

Housing Element

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS CHAPTER:

- Estimates of current and future housing needs; and
- Policies to preserve and improve the existing housing stock; encourage new housing that meets the full spectrum of the community’s needs; and develop thriving, equitable neighborhoods.

Purpose

This Housing element describes how Tukwila’s housing needs will be satisfied through 2044. This element is based on a detailed analysis of Tukwila’s housing needs contained in the Housing Background Report; housing projections determined by a joint committee including King County and its cities; and community engagement input.

The goals and policies seek to guide City actions related to housing, including decisions related to development regulations, affordable housing, and other programs. In the coming years, the City will need to plan for growth while ensuring the existing and future housing stock serves the changing needs of Tukwila’s population, reducing barriers that prevent low- and moderate-income households from living near their work or transit, and preserving housing that is affordably priced. Tukwila’s future must include thriving, equitable neighborhoods where everyone has the opportunity to live in a safe, healthy, and affordable home in the “City of opportunity and the community of choice”.

Tukwila Neighborhoods

Tukwila’s residential neighborhoods are geographic areas, some with distinct boundaries such as waterways and freeways, and others with less obvious boundaries based on time of annexation. These neighborhoods are a mix of smaller-lot, built-out residential areas predominately built before World War II, large multi-family apartment complexes built in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, and newer areas characterized by larger houses.

From the Comprehensive Plan’s adoption in 1994 to the present, Tukwila residents have described the City as having a distinct character focused on community and livability.- The ten residential neighborhoods identified in previous Plan updates are shown in Figure 1 Exhibit X.

INSERT EXHIBIT X



Issues

In developing the goals and policies for Tukwila’s Housing Element, the following issues were identified.

Housing Stock

- **Building age:** Almost half of Tukwila housing units are more than fifty years old, and most units were constructed between 1960 and 1980. As of 2023, only a tenth of the existing units were constructed since 2000. Older buildings can be more expensive to maintain, especially for cost-burdened residents. If well-maintained and protected from displacement, however, these units can offer a naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) reservoir.
- **Housing size:** Housing units available for rent tend to consist of studios and 1- and 2-bedroom units, while ownership units tend to have 3 or 4 bedrooms. However, renter households tend to be larger than homeowner households, creating a mismatch between need and availability.
- **Vacancy rates:** Tukwila has very low vacancy rates. In 2021, the rental vacancy rate was 1.3% and the ownership vacancy rate was 1.4%. Low vacancy rates indicate a lack of housing supply, which makes it more difficult for existing residents and prospective renters and buyers to identify housing that might best suit them.



Figure 221. Housing of different designs, ownership arrangements, and prices help meet the diverse needs of Tukwila residents.

Home Ownership Options and Middle Housing

Having a range of housing types to choose from facilitates a wider range of households being able to purchase a home. Homeownership can offer greater stability (vs. renting), as well as can provide the opportunity to build wealth and strengthen a household’s resilience against the risk of displacement.

Currently, most of Tukwila’s housing stock consists of older single-family homes, and apartments in large multi-family developments. These limited options do not accommodate residents in all stages of life, including young adults, multigenerational families, older adults hoping to “age in place,” and older adults looking to downsize. Single family houses, the only housing type allowed on most residential lots in Tukwila, are also generally the most expensive type of housing to purchase and develop per unit, meaning new units are financially out of reach for many households.

“Middle housing” includes duplexes, townhouses, cottages, courtyard apartments, and other building types that fall between single family detached houses and high-density apartments. Middle housing tends to be more affordable to build and offers a greater variety of layouts and sizes that are better suited to the range of household types in Tukwila. Expanding the areas in which middle housing is allowed could help create new “starter homes” and offer the advantages of homeownership to a new generation.



Figure 332. Middle housing illustrations.

Housing Projections

The Puget Sound Regional Council – the regional planning organization that develops growth projections – estimates that Tukwila will need a total of 14,239-454 housing units by 2044, or 5,223-045 more than the City’s current-most recent 2024 estimate of stock (9,231-194 units), as shown in Table 1. To achieve this growth, roughly 240 new units will need to be developed every year. Achieving this target would increase the City’s population to approximately 36,000 residents in 2044.

Historically, there has been a large gap between the City’s growth target and number of housing units actually constructed in the target period, although housing production increased since 2018, partly due to modified development regulations in the Southcenter urban center, and new development along Tukwila International Boulevard. Due to the slow growth, the King County Urban Growth Capacity recommends that the City adopt “reasonable measures” to accelerate housing production, potentially including changes to zoning, permitting procedures, or other measures.

Table 1. Tukwila Housing Capacity and 2044 Targets

	2018 Baseline	Additional Unit/ Job Target	2044 Total Target
Housing (Units)	----- 7,869-954	----- 6,500	---- 14,369-454

Source: King County Urban Growth Capacity Report, 2021, and the City of Tukwila

Analysis of Tukwila’s current zoning shows that the City has a total capacity for 7,475 new housing units within its zones that allow residential development, including anticipated housing units from projects in the development pipeline. Antiquated development regulations and extended permitting timelines, however, continue to inhibit and create barriers to new construction.

Affordable Housing Targets and Anti-Displacement Concerns

Under the Growth Management Act, cities and counties work together to plan for a sufficient supply of housing affordable to all income levels.¹ Since 2021, cities and counties have coordinated to identify equitable individual housing targets that will meet regional housing needs. Tukwila’s targets are shown in Table 42 below.

Table 42. Tukwila Housing Supply and Need by Income

Income band	Share of Existing Units	Share of Existing Households	Share of New Unit Target	Needed Housing Units
Extremely low (0-30% AMI)	4%	23%	21%	1367*
Very low (30-50% AMI)	26%	19%	4%	274
Low (50-80% AMI)	35%	16%	3%	214
Moderate (80-100% AMI)	18%	12%	19%	610
Higher (100-120% AMI)	10%	30%	11%	692
High (>120% AMI)	7%		51%	3,343

* Includes 471 needed permanent supportive housing units

Source: King County Countywide Planning Policies

With a significant supply of relatively affordable housing present in Tukwila, the City is already contributing significantly to countywide affordability. It is important to note that newly developed units available at costs lower than 120% AMI can be allocated to the >120% AMI level for target purposes.

As new homes are created, it will be important to act to reduce impacts on vulnerable communities in Tukwila. These impacts may include displacement of naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAHs) and cultural anchors, such as businesses and places of worship. Displacement is most likely to occur in areas where zoning allows higher intensity development relative to other parts of the City (e.g., along Tukwila International Boulevard), and where

¹ For a discussion of the relationship between AMI and housing affordability, see page 1 of the Housing Background Report.

vulnerable communities such as low-income residents, recent immigrants, or non-White communities are present.

This element includes policies intended to prevent displacement; preserve and maintain older, more affordable housing; and strengthen links with members of vulnerable communities.

Goals and Policies

The following goals and policies intend to help Tukwila establish vibrant neighborhoods and encourage new housing, while maintaining affordable housing and meeting the needs of low-income and special-needs households. Each goal is followed by a list of related policies.

GOAL 1 – Support housing growth consistent with regional targets.

- H1.1 Ensure zoned capacity is sufficient and encourages housing construction sufficient to meet the regional growth target of at least 6,500 additional housing units by 2044.
- H1.2 Identify and remove excessive regulatory barriers to housing production.
- H1.3 Modify residential zoning designations and development standards to align with City goals, and periodically assess the amount of housing produced under these standards.
- H1.4 Encourage housing growth near major transit stops, especially high-capacity transit nodes and in Southcenter/Tukwila Urban Center.
- H1.5 Align development regulations to market conditions to reduce reliance on time- and funding-intensive development agreements.

GOAL 2 – Promote safe, healthy, and affordable housing choices for residents of all income levels.

- H2.1 Encourage production in all neighborhoods of diverse housing types that are appropriate for residents in all stages of life and all household sizes.
- H2.2 Encourage housing development affordable to all income segments sufficient to meet needs consistent with adopted targets.
- H2.3 Encourage the creation of housing for different income levels in residential areas throughout the City.
- H2.4 Support the development of emergency housing, emergency shelters, and permanent supportive housing sufficient to meet adopted targets, and ensure that City regulations guiding such development are consistent with state and regional guidance.

- H2.5 Support siting of transitional housing and permanent supportive housing in any zones in which residential dwelling units or hotels are allowed, and siting of indoor emergency shelters and indoor emergency housing in any zone where hotels are allowed in accordance with state law.
- H2.6 Expand capacity for moderate density housing, i.e., “missing middle housing”, in residential areas with low-density zoning throughout the City to increase home ownership and rental housing options.
- H2.7 Work with the owners and managers of Tukwila’s new and existing permanent or long-term low-income housing to maximize housing desirability, protect long-term affordability, and strengthen community connections.
- H2.8 Strive to make alternative and affordable housing options available for residents currently living in substandard housing, such as pre-HUD code mobile homes.
- H2.9 Encourage housing design that improves resilience in the face of climate-change driven extreme weather events, such as flooding and extreme heat.

GOAL 3 - Support collaborative efforts with other jurisdictions and organizations to assess housing needs, coordinate funding, and preserve and create affordable housing opportunities.

- H3.1 Support the equitable distribution of regional funds, such as Community Development Block Grants, interlocal-agreement sales taxes revenue, and other federal, State and County funding, for needed affordable housing.
- H3.2 Pursue establishing, or expanding, programs to provide tax incentives for increased housing development.
- H3.3 Play an active role in regional efforts to meet the needs of low-income community members, including monitoring of housing needs and updating city policies and regulations to align with regional goals.
- H3.4 Continue to work closely with South King Housing and Homelessness Partnership (SKHHP) and other partners to achieve development of subsidized affordable housing for very low-, low- and moderate-income households.

GOAL 4 – Limit displacement impacts to vulnerable and historically underserved populations.

- H4.1 Identify and take action to remove City policies, rules, and programs that exacerbate racially disparate impacts.
- H4.2 Develop and implement strategies to reduce displacement of low-income households in areas of redevelopment.

- H4.3 Evaluate City actions for potential to increase displacement risk for naturally occurring affordable housing and vulnerable communities and mitigate or avoid taking actions that significantly increase this risk.
- H4.4 Support the long-term preservation of existing naturally occurring affordable housing developments by acting as a facilitator between affordable housing groups interested in purchasing units and property owners.
- H4.5 Continue to improve the condition of rental housing through administration of the Residential Rental Licensing and Inspection Program.
- H4.6 Continue to support the maintenance, weatherization, rehabilitation, and long-term preservation or replacement of existing housing for low- and moderate-income residents.
- H4.7 Continue to develop relationships with populations that have been historically underserved and are at risk of displacement to better understand needs and risks.
- H4.8 Support programs and City actions that increase homeownership opportunities for vulnerable populations.
- H4.9 Adopt renter protections to ensure stable housing for Tukwila Renters.

GOAL 5 – Promote housing options that support personal fulfillment and a healthy social life and are appropriate for people in all stages of life.

- H5.1 Encourage development of housing that is appropriate for multi-generational families, including the development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), middle housing, and family-sized apartments.
- H5.2 Review and update development code to support production of housing types that provide relatively affordable homeownership options, such as middle housing (including townhouses) and condominiums.
- H5.3 Encourage use of universal design principles in new housing development.
- H5.4 Assist in providing residents with the human services, economic development, and transportation needed to increase access to housing options.
- H5.5 Support community groups that actively work to improve neighborhood quality and strengthen the sense of community.
- H5.6 Encourage site and building design that helps reduce social isolation and supports active lifestyles.
- H5.7 Support the creation of co-housing, housing cooperatives, co-living buildings, and other types of housing that provide community-oriented housing alternatives for families, seniors, young singles, religious communities, or other groups with specific needs.

Resources

- Housing Background Report
- [Tukwila Transit Oriented Development Housing Action Plan 2020](#)
- [Puget Sound Regional Council VISION 2050](#)
- [King County Countywide Planning Policies 2021](#)
- Regional South King County Housing Action Framework 2020:
 - [Housing Strategies Framework](#)
 - [Housing Context Assessment Methods](#)
 - [Housing Policy Assessment](#)
- [Regional Affordable Housing Task Force 2018 Report](#)
- [Tukwila 2012 Strategic Plan](#)
- [Adequate provisions checklist](#)