

# Pierce County Comp Plan Housing Summary

## Planning Options

**Alternative 1** does not change existing land use policies or zoning. It results in a deficit of housing capacity for households with low incomes in the 0-80% AMI range.

**Alternative 2** would increase density to 8 units per acre in most parts of the urban area to support middle housing production. This would result in more intense development, but still suburban in character. Alternative 2 would provide adequate housing capacity for all incomes.

**Alternative 3** would increase density to 20 units per acre in most areas within 1/2 mile of the County's established Centers and Corridors to support transit-oriented development. Areas outside the expanded Centers and Corridors areas would stay much the same. Alternative 3 results in a deficit of housing capacity for households with low incomes in the 0-80% AMI range.

## Data and Issues to be Addressed

Housing Units. According to the Washington State Department of Commerce there were 355,799 housing units in Pierce County in 2020, with 57% in incorporated cities and towns and 43% in unincorporated areas.

Ages. The proportion of older adults (age 65 and older) is expected to grow to about 23%, with a similar decline in children under 18. Currently Pierce County's rural areas have higher percentages of older residents, while our urban unincorporated areas tend to have higher percentages of children. Aging signals that the need for smaller, more affordable units will be strong.

Household Size. More than 50% of the households have only one or two people. However, the share of larger households has grown in urban areas outside of the urban growth area.

Diversity. Pierce County's urban areas are significantly more diverse than its rural areas. More than twice as many people living in urban unincorporated communities identify as black, indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC) compared to rural residents. 18% speak language other than English in their home in urban areas versus 7% in rural areas.

Disabilities. About 12% of the population has a disability in unincorporated Pierce County. Disabilities can include sensory disabilities, physical disabilities, mental disabilities, self-care disabilities, go outside home disabilities, and employment disabilities. These conditions often require accommodations that can leave people with disabilities at risk of discrimination and harassment in their attempts to secure and maintain housing.

### Cost-Burden.

Housing cost burden is a key indicator of housing affordability. A household is considered cost-burdened if it spends more than 30% of its income on housing costs. Housing cost-burden was most common among the lowest income households. Severe housing cost-burden (those spending more than 50% of their incomes on housing costs) was most common among households with incomes at or below 50% AMI. Moderate housing cost-burden was common across all income levels. There is a table in the plan document that could not be copied into this summary.

Housing Type Diversity. Diversify housing types. To meet the needs of all residents, housing is needed that fits each stage of life in terms of size, design, and affordability for the diverse people in our community. Middle housing consists of housing types that provide alternatives to both detached single-family units and large multi-family flats. This includes duplexes, cottages, row homes, and ADUs. These diversify the types of available and provide options for community members.

Housing for special needs. Special needs housing includes permanent supportive housing, group homes, and assisted living. These allow for people to continue to live in their preferred neighborhoods while receiving the care that they need.

Homelessness. Homelessness and housing insecurity has increased within the county since 2015, which means a diversified approach is needed. The development of housing at the 0-30% AMI combined with a network that can connect community members to re-housing services before experiencing homelessness is needed to curb this growth.

Growth Areas. Most growth in Pierce County is happening in urban areas, a pattern consistent with state, regional, and countywide policy directives. The communities seeing the most housing production within unincorporated Pierce County are located in or near South Hill, Puyallup, Frederickson, and South Tacoma.

Transportation. Focusing growth in areas with plentiful transportation options can help to lower those costs. Adding housing near employment areas can also boost economic development and moderate housing costs.

Climate Change. The built environment is the source of 34% of Pierce County's GHG emissions, and the residential built environment is a source of 40% of those.<sup>2</sup> Siting housing near jobs, increasing housing density, energy efficiency improvements, use of renewable energy, weatherization, and temperature regulation can help housing to reduce emissions and improve climate resiliency for residents.

Housing Types. The majority housing units in Pierce County are detached single-family dwelling units, followed by larger multi-family developments. Middle housing types tend to fall in the range of two-unit structures, representing only about 9% of unincorporated housing stock in unincorporated Pierce County.

While demographic data shows that most households have one or two persons, more than two-thirds (2/3) of the housing units in unincorporated Pierce County are two- or three-bedroom units. Owner occupied units are more likely to have 4 or more bedrooms, and rental units are more likely to have one bedroom or less. This suggests there may be a need for some larger rental units and some smaller ownership units.

Affordability. There is a mismatch in Pierce County housing between the number of housing units available at each affordability level and the number of households at each affordability level. For unincorporated Pierce County, the largest deficits in housing units by affordability level are in the 0-30% and 80%+ AMI categories.

Shelter. There are no shelter beds or temporary housing communities in unincorporated Pierce County at this time. There are a few safe parking sites run by religious institutions and non-profits.

Transitional Housing. Transitional housing is similar to permanent supportive housing because it is coupled with supportive services to help people who have experienced homelessness. However, residency in transitional housing is limited, with the goal of integrating residents back into independent housing within two years. It is unknown how many transitional housing units are operating in unincorporated Pierce County.

Growth. Strategies that could help to address housing needs related to growth:

- Create more housing by expanding development opportunities and reducing regulatory barriers. Support ADUs and middle housing in the Pierce County Code and streamline permit processes and procedures.
- Incentivize affordable housing construction through financial incentives such as tax credits and forgivable or low-interest loans.
- Support mobile and manufactured homes as a low-cost option for residents.
- Promote density near high-capacity transit. Increasing growth in areas with high-capacity transit increases housing supply while enabling people who do not own a personal vehicle to meet their daily needs.

Racial and other Disparate Impacts. Pierce County conducted an evaluation of Racially Disparate Impacts, Displacement, Displacement Risk, and Exclusion in Housing as part of its Housing Action Strategy in 2022. It found that family household incomes are lower across BIPOC groups when compared to countywide and white alone income levels. As a result, rising housing costs disproportionately burden households of color, who spend more of their income on housing and have lower homeownership rates.

These factors create a higher risk of exclusion and displacement for BIPOC community members within the county.

There has also been less investment in infrastructure in areas with greater BIPOC residents based on reviews of the County's equity indices. Areas near Tacoma have better access to parks and transit than other parts of the county; parks are also more available in the Parkland,

Spanaway, and South Hill areas. The lack of amenities available to BIPOC communities can affect quality of life and access to opportunities.

The areas of highest displacement risk within the unincorporated Pierce County are adjacent to cities and town and where this is potential for land use change to accommodate transit, such as South Hill. This is likely due to the growth outpacing housing development in these areas.

### Housing Equity Strategies

The following strategies could help promote housing equity:

- **Affordability.** Improving housing affordability and supporting the development of affordable housing units provides the greatest benefit to those most economically challenged.
- **Awareness.** Thinking carefully about equity and the potential for inequitable outcomes is a good first steps towards addressing and preventing disparate housing impacts. The Pierce County Equity Index and Equity Note process are a good first step at building awareness about the impacts of County decision-making.
- **Investment.** Policies prioritizing investment in areas with low Equity Index scores helps to rebalance community access to opportunity.

Homeownership. Homeownership improves community stability and eliminates displacement associated with rent increases. If housing prices continue to increase, owning a home also creates a source of generational wealth that can be leveraged to improve opportunity and outcomes for families over time.

## Proposed Policies

*Please note that the numbering system will be changed in the final plan. The numbers that are not in sequence are because some have been moved from other sections of the earlier plan or have been added for the first time.*

## HOUSING FOR ALL

### **GOAL H-1 Allow for a range of housing types in the County to support housing choice and affordability.**

H-1.1 Support a variety of housing types that allow moderate and high densities and creative and efficient use of land within the urban area.

H-1.2 Ensure that housing types within the rural and resource areas retain the rural character, and respect the features of the lands.

H-1.3 Allow middle housing such as duplexes, townhomes, accessory dwelling units, cottages, multi-plexes and other innovative types.

H-1.4 Encourage multifamily residential development that provides owner-occupied, housing units (i.e., condominium units) through various incentives such as bonus density, increased building height, multifamily housing tax incentives, reduced parking requirements, and other measures.

H-X Allow mobile home parks in areas where other single-family housing is allowed

H-X Allow for the placement of manufactured housing within mobile home parks in addition to the traditional mobile home units.

H-1.6 Allow shared housing in urban zones where similar housing unit types are allowed to support affordability for households with very low and extremely low incomes.

H-1.6.1 Allow rooming houses where single-family homes are allowed.

H-1.6.2 Allow congregate housing where multi-family and mixed-use development is allowed.

H-1.6.3 Allow shared housing villages where mobile home parks, multifamily, and cottage development is allowed.

H-1.6.4 Provide a density equivalent for shared housing that allows multiple sleeping units to be calculated as a single unit of density.

**GOAL H-2 Encourage the development of new housing within the Urban Growth Areas where adequate facilities and services exist or are planned.**

H-2.1 Increase density in communities with existing infrastructure.

H-2.2 Encourage accessory dwelling unit development to increase diversity in housing stock.

H-2.2.1 Streamline urban accessory dwelling unit development requirements during the permitting process to reduce development costs and delayed construction.

H-2.3 Support the redevelopment of surplus properties where infrastructure exists.

H-2.3.1 Assess all County-owned properties and tax-title properties for suitability for housing prior to disposition as surplus lands.

H-2.3.2 Sell County surplus properties for developments that provide for affordable housing.

H-2.3.3 Apply the proceeds from the sale of surplus County property suitable for other uses towards the development of affordable housing.

H-2.3.4 Allow surplus lands suitable for housing to be land banked.

H-2.4 Plan for housing density and affordable housing in high-opportunity neighborhoods near existing or future transit routes with high frequency service.

**GOAL H-10 Promote understanding of how a variety of dwelling types have historically been a part of livable communities.**

**GOAL H-3 Consider the economic implications of regulations and practices on housing costs.**

H-7.4 Ensure consistent, streamlined regulations and procedures.

7.4.2 Consider allowing reduced design standards and zoning and development standards such as parking, height restrictions, and bulk requirements where community livability can be maintained.

H-7.4.3 Provide for streamlined permitting to support housing production.

H-7.4.4 Support building practices consistent with recognized healthy housing standards.

H-3.1.4 Provide pre-approved building plans for accessory dwelling units, cottage housing units, or other middle housing types to lower design costs for applicants.

**GOAL H-5 Seek ways to prevent discrimination, address displacement, and mitigate past harm in the development and maintenance of housing.**

H-5.1 Collaborate with community leaders, organizations, non-profits, and

businesses to help vulnerable groups obtain and maintain housing.

H-5.2 Support resident ownership of mobile home parks.

H-5.3 Evaluate the potential for displacement on lands proposed for rezone or redevelopment for public use.

**GOAL H-6 Support the development of housing for older adults, people who have experienced homelessness, people with disabilities, and others with different physical, social, and economic needs.**

H-6.1 Encourage the development of housing built to universal design standards to support housing for people of different abilities.

H-13.1 Provide a broad range of housing choices in terms of cost, size, design, and suitability for various household types, e.g., families, people of all ages and levels of mobility, couples, and persons with disabilities or special needs with adequate accessibility and safety infrastructure.

H-13.2 Ensure adequate zoning to support emergency and temporary housing for homeless as well as transitional and permanent supportive housing for formerly unhoused families and individuals.

H-14.1 Encourage and support the development of affordable special needs and foster care housing in Pierce County by providing incentives and technical assistance for housing development.

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**GOAL H-4 Promote and assist in the development of the necessary financial tools to address affordable housing for County residents.**

H-4.1 Expand the County Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) program, where allowed by law, to encourage the development of more affordable multi-family housing.

H-4.1.1 Collaborate with local lenders and non-profit organizations providing homeownership support for low-, moderate and middle-income households and other demographic groups that historically have low rates of homeownership.

H-7.3 Seek funding for nonprofit developers to build affordable housing.

H-7.5 Implement Participate in the federally funded program, which provides assistance to households earning below the County median income, who are willing to help build or remodel their own housing.

**GOAL H-7 Create solutions for affordable housing that benefit all economic segments of the population.**

H-7.1 Apply planning and zoning tools identified as techniques to achieve affordable housing, such as: transfer of development rights, redevelopment of vacant and blighted property, development incentives, and inclusionary housing.

H-7.2 Promote innovative programs and techniques that minimize the cost of affordable housing.

H-7.2.1 Provide incentives for developers to construct affordable housing for households earning 80% or less of the median household income for the County.

H-7.2.2 Consider fee exemptions for residential projects that incorporate housing affordable to households earning 80% or less of the County median household.

NEW H-7.2.3 Support community land trusts that t acquire land and develop housing to support affordable home ownership.

H-7.4 Consider allowing bonus densities for housing in urban areas that provides affordable units.

H-7.7 Require inclusionary housing provisions in future developments associated with Comprehensive Plan amendments to increase development potential.

H-7.8 Identify specific development fees and processes that may be waived if a residential development guarantees inclusionary housing provisions.

H-7.10 Implement inclusionary housing provisions based upon consideration of: the number of affordable units, the level of affordability achieved for low income households, the duration of time the units would be maintained as affordable, and a method for monitoring and maintaining affordability over time.

H-7.9 Integrate required affordable housing units within a development.

H-7.9.1 Encourage provision of units through various types of housing structures.

H-7.9.2 Ensure the architectural features of the affordable units are consistent with the overall project.

**GOAL H-11 Support training, seminars, programs, and partnerships that connect middle and lower-income households with affordable housing options, including options for home-ownership.**

**H-7.12 Support programs to reduce the cost of home ownership and reduce displacement for low- and moderate-income households such as: emergency repair programs, tax exemptions, weatherization improvements, and energy upgrades.**

## EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

**GOAL H-12 Reuse the existing housing stock to help meet the housing demand with naturally occurring affordable housing.**

H-12.1 Explore and identify opportunities to reutilize and redevelop existing parcels where rehabilitation of existing buildings is not cost-effective.

H-12.2 Review regulatory restrictions prohibiting rehabilitation of existing housing stock.

H-12.3 Develop and implement rehabilitation programs and opportunities to reuse existing housing stock.

H-9.2 Consider a current use tax incentive conditioned on maintaining the land use as a manufactured/mobile home park and requiring repayment of abated taxes in the event of a manufactured housing community closure or change of use.

## FARMWORKER HOUSING

**GOAL H-15 Identify strategies to expand opportunities to increase supply of housing to meet the needs of farmworkers and the agricultural industry.**

H-15.1 Protect the economic viability of the agricultural industry by considering innovative planning techniques to allow for farmworker housing supporting the agricultural resource activities.

H-15.2 Consider the seasonal nature of farming and potential options to accommodate seasonal housing that does not permanently convert agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

H-15.3 Explore the opportunity to provide a siting process to expedite farmworker housing projects using preapproved designs for housing of both temporary and permanent farmworkers employed by the property owner.

H-15.4 Work with the agricultural community to develop criteria and a process for siting permanent and migrant farmworker housing in rural and agricultural resource areas with consideration given to neighborhood and project security, health and sanitation, availability of public services, access, childcare, and the availability of affordable housing in a nearby urban area.

H-15.5 Support the development of climate resilient farm worker housing that considers climate vulnerability in siting and design.

**GOAL H-16 Collaborate with public agencies, private institutions, and organizations to remove barriers to providing farmworker housing, and explore innovative approaches to meeting farmworker housing needs.**

H-16.1 Encourage new housing and/or housing rehabilitation in suitable areas.

H-16.2 Evaluate state requirements for farmworker housing.

**GOAL H-17 Monitor future development and consider regulatory amendments as necessary to support this farmworker housing.**

## HOUSING AND GROWTH

**GOAL H-17A Plan for adequate housing affordable at all income levels for Pierce County.**

H-14.2 Participate in inter-jurisdictional efforts to ensure a fair, equitable and rationale distribution of housing for all income levels and for emergency housing, consistent with land use policies, transportation, and employment locations.

H-7.6 Coordinate with Pierce County cities and towns to ensure a fair share distribution of affordable housing within new master planned communities.

H-7.11 Support the development of affordable housing consistent with needs identified by Washington State.

**GOAL H-18 Monitor the success of the housing policies in accomplishing the goals by developing benchmarks and monitoring the achievement of housing policies at least every five years.**