

Housing & Residential Neighborhoods Policy Issues Comprehensive Plan Update 2015

As part of the update process for the Housing Element and Residential Neighborhoods Element, data on current conditions and needs were reviewed in relation to existing policy and King County requirements. For some issues, there appears to be a gap between existing policy and the current needs of the City. In others, policy language remains relevant to today's needs, but can be strengthened to aid in future implementation strategies such as updating development regulations.

Each issue presented below includes data on current conditions in Tukwila, followed by a brief overview of existing policy and requirements from the updated King County Countywide Planning Policies. Gaps are indicated with red arrows, and potential issues resulting from a gap between existing policy and current needs are shown in the gold boxes. Changes to development regulations and City programs will require additional consideration, which follow Comprehensive Plan adoption, as outlined in the City's 2015-2016 Work Plan.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITION

- Most existing single-family homes in Tukwila were constructed before 1970, and the majority of multi-family homes were constructed during the 1960's, '70's, and '80's. Older homes typically require more money for maintenance and many residents do not have the resources to adequately maintain their homes.
- Tukwila has a relatively large percentage of family households occupied by five or more people, however a large percentage of the City's housing stock are 1-and 2-bedroom homes. Overcrowding conditions affect the wear and tear on a home, property, and neighborhood, and increase health and safety concerns for those living in the units.

Housing Policy 3.3.1 – 3.3.4: Focus on weatherization and improvement of rental housing;

→ Does not address home repair needs related to age and/or overcrowding

KCPP¹ H-11: Encourage maintenance to ensure housing condition and quality is safe and livable

Explore policy options to seek additional resources to assist residents with home repair and maintenance.

¹ King County Countywide Planning Policy, Amended 12/03/2012

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- While Tukwila has traditionally been sought out for its affordable housing prices, rents and mortgage payments are rising and are a cost burden for many residents. More than half (50.2%) of residents pay more than 35% or more of their income on housing.
- There is an unmet need for housing for very low-income residents earning less than 30% of the area median income (AMI). Approximately one-fifth of residents earn less than 30% AMI, yet only slightly less than 4% of housing is considered affordable for these residents.

Housing Policy 3.2.1 – 3.2.10: Support efforts to provide the City’s fair share of affordable housing;

→ Existing policy does not address affordable housing for very-low income (less than 30% AMI) residents

KCPP H-2: Focus on housing for households earning less than 30% AMI

Explore policy options to encourage the availability and preservation of housing for all income levels, including those making less than 30% AMI.

- Over 60% of the homes in Tukwila’s four mobile home parks are pre-HUD code². Approximately a quarter of the 88 manufactured homes on individual single-family homes are pre-HUD code homes.
- The City has received public comments expressing concern over living conditions within manufactured/mobile homes and the associated risks to buyers of these homes.

→ Existing policies do not address mobile homes

Explore alternative affordable housing options for City residents living in substandard housing such as pre-HUD code mobile homes.

DIVERSITY OF HOUSING

- The majority of the City’s housing stock consists of older, 2 bedroom single-family homes and apartments in large multi-family developments. This range of housing options does not accommodate residents in all stages of life, including young adults, multi-generational families, and older adults hoping to “age in place.”

² Due to concerns over the quality, durability, health and safety of mobile/manufactured homes, Congress passed the Federal Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act in 1974, which led to the creation of a national manufactured-housing code, referred to as the “HUD code,” to which all new manufactured homes constructed after 1976 were required to conform.

- Many of the vacant parcels in residential zones do not meet Zoning Code requirements and cannot be developed as is. Some large parcels (greater than 10,000 but less than 13,000 square feet) are ineligible for platting activity given the minimum lot requirement of 6,500 square feet.
- Approximately 20% of vacant parcels in the LDR Zone are smaller than 6,500 square feet and are considered substandard lots and cannot be developed in their current state.

Housing Policy 3.4.1-3.4.2: Develop housing design standards for special populations;

→ Existing policy may be strengthened to reflect the changing needs of residents

KCPP H-5: Promote housing supply, affordability, and diversity suitable for a range of household types and sizes

Explore policy options to encourage a diverse range of housing choices within residential neighborhoods, including cottages, small lot development, duplexes, and detached ADUs.

- Less than half of housing units in Tukwila are apartments, but almost 60% of housing units in the City are renter-occupied.
- Tukwila has an estimated 2.9% foreclosure rate, more than double the County rate of 1.2%.

→ Existing policy does not address home ownership

Explore policy options to support first-time homebuyers to encourage greater rates of home ownership.

RESIDENTIAL CONNECTIVITY

- Approximately 29% of Tukwila’s street edges have sidewalks. The majority of new sidewalk construction over the past decade has been the result of City-led efforts, as current Subdivision Code does not require street frontage improvements, including sidewalk construction, for developments of four or less lots.

Residential Neighborhoods Policy: 7.4.1 – 7.4.6: Provide sidewalks to promote neighbor interaction;

→ Existing policy does not address financing sidewalk construction or place-making aspects in streetscape design

KCPP DP-7: Promote safe routes to and from public schools

→ Tukwila does not have a specific review process for projects along school walk routes, inconsistent with state requirements

Explore policy options to support both public and private sidewalk development. Specific approach to be determined through changes to development regulations and/or City programs.

SINGLE-FAMILY INFILL COMPATIBILITY

- As there is limited vacant land, the majority of single-family home construction in Tukwila will occur as infill – building new homes in existing residential neighborhoods. Housing projections show that vacant and underused sites in residential neighborhoods may account for approximately 24% of new housing in the coming decades.
- The size of new single-family homes is increasing, consistent with a national trend. The majority of Tukwila’s single-family homes were built prior to 1970 and averaged 2,000-3,000 square feet in size, and are 1 to 2 stories in height. Homes built since 1990 have averaged 4,000-5,000 square feet in size, and are 2 to 3 stories in height.
- City staff has received several public comments expressing concern about new larger, incompatible homes in residential neighborhoods that block views and encroach on privacy.

Residential Neighborhoods 7.6.4-7.6.8: Encourage single-family infill that is compatible with existing scale and siting;

→ Lot sizes vary in Tukwila’s neighborhoods; the existing one-size-fits-all approach to minimum lot size and types of development allowed within neighborhoods may prevent compatible infill development from occurring

→ Existing height, setback, and other development regulations do not consider how views from adjacent structures can be impacted as infill development occurs, and do not prevent new homes from having a “looming” effect on existing homes

KCPP DP-44: Adopt design standards or guidelines that foster compatible infill

Explore policy options to support neighborhood specific development standards. Specific approach to be determined through changes to development regulations.