

# 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".

## Issues

In developing the goals and policies for Tukwila's Housing Element, these 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. That said, if well-maintained and protected from displacement, these units offer a naturally-occurring affordable housing 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 1. 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 home ownership among a wider range of households. Homeownership can offer greater stability and the opportunity to build wealth, as well as strengthen resilience against 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 2. 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 housing units by 2044, or 5,045 more than the City’s current stock (9,194 units). To achieve this growth, roughly 240 new units will need to be developed every year. 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 City is recommended to adopt “reasonable measures” to accelerate housing production, potentially including changes to zoning, permitting procedures, or other measures.

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 and from anticipated housing units from projects in the development pipeline. However antiquated development regulations and extended permitting timelines have created 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. 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 1 below.

Table 1. Tukwila Housing Supply and Need by Income

Income band	Share of Existing Units	Share of Existing Households	New Unit Target Share	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

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 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.

(changes to policies in the 2015 plan are noted in this draft)

### **GOAL 1 – Support housing growth** consistent with regional targets. (Revised 3.1)

- H1.1 Ensure zoned capacity is sufficient and encourages housing construction sufficient to meet the regional growth target of at least 5,045 additional housing units by 2044. (Revised 3.1.1)
- H1.2 Identify and remove excessive regulatory barriers to housing production. (Revised 3.1.2)
- 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. (New policy)
- H1.4 Encourage housing growth near major transit stops, especially high-capacity transit nodes and in Southcenter/Tukwila Urban Center. (New Policy)
- H1.5 Align development regulations to market conditions to reduce reliance on time- and funding-intensive development agreements. (New Policy)

## **GOAL 2 – Promote safe, healthy, and affordable housing choices for residents of all income levels. (Revised 3.2)**

- 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. (Revised 3.2.1)
- 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 (Revised 3.2.2).
- 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. (Revised 3.2.3)
- 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. (New Policy)
- 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. (New Policy)
- 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. (Revised 3.2.4)
- 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. (No change; formerly 3.2.6)
- H2.9 Encourage housing design that improves resilience in the face of climate-change driven extreme weather events, such as flooding and extreme heat. (New policy)

### **Sidebar: RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTION PROGRAM**

Implemented in 2011, the Tukwila Residential Rental Licensing and Inspection Program requires all rental unit owners to obtain an annual residential rental business license and complete an inspection every four years. The inspection may be conducted by a City inspector or a pre-approved private inspector. Rental units must meet code standards, and violations must be addressed within 30 days. The program seeks to improve substandard and unsanitary residential buildings that do not meet State and local housing and technical codes.



As of November 2023, 114 rental licenses (895 rental units) were due for inspection; in 2024, 180 rental licenses (1,570 units) are due.

**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. (Revised 3.3.1)
- H3.2 Pursue establishing, or expanding, programs to provide tax incentives for increased housing development. (PC Public Hearing ask to staff)
- 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. (Revised 3.3.2; removed preservation clause)
- 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. (Revised 3.3.3)

**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. (New policy)
- H4.2 Develop and implement strategies to reduce displacement of low-income households in areas of redevelopment. (Relocated and revised 3.2.5)
- 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. (New policy)
- 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. (Relocated and revised 3.2.7)
- H4.5 Continue to improve the condition of rental housing through administration of the Residential Rental Licensing and Inspection Program. (Relocated 3.4.1)
- H4.6 Continue to support the maintenance, weatherization, rehabilitation, and long-term preservation or replacement of existing housing for low- and moderate-income residents. (Relocated 3.4.2, also covers 7.5.8)

- 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. (Relocated and revised 3.5.3)
- H4.8 Support programs and City actions that increase homeownership opportunities for vulnerable populations. (New policy)
- H4.9 Adopt renter protections to ensure stable housing for Tukwila Renters.

### **Sidebar: MINOR HOME REPAIR PROGRAM**

The City administers the Minor Home Repair Program, which provides and promotes the repair and maintenance of housing for low- and moderate- income homeowners. The program is funded through a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The City receives approximately \$25,000 in annual funding.

This program is a valuable resource for residents, however Tukwila Human Services estimates the program meets a fraction of the existing need for home repair and maintenance. Additional funding and partnerships can help to improve the look and quality of housing throughout the City.

### **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. (New policy)
- 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. (New policy)
- H5.3 Encourage use of universal design principles in new housing development. (Revised 3.5.1)
- H5.4 Assist in providing residents with the human services, economic development, and transportation needed to increase access to housing options. (Relocated and revised 3.5.2)
- H5.5 Support community groups that actively work to improve neighborhood quality and strengthen sense of community. (Relocated and revised 3.6.3, also covers 7.5.1)
- H5.6 Encourage site and building design that helps reduce social isolation and supports active lifestyles. (New policy)

- 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. (New policy)

### **Sidebar: Family-sized housing**

Family-sized, family-friendly housing units contain at least two bedrooms and include features such as areas where family members can gather for meals and other activities, sufficient storage space, a spot for children to do homework, and easy access to outdoor play and recreation space. Due to various factors related to building design, market demand, and building code stipulations, apartment buildings are rarely constructed with family-sized units with more than two bedrooms and associated spaces. While these elements are historically available in single family detached homes, middle housing types of development, such as duplexes and townhomes, can be well-suited to providing more spacious family-sized housing. Encouraging new family-sized housing in areas with access to transit and proximity to schools, parks, low-traffic streets, and other family-friendly elements will make it easier for families to find their home in Tukwila.



*Figure 3. Examples of housing with a common open space to strengthen relationships between neighbors and create safe outdoor play areas for children.*



## Sidebar: What is Universal Design?

Universal design is an approach to designing buildings, products, and the built environment to be easily usable by the broadest possible range of people, regardless of age or ability. The approach centers convenience and accessibility for the benefits of all users.

As the population changes over time, family structures gradually transform as well. Many homes are designed around the concept of the nuclear family, typically two adults tied by partnership or marriage, with their minor children. This arrangement once represented a majority of households. Today there is a wider variety of households than in the mid-twentieth century; for example, adults living without children, single adults, and multigenerational families. Universal design helps to support

aging in place and multigenerational families by applying design principles that emphasize flexibility, intuitive design, and variations in size and space for different users ([Center for Excellence in Universal Design](#)). One example is a home that includes wide hallways and doorways to ease wheelchair user navigation, tiered or height-adjustable countertops to accommodate more than one height, and a bathroom shower that is spacious and flush with the floor. Through home modifications or retrofitting, barriers that limit a home's accessibility can be eliminated, and families can be better prepared for a lifetime of changing needs.



*Figure 4. Bathroom with universal design principles. Source: US HUD*

## 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](#)