

Chapter 3

Housing



A Vision for Housing

The city of Lake Stevens will provide a fair and equitable regulatory framework that supports the creation of high-quality and diverse housing types that meets the needs and preferences of the community across all income levels and demographics.

INTRODUCTION

The Housing Element serves as a roadmap for providing housing opportunities for current and future Lake Stevens residents at all income levels and across a variety of housing types, while recognizing the unique characteristics of the community and natural environment. It is largely guided by Statewide Planning Goal 3 as outlined in RCW 36.70A.020, and includes:

- A description of the local, regional and state context;
- An inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs;
- Goals, policies and objectives;
- An evaluation of new state requirements and growth targets;
- Provisions for the preservation, improvement and development of housing;
- Identification of sufficient land for housing; and
- Provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community.

This element examines Lake Stevens' current housing inventory, evaluates its condition, and illustrates how housing options addressing the diverse needs of the community can be accommodated over the next 20 years. While Lake Stevens is not mandated or expected to directly construct housing units, it is the city's responsibility to facilitate and advocate for housing development by both private and public sectors through the city's planning frameworks and regulations.

As discussed in more detail later in this chapter, Lake Stevens has a demonstrated need for a variety of housing types, including single-family residences, middle housing, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), multifamily units, emergency housing, permanent supportive

housing and transitional housing. This element provides an overview of housing data and highlights specific trends relevant to Lake Stevens and utilizes numerous sources, including:

- *U.S. Census Bureau’s 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates*
- *2016-2020 US HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)*
- *2023 Lake Stevens’ Housing Action Plan (HAP) and Housing Needs Analysis (HNA)*
- *Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM)*
- *2023 Snohomish County Housing Characteristics and Needs Report (HO-5 Report)*
- *2021 Snohomish County Buildable Lands Report*

Housing supply and affordability is a regional issue, with each jurisdiction required to do their fair share to ensure they meet the future needs of their community while working collaboratively with neighboring jurisdictions. In Lake Stevens, the city works with the Department of Commerce (Commerce), the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), and Snohomish County to analyze trends and needs to help inform Lake Stevens on how best to plan for future growth in a sustainable, equitable, and collaborative manner.

This chapter intends to assess current housing trends, present policies, and craft strategies that will help meet 2044 population and housing growth targets at various income levels. As detailed in the Land Use Element (Chapter 2), Lake Stevens has the zoned capacity to meet its 2044 population and housing targets, with the adoption of the proposed map amendments in Figures 2.4 and 2.5. Lake Stevens’ largest existing housing deficit is that which serves households making less than 80% of the area median income (AMI), most notably at or below 30% of AMI (extremely low income). Lake Stevens will require a combination of policies, regulations, programs and partnerships to meet these needs.

PLANNING CONTEXT

State Planning

Per RCW 36.70A.070(2), the Housing Element is one of the six mandatory elements required by the Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA has seen extensive changes related to housing since this element was last updated in 2015. Most prominent among these changes was the adoption of House Bill 1220 (2021), which revised the language in the GMA to require jurisdictions to “plan for and accommodate” housing affordable to all income levels,

based on growth targets at a variety of income levels. HB 1220 also added requirements related to the provision of permanent, transitional, and emergency housing, which are discussed later in this chapter. Overall, the GMA requires comprehensive plans to:

- Include an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs that identifies the number of housing units necessary to manage projected growth;
- Include a statement of goals, policies, objectives, and mandatory provisions for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing, including single-family residences, middle housing, and multi-family housing at all income levels;
- Identify and amend policies, regulations, and implementation measures that may result in racially disparate impacts, displacement and exclusion in housing;
- Identify sufficient land for housing, including, but not limited to, government-assisted housing, housing for low-income families, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, permanent supportive housing and emergency housing, transitional housing, and group homes and foster care facilities; and
- Make adequate provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community.

In addition, 2023 saw the adoption of middle housing and accessory dwelling unit (ADU) bills (HB 1110 and HB 1337) that aim to further expand infill housing opportunities, which will be an important source of future housing given the city's lack of vacant land. These bills focus on increasing the potential supply of moderate-income and market rate housing in the region at moderate densities. As a Tier 2 jurisdiction as defined by House Bill 1110, Lake Stevens is required to allow at least two dwelling units per lot that is residentially zoned, and at least four units per lot that is either within ¼ mile of major transit stops or provides at least one affordable unit. HB 1337 provides the ability to develop up to two accessory dwelling units (ADUs) per residential lots. The city amended its development code in March 2024 to comply with both HB 1110 and 1337 and has factored this additional capacity into its analysis of future housing needs.

Regional Planning

PSRC's VISION 2050 plan provides a regional strategy for housing in the four-county Puget Sound region. VISION 2050's policies are based on the regional growth strategy and emphasize locating housing near growth and employment centers and along transportation corridors.

Housing

Goal: The region preserves, improves, and expands its housing stock to provide a range of affordable, accessible, healthy, and safe housing choices to every resident. The region continues to promote fair and equal access to housing for all people.

Vision 2050 Housing Goal (Source: PSRC)

Key housing-related elements of this strategy include:

- Designing diverse housing to align with the Regional Growth Strategy, ensuring a balance of job opportunities and housing for current and projected needs.
- Providing a spectrum of housing types for all income levels, especially prioritizing low- to middle-income households, and ensure an equitable regional distribution.
- Enhancing housing options, especially affordable ones, in areas near transit infrastructure, bridging the density gap between single-family and multifamily units.
- Promoting homeownership opportunities, particularly for low- to middle-income groups, while addressing historical disparities faced by communities of color.
- Encouraging jurisdictions to streamline development standards and foster inter-jurisdictional collaborations and public-private partnerships for better housing solutions.
- Proactively identifying and addressing potential displacement risks for marginalized communities, deploying strategies to minimize associated impacts.

Countywide Planning

In advance of each Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update cycle, Snohomish County adopts an updated set of countywide planning policies (CPPs), which must be consistent with the GMA and Vision 2050. The current CPP (as amended in 2021) for housing reads:

“Snohomish County and its cities shall promote fair and equitable access to safe, affordable, and accessible housing options for every resident through the expansion of a diverse housing stock that is in close proximity to employment, services, and transportation options.”

The countywide planning policies identify numerous challenges that the county and local jurisdictions face over the next 20 years. These include:

- Adequate supply of affordable housing for all household types, income levels, and housing unit types;
- Adequate supply of quality housing options in proximity or satisfactory access to places of employment;
- Community concerns about density and design;
- Adequate resources for, and equitable distribution of, low-income, emergency, transitional and permanent supportive housing;
- Housing types suitable for changing household demographics and an aging population; and
- Maintenance of existing affordable housing stock, including mobile home and manufactured housing.

In 2023, the county issued its Housing Characteristics and Needs Report, also known as the HO-5 Report, which requires the county and cities to create a housing report that:

- Describes the measures that jurisdictions have taken to implement or support housing CPPs;
- Quantifies and maps existing characteristics that are relevant to the results prescribed in the housing CPPs; and
- Identifies the number of housing units necessary to meet the various housing needs of the project population.

Housing growth targets for Snohomish County jurisdictions were derived from the regional growth strategy identified in Vision 2050 and allocated to individual jurisdictions and unincorporated areas following a collaborative process through Snohomish County Tomorrow. For the 2020-2044 planning period, Lake Stevens was allocated an additional 4,915 additional housing units. As shown in Figure 3.1, these housing units are allocated at specific household income levels, and the city must demonstrate the capacity to

accommodate housing types affordable at each income range, based on guidance from the Washington State Department of Commerce.

Overall, the city must demonstrate adequate zoned capacity to accommodate the following projected housing needs based on a percentage of area median income (AMI), which as of 2024 was \$150,700 for a family of four and \$105,400 for a single person:

- 1,168 units at 0-30% AMI (Extremely Low Income)
 - Includes 456 Units of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)
- 820 units at 30-50% AMI (Very Low Income)
- 549 units at 50-80% AMI (Low Income)
- 458 Units at 100-120% AMI (Moderate), provided as middle housing units
- 1,920 units at 120% AMI or greater (Market Rate), provided in SFR units
- 304 beds of emergency housing

For permanent supportive housing (PSH) – permanent housing with integrated supportive services that aim to provide housing stability to households with at least one member with a disability - and other extremely low (0-30% AMI) and very low income (30-50%) households, jurisdictions are expected to provide this zoned capacity via multifamily housing, primarily apartments.

The HAP and subsequent analysis show that city has adequate zoned capacity at 50% and above of AMI, which can be met through a combination of detached single-family homes, duplexes, middle housing (triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, cottage housing) and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). It is the projected need at lower income levels that required the city to consider both map amendments and policy changes to accommodate its full spectrum of housing needs. The proposed map amendments incorporated into Chapter 2 include several targeted map amendments and concurrent rezones to provide more multifamily housing (apartments and condos) opportunities. These include:

- Rezoning areas within and adjacent to the 20th St SE Corridor subarea to Multifamily Residential (MFR), most notably the east side of 99th Ave SE north of 20th St SE and the south side of 20th St SE west of Cavalero Road;
- Rezoning areas within and adjacent to the Lake Stevens Center subarea to MFR; and
- Rezoning parcels within and adjacent to the Downtown Lake Stevens subarea.

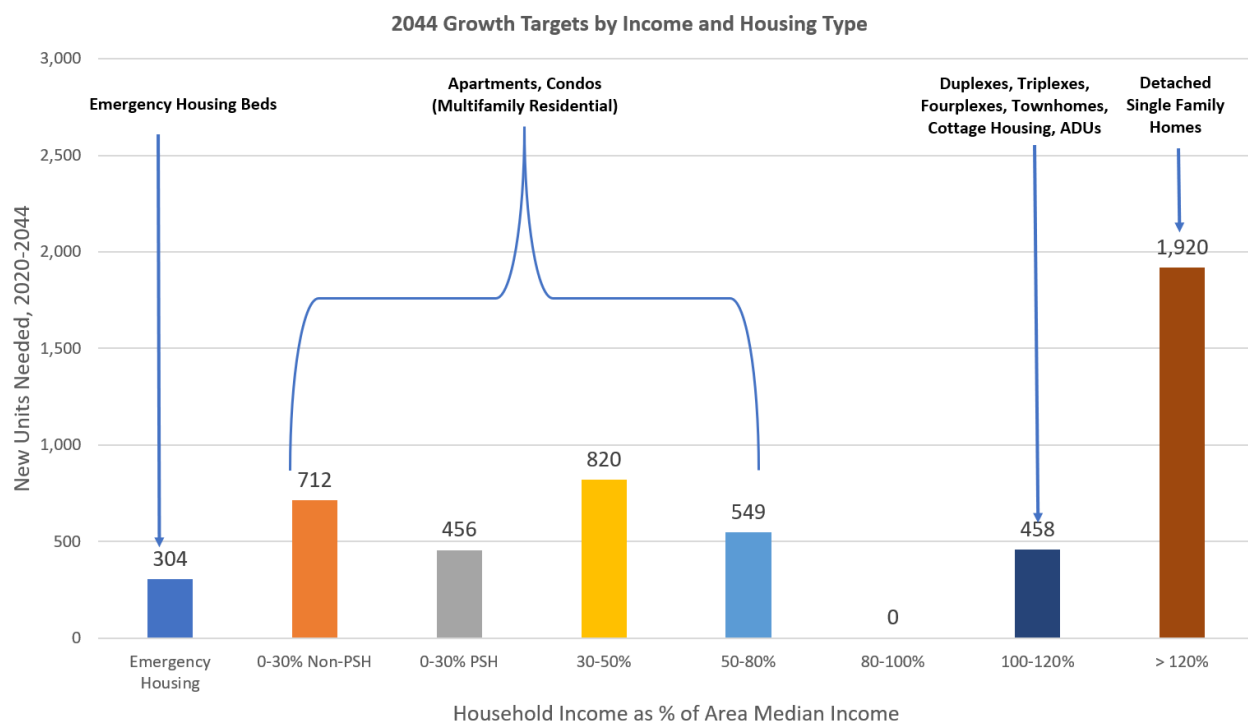


Figure 3.1 – 2044 Growth Targets by Income and Associated Housing Types

Source: Snohomish County, City of Lake Stevens

The HO-5 Report prioritizes cost-efficient housing production, exploring diverse infrastructure funding methods ranging from existing revenue streams to impact fees and bonds, ensuring they mirror the cost of new public amenities without unduly inflating housing costs. A cornerstone of the county's approach is the promotion of long-term affordable housing. This involves deploying a suite of incentives, from zoning changes to density bonuses. Additionally, metropolitan and core cities, especially those with high transit connectivity, are tasked with implementing strategies that protect historically marginalized communities from displacement, ensuring that both residents and neighborhood-based businesses are preserved and supported.

Lake Stevens Planning

As the demographic patterns in the county change, housing demand and needs will also continue to change. Over the past 15 years, the city has undertaken extensive subarea planning efforts as well as adopted zoning and development code amendments that have increased housing options, densities, and capacity in the city. These include code amendments in 2020 that expanded middle housing opportunities in most residential zones,

well ahead of the adoption of HB 1110 and HB 1337 in 2023. These regulations support a shift from lower-density single-family housing to moderate-density housing and more efficient land use, which provides housing opportunities to a broader range of incomes.

In 2023, the city adopted a Housing Action Plan (HAP) that serves as the housing needs analysis (HNA) and general policy foundation for this Housing Element and is included as Appendix G to the Comprehensive Plan. The HAP, along with the HO-5 Report, showed that the city had adequate zoned capacity to meet its overall housing growth targets and those at higher income ranges (80% of AMI and above), but that additional zoned capacity was needed to accommodate housing units at types affordable at below 80% of AMI, most notably apartment units and other multifamily residential housing (Figure 3.2).

The Department of Commerce provides guidance on relating zone categories to housing types and income levels. For Puget Sound and other higher-cost communities, this relationship is shown in Table 3.1.

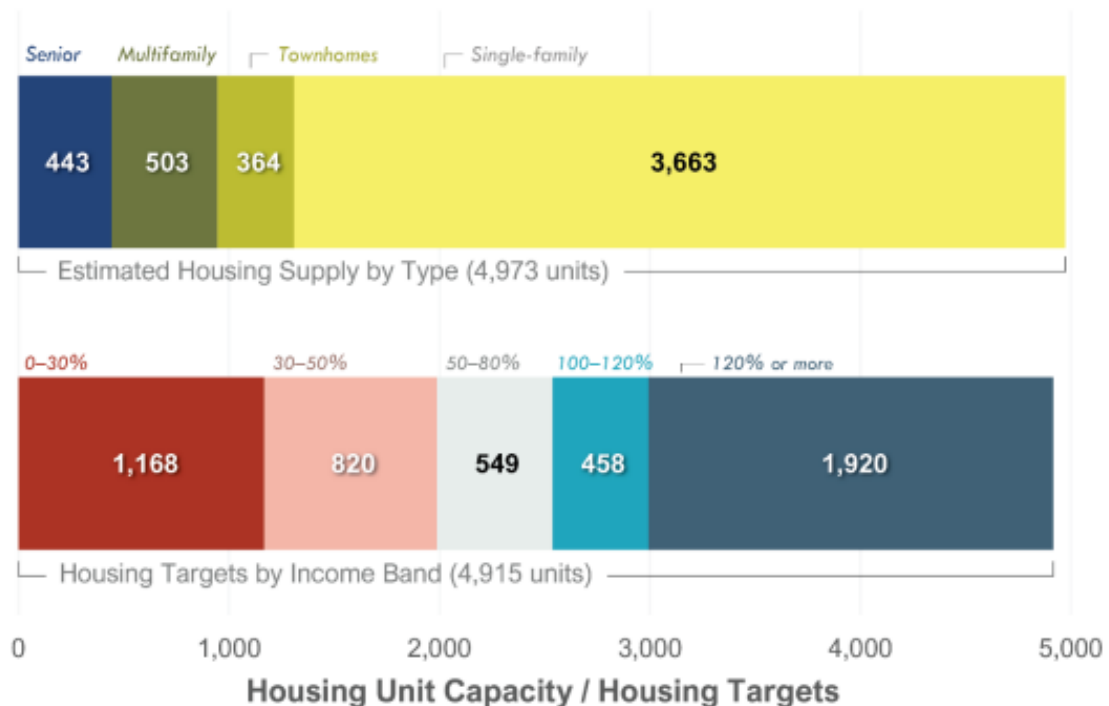


Figure 3.2 – Comparison of 2021 Zoned Capacity to 2044 Growth Targets

Source: City of Lake Stevens, Snohomish County BLR

Zone category	Typical housing types allowed	Lowest potential income level served		Assumed affordability level for capacity analysis
		Market rate	With subsidies and/or incentives	
Low Density	Detached single family homes	Higher income (>120% AMI)	Not feasible at scale*	Higher income (>120% AMI)
Moderate Density	Townhomes, duplex, triplex, quadplex	Higher income (>120% AMI)	Not typically feasible at scale*	Higher income (>120% AMI)
Low-Rise Multifamily	Walk-up apartments, condominiums (2-3-floors)	Moderate income (>80-120% AMI)	Extremely low, Very low, and Low-income (0-80% AMI)	Low income (0-80% AMI) and PSH
Mid-Rise Multifamily	Apartments, condominiums	Moderate income (>80-120% AMI)	Extremely low, Very low, and Low-income (0-80% AMI)	Low income (0-80% AMI) and PSH
High-Rise/Tower	Apartments, condominiums	Higher income (>120% AMI)	Moderate income (>80-120% AMI)	Moderate income (>80-120% AMI)
ADUs (all zones)	ADUs on developed residential lots	Moderate income (>80-120% AMI)	N/A	Moderate income (>80-120% AMI)

Table 3.1 – Housing Types by Income in Puget Sound

Source: Dept of Commerce

As required by state law, the city completed a land capacity analysis (LCA) to evaluate its ability to meet its housing growth targets at individual income bands. The LCA (Appendix B) determined that the city did not have adequate zoned capacity to meet its future needs at the extremely low (0-30% AMI), very low (30-50% AMI), and low (50-80% AMI) income bands, including permanent supportive housing (PSH).

Adequate Provisions

As summarized in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 and discussed in more detail in Appendix B, the proposed land use and zoning map amendments reflected in Figures 2.4 and 2.5 (Chapter 2) would allow the city to meet its 2044 growth targets at all income bands. The LCA initially noted that the city was not required to quantify the capacity needed to meet its emergency housing needs so long as it allows emergency housing in all zones where hotels are permitted, which was based on 2023 guidance from the Department of Commerce. However, based on revised Commerce feedback in November 2024, the city updated the LCA in January 2025 to include a quantitative analysis of emergency housing needs in the city.

Appendix B also includes Adequate Provisions Checklists to meet the requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(2) by identifying and assessing potential barriers to the production of housing units that the city has historically not seen sufficient supply to meet projected demand. These include 1) emergency housing and permanent supportive housing (Table 5) and 2) Low-Rise

and Mid-Rise Housing (Table 6), which are the assumed development types for housing at or below 80% AMI, per Table 3.1 above. The checklists in Appendix B build upon recent housing policy and implementation work, including the 2023 Housing Action Plan and 2024 code amendments to comply with HB 1110 (middle housing) and HB 1337 (accessory dwelling units). Adequate provisions checklists were not prepared for housing types where significant barriers do not exist (primarily due to recent code updates to comply with state legislation), such as ADUs and middle housing.

Income Band(s) (% AMI)	Housing Types Serving Range	Associated Zoning Districts	2044 Growth Target	Current (2023) Capacity	Surplus or (Deficit)
0-30% (non-PSH) 30-50%	Apartments, Condos	MFR, CD, MU, MUN, CBD, PBD (PBD to be eliminated)	2,081	1,780	(301)
0-30% (PSH)	PSH	MFR, CD, MU, MUN, CBD, PBD (PBD to be eliminated)	456	0	(456)
100-120%	Duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, cottage housing, ADUs	R4, R6, R8-12	458	1,829	1,371
120% and above	Detached single-family residences	WR, R4, R6, R8-12	1,920	2,930	1,010

Table 3.2 – Housing Types by Income Band with Projected Surplus or Deficit

Current Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Net Acres	Assumed Density	Projected Increase in MFR	Projected Reduction in SFR
R4	MFR	15.1	20 un/acre	302	(60)
R8-12	MFR	12.8	20 un/acre	256	(102)
R8-12	CD	5.8	30 un/acre	174	(47)
R4	CBD	0.3	30 un/acre	9	(1)
R6	CBD	1.1	30 un/acre	33	(7)
Total				774	(217)

Table 3.3 – Proposed Zoning Map Amendments to Meet 2044 Growth Targets

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Population Data

According to the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM), the populations of Snohomish County and the larger four-county region both grew by approximately 20% between 2010 and 2023 (Figure 3.3). Lake Stevens has witnessed even more rapid population growth during this period, growing from just under 30,000 residents (which accounts for a series of annexations between 2006 and 2009) to 41,260 in 2023, an increase of nearly 40% (Figure 3.4).

In the past decade, the city has methodically annexed lands within the Urban Growth Area (UGA), adhering to a vision of establishing "One Community Around the Lake." Approximately 400 acres remain within the city's UGA, situated to the northeast and southeast, which are available for annexation. While annexations have played a major role in the city's population growth (including a large annexation in 2021 that added approximately 3,000 residents), new housing production has also contributed significantly to this growth, as discussed in the next section.

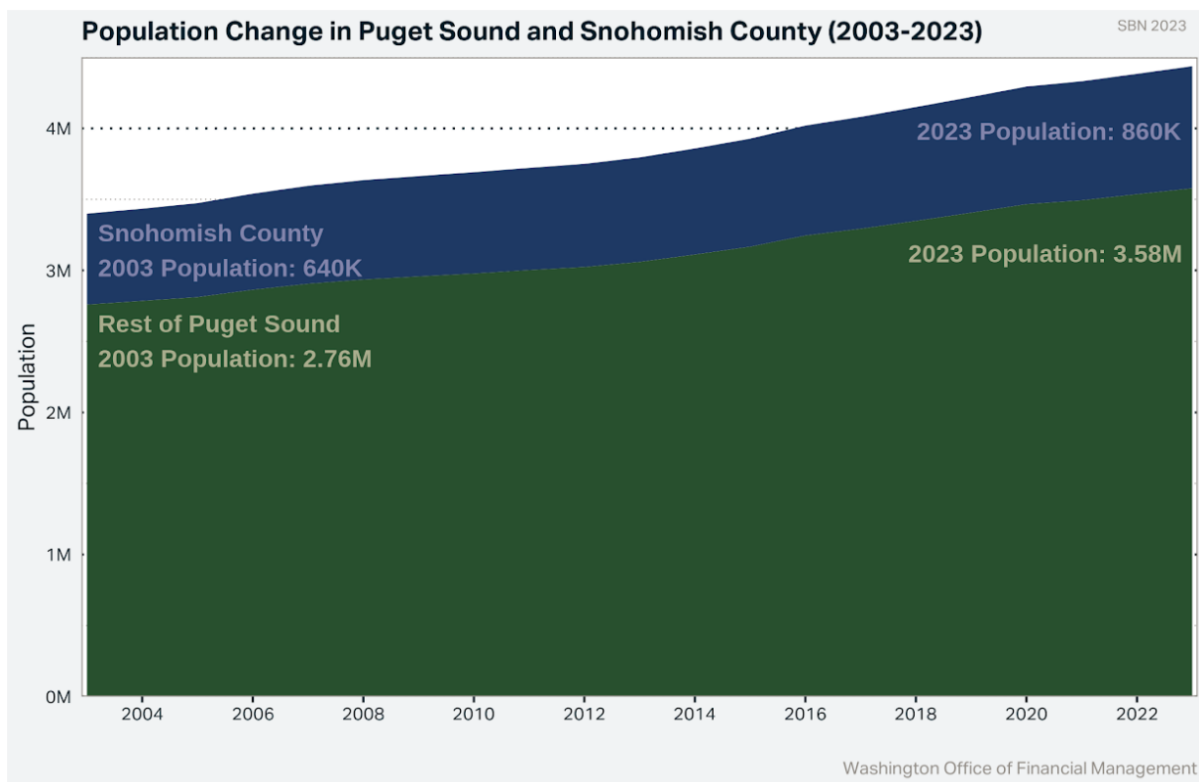


Figure 3.3: Population Change in Snohomish County and the Region (Source: OFM)

According to the 2022 ACS, the median age of Washington residents is 38.4, nearly identical to that of Snohomish County at 38.8. Lake Stevens' median age sits just below that of the state and county at 34.4. The age distribution of Lake Stevens shows a larger percentage of young families, with a relative gap of individuals in their 20s (Figure 3.5). Approximately 8.7% of the population in Lake Stevens is aged 65 and over. Planning for the future housing needs of these demographics, which may include an increased need for multifamily dwellings, senior housing, assisted living facilities, group homes, and infill housing, will be important to adequately accommodate an aging population and those just entering the housing market in the future.

Lake Stevens currently has an average household size of 2.94 people, which is the largest in Snohomish County. The city of Lake Stevens is less ethnically diverse than Snohomish County, with approximately 85% of its 2020 population identifying as non-Hispanic White, as shown in Figure 3.5. As discussed later in this chapter, there are differences in housing tenure (rental vs ownership) by race and ethnicity that merit additional discussion and policy considerations.

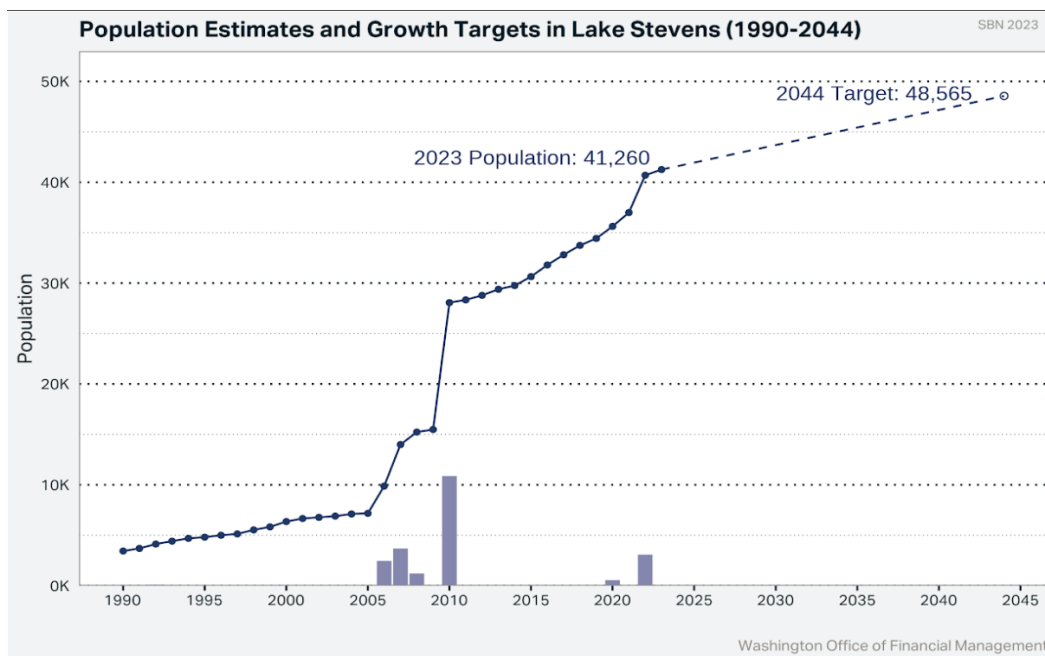


Figure 3.4: Population Growth and Projections in Lake Stevens (Source: OFM)

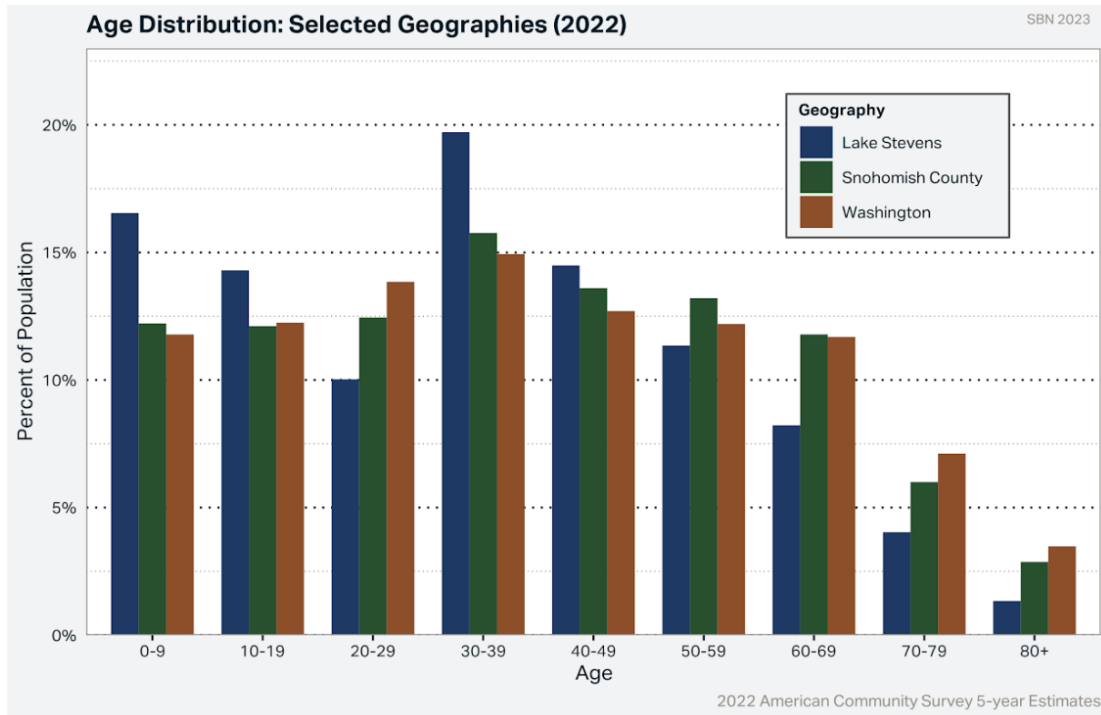


Figure 3.5: Age Distribution in City/County/State (Source: 2022 5-Year ACS)

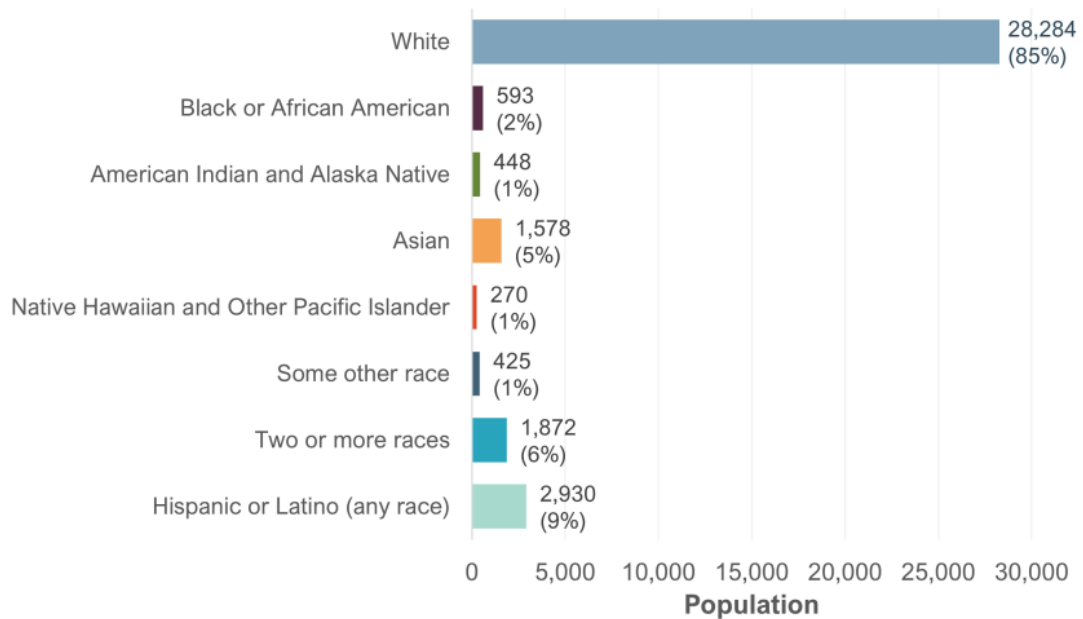


Figure 3.6: City Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2020 (Source: 2020 5-Year ACS)

Housing Stock

According to OFM data, as of April 2023 there were an estimated 14,516 dwelling units in Lake Stevens and 336,690 dwelling units in Snohomish County. Lake Stevens has a significantly higher percentage of its housing stock comprised of detached single-family homes (81.2%) than the county (64.6%), reflecting its history as a suburban bedroom community. Historically, the city has lacked a supply of mid-size and large multi-family buildings, as shown in Figure 3-7.

According to the 2022 ACS, the percentage of owner-occupied units in Lake Stevens was 76.4%, compared to 68.6% in Snohomish County. This has grown slightly since 2012 (74.3%), when the county average was 67.3%. During this period, the statewide ownership rate has remained relatively stable at around 64%, while the rate in the four-county Puget Sound region has decreased slightly from 61.7% to 61%. This suggests a local housing market more supportive of homeownership than elsewhere in the county and region – recent sale prices in the city may reflect more affordable units than nearby jurisdictions. According to the HAP, rental vacancy rates as of 2022 were about 3%.

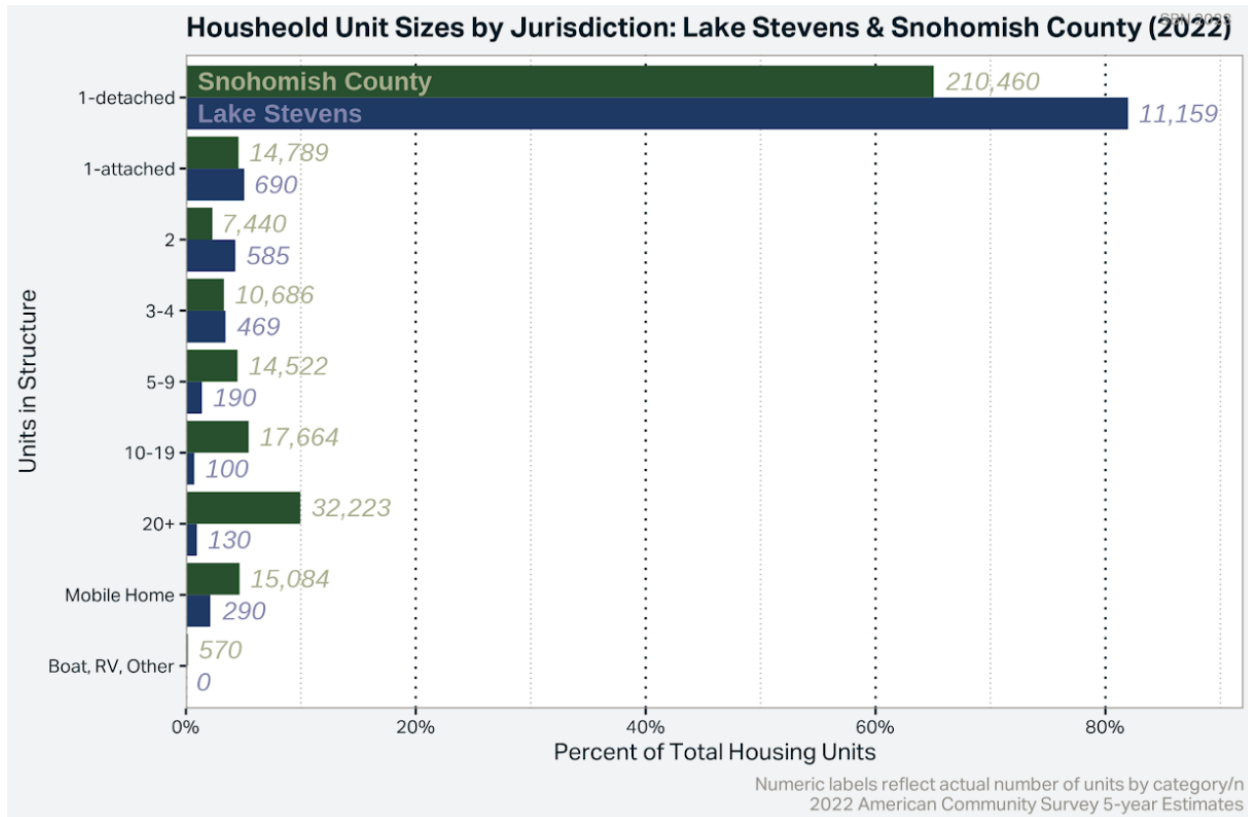


Figure 3.7 – Household Unit Size by Jurisdiction (Source: 2022 5-Year ACS)

The average lot size in Lake Stevens varies by zone, which are described in more detail in Chapter 2 (Land Use). Historically, most homes were on lots with 9,600 square feet or more. Through the 1990s and early 2000s, several planned residential developments (PRDs) were constructed with smaller lot sizes between 4,000 and 6,000 square feet. Many of the areas annexed into the city between 2000 and 2009 contained small-lot subdivisions. While lot sizes have decreased, home sizes have increased during the same time, which has impacted housing affordability. Recent city ordinances have greatly diversified lot sizes and density allowances to support more efficient and affordable housing options, with up to four units now allowed in most residential zones via the city’s infill housing ordinance.

Following these recent code amendments and subarea planning efforts, the city has increased its supply of middle housing and multifamily housing in recent years. Between 2010 and 2022, the city added nearly 3,000 housing units (not including existing units that were annexed), including nearly 1,300 units between 2020 and 2022. As shown in Figure 3.8, over 400 new multi-family units were completed between 2020 and 2022, adding an important supply of rental housing and more affordable options than detached single-family residences. The city receives credit towards its 2044 growth target for this recent supply.

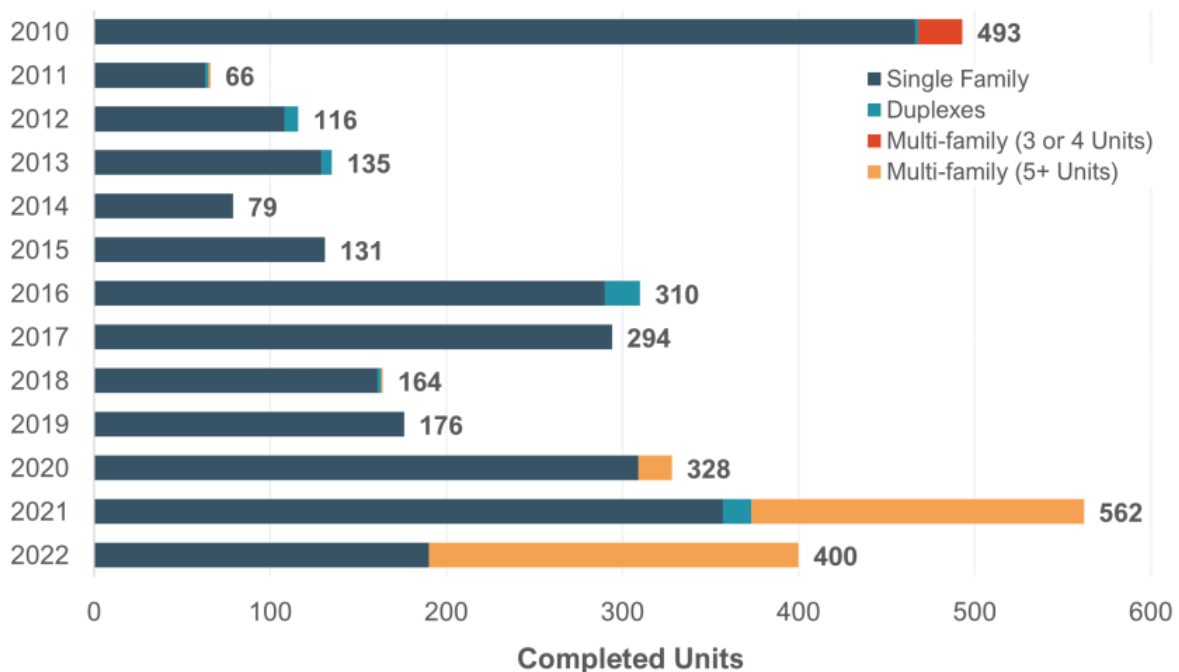


Figure 3.8 – Housing Units Completed, 2010-2022 (Source: OFM)

Household Income, Housing Costs and Housing Equity

One of the most significant challenges confronting Lake Stevens is assessing and addressing housing affordability for its residents. Residents' quality of life is heavily influenced by their ability to find housing that meets their needs and within their financial capabilities.

"Affordable housing" is generally understood as housing that is within reach for households earning up to 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Such households are categorized as "low-income." Those earning up to 50% of the AMI are termed "very low-income," while those at or below 30% of the AMI are identified as "extremely low-income." These income ranges are reflected in the housing growth targets discussed earlier in this chapter, with the city expected to provide housing types that meet the needs of households at a variety of incomes.

In Lake Stevens, households of color tend to have a higher representation among renters and those with lower incomes. Out of all households, around 16% identify as households of color, including Hispanic/Latino households. These households are more likely to rent, with about 48% renting their homes, compared to 42% of white households. By income, 38% of households of color fall into the category of low income (earning less than 80% of the area's median income), a percentage that is notably higher than the 29% seen in white households. Housing affordability challenges are more pronounced for households of color. While 53% of all renters in Lake Stevens experience housing cost burdens, this figure jumps to 64% for renters of color, indicating a significant disparity in financial strains related to housing.

The term "housing affordability", as recognized by lenders, real estate sectors, and government agencies, is based on the concept that housing expenses should not exceed 30% of a household's gross monthly income. For homeowners, this percentage encompasses taxes, insurance, and other housing-related costs. In the context of rentals, utilities are accounted for within this 30% bracket.

Figure 3.9 illustrates the proportion of Lake Stevens households by race/ethnicity and income for the year 2019. Overall, approximately 51% of city households make 100% or more of the region's median family income (MFI), including 53% of non-Hispanic households and 44% of minority households. Approximately 29% of non-Hispanic white households make 80% or less of AMI, compared to 38% of minority households. In response, the city has developed several equity-related policies to address racial disparities in household income and housing opportunities.

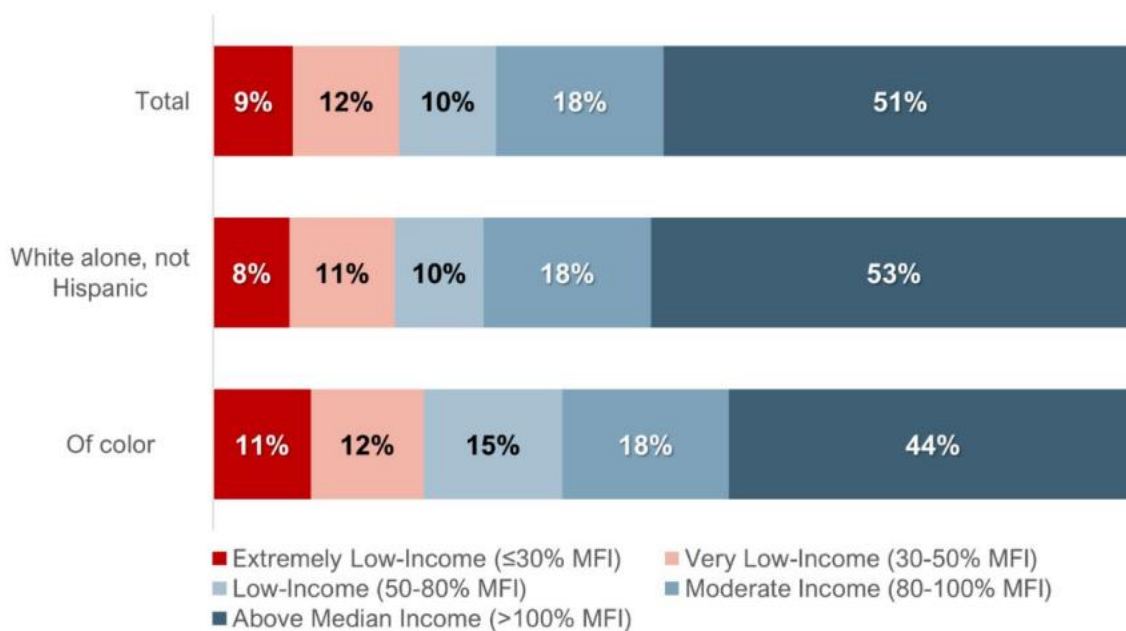


Figure 3.9 – Households by Race/Ethnicity and Income (Source: 2015-2019 CHAS)

Households spending beyond this threshold are labeled "*cost burdened*." Those allocating more than 50% of their monthly income to housing are deemed "*severely cost burdened*," which jeopardizes their ability to cover essential needs such as food, transportation, and healthcare. While Lake Stevens has a slightly higher median income than the county, significant sections of the city's population face housing as a notable financial burden. According to CHAS data, nearly 20% of the city's households have incomes below 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI), highlighting the crucial need for affordable housing options.

As shown in Figure 3.10, as of 2019 housing cost burden was a significant issue in Lake Stevens. Given the region's high housing costs, this problem is not unique to Lake Stevens and has been increasing over the past decade. However, race and ethnicity are significant factors in housing cost burden, with 64% of minority households cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened, compared to 49% of non-Hispanic white households. Approximately 16% of city residents – about one of out every six residents – are severely housing cost burdened.

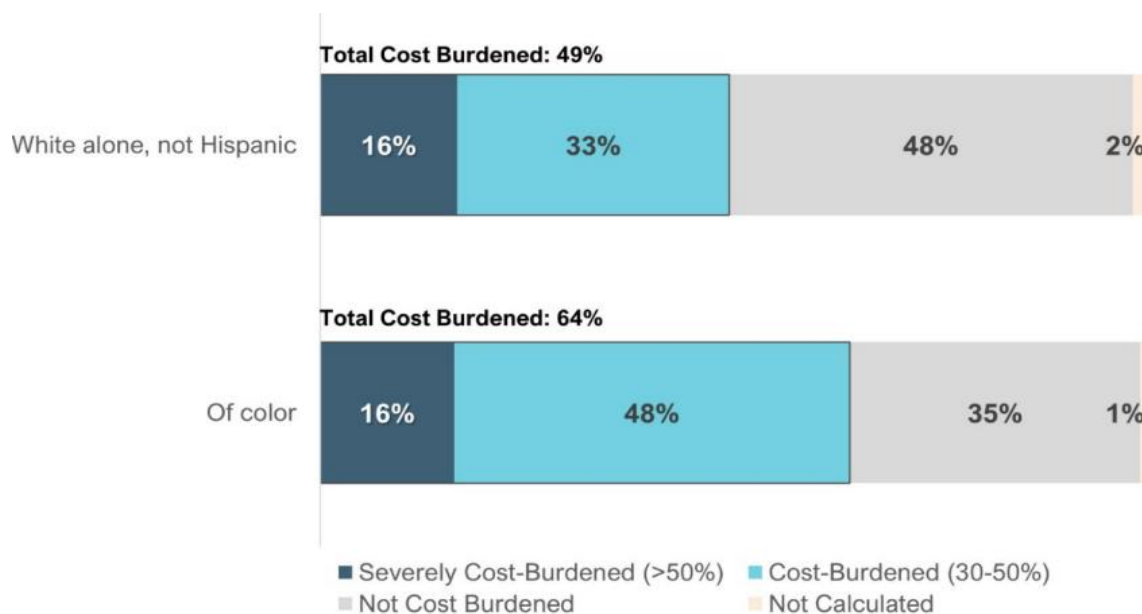


Figure 3.10 – Housing Cost Burden by Race/Ethnicity (Source: 2015-2019 CHAS)

The median home sales price in Lake Stevens in 2023 was \$755,000. To afford the median home price without being cost-burdened, a family of four would require an annual income of at least approximately \$180,000 per year based on an assumed 20% down payment and 6% interest rate, which is approximately 120% of the county AMI. Rental households are, on average, smaller in size than those that own their own homes. However, smaller units are more difficult to find in Lake Stevens, with only 21 percent of units being comprised of one or two-bedroom units, while 47 percent of total households in the city include two individuals or less. This indicates a need for more one and two-bedroom units in the city to support the needs of the large number of smaller households.

Future Housing Needs

The Snohomish County Council adopted a 2044 population target of 1,136,309, which translates to a need for approximately 167,000 additional housing units. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Lake Stevens' 2044 housing unit target is 4,915 additional units. Following code updates and zoning changes, Figure 3.2 shows that the city has adequate overall capacity to meet this growth. However, per Figures 3.1 and 3.11, over 50% of this housing need is at or below 80% AMI, needs which cannot be met by the city's current and projected supply of land for detached single-family residences.

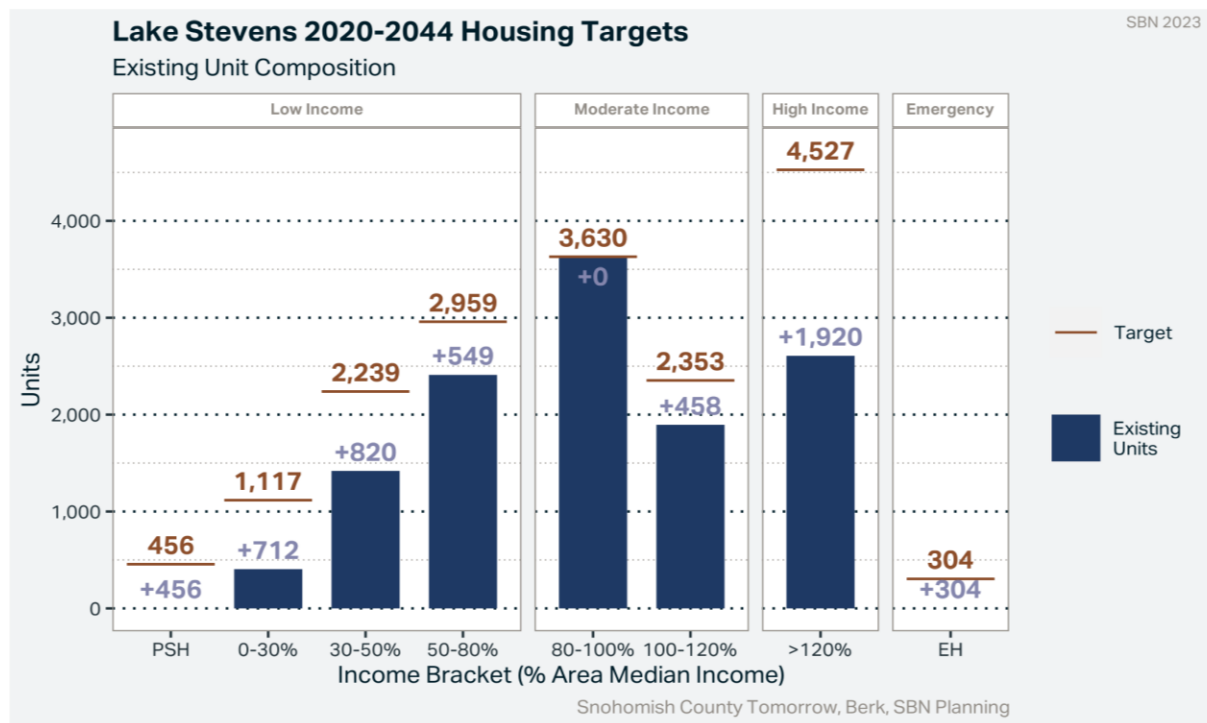


Figure 3.11 – Existing Housing and Housing Needs by Income (Source: 2021 BLR)

Land Use Map and Policy Amendments to Accommodate Future Housing Needs

The Land Use Element identifies land area for single-family, multifamily and mixed-use housing as well as transitional, emergency, and permanent supportive housing. As discussed in Chapter 2, this plan has incorporated several land use map amendments (summarized in Table 3.3) to increase the supply of land that can accommodate multifamily housing, which) is the assumed housing type for households with incomes $\leq 80\%$ AMI. Additional analysis can be found in the land capacity analysis in Appendix B.

In addition, the city has identified several strategies to meet its housing targets across all income ranges and housing types and address preferences for different types of housing. Increased housing choices will help ensure the city's housing supply meets the needs of a diverse population. By allowing additional mixed-use neighborhoods and adopting policies and implementing code language that permit duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, and other middle housing throughout the city, Lake Stevens has taken strides to allow a wider variety of housing. In addition, the city has embraced small lot development as a standard for subdivisions. As new and innovative housing patterns emerge to provide

increased housing affordability, the city will evaluate how these are compatible with existing neighborhoods.

Racially Disparate Impacts and Risk of Displacement

As amended, the GMA requires cities to analyze zoning, policies and other conditions that have resulted in racially disparate impacts – that is, historic decisions that have resulted in decreased housing opportunities for minorities, manifested in things such as lower homeownership rates and higher housing cost burden, which are discussed above.

Given the lack of vacant land, the city will need to rely primarily on infill development and redevelopment to meet its housing growth targets. However, this also increases the risk of displacement of existing residents, including lower-income and minority residents. The goals and policies in this chapter also address mitigating the displacement of existing residents that could result from new development.

The city utilized PSRC's Displacement Risk tool to identify areas where residents may be at greater risk of displacement based on factors including socio-demographics, transportation qualities, neighborhood characteristics, housing, and civic engagement. As shown in Figure 3.12, the entirety of Lake Stevens falls within the "Lower" displacement risk category. This category is comprised of census tracts with displacement risk scores in the bottom 50% of the score range, indicating a lower risk of displacement in the city than in the four-county region, which shows 32% of the region's population in census tracts at moderate risk of displacement, and 13% of the region's population in census tracts at higher risk of displacement

The city's 2023 Housing Action Plan noted that the city's historic reliance on detached single-family housing may have contributed to racially disparate impacts given the differences in income levels (Figure 3.9) and housing cost burden (Figure 3.10) based on race and ethnicity. Since most of the city has been annexed since 2006, the city has not documented historic zoning, disinvestment, or infrastructure availability policies and regulations resulting in racially disparate impacts. However, this plan includes several new goals and policies that aim to specifically address and remedy potentially disparate impacts.

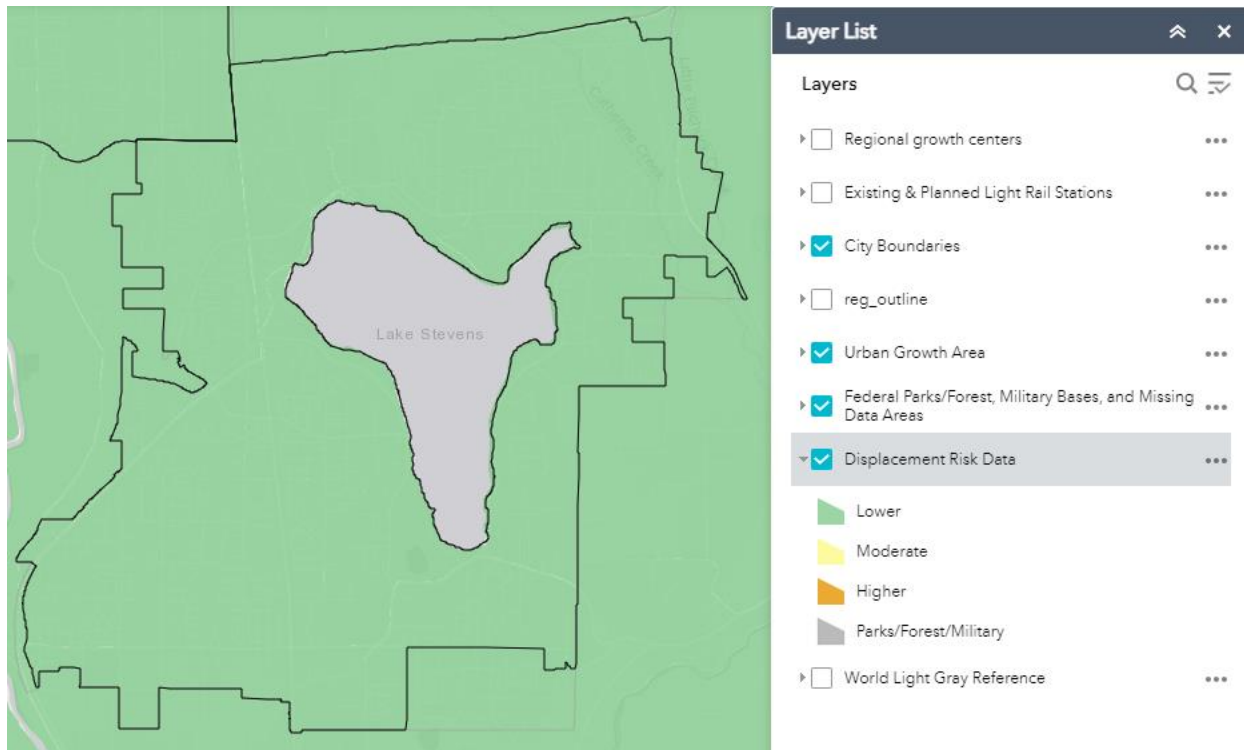


Figure 3.12 – Displacement Risk in Lake Stevens (PSRC Displacement Risk Tool)

While the identified displacement risk in Lake Stevens is low, this housing element includes several proposed policies that aim to address and reduce potential disparities to provide more equitable housing opportunities for the entire community. The city has updated its development code to expand middle housing opportunities in historically single-family zoning districts, increasing affordability, homeownership, and rental opportunities for all residents.

Permitting and Supporting Permanent Supportive Housing and Emergency Housing

Under the GMA, cities are required to provide policy language that:

- Allows emergency housing and emergency shelters in all zones that allow hotels (Commercial District, Central Business District, and Local Business) and eliminates impact fees for emergency housing. Per its growth targets, the city is required to demonstrate it has the capacity (beds) for 304 people requiring emergency housing, which it does within its existing commercial zones. This section's updated goals and policies provide new language supporting this requirement.

- Allows permanent supportive housing and transitional housing in all zones that allow hotels and/or residential uses. As discussed in Chapter 2, the city has determined that it has adequate capacity within its existing commercial districts (which allow hotels) to accommodate the allocated 456 units of PSH, and new policy language has been added to this chapter supporting this requirement.

STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Lake Stevens is vested in improving housing affordability for all its residents. Housing affordability is a function of land availability, density of development, local household income, and quality of housing. This is in line with the city's desire to be a sustainable community. With the residential design guidelines, careful site planning, open space, and environmental review standards, these types of developments can successfully be integrated into the Lake Stevens community. The following section describes specific land use strategies that support a sustainable and affordable community for all residents.

The following section includes many land use strategies that implement housing affordability goals and policies, largely based on the 2023 HAP. For example:

- The city has adopted a variety of zones, including high-density residential and mixed-use, to increase development efficiency;
- The city allows innovative housing options, such as small lot single-family and middle housing, in most of its residential zones and complies with HB 1110 and 1337 (2023);
- The city has adopted cluster subdivision and planned residential subdivision regulations;
- The city permits up to two accessory dwelling units per residential lot;
- The city has created density bonus provisions within its subareas and;
- Current city regulations support mixed-use development and home occupations.

As the city updates its procedural and development regulations, it will look for implementation opportunities to develop codes that support increased access to affordable housing. More innovative strategies that incentivize affordable development, such as reduced parking minimums, may also be explored in areas with access to essential services and amenities. Providing opportunities and resources for alternative development and ownership models, such as co-op housing and alternative, community land trusts, and

bespoke financing, may greatly increase all residents' equity generation opportunities. The city will also continue actively participating with the Alliance for Affordable Housing, Housing Authority, and Snohomish County on housing topics.

Land Use Strategies

- **Increasing Housing Capacity:** Increasing opportunities for development in targeted areas throughout the city not only facilitates the development of additional housing but also broadens the scope for establishing diverse residential, commercial, and mixed-use spaces within the target area, contributing to a more vibrant community.

Decreasing minimum lot sizes, increasing height limits, and enabling higher-density utilization can directly reduce per-unit land costs. The city must evaluate aspects such as compatibility with existing residences, potential expansion of utilities, and adherence to long-range population forecasts, ensuring infrastructural and service provision capacity aligns with future urban demands.

- **Lot Size Averaging:** Lot size averaging within new subdivisions allows varied lot sizes to facilitate minimum densities on sites encumbered by critical areas and associated buffers and setbacks.
- **Innovative Housing Options:** Innovative housing encourages diversity in housing choices ranging from large-lot single-family residences to small-lot developments or middle housing, including duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units. Innovative housing options are meant to expand options for a different population segments, including singles, single-parent households, starter families, and seniors.
 - **Small Lot:** Small-lot zoning districts such as those included in the High-Density Residential land use and alternative subdivision methods, including Planned Residential Developments and Cluster Subdivisions, allow denser housing options, with specific design review and controls to integrate these developments into existing neighborhoods.
 - **Infill Housing:** As large tracts of vacant land are developed, “urban infill” will provide most of the city’s housing supply. Infill development may include short subdivisions on large lots or the redevelopment of existing parcels without demolishing existing structures. Infill development provisions already established in Lake Stevens allow for attached and detached single-family housing, small multifamily complexes (e.g., triplexes and fourplexes), and

accessory dwelling units to meet density and affordability goals. The city adopted code amendments in 2020 and 2024 that greatly expanded infill housing opportunities throughout the city.

- **Minimum Densities:** Jurisdictions may require that new subdivisions or multifamily developments achieve minimum densities instead of a maximum land use density. This approach can help discourage sprawl, reduce the unit cost of land, and improve the cost-effectiveness of capital finance plans.
- **Density Bonuses:** Providing density bonuses in exchange for the construction of affordable housing can incentivize a developer to provide such housing. Alternatively, the city could adopt policies to reduce development standards for projects that provide affordable housing, including but not limited to reduced setbacks, street standards, parking, sidewalks, and utilities. As a Tier 2 jurisdiction, HB 1110 has imposed some minimum density bonuses for middle housing, but the city may want to explore additional changes beyond the minimum to support broader housing goals.
- **Inclusionary Zoning:** Inclusionary zoning programs typically require that a percentage of lots in a new subdivision or residential units in a new apartment project be set aside for low-cost housing. Density bonuses are often provided to offset the cost of the inclusionary requirement.
- **Cluster Subdivisions:** Cluster subdivisions offer a means of keeping housing development costs down by reducing minimum lot sizes and confining development to the most suitable portion of a building site. Cluster housing may entail the use of shared driveways and parking areas, reduced but more usable yard space, and architectural "techniques" to maintain privacy and a sense of space.
- **Planned Residential Development (PRD):** The city also encourages PRDs that offer incentives to projects that integrate mixed-income housing and mixed types of housing (detached, duplex, and apartments) and encourage clustering to achieve desired densities while protecting environmentally sensitive areas. PRDs do not directly provide affordable housing but make more efficient use of land and capital facilities to keep costs lower.
- **Shared Housing:** With the steady trend of larger houses for fewer people, there is a greater opportunity for shared housing arrangements, whereby non-related persons live together and share the housing costs.

- **Cottage Housing Developments (CHD):** Cottage housing developments have been proposed to provide smaller detached housing in single-family neighborhoods.
- **Cluster Housing:** Cluster housing is an architectural/design technique used in urban settings to obtain high-density single-family units on small lots. This may include cluster housing around joint community areas.
- **Manufactured Housing:** Manufactured (mobile and modular) housing provides an established record of successfully addressing affordable housing needs. Manufactured homes may occur throughout the city in standard residential neighborhoods or in dedicated parks.
- **Mixed-Use Development:** Mixed-use developments integrate various land uses into a single development or district, such as office, commercial and residential buildings grouped together in a single building or around a single site. Mixed-use developments may offer more acceptable sites for higher-density housing than established single-family neighborhoods. Mixed-use developments situated along transportation routes can help reduce reliance on private vehicles, provide housing opportunities for persons who require public transportation, and may produce an income stream from commercial rents that help subsidize low-cost housing.
- **Home Occupation/Live Work:** Another innovative housing concept is allowing expanded home occupations or live/work arrangements, where the homeowner could maintain a business inside or separate from the home. Traditional home occupation rules require that all activity occur inside the home with strict limits on signing, appearance, etc. The newer concept would have a more mixed-use appearance where a professional office could occur on a first floor, with a residence occupying the balance of the building.

Administrative Procedures

- **Streamlined Approval Processing:** Holding costs are one of the hidden expenses in a housing development budget. They include the variety of costs involved in carrying a project through the development phase, such as insurance, office and staff, equipment, security patrols, landscape maintenance, the financing of land and construction, etc. Shorter approval periods translate into less expensive development costs. At the state level, jurisdictions are subject to specific review and approval timelines in RCW 36.70B.080, which SB 5290 (2023) revised effective January 1, 2025. Many jurisdictions in Snohomish County are also studying or have adopted

permit streamlining for affordable housing projects. It has proven successful in reducing the processing time for projects while ensuring compliance with development codes.

- **Priority Permit Processing:** Priority permit processing can reduce housing costs by minimizing the amount of time and expense involved in permit and approval processing. The more permits that receive priority attention, however, the less valuable the incentive may become if the priority waiting line is as long as the normal waiting line. Priority processing is most effective when used selectively, such as an inducement to develop a particular type of housing the market is not currently producing. If priority processing is offered as an incentive to develop low-cost housing, the city should establish a means of ensuring the housing is occupied by persons in need of low-cost housing and the housing remains affordable for an extended period.
- **Impact Mitigation Payment Deferral:** Jurisdictions can minimize the effect of impact fees on market-rate housing by deferring the collection of impact mitigation payments from the permit approval stage of development to either final project approval or occupancy. In Lake Stevens, for instance, school mitigation fees are deferred to the building permit stage rather than at the subdivision phase. Deferring the collection of impact fees can reduce the developer's finance costs.

Housing Production & Preservation Programs

- **Housing Preservation:** Existing housing often provides the best source of affordable housing. As such, preservation and enhancement of the existing stock must be a key element in a program for assuring affordable housing.
- **Public Housing Authority:** While the city has not created its own housing authority, the Housing Authority of Snohomish County, created pursuant to the enactment of the Housing Authorities Law in 1939, provides housing assistance within the city limits. The city is also a member of the Alliance for Affordable Housing.

The Housing Authority can underwrite the cost of low-income housing development by various means, including eligibility to administer HUD housing assistance programs and payment contracts, exemption from property taxes on housing authority facilities, and authority to issue tax-exempt bonds and low interest bond anticipation notes. Under state statute bonds and other obligations of a housing

authority are neither a debt of its respective city nor are cities liable for housing authority obligations.

- **Public Development Authority (PDA):** Jurisdictions interested in coordinating their initiatives in the areas of economic development, community revitalization, and low-income housing may consider creating a public development authority (PDA) to achieve these ends. Under RCW 35.21.730-757, cities or towns to “improve general living conditions in the urban areas of the state” and “to perform all manner and type of community services” may create PDAs.

PDAs may exercise many of the powers of housing authorities, such as owning and selling property, contracting for services, loaning and borrowing funds, and issuing bonds and other debt instruments. Any property owned or operated by a PDA that is used primarily for low-income housing receives the same exemption from taxation as the municipality that created it. By statute, all PDA liabilities must be satisfied exclusively from PDA assets and PDA creditors are denied any right of action against the municipality that created it.

- **Public and Nonprofit Housing Developers:** A less direct mode of involvement may be to establish cooperative agreements with public or nonprofit housing developers to ensure adequate levels of low-income or special needs housing is available in the community. In addition to the Everett and County housing authorities, there are nonprofit organization and other potential partners to assist with the production of emergency housing (including homeless shelters), permanent supportive housing, and transitional housing.

The city may encourage the production of these types of housing by committing land use incentives, modified development standards, surplus land or financial resources to a housing authority or nonprofit-sponsored projects targeted for their jurisdiction.

- **Market Housing:** By far, private market housing provides the greatest number of dwelling units in Lake Stevens. Lake Stevens currently has a surplus in zoned capacity for market-rate housing serving residents at or above 100% AMI. While affordable and moderate-income housing supply should be prioritized, it is important to maintain housing options for all income brackets in the city. There is some evidence that providing opportunities for market-rate housing as residents’ incomes increase maintains vacancies at more affordable tiers.

GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL 3.1 PROVIDE A RANGE OF HOUSING TYPES AND CHOICES TO MEET THE CURRENT AND FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS OF LAKE STEVENS RESIDENTS REGARDLESS OF INCOME LEVEL OR DEMOGRAPHIC STATUS

Policies

- 3.1.1 Plan for and zone sufficient buildable lands to meet the city’s housing growth targets at all income levels and accommodate a variety of housing types and densities throughout the city, including single-family, manufactured housing, middle housing, multifamily, mixed-use and accessory dwellings.
- 3.1.2 Consider the cumulative impact of map amendments, rezones and land use policy decisions that may reduce affordability, contribute to displacement of existing residents and impact employment or residential capacity.
- 3.1.3 Continue to allow diverse subdivision methods including short subdivisions, formal subdivisions, cluster subdivisions, planned residential developments and unit lot subdivisions to create diverse buildable lot types throughout the city.
- 3.1.4 Allow a variety of middle housing types in all residential zoning districts.
- 3.1.5 Encourage the distribution of multifamily housing including apartments, condominiums, townhomes and multiplexes throughout the city in appropriate zoning districts and in mixed-use and commercial developments.
- 3.1.6 Permit manufactured homes in all residential zoning districts in the city and encourage their preservation as a source of affordable housing.
- 3.1.7 Allow up to two accessory dwelling units per residential lot and encourage their development as an opportunity for affordable home occupancy or ownership.
- 3.1.8 Explore updates to city programs such as the Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) program that have the potential to increase the city’s supply of affordable housing.
- 3.1.9 Identify strategies to increase multifamily and mixed-use housing supply within the city’s subareas.

GOAL 3.2 INCREASE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL RESIDENTS TO HAVE FAIR AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, SAFE, AND SANITARY HOUSING

Policies

- 3.2.1 Provide opportunities for supportive, mixed income and affordable housing throughout the city. Some clustering of supportive and affordable housing may be appropriate within proximity to public transportation, medical facilities or other essential services.
- 3.2.2 Support land uses and development regulations designed to increase housing opportunities for current and future residents, seniors, disabled, or other special-needs populations in proximity to shopping, health care, services, recreation facilities and public transportation.
- 3.2.3 Encourage a range of independent living, assisted living and skilled care facilities affordable to seniors and other special-needs residents at a variety of income levels throughout the city.
- 3.2.4 Allow emergency housing and emergency shelters in all zoning districts where hotels are permitted and adopt a clear and objective process and standards for their siting, with a focus on areas within proximity of transit and services.
- 3.2.5 Allow permanent supportive housing and transitional housing in all zones where either residential uses or hotels are allowed.
- 3.2.6 Coordinate with regional organizations, housing authorities and nonprofit affordable housing providers to identify emergency housing and shelters, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing options.
- 3.2.7 Support the acquisition, rehabilitation, and preservation of existing affordable housing by agencies and organizations as an alternative to new construction.
- 3.2.8 Eliminate impact fees for emergency housing.
- 3.2.9 Evaluate city policies, regulations and land use patterns that may have contributed to racially or socially disparate impacts and exclusion of certain residents and work to remedy them.
- 3.2.10 Work with the county and local affordable housing providers to identify areas at risk of increased displacement of existing residents and explore and develop anti-displacement strategies to mitigate the potential impacts of redevelopment.

- 3.2.11 Identify city-owned real property that is surplus to its needs and viable for affordable housing development for extremely low- to moderate-income households.
- 3.2.12 Provide reasonable accommodations from zoning and development standards to residents with disabilities.
- 3.2.13 Identify programs and strategies that aim to address historic inequities in homeownership opportunities and increase opportunities for communities of color.

GOAL 3.3 ENCOURAGE THE USE OF INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES TO EFFICIENTLY USE LAND, PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Policies

- 3.3.1 Develop innovative zoning regulations to encourage infill development, including small multiplexes, small lot single-family subdivisions, compact/cottage housing, manufactured housing, and accessory dwelling units.
- 3.3.2 Encourage planned residential developments and other development concepts that allow flexibility in lot sizes, setbacks and other development standards in exchange for community benefits such as protecting natural resources and features and providing affordable housing options.
- 3.3.3 Explore innovative techniques and programs that can facilitate the creation of affordable housing, including but not limited to, a housing trust fund, inclusionary zoning, design/regulation flexibility, impact fee waivers, and streamlined processing.
- 3.3.4 Encourage voluntary efforts to provide affordable housing within new multifamily and single-family housing developments.
- 3.3.5 Implement strategies and actions from the city's Climate Sustainability Plan that support access to and the development of a wide range of housing types in the city.
- 3.3.6 Work with partner agencies to incentivize the installation of solar panels, electric vehicle charging stations, and other improvements in residential neighborhoods to make homes more energy efficient and resilient to climate change.

GOAL 3.4 PROMOTE AN EFFECTIVE STREAMLINED PERMIT PROCESS THAT INCLUDES MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT AND NOTIFICATION WITH THE PUBLIC THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

Policies

- 3.4.1 Implement regulations, procedures and process improvements that provide predictability to applicants and meet statutory review timelines for residential permit applications while maintaining opportunities for meaningful public involvement and comment.
- 3.4.2 Implement streamlined approval processing procedures, such as centralized counter services, continuing pre-application conferences, thorough handouts summarizing building permit and approval requirements, automate over the counter permits, area-wide environmental assessments, reducing the number of residential zoning districts, reducing complicated administrative procedures, concurrent permit and approval processing, expedite routine applications, meet or exceed permit review timeframes, and elimination of multiple hearings for a single project.
- 3.4.3 Periodically review existing and new development regulations to ensure a continued public benefit, adequate flexibility and minimization of housing costs.
- 3.4.4 Provided expedited permitting to projects with a demonstrated public benefit, including affordable housing and green building projects.
- 3.4.5 Evaluate the use of various infrastructure funding methods including existing revenue sources, impact fees, local improvement districts and general obligation bonds to minimize housing productions costs.
- 3.4.6 Ensure impact fees for new housing reflect the proportionate share necessary to build infrastructure to support growth per Chapter 82.02 RCW.

GOAL 3.5 PROVIDE A BALANCED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN, WHICH PROMOTES PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITIES, A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND SAFETY

Policies

- 3.5.1 Promote residential development in areas that allows pedestrian access to commercial areas, employment, public transportation routes, schools and park or recreational areas.

- 3.5.2 Develop and provide a range of housing options for workers, at all income levels which promote accessibility to jobs and provide opportunities to live in proximity to work.
- 3.5.3 Ensure that new development is consistent with citywide and applicable neighborhood goals and policies, including but not limited to, sustainable site standards, climate change adaption, access to trails and other active transportation, landscaping requirements, building design guidelines and affordability, to ensure new and existing neighborhoods are attractive and safe places to live.
- 3.5.4 Prioritize funding transportation facilities, infrastructure and services that explicitly advance the development of housing in designated growth centers.
- 3.5.5 Expand the supply and range of housing options, including affordable units, in designated growth centers.
- 3.5.6 Strive to provide housing in good condition with high-quality designs, protections from noise, odors, and other environmental stresses.
- 3.5.7 Encourage and incentivize the development of efficient and environmentally sensitive housing practices to minimize impacts to infrastructure and natural resources.

GOAL 3.6 PROMOTE MEASURES THAT WILL PROLONG THE USEFUL LIFE OF STRUCTURES

Policies

- 3.6.1 Invest in infrastructure (storm drainage, street paving, and recreation) to support desired growth patterns and prevent depreciation of property values.
- 3.6.2 Implement an active code enforcement program to help motivate owners to repair and improve maintenance of their structures and avoid extensive deterioration of housing units.
- 3.6.3 Promote public and private home improvement grants and loans, available from the utility companies, charitable organizations and public agencies, for housing repair and maintenance.
- 3.6.4 Support the preservation of existing subsidized, lower-cost and affordable housing.
- 3.6.5 Coordinate with neighborhood-based groups and volunteer organizations to promote rehabilitation and community revitalization efforts.

- 3.6.6 Coordinate with partner agencies and special districts to deliver services and provide infrastructure within residential neighborhoods and ensure alignment with adopted service standards and capital improvement plans.

GOAL 3.7 ENCOURAGE INTERJURISDICTIONAL EFFORTS AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVANCE THE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING THROUGHOUT THE CITY AND REGION

Policies

- 3.7.1 Promote housing strategies that address housing needs identified in the Snohomish County Countywide Planning Policies for creating affordable residences for all households.
- 3.7.2 Work with Snohomish County Housing Authority, the Alliance for Affordable Housing, other jurisdictions and housing agencies to coordinate a regional approach to funding and meeting the housing needs of Snohomish County.
- 3.7.3 Support housing legislation and financial support at the city, county, state and federal levels which promotes the goals and policies of the Housing Element.
- 3.7.4 Periodically update the city's Housing Action Plan to evaluate the effectiveness of housing policies and regulations in meeting the housing needs for Lake Stevens.
- 3.7.5 Coordinate with Snohomish County on monitoring housing characteristics, needs and available buildable lands capacity.
- 3.7.6 Support housing goals that are consistent with Vision 2050 to accommodate needed housing and facilitate an equitable distribution of affordable housing.