effective development regulations that will allow the upgrading and modernizing of existing mobile home parks. [2002 amendment]
- H-2:** Provide opportunities for housing that is responsive to market needs within our region, including both ownership and rental opportunities. (ongoing)
- H-3:** Encourage amenities that enhance neighborhood safety. (ongoing)
- Policy H-3.1:** Encourage and support community service projects such as painting, landscaping, spring clean up, and tree planting programs.
- Policy H-3.2:** Review for effectiveness and enforce regulations intended to reduce or mitigate such negative impacts as traffic, noise, lights, glare, etc., on residential sites and neighborhoods.

Subgoal: Housing Opportunities

Provide for diverse, safe, and decent housing opportunities that meet local housing needs without encroachment into established single-family neighborhoods.

Objectives:

- H-4:** Establish zoning that permits alternative housing types and mixed-use development in the Edmonds Community College District. (immediate)
- Policy H-4.1:** Adopt the Community College Areawide Plan, including its related zoning, overlay zone, development guidelines and other implementation tools.
- Policy H-4.2:** Provide redevelopment incentives and performance standards that will allow college and neighborhood scale mix-used development at appropriate locations within the College District.
- H-6:** Allow developers the use of the most efficient state-of-the-art design and development tools to produce new homes and neighborhoods that are consistent with regional housing market trends.
- Policy H-6.1:** Modify the Zoning Code (Title 21) to remove development obstacles and allow greater innovation in design and construction.
- Policy H-6.2:** Consider limited use of incentives that will allow a greater variety of housing types in selected locations throughout the City. These may include: density bonuses; cluster housing; zero lot line; revised development standards (setbacks, lot sizes, street

standards, etc.); affordable housing set-aside; and streamlined development review.

Subgoal: Affordable Housing

Encourage the development of affordable housing for all income levels within the City.

Objectives:

H-7: Comply with regional Fair Share population and housing allocations, as provided through Snohomish County.

Policy H-7.1: Consider the use of grants, private lenders, and other available funding sources to establish and carry out a housing subsidies program aimed at meeting our Fair Share allocation, as necessary.

Policy H-7.2: Consider the creation of new affordable housing development opportunities and/or a home maintenance and rehabilitation program through the use of available resources.

H-8: Develop a public awareness program by July 2006 to enhance awareness of available housing programs and related resources.

Policy H-8.1: Work closely with the Snohomish County Housing Authority (HASCO) and other agencies to provide affordable housing and related information on the availability of housing and housing assistance programs.

Policy H-8.2: Encourage the development of affordable housing for senior citizens to include, as a viable alternative, mobile and/or manufactured home parks.

