

2007 Housing Evaluation Report

Snohomish County Tomorrow

As approved by the Steering Committee

May 28, 2008

***A five-year review of progress meeting the
Housing Objectives of the Countywide Planning Policies***

Snohomish County Tomorrow, Steering Committee

Co-chairs:

Honorable Aaron Reardon, County Executive, Snohomish County

Honorable Dennis Kendall, Mayor, City of Marysville

Planning Advisory Committee (PAC)

Co-chairs:

Craig Ladiser, Director of Planning & Development Services, Snohomish County

Gloria Hirashima, Planning Director, City of Marysville

Hiller West, Planning Director, City of Monroe

Authors

PAC Housing Subcommittee:

Rob Chave, Planning Manager, City of Edmonds

Brad Collins, (former) Planning Director, City of Arlington

Dave Koenig, Planning Manager, City of Everett

Keith Maw, Senior Planner, City of Lynnwood

Yvonne Page, Senior Planner, City of Arlington

Tom Rogers, Planning Manager, City of Mill Creek

Mike Stanger, Senior Planner, Snohomish County

Stephen Toy, Principal Planner/Demographer, Snohomish County

Hiller West, Planning Director, City of Monroe

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Other Snohomish County Planning & Development Services staff, notably Jessica Coburn and Allison Sanders, contributed significant effort and expertise to this *Report*. The *Report's* authors also wish to thank the Snohomish County Office of Housing, Homelessness, and Community Development for the assisted rental housing inventory; the Housing Authority of Snohomish County and the Everett Housing Authority for contributing inventory and voucher data; and the Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County for welcoming our trial presentations and reviewing our findings.

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Introduction

The *Housing Evaluation Report* is produced every five years by Snohomish County Tomorrow (SCT). The *Report*:

- Assesses the strategies our communities have used to meet local and countywide housing objectives.
- Evaluates progress toward achieving housing goals and objectives; notably, housing affordability.
- Updates most of the indicators of housing strategies and progress from the *2002 Housing Evaluation Report*.

SCT creates this *Report* for the information of its members: the city and county governments of Snohomish County and the Tulalip Tribes, their officials and staff personnel. The *Report* is also intended to inform the public at large. Monitoring and reporting information such as this helps governments be more effective and accountable, and may be used to craft better public policies and programs for the future.

Snohomish County Tomorrow and the Countywide Planning Policies

As Snohomish County's growth management advisory body, SCT studies and recommends planning policies that apply to cities and the unincorporated county. SCT's mission is "to adopt a publicly shared vision to guide effective growth management and preserve Snohomish County's unique quality of life."

The policies that SCT recommends are known as the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs), which are written and used solely for the purpose of establishing a countywide framework. The Growth Management Act (GMA), originally passed by the State Legislature in 1990, requires that counties and cities collaborate on a set of framework policies to guide each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan.¹ In this way, local government plans are consistent with each other

¹ Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 36.70A.210

and support goals that extend beyond political boundaries (such as housing markets). CPPs address topics ranging from the location of future population and employment growth, environmental protection, and providing decent, safe, and affordable housing for all.

The CPPs are adopted formally by the Snohomish County Council. First adopted in 1993, they have been amended several times since then through "the SCT process." This process typically involves two or more of SCT's six standing committees, including the Steering Committee, which comprises representatives of all member jurisdictions.

The Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), another of SCT's standing committees, recommended this *Report* to the Steering Committee. The PAC is composed of professional planners from SCT's member governments.

How the Report was produced

A subcommittee of the PAC authored this *Report*. Snohomish County staff gathered and analyzed the data (as described in more detail later in this *Report*) and wrote the text with oversight by the subcommittee. The PAC reviewed drafts of the *Report* in December, 2007 and January and March, 2008. County staff presented findings from the data analysis to the PAC prior to the first draft, and to the Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County after the first draft. SCT's Community Advisory Board reviewed the final draft at their meeting in March, 2008.

More information on the methods used in data collection and analysis can be found in each of the four evaluation chapters, as well as the Appendix.

Basis for the Report

The *Housing Evaluation Report* itself is required by Countywide Planning Policy:

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Countywide Planning Policy Housing Objective 9

Implement a coordinated monitoring program to evaluate progress towards achieving housing goals and objectives on a countywide and jurisdictional level. Such a monitoring program shall entail the preparation of a housing monitoring report every five years or more frequently if housing conditions and data availability warrant. The housing report will include an assessment of the adequacy of the jurisdictions' supply of undeveloped, partially used and redevelopable residential land and applications/ permits for residential development, the jurisdictions' supply of land for non-residential land uses, the location of urban growth boundaries, and an assessment of the jurisdictions' strategies for achieving their housing objectives. The preparation of the housing report may be combined with the review and evaluation program required by UG-14. (Amended Feb. 16, 2000 – Amended Ord. 99-121; Amended Mar. 31, 2004 – Amended Ord. 04-007)

SCT agreed to pool its resources and jointly prepare this *Report* to fulfill the monitoring requirement of HO 9 on behalf of all jurisdictions, as it did the first *Housing Evaluation Report* in 2002.

Scope of the Report

The *Housing Evaluation Report* evaluates aspects of 17 CPPs on housing. Most of these policies concern the costs of housing, but others address:

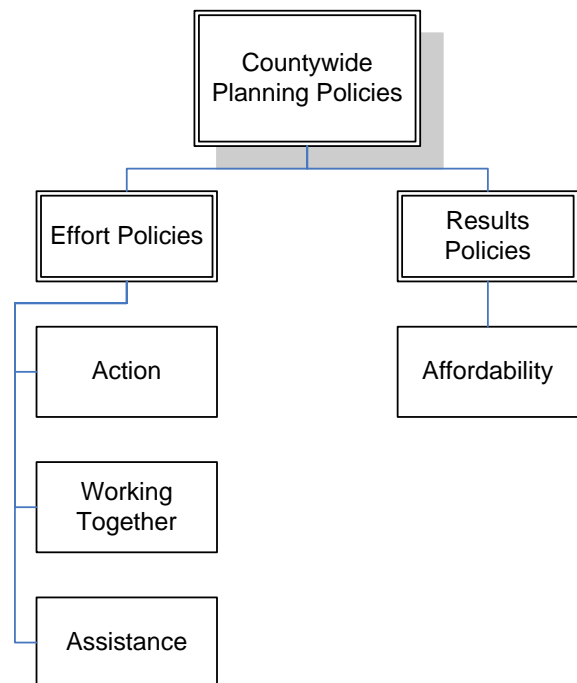
- Special needs housing.
- Impacts of housing development on natural resource protection.
- Neighborhood vitality and character.
- Infill development and community acceptance.
- Housing relocation assistance.

The evaluation considers both *effort* policies and *results* policies, as illustrated in Figure 1. Some CPPs contain both effort and results policies.

Effort policies prescribe activities that should be performed. The evaluation tries to determine whether or how extensively efforts have been made, divided into three chapters: Action, Working Together, and Assistance.

Results policies state what outcomes should be achieved. The evaluation tries to assess the degree to which those results have occurred, combined into one chapter: Affordability.

Figure 1



The contents of the four chapters are described in more detail below, under “How the Report is Organized.”

In addition to evaluation, which is the focus of this effort, the *Report* also provides a substantial amount of other demographic and housing information in the Appendix.

Wherever possible, the evaluation and other data are provided for each city, the unincorporated county, and Snohomish County as a whole. Unfortunately, 2006 American Community Survey (ACS) data, which is the source of cost-burdened households and other counts, are available only at the countywide level and for

the city of Everett. This is because the ACS uses a small survey sample. In the future, reliable estimates will be derived for smaller populations. More information on this can be found in the Appendix.

The scope of the *Report* was further limited, compared with the 2002 edition, because of SCT’s decision to do a less extensive evaluation. Given that many of the indicators could not be updated with more current data, the PAC recommended that SCT adopt a work program for this *Report* in which County staff would update the quantitative indicators and jurisdictions themselves would update their own housing strategy assessments. This resulted in a significant cost savings to SCT.

The *Housing Evaluation Report* does not address this part of CPP HO 9: “the adequacy of the jurisdictions’ supply of undeveloped, partially used and redevelopable residential land and applications/permits for residential development, the jurisdictions’ supply of land for non-residential land uses, the location of urban growth boundaries.” SCT’s *Buildable Lands Report* fulfills this requirement.

Three other policies were not evaluated.

**Countywide Planning Policy
Housing Objective 1**
Ensure that fair and equal access to housing is available to all persons regardless of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin, familial status, source of income, or disability.

Snohomish County’s Office of Housing, Homelessness, and Community Development (OHHCD), a division of the Department of Human Services, monitors fair housing and evaluates the actions taken to ensure that equal access to housing is available to all. OHHCD publishes this evaluation in its *Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)*. The City of Everett produces its own CAPER for activities in its jurisdiction.

**Countywide Planning Policy
Housing Objective 10**
Ensure consistent application of countywide housing planning policies by adopting definitions of affordable housing, extremely low-income housing, very low-income housing, low and moderate-income housing, and middle income housing as established in the Snohomish County Tomorrow growth monitoring system. These definitions may be periodically revised based on consideration of local demographic data and the definitions used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The generally accepted definition of housing affordability is for a household to pay no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing (HUD). The following definition of special needs housing shall be adopted:

“Affordable housing for persons that require special assistance or supportive care to subsist or achieve independent living, including but not limited to persons that are frail, elderly, developmentally disabled, chronically mentally ill, physically handicapped, homeless, persons participating in substance abuse programs, persons with AIDS, and youth at risk.”

This policy directs each jurisdiction to define “affordable housing” and affordability/income levels consistent with those used in other Snohomish County Tomorrow analyses. These definitions are detailed in the Affordability chapter of this *Report*. The survey instrument that cities and the County used to assess their housing strategies did not address this policy, and as a result we do not know whether any communities have adopted definitions, consistent or otherwise.

**Countywide Planning Policy
Housing Objective 20**
Require that adequate quantities of affordable housing for support staff are provided in new master planned resort developments concurrent with the development of other publicly-approved project improvements. (This would be applicable only if the County has made provision for new master planned resort developments.)

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Snohomish County has not adopted a policy specifically for new master planned resorts, and none have been proposed or developed. Therefore, the policy is not applicable.

Finally, we point out these limitations of the evaluation: The *Report* does not forecast housing needs for the future, nor does it attempt to explain why the results we found happened as they have. Public policies and programs alone do not determine housing outcomes. To the extent that explanations can be made, more sophisticated analysis is needed. SCT's Fair Share Housing Allocation projects affordable housing needs for lower-income households in the year 2025.

How the *Report* is organized

This 2007 *Report* follows closely the structure of the 2002 edition for the purpose of consistency and comparability over time. The evaluation is divided into four parts:

Action – What steps have jurisdictions taken to meet local or countywide housing objectives? This chapter evaluates jurisdictions' efforts to achieve CPPs on housing, including steps taken to promote affordable housing.

Working Together – What steps have jurisdictions taken jointly in order to achieve countywide housing objectives? This chapter evaluates actions taken by two or more local governments working together. Some of those actions are called for by CPPs on housing, and others were recommended in the 2002 *Report*.

Assistance – How much assisted housing does the county have, and in which jurisdictions? This chapter presents analysis of an inventory of assisted rental housing, including both subsidized units and resident-controlled

vouchers, by city, urban growth area, and types of households assisted.

Affordability – Is market-rate housing in each jurisdiction becoming more affordable and available to households with lower incomes? This chapter evaluates the effectiveness of the steps described in the Action, Working Together, and Assistance chapters, using data on housing affordability, commute times, non-single-family detached housing permits, and cost-burdened households.

Changes to Countywide Planning Policies since 2000

Seven CPPs were amended since the 2002 *Report*. None of the amendments have significantly changed the scope of the evaluation or affected comparability of the two reports. The only substantive amendment, to HO 6, added the policy of “foster(ing) cooperative efforts with non-profit housing developers” to the objective of “exploring ... interjurisdictional private/public financing programs (involving local lenders.” This objective is addressed in the Working Together section.

A note concerning annexations

A factor that will make it hard to compare the 2002 and 2007 reports is the number and size of annexations of residential land from the unincorporated county to incorporated cities. This will be especially important when studying Marysville, Lake Stevens, and the unincorporated Urban Growth Area, for example, where annexations have affected considerable amounts of land, population, and housing units.