

Planning for Deeply Affordable Housing under the GMA

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GROWTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES

MARCH 12, 2023



Washington State
Department of
Commerce

HB 1220 Requirements

Requires **Commerce to provide projected housing needs to local governments** by income bracket and for permanent supportive housing (PSH) and emergency housing

Local housing element to:

- Conduct an **inventory and analysis of all housing needs** – to include housing needs by income, PSH and emergency housing
- **Identify sufficient capacity of land** for identified housing needs
- **Make adequate provisions for all housing needs, including “document barriers to housing availability such as gaps in local funding, development regulations, etc.”**
- Identify **local policies and regulations that result in racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion** in housing and **undo them**
- Identify **areas at higher risk of displacement** and establish **anti-displacement policies**

What is deeply affordable housing?



Emergency shelters (ES)



Emergency housing (EH)



Transitional housing (TH)



Extremely low-income housing



Permanent supportive housing (PSH)



Removing barriers to deeply affordable housing

- Develop strong policies to encourage deeply affordable housing
- Allow at a minimum: emergency housing, emergency shelters, transitional housing and PSH in as many zones as possible
- Identify sufficient land capacity
- Identify and remove barriers (e.g., parking, conditional use processes, etc.)
- Incentivize deeply affordable housing

Support strategies with policies!

See example policies on deeply affordable housing in:

- [Housing Element Book 1, Appendix A](#) (p. 90-100)

Allowing uses

- **Allow emergency housing and emergency shelters in all zones that allow hotels, OR allow these uses in a majority of zones within one-mile of transit.**
 - Best practice is not to require conditional use, or if you do – provide very clear objective criteria and examples of documents needed
- **Allow permanent supportive housing and transitional housing in all zones with where residential uses and hotels are allowed**
 - Remember: RCW 36.130.020 → City and county code provision must not adopt, impose, or enforce requirements on an affordable housing development that are different than the requirements imposed on housing developments generally

[See: RCW 35A.21.430, RCW 35.21.683](#)

Allowing uses

- **Reasonable** occupancy, spacing, and intensity of use requirements may be imposed by ordinance on PSH, TH, ES, and EH **to protect public health and safety**.
- Requirements on occupancy, spacing, and intensity of use may not prevent the siting of a **sufficient number** of PSH, TH, ES, EH necessary to accommodate each code city's projected need for such housing and shelter under RCW 36.70A.070(2)(a)(ii)
- Review other special housing types (assisted living facilities, adult family homes, SROs, etc.) and allow in as many zones as possible

[See: RCW 35A.21.430](#), [RCW 35.21.683](#)

Land capacity

- **For PSH → Identify sufficient land capacity for multi-family housing**
 - Multi-family housing will be the likely format that 0-30% AMI housing will be built at, aside from small, scattered individual sites
- **For emergency housing (EH) → Jurisdictions must do a quantitative LCA for emergency housing to show capacity**
 - Much of the work from the multi-family housing analysis can be used for this work
 - Detailed steps in Housing Element Book 2 on pages 44-48
- **Deeply affordable housing is not suitable outside of UGAs**

Identify and remove barriers (Adequate Provisions)

RCW 36.70A.070(2)(d): “Makes adequate provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community, including:

- (ii) Documenting programs and actions needed to achieve housing availability including gaps in local funding, barriers such as development regulations, and other limitations;

****There is [an Adequate Provisions checklist](#) to help identify these barriers.****

Possible barriers to evaluate

- **Development regulations**
 - Limiting maximum densities or FARs
 - Excessive off-street parking requirements
 - Unclear development regulations
 - Building height limits
 - Ground floor retail requirements
- **Process obstacles**
 - Conditional use permit
 - Design review
 - Lack of clear and accessible information on process
 - Permit fees, impact fees, and utility connection fees
 - Processing times
 - SEPA
- **Funding tools within the local governments control**

Also see
PSRC's
[Findings from
Affordable
Housing
Developer
Outreach](#)

Additional barriers for EH and PSH

- Spacing requirements (e.g., minimum distances from parks or schools, or other facilities)
- Arbitrary limits on occupants
- Restrictions on support spaces, such as office space, within a PSH building in a residential zone
- Regulations inconsistent with Fair Housing Laws
- Any different requirements than general housing development (RCW 36.130.020)
- Requiring too many additional plans, agreements, or conditions (good neighbor agreements, background checks, sobriety, etc.)

Identify actions to remove barriers

Identify and document appropriate programs and actions to overcome each barrier

Barrier	Action	Priority
Insufficient land for moderate density residential zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make minor adjustments to comp plan land use map• Increase allowed densities and/or heights in R-5, R-8, R-12, RM-10, RM-20, UC, and CC zones	High
Slow permitting process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add comp plan policy for expedited permitting for affordable housing projects• Work to hire vacant permitting position and streamline onboarding process	Moderate
Conditional use process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove conditional use process requirements for PSH	High
Lack of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop comp plan policy to implement affordable housing taxes• Evaluate which local funding tools the city currently does not utilize and develop plans with city council	Moderate

Incentivize deeply affordable housing

In exchange for deeply affordable housing:

- Allow additional density
- Fee waivers and exemptions
- Waive other regulatory requirements (parking, height, bulk, setbacks, etc.)
- Expedite permitting
- Provide free or highly discounted land

A few cities with incentives for affordable housing:

- Seattle
- Redmond
- Bellevue
- Burien
- Bothell
- Sammamish
- Marysville
- Anacortes

Incentivize deeply affordable housing

- Allow religious organizations more flexibility (per law)
 - See [Supportive Housing Types Review Checklist](#)
- Partner with non-profit partners and religious organizations
- Infrastructure improvements
- Provide a liaison to support permitting or a regional liaison to support funding applications
- Use available local affordable housing funds and pool funds with neighboring jurisdictions
- Encourage creative housing types – house sharing, co-housing, SROs, etc.

Case study: Tacoma

- **Inclusionary Zoning – aimed at 50% AMI and below**
 - First IZ units completed in July 2023
- **Leverage publicly and partner-owned land for affordable housing:**
 - Three surplus properties were awarded to Affordable housing developers through a surplus property RFP
- **Establish a dedicated source of funding for the Tacoma Housing Trust Fund**
 - Use sales and use tax revenue authorized under SHB 1406
- **Priority permitting program for affordable housing projects**
- **City authorized and supported emergency shelter sites**

Tacoma's [Affordable Housing Action Strategy website](#) with more details

Case study: Burien

Affordable Housing Demonstration Program

- 2003 Comp Plan policy, codified in 2019
- Allows for a variety of housing types across all zones that allow residential uses
- Provides flexibility from development regulations
- Establishes affordability requirements (Affordable to <50% AMI; 50-year affordability term)
- Program allows the city to see which development regulations may be inhibiting new affordable housing



DESC 6-story project

- 95 units of PSH
- Affordable at 0-30% AMI

Case study: Langley

- Tiny House Zoning Code and adopted the International Tiny House Building Code
- 9 tiny homes on permanent foundations and 1 renovated single-family home
- Individuals, businesses, organizations and churches sponsor the building of each tiny home
- The units will be rented on a sliding scale to low-income tenants



Images courtesy
Thinc Whidbey

Resources

- [Guidance for Updating your Housing Element \(Book 2\)](#)
- [Adequate Provisions Checklist](#)
- [Supportive housing types review checklist](#)
- [Supportive housing types presentation and recording \(@ 1:07\)](#)
- [Coordinating Low-income Housing Planning \(CLIHP\) Grant open through March 2024!](#)

Forthcoming:

- State of the Practice for STEP (ES, TH, EH, PSH)
- Model Ordinance for STEP (ES, TH, EH, PSH)
- Model Ordinance User's Guide and Best Practices Guide
- Communications Tools, including PSH Communication Tools

Need help matching an affordable housing tool to your jurisdiction?

See PSRC's [Housing Opportunities by Place](#)

Questions?

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Updating GMA Housing Elements

Growth Management Act housing element updates and requirements created by HB 1220 are presented below.



Planning for Housing in Washington State

In 2021, the Washington Legislature changed the way communities are required to plan for housing. [House Bill 1220](#) (HB 1220) amended the Growth Management Act (GMA) to instruct local governments to “plan and accommodate” for housing affordable to all income levels. This significantly strengthens the previous goal, which was to encourage affordable housing. HB 1220 also made significant updates to how jurisdictions are to plan for housing in the housing element of their comprehensive plans.

Quick Links

- [Growth Management](#)
- [Governor's Smart Communities Awards Program](#)
- [Collaborative Roadmap Phase III](#)
- [Climate Program](#)
- [GMA Laws and Rules](#)
- [GMA Periodic Update](#)
- [Growth Management Grants](#)
- [Growth Management Topics](#)
- [Guidebooks and Resources](#)
- [Civilian-Military Compatibility](#)
- [Defense Community Compatibility](#)
- [Regional Planners' Forums](#)
- [Short Course on Local Planning](#)
- [Submitting Materials to the State for Review](#)

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