

## **HOUSING ELEMENT**

### **GOALS**

- 1.** Ensure sufficient land capacity to accommodate the existing and future housing needs of the community, including Renton's share of forecasted regional growth.
- 2.** Ensure that housing exists for all economic segments of Renton's population.
- 3.** Ensure that there are housing opportunities for people with special needs, such as seniors, people with disabilities, and the homeless.
- 4.** Maintain, protect, and enhance the quality of life of Renton's residents.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview of Housing Element.....	VII-3
State and Regional Planning Context.....	VII-3
Public Review Process.....	VII-4
Goals.....	VII-5
Objectives and Policies	
Single-Family/Multi-Family Balance of Unit Types.....	VII-17
Cost of Regulation, Permitting Time and Fees.....	VII-17
Upper-Income Housing.....	VII-17
Moderate and Middle-Income Housing.....	VII-18
Low-Income Housing.....	VII-19
Special Populations.....	VII-20
Variety of Housing Types and Regulatory Measures for Affordability....	VII-21
Manufactured Housing Zone.....	VII-22
Manufactured, Modular and Factory Built Homes.....	VII-23
Preservation of Existing Housing.....	VII-23
Quality of Neighborhoods.....	VII-23
Home Ownership.....	VII-24
Housing in Mixed-Use Areas.....	VII-24

## HOUSING ELEMENT

### I. Overview

Renton has a diverse housing stock with a wide range of unit types and prices. This includes new single-family homes of all sizes, older single-family homes and flats, townhouses, semi-attached houses, low- and mid-rise apartments and condominiums, and high-density mid-rise apartments in the Urban Center. Renton also has a strong sense of community, and many established neighborhoods organized around schools, parks, and other institutions.

In addition to established neighborhoods, where infill development has been increasingly common, the City has newly developed neighborhoods close to its southern and eastern edges, and emerging mixed-use residential neighborhoods in several of its commercial centers. In 1998, Renton's downtown started to undergo a transformation, with a considerable amount of new housing development. Downtown Renton is becoming a vibrant urban neighborhood with many amenities. Areas along Lake Washington are also being redeveloped with mixed-use residential and commercial development, also at urban densities. Families, young singles, and couples are choosing to locate in Renton because of the community's amenities and the availability of new housing that suits their needs.

Renton continues to have a supply of vacant, underutilized, and redevelopable land in its neighborhoods and mixed-use centers, offering many opportunities for growth. The policies and map included in the Land Use Element of this Comprehensive Plan establish sufficient land capacity to accommodate forecasted population growth with new housing. The policies of the Housing Element further define how the City's housing stock and neighborhoods will grow and change.

The Housing Element is based on an assessment of Renton's current demographics and existing housing stock. It also responds to the State's Growth Management Act (GMA), to the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPP), to the City's Vision Statement, and to other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Along with the residential sections of the Land Use Element, the Housing Element considers how Renton will accommodate its share of projected regional growth and how it will provide housing for all economic segments of its population. It provides a framework for addressing the housing needs of current and future residents. Finally, it serves as a guide for protecting and enhancing the quality of life in residential and mixed-use areas. *(See the residential sections of the Land Use Element for additional policies related to housing policies.)*

### II. State and Regional Planning Context

Housing is one of the 13 major goals of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA housing goal is to:

*"Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities, and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock."*

By GMA mandate, the Housing Element must include:

1. An inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs.

2. A statement of goals, policies, and objectives for the preservation, improvement and development of housing.
3. An analysis that identifies sufficient land for housing, including, but not limited to government-assisted housing, housing for low-income families, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, and group homes and foster care facilities.
4. An analysis that makes adequate provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community.

GMA directs that the "plan shall be an internally consistent document." The policies of one element cannot conflict with those of another element. The policy decisions made in each element may either be affected by or direct the other elements. The various elements address housing issues in the following ways.

<b>Land Use Element</b>	Directs where housing locates, its density, and the purpose and character of various land use designations
<b>Housing Element</b>	Refines and types of housing, provides a strategy for addressing the affordability of housing, and a policy foundation for reaching citywide housing objectives
<b>Utilities Element</b>	Influences the location of housing, costs, timing of development.
<b>Transportation Element</b>	Influences access to housing, jobs, and services
<b>Capital Facilities Element</b>	Influences services, quality of life, timing of development
<b>Community Design Element</b>	Influences how residential neighborhoods and infill housing will look

Amendments to the GMA in 1991 require cities and counties to jointly develop countywide housing policies. King County's Countywide Planning Policies, developed by the Growth Management Planning Council, responded to this by identifying a housing unit growth target for each community in the County. The CPP also specify targets for housing units for each community that should be affordable to moderate and low-income households, and require jurisdictions to set housing unit growth targets for middle and upper income households. This Housing Element defines these targets and how they will be met.

### **III. Public Review Process**

In 2002, the City convened a special task force to review its existing housing policies and the current housing situation, and to make recommendations for the 2002 update of the Housing Element. The task force included citizens, non-profit and for-profit housing developers, and members of the faith and human services community. The group met nine times during the first half of 2002. It first looked at background data about Renton's housing, population, income, and zoning. Then it discussed issues including the variety of housing types, housing for moderate and low-income residents, costs associated with housing development, and preservation of existing housing stock. The Housing Element Task Force issued its Recommendation Report in June 2002.

The recommendations of the Task Force were reviewed by the Planning Commission, City Council, and Mayor. The Housing Element, with other Comprehensive Plan Elements was

substantially revised as part of the GMA-mandated update. The Task Force recommendations have been incorporated into the revised goals, objectives, and policies of the Housing Element.

#### **IV. Goals**

The Housing Element includes four broad goals, which provide general direction for the Element. Each goal is explained below, along with related information on Renton's population, housing stock, and housing growth capacity. Following the discussion is a list of Housing Element objectives and policies. The objectives provide a framework for guiding city actions and housing unit growth, and each objective responds to several goals. The policies that follow each objective further shape and guide city actions and development regulations.

Renton's Housing Element goals are:

1. Ensure sufficient land capacity to accommodate the existing and future housing needs of the community, including Renton's share of forecasted regional growth.
2. Ensure that housing exists for all economic segments of Renton's population.
3. Ensure that there are housing opportunities for people with special needs, such as seniors, people with chronic disabilities, and the homeless.
4. Maintain, protect, and enhance the quality of life of Renton's residents.

##### **A. Capacity**

The 2000 Census showed 22,676 housing units in Renton, and it is estimated that in 2002 there were close to 24,000 units. Renton's mid-range housing unit growth target for the years 1992 through 2012 was 9,020. This figure was developed as part of the CPP and was based on forecasted population growth and household size. It includes a target of 60 units for the annexation area, transferred into the City's target as the area was annexed. From 1992 through 2000, there were 4,177 new housing units permitted in the City of Renton. This amounts to 46% of the middle target, achieved in first nine years of the first GMA 20-year planning period.

The 2004 Comprehensive Plan update plans for to a new target for housing unit growth from Jan. 1, 2001 through Dec. 2022. Renton's new target is 6,198 units. This replaces the remaining target from the 1992-2012 planning period. The target is based on projected population growth, household size, and the amount of growth that occurred since the first round of comprehensive planning under GMA.

GMA requires jurisdictions to show zoned land capacity for their targeted number of new housing units. This capacity includes land that is available for new development, redevelopment, or infill development.

Renton's 1995 Comprehensive Plan established policies about minimum density requirements for the City's residential zones. Minimum densities ensure that actual residential development corresponds to the planned levels of growth, meets Urban Center criteria, minimizes inefficient use of urban services and infrastructure, and supports transit service in urbanized areas. By setting a base standard for allowed density, minimum density standards increase the average yield in each zone. The annual Buildable Lands Reports, part of a countywide effort to track the actual density of growth and future growth capacity, establishes Renton's land capacity based on

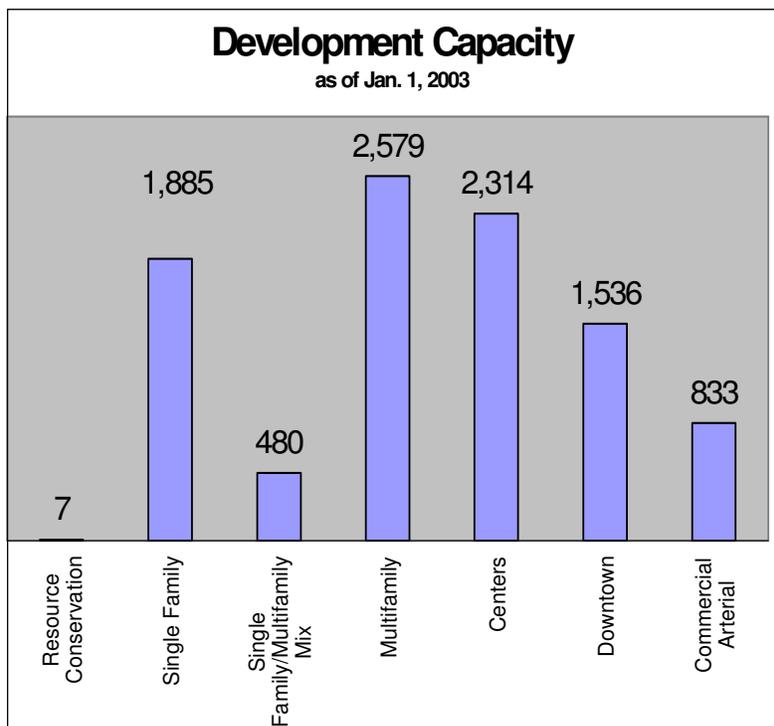
average net density. This report showed that at the beginning of the planning period, Jan. 2001, Renton's capacity for growth was 11,261 units and 32,240 jobs. During the first two years, 1,608 units were reviewed and vested for development.

As of January 1, 2003, capacity for 9,653 units remained based on the Buildable Lands methodology, capacity of areas annexed to the City during the two-year period, and Comprehensive Plan Annual Map Amendments. The housing unit target remaining as of Jan. 1, 2003 is 4,523 units.

Figure 1 below shows the remaining zoned capacity of 9,653 units for housing units by land use category within the city, according to the Land Use Map, as of January 1, 2003. This City has sufficient capacity to house targeted growth through 2022.

For the purposes of Capital Facilities planning, Renton plans for forecast growth in addition to targeted growth. (See Capital Facilities Element Policy CFP-1 and growth projections section.) This policy ensures that needed infrastructure is in place if market-driven growth exceeds targets. The data in Figure 1 shows that the City has sufficient capacity under Building Lands methodologies for both targeted and forecast residential growth during the six-year period addressed in the Capital Facilities Element and for the 21-year planning period.

Figure 1



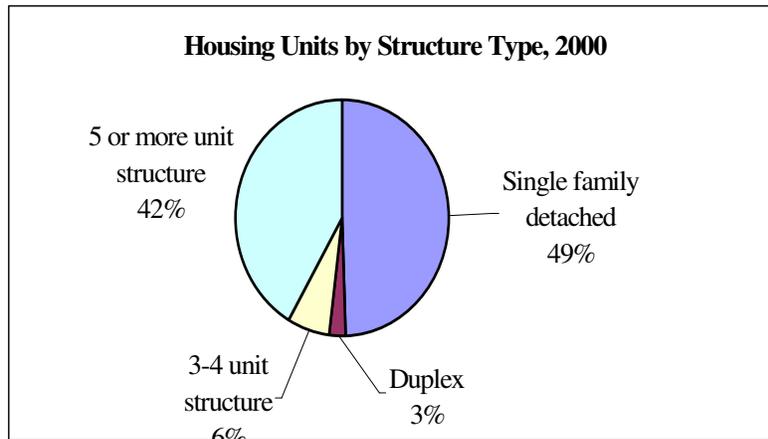
Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management

### B. Mix of Unit Types

In 2000, Renton had an approximately equal amount of housing units in single-family houses as in multi-family buildings. This did not represent a significant change in the proportion when compared to 1990. Figure 2 shows Renton's housing stock by structure type.

The largest growth since 1990 was in buildings of five or more units (1,889 new units), followed by single-family structures (1,235 new units). Sixty-four new flats (duplex units) were added, and 226 new units in structures containing three or four units. Since the first Countywide housing unit growth targets were established in 1992, 60% of Renton's new housing units have been in multifamily structures.

**Figure 2**



*Source: 2000 U.S. Census*

The approximately 9,653 units that would be built if all vacant land and land with redevelopment potential within the City were to be developed at its currently zoned capacity would bring the total number of housing units to about 33,650. Assuming 24,000 units existed in 2002, of the total, about 14,100 units or about 42 percent would be in single-family structures and about 19,550 units or about 58 percent would be in multi-family buildings. Approximately 3,500 of the new multifamily units would be in the downtown area. The eventual mix of single-family and multi-family units depends upon many factors including demand, development costs, and specific development regulations, especially in areas where regulations allow a mix of unit types.

The Citywide balance can also be adjusted through annexation of unincorporated areas, which are predominately single-family and have additional zoned capacity for single-family houses.

### C. Household Size in Relation to Ownership

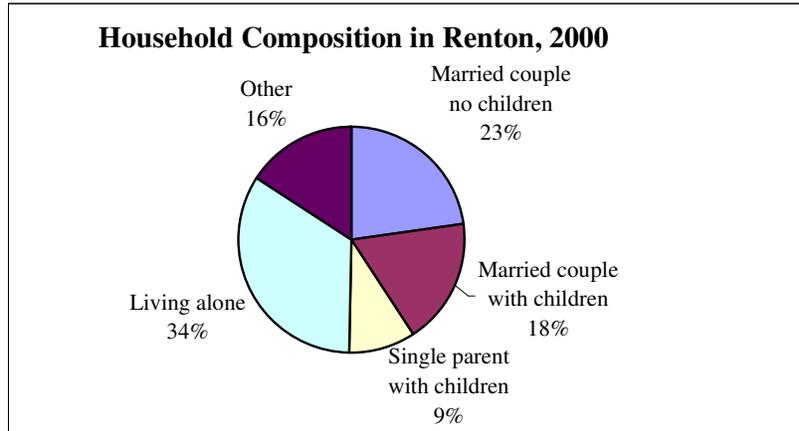
Demographic trends provide an indication of future demand for various unit types. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, average household size in Renton is 2.29 persons. Renton's household size is much smaller than several of its neighboring South King County cities and smaller than nearby Bellevue. Average household size for owner-occupied housing units in 2000 was 2.47. For renters it was 2.11. This shows an increase in renter-occupied household size, up from 2.03 in 1990, and a decrease in owner-occupied household size, which was 2.53 in 1990.

### D. Household Composition in Relation to Ownership

In Renton, 34% of all households are people living alone. This represents the most common household composition, and the majority of them, 62%, are renters. Thirty-three percent of Renton's households are two-person households, the majority of these, 66%, are homeowners. Of

family households, which include single parents, 60% are homeowners, while only 36% of non-family households are owners (this includes people living alone). Figure 3 shows the composition of Renton's households.

**Figure 3**



*Source: 2000 U.S. Census*

#### E. Housing for All Economic Segments

GMA requires all jurisdictions to encourage the availability of housing for all economic segments of the population. These economic segments are defined by the State of Washington and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as follows:

Upper Income	Households at 121% of Median Income and above
Middle Income	Households at 80-120% of Median Income
Moderate Income	Households at 50-80% of Median Income
Low Income	Households at 30-50% of Median Income
Very Low Income	Households below 30% of Median Income

HUD also defines the maximum amount that households should have to pay for housing as 30% of total household income. The CPP consider households that earn less than 80% of county median income, but pay more than 30% of their income for housing costs, to be in need of less expensive housing. The CPP ask all cities to take action to address existing housing needs, and to create affordable housing for expected population growth.

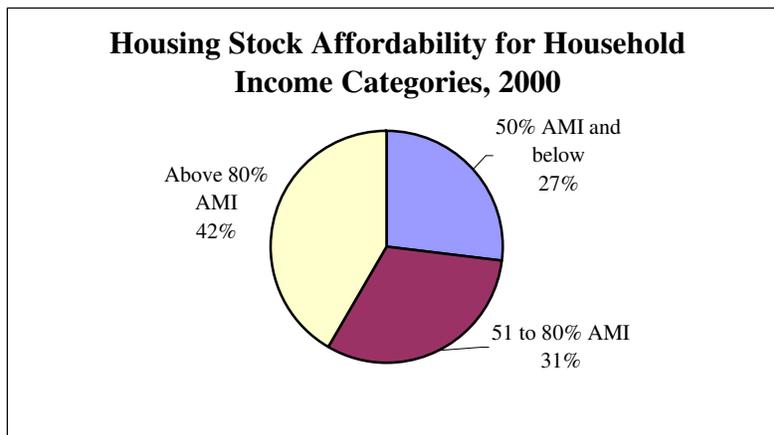
Housing costs are related to development costs, but are also a function of supply and demand, interest rates, and policies at many levels of government. As the vast majority of housing is supplied by the private sector, local governments use regulatory means to influence the supply, unit types, and affordability of new housing. Local regulations with an impact on the cost of housing include subdivision and road requirements, utility policies, development and mitigation fees, building and energy code requirements, and zoning regulations. In addition, overall permit-processing time also affects new home prices.

##### 1. Affordability of Housing in Renton

Housing prices have risen significantly in Renton and in most parts of King County over the past 25 years. From April 2001 to April 2002 alone, the Northwest Multiple Listing Service showed a 27% increase in Renton's median home sale price. Over the past decade, home prices have outpaced growth in income, although low interest rates starting in the late 1990s and continuing through the time of this update have made high prices somewhat more affordable. Rents also increased substantially during the 1990s, but leveled off in the early 2000s. While other parts of the economy slowed in 2001 and 2002, home prices remained high.

Renton median sale prices and rents are somewhat lower than for King County, and the 2001 King County Benchmarks Report showed that a greater percentage of Renton's market-rate housing is affordable to moderate and low income households than is affordable in King County as a whole. Figure 4 shows the percentage of market-rate housing units that were affordable to three broad income categories based on prices and county median income in 2000.

**Figure 4**



*Source: 2001 King County Benchmark Report*

*Based on 2000 HUD Income Levels for King County and market-rate rental and ownership units*

Figure 4 does not account for 1,424 units of subsidized, public, and non-profit housing in Renton. An inventory done by the City in 2002 showed that approximately 910 of these units (4% of Renton's total housing units) are geared at households at or below 50% AMI, although the varying types of income restrictions used in subsidized housing means the count is only an estimate. The chart also does not account for households living in Renton with Section 8 rental assistance vouchers. In January of 2002, over 500 Renton households (2% of all Renton households) received Section 8 rental assistance. Section 8 vouchers are for households earning at or below 50% AMI. The chart does not indicate the availability of market-rate affordable housing, its condition, its size or adequacy for the households that need or occupy it.

The chart also does not show separately the amount of market-rate housing affordable to very low income households, those earning 30% AMI or below, since it is combined with the 30-50% AMI category. The City's inventory of subsidized housing shows at least 260 units, or 1.2% of all housing units, that is available for this category. In addition, 75% of Section 8 vouchers are for households in this category.

Overpayment for housing is perhaps the best indication of need, although Census 2000 data showing “overpayment correlated to income” were not available at the time of this writing. The percent of renter households in Renton that are overpaying jumped by 4.6 percentage points from 25.6 in 1989 to 30.2 in 2000. The percent of owner-occupants who are overpaying nearly doubled, from 9.6 in 1989 to 18.0 in 2000, however it is likely that many overpaying owner-occupant households are in higher income categories than overpaying renters. (These figures include households paying more than 35% of income on housing costs.)

Underpaying households comprise a much larger portion of all Renton households, indicating that many have significant disposable income. Of renters, 48.7 percent were underpaying in 2000 (spending less than 25 percent of income on housing costs), and 62.4 percent of owner-occupants were underpaying.

Figure 5 shows an estimate of Renton’s households by HUD income categories. When compared with the percent of housing affordable to the income categories in 2000, this data indicates that Renton has a shortage of housing for middle and upper income households, a small surplus of housing for low-income households and a large surplus of housing for moderate-income households. However, it was not possible to determine whether the affordable housing shown in Figure 4 was actually occupied by lower income households.

**Figure 5**  
*Estimate of Renton population by HUD income categories, 2001*

		Percent	Approximate number of households
<b>Low and very low income</b>	<b>50% of median and below</b>	23%	5,096
<b>Moderate income</b>	<b>51 to 80% of median</b>	14%	3,074
<b>Middle income</b>	<b>81 to 120% of median</b>	27%	5,914
<b>Upper income</b>	<b>Over 120% of median</b>	36%	7,869
	<b>Total</b>	100%	21,953

*Source: Calculations based on data from Claritas  
This data does not account for household size.*

## 2. Upper Income Housing

The 1995 Comprehensive Plan set a goal of 30% of new housing units per year to be affordable at the upper income level. Of ownership housing, approximately 41% of new homes sold in 2001 were affordable to upper income households (or some middle income households with a down payment of more than 5%). All of these were detached, single-family homes. The prices of new construction rental homes were not tracked. Of existing home sales, about 19% were affordable to upper income households.

While a few of the new upper-income homes are in areas with one or fewer units per acre, the majority is in the R-5 (5 units per acre) zone. In addition, there are a number of new market-rate apartment complexes on Lake Washington and in the downtown, with some units geared at upper-income households. As the region becomes more densely populated and the convenience and amenities of urban neighborhoods become

increasingly desirable, upper income households will be found in a greater variety of neighborhoods and housing types. Apartment, townhouse, and condominium units with amenities such as views and waterfront access account for a growing share of high-end housing.

### 3. Middle Income Housing

The middle segment has many choices for housing in Renton, and much of the new stock of ownership housing in 2001 is affordable to this group. However, estimates of income and housing suggest that an increase in housing for this segment would be readily absorbed. New single-family homes in new neighborhoods and on infill sites will provide housing for this income segment, while innovative housing types such as small lot detached houses and semi-attached houses, may also be a part of the growth in housing at this income level.

### 4. Moderate Income Housing

Analysis of data from 1997 through 2001, suggests that Renton exceeded its target of 17% of new units annually affordable to the moderate-income segment with ownership housing alone. In addition, a large amount of rental housing in Renton is also available at this level, with average market-rate rents being affordable to households at 80% AMI and slightly older buildings being affordable below that level of income. By 2002, rising apartment vacancies meant more availability of rental stock affordable to this category. Low interest rates have also helped moderate-income households, mostly those at the high end of this category, to purchase a home. There is no way, however, to judge what vacancy and interest rates will be in the long term.

The City values opportunities for home ownership at the moderate-income level, particularly the opportunity to buy a first home. Where households can locate in neighborhoods with convenient access to transit, some may choose to lower their rate of car ownership, saving money and allowing them to pay (or borrow) more for housing.

### 5. Low and Very Low Income Housing

While the majority of new housing is affordable to moderate, middle, and high-income households, the majority of housing for low and very low-income households has historically been older stock, although some new stock is geared at these income segments. Some of the community's housing needs that cannot be met by the market are met by public housing authorities, such as the Renton Housing Authority (RHA), and by private non-profit housing providers. The RHA is one of only four public housing authorities in King County. Since current conditions make construction of housing affordable to low and very low-income households difficult without a subsidy, RHA and non-profits play a necessary role in providing and managing a portion of Renton's housing stock. These organizations are generally subject to the same land use regulations as for-profit developers, however they can access an array of federal, local, and charitable funding to make their products affordable to households in the lower income segments.

In recent years, financial tools have been created at the federal and state level to enable private for-profit developers to provide subsidized housing for low-income households. These tools, such as tax credits, may play an increasing role in the provision of housing

for low and moderate-income levels. Some household needs are also met through payment assistance programs that have traditionally been available only for renters, but are now occasionally available for homeowners.

While approximately 6% of new stock created in the last planning period was affordable to the low and very low-income group, the number of households in this income group in Renton served by Housing Choice vouchers has been increasing over the past few years. The combination of a Housing Choice Voucher and Renton's existing affordable stock has been the means by which Renton provided housing for low-and very low-income families.

F. Overcrowding

Overcrowding is an indicator of housing need. It is created by high housing costs or by a shortage of available housing units, which force people to over-occupy housing units or "double up." Moderate overcrowding is defined as households with between 1.01 and 1.50 persons per room. Extreme overcrowding is defined as households with over 1.51 persons per room. Figure 6 shows that overcrowding rates in Renton have increased since 1990, indicating that there may be more need for additional housing units than income and housing price data show.

**Figure 6  
Overcrowded Households in Renton, 1990 and 2000**

	1990		2000	
	Number (18,642 total households)	Percent of Total Households	Number (21,689 total households)	Percent of Total Households
<b>Moderate Overcrowding</b>	424	2.3%	750	3.5%
<b>Extreme Overcrowding</b>	261	1.4%	701	3.2%

*Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census Data*

However, the rental vacancy rate was very low (4.7%) at the time of the 2000 census and it is possible that overcrowding has eased somewhat since vacancy rates have increased since then (8.8% in spring 2000, according to Dupre+Scott). Both increasing the supply of affordable housing and providing higher wage employment opportunities for residents can ease overcrowding.

G. Housing for Special Populations

Elderly residents often need specialized housing combined with services and many elderly find their incomes declining as they grow older, making affordable housing more important. Census 2000 sample data showed an estimated 401 persons in Renton age 65 and over and below the federally defined poverty level. This is about 0.8% of the Renton's population, or about 7.8% of the population age 65 and over. The poverty rate among the elderly was actually lower than the rate among the general population, which was 9.7%. Of the population age 65 and over, 46% (2,215 individuals) have a disability, according to Census 2000, although the degree of disability was not indicated. Mean Social Security income for households in Renton in 1999 was \$12,100. Mean retirement income for households in Renton in 1999 was \$18,330.

A City-initiated inventory in 2004, of subsidized, public, and non-profit housing, showed 297 units of dedicated senior housing, 215 units for either seniors or the disabled and 209 units for either seniors or families. In addition, there were 16 housing units dedicated to the developmentally disabled, and three units exclusively for mentally ill residents. This does not include the many market-rate housing units that may also be occupied by special population residents.

#### H. Homelessness

Homelessness tends to be a regional issue, as homeless households are mobile and tend to go where emergency and transitional housing are more accessible. Emergency shelters provide housing for a few nights to a few months, while transitional housing is typically for a few months to one or two years. South King County has 51% of the emergency housing units in the county outside of Seattle, and 61% of the transitional housing units in the county outside of Seattle. Renton has transitional housing for 21 families, about 8% of South King County transitional housing units.

Homelessness is difficult to measure, and homeless rates are difficult to predict. The proportion of homeless people with limited English-speaking ability, measured during a one-night count of homeless population in emergency and transitional housing in King County outside of Seattle was 14%. This is significantly higher than that of King County's general population, which is 8.4% according to Census 2000. The rate of limited English speaking ability among individuals in Renton's population is 12%. The majority of homeless people in shelters are part of families, though this may reflect the fact that many shelters are designed to serve families. Of homeless households in the one-night count (in King County excluding Seattle) 34% included an employed person, indicating that low wage jobs may be a factor in homelessness. The disability rate in the same count was 21%, a measure that includes alcohol and substance abuse (39% of disabilities) along with physical and mental disabilities (Source: United Way).

#### I. Neighborhood Enhancement

In 1997, the City started its Neighborhoods Program to enhance the quality of community life, strengthen neighborhood identity, increase neighborhood involvement in government, and encourage the preservation of neighborhood character when neighborhoods are impacted by new development. Infill development in existing neighborhoods is part of the strategy for meeting housing unit growth targets. Many City policies, particularly those in the Community Design Element of this Plan, aim to address neighborhood concerns as neighborhoods are always impacted in some way by new development.

#### J. Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential Areas

Mixed-use areas include a significant amount of Renton's housing unit growth capacity, and comprise several of Renton's existing commercial areas. Renton is guiding redevelopment in these areas to be pedestrian-oriented and to incorporate housing for a variety of income levels, as well as commercial and office uses. The mixed-use areas will provide a high quality of life with proximity from residential units to shopping, transit, parks, and a variety of public facilities.

#### K. Urban Center

The South Lake Washington redevelopment area and Downtown Renton comprise a regional Urban Center, with an existing and planned mix of residential, commercial, and public uses. In

1990, Downtown Renton had a significant concentration of low-income housing, and a lack of market-rate housing. By 2002, this trend had been reversed. Three new developments in the Downtown Core, with retail on the ground floor and several floors of market-rate housing above, started the much-anticipated transformation of the downtown into a pedestrian-friendly urban residential neighborhood. Downtown Renton also has a new transit center, urban park, new performing arts center, and City-owned public parking garage making living there both convenient and enjoyable. Additional market-rate downtown housing is anticipated.

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan Amendments provided policies that will guide redevelopment of the South Lake Washington Redevelopment Area (Boeing Renton Plant site). This area, designated “Urban Center-North” to distinguish it from the Urban Center-Downtown, will include retail, light industrial or high-technology uses, office, commercial and residential in addition to existing aircraft manufacturing (until Boeing transitions out of the area).

The estimated number of residential units (all attached units) is approximately 3,225 by the year 2030, based on a conceptual scenario.

**L. Homeownership**

The City considers homeownership desirable at all income levels, as it produces stable neighborhoods and gives citizens a long-term stake in the community. Though increases in housing price made it increasingly difficult for first time buyers to enter the housing market during much of the 1990s, low-interest rates in the past few years have eased this situation.

The percentage of owner-occupied housing units in Renton increased from 45.9% in 1990 to 47.8% in 2000. In order to encourage continued growth in homeownership at all income levels, Renton is encouraging the construction of a variety of housing types. Programs to help first-time homebuyers, sometimes simply through education, can also contribute to increased home ownership. In addition, the City of Renton adopted a condominium conversion ordinance in 1979. Very few condominium conversions have occurred since that time, however.

**M. Age of Residential Structures**

Housing built since 1990 accounts for over 21% of Renton's housing stock, with much of it being built since 1995. However, Renton also has a significant proportion of older housing stock. Twenty-four percent of the stock was constructed in 1959 or before. Some older houses are located in parts of the City now designated for mixed-use or commercial development. Figure 7 describes the age of residential structures in the City at the time of the 2000 Census.

**Figure 7  
Age of Residential Structures 2000**

<u>Year Structure Built</u>	<u>Number of Units</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>
1999 to March 2000	758	3.3%
1995 to 1998	2,193	9.7%
1990 to 1994	1,886	8.3%
1980 to 1989	4,875	21.5%
1970 to 1979	3,679	16.2%
1960 to 1969	3,878	17.1%
1940 to 1959	3,982	17.5%

1939 or earlier	1,448	6.4%
Total	22,699	100.0%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

## 1. Condition of Housing

There is no current data available on housing condition in Renton. However, the City also is active in funding two programs through the Community Development Block Grants designed to prevent deterioration of housing in Renton. The City also inspects for building code violations both pro-actively and based on complaints.

## 2. Demolitions

Since 1990 about 12 housing units were demolished per year in the City. Many demolitions were of structures adjacent to expanding commercial areas. Other demolitions were the result of new subdivisions and multifamily housing developments. In some cases new single-family homes were rebuilt on the site of a recently demolished single-family home.

Most residential demolitions are done by private action. Rarely has the City, in the course building code enforcement, had to remove a residential structure to ensure public safety. However the City has, and likely will in the future, acquire and demolish residential structures in the course of making infrastructure improvements or other municipal activities.

## N. Manufactured and Modular Housing and Mobile Homes

Manufactured or modular housing is prefabricated housing that is placed on a foundation. When new manufactured housing is placed in single-family zones, it is required to conform to all applicable development standards. With recent advances in design, construction, and shipping, new manufactured homes can be virtually indistinguishable from site-built homes in both appearance and quality, while offering real cost savings.

The City and its potential annexation area also include several mobile/manufactured home parks built over the past 50 years. As of June 2002, the City of Renton has one mobile home park and two manufactured housing developments. The three properties consist of 487 dwelling units. Early mobile home parks were designed for “movable” homes and in some cases accommodated long-term occupancy of travel and camping trailers. Some newer manufactured housing developments were master-planned and conformed to the development standards of a zoning district designed to accommodate them. There is also a small but undetermined amount of older mobile/manufactured housing units scattered on individual lots throughout the City.

As property values in the Puget Sound region continue to increase, the conversion of mobile home parks to other land uses continues to be an issue. While mobile homes can provide affordable ownership housing, they do not contribute to a household’s assets through appreciation in the way that owning permanent housing can.

## O. Nonconforming Uses

Approximately three hundred residential structures are nonconforming in respect to their zoning and could be converted from housing to other uses. Many of these nonconforming housing units are older in age and are in higher-than-average levels of disrepair. Many are single-family houses

located in commercial and high density residential zoning districts in and around the City's Urban Center.

#### P. Tracking Progress toward Goals

Monitoring, which is required by the Countywide Planning Policies, enables jurisdictions to evaluate the effectiveness of their housing policies and development regulations. To date, cities have successfully provided data to King County for tracking the actual density of new housing development. This is useful in evaluating the progress of cities toward forecasted housing unit growth, without consideration of affordability.

More limited efforts have been made in tracking the affordability of new housing units, and cities' progress toward their targets for each income segment. A clear definition of the types of housing that count toward each target makes monitoring possible. However, affordability is a moving target since it is based on supply and demand, income, interest rates, and other dynamic, and somewhat unpredictable factors. In addition, data on the sales prices of homes tend to be more complete than rental data, though the varying level of savings and financial terms with which households purchase their homes makes true affordability difficult to measure. The monitoring of affordability can only be based on the best data available.

## **HOUSING**

### **V. Objectives and Policies**

#### **A. Single-Family/Multi-Family Balance of Unit Types**

**Objective H-A:** Maintain a balance in the number of single-family and multi-family housing units outside of the urban center, through adequately zoned capacity.

**Policy H-1.** Count new unit types as follows when monitoring the single-family/multi-family balance:

1. Count cottages as single-family houses.
2. Count semi-attached houses as single-family houses.
3. Count accessory dwelling units as multi-family units, while continuing to count the primary unit in a house with an ADU as a single-family unit.

**Policy H-2.** Ensure that sufficient multi-family capacity is provided within the city boundaries in order to accommodate housing demand, provide adequate housing options, meet urban center criteria under the Growth Management Act and Countywide Planning Policies, and prevent unnecessary increases in housing costs.

#### **B. Cost of Regulation, Permitting Time, and Fees**

**Objective H-B:** Ensure that City fees and permitting time are set at reasonable levels so they do not adversely affect the cost of housing.

**Policy H-3.** Ensure predictable and efficient permit processing.

**Policy H-4.** Create and maintain utility standards that encourage infill development.

**Policy H-5.** Create and maintain development standards that reduce the overall cost of housing as long as health and safety can be maintained.

#### **C. Upper Income Housing**

**Objective H-C:** Increase housing opportunities for upper income households.

**Policy H-6.** Achieve the target of thirty (30) percent of new housing units annually through 2022 to be affordable to upper income households that earn over 120 percent of county median income, as established by the City in response to the Countywide Planning Policies.

**Policy H-7.** Provide opportunities for large- and medium-lot single-family development.

**Policy H-8.** Utilize low-density, single-family areas and Resource Conservation designations to provide opportunities for upper income development.

**Policy H-9.** Encourage larger lots on parcels with physical amenity features of the land such as views, significant vegetation, or steep slopes.

**Policy H-10.** Encourage construction of upper income homes on larger existing parcels that are exempted from minimum density requirements.

**Policy H-11.** Encourage the construction of luxury condominium developments in mixed-use areas.

**Policy H-12.** Support site plans and subdivisions incorporating amenity features such as private recreation facilities, e.g. pools, tennis courts, and private parks to serve luxury developments.

**Policy H-13.** Increase public awareness of upper income housing opportunities in Renton.

#### **D. Moderate And Middle Income Housing**

**Objective H-D:** Encourage the private sector to provide market rate housing for the widest potential range of income groups including middle- and moderate-income households.

**Policy H-14.** Achieve the Countywide Planning Policies target that seventeen (17) percent of new housing units annually through 2022 should be affordable to moderate income households that earn 51 to 80 percent of county median income.

**Policy H-15.** Achieve the target of thirty-three (33) percent of new housing units annually through 2022 to be affordable to middle income households that earn 81 to 120 percent of county median income, as established by the City in response to the Countywide Planning Policies.

**Policy H-16.** Encourage home ownership opportunities affordable to moderate income households.

**Policy H-17.** Encourage the construction of townhouse, condominium, and rental units affordable to moderate income households in mixed-use developments as defined in the Land Use Element.

**Policy H-18.** Continue to provide technical assistance for redevelopment of land particularly in Downtown Renton.

**Policy H-19.** Market Renton to housing developers.

**Policy H-20.** Continue to maintain an updated inventory of land available for housing development.

**Policy H-21.** Support proposals for moderate-income housing based on the following criteria:

1. Dispersion of moderate-income housing throughout the City.
2. Convenient access to transit for moderate-income households
3. A range of unit types including family housing.
4. Ownership housing when possible
5. Long-term affordability.

**Policy H-22.** Pursue public-private partnerships to provide and manage moderate-income housing.

**Policy H-23.** Provide zoning standards that allow studios and other small rental units that would be affordable to moderate-income households.

**Policy H-24.** Disperse moderate-income housing in all areas of the City that have vacant land.

**Policy H-25.** Ensure that a sufficient amount of land in all multi-family and mixed-use areas of the City is zoned to allow attached housing and innovative housing types.

**Policy H-26.** Support proposals for affordable housing, created with public subsidies that give priority to households earning at or below 80 percent of regional median income.

## **E. Low Income Housing**

**Objective H-E:** Increase housing opportunities for low and very low-income Renton residents and provide a fair share of low-income housing in the future.

**Policy H-27.** Achieve the Countywide Planning Policies target for Renton, defined by the City as: the number of housing units equal to twenty (20) percent of newly permitted housing units annually through 2022 to be affordable to low income households that earn fifty (50) percent or less of county median income.

**Policy H-28.** Establish the following sub-targets for affordability to households earning 50 percent or less of county median income, to be counted toward the 20 percent target:

1. Ten percent of new housing units constructed in the City.
2. A number equal to five percent of new housing units, to be met by existing units that are given long-term affordability.
3. A number equal to five percent of new housing units, to be met by existing units that are purchased by low-income households through home-buyer assistance programs.

**Policy H-29.** Support proposals for low-income housing for households earning less than 60 percent of area median income based on the following criteria:

1. Dispersion of low-income housing throughout the City.
2. Convenient access to transit for low-income households.
3. A range of unit types including family housing.
4. Ownership housing when possible.
5. Long-term affordability.

**Policy H-30.** Pursue public-private partnerships to provide and manage affordable housing.

Strategy H-30.1. Support non-profit agencies that construct and manage projects within the City.

Strategy H-30.2. Support the role of the Renton Housing Authority in providing additional housing.

Strategy H-30.3. Before City surplus property is sold, evaluate its suitability for development of affordable housing.

Strategy H-30.4. Use a greater percentage of federal funds including Community Development Block Grants and HOME funds to support low and moderate income affordable housing.

**Policy H-31.** Work with other King County cities to address regional housing issues.

**Policy H-32.** Disperse low-income housing in all mixed-use and multi-family land use designations that allow attached dwelling units.

**Policy H-33.** Encourage preservation, maintenance, and improvements to existing subsidized housing and to market-rate housing that is affordable to low and moderate-income households.

**Policy H-34.** Reduce existing housing need, defined as the number of existing households that earn 80 percent of county median income, and are paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing, or live in inadequate housing by increasing housing supply for all economic segments of the community.

Strategy H-34.1. Create opportunities for higher income households to vacate existing lower cost units, but stay in Renton by creating larger houses on larger lots.

Strategy H-34.2. Prioritize applications to the City for housing rehabilitation grants to homeowners earning 80 percent of county median income or below based on the greatest degree of existing need. With the exception of emergencies, priority should be given to households occupying conventional housing.

## **F. SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

**Objective H-F:** Increase the supply of special needs housing.

**Policy H-35.** Support the housing programs of social service organizations, including the Renton Housing Authority, that provide opportunities for special needs populations.

**Policy H-36.** Support the establishment and operation of emergency shelters.

**Policy H-37.** Support proposals for special needs housing that:

1. Offer a high level of access to shopping, services, and other facilities needed by the residents.
2. Demonstrate that it meet the transportation needs of residents.
3. Help to preserve low-income and special needs housing opportunities in a neighborhood where those opportunities are being lost.
4. Disperse special needs housing throughout the residential areas of the City.

**Policy H-38.** Support development proposals by sponsors of assisted housing when applicants document efforts to establish and maintain positive relationships with neighbors.

**Policy H-39.** Retain the City of Renton Fair Housing Ordinance to reflect the following principles from the Federal Fair Housing Amendment Act of 1988:

1. Ensure that no dwelling is made unavailable or denied to any member of a protected class.
2. Make reasonable accommodations in its rules, policies, practices, and services when such accommodations may be necessary to afford persons with disabilities equal opportunity to use or enjoy a dwelling.
3. Prohibit the application of special requirements through land use regulations, restrictive covenants, and conditional or special use permits that have the effect of limiting the ability of persons from protected classes to live in the residence of their choice in the community.

## **G. Variety of Housing Types and Regulatory Measures for Affordability**

**Objective H-G.** Allow the construction of a variety of housing types affordable to low, moderate, and middle-income households when site plans and subdivisions address maintaining the quality of neighborhoods.

**Policy H-40.** Support projects including subdivisions and site plans incorporating innovative lot and housing types, clustered detached houses, clustered semi-attached houses, and varied lot and housing types within a site.

**Policy H-41.** Support projects that incorporate quality features, such as additional window details, consistent architectural features on all facades, above average roofing and siding, entry porches or trellises where innovative site or subdivision designs are permitted.

**Policy H-42.** Encourage the construction of cottages on small lots through incentives such as density bonuses. Implementing code will be in place within three years of the adoption of the GMA update.

**Policy H-43.** Support standards that allow cottage housing developments with the following features in residential zones, provided the cottages are limited by size or bulk:

1. Allow increased density over the zoned density.
2. Allow reduced minimum lot size, lot dimensions, and setbacks.
3. Allow both clustered and non-clustered cottages.
4. Allowing clustered parking.
5. Base the required number of parking spaces on unit size, or number of bedrooms.

Implementing code will be in place within three years of the adoption of the GMA update.

**Policy H-44.** Support accessory dwelling units as strategies for providing a variety of housing types and as a strategy for providing affordable housing, with the following criteria:

1. Ensure owner occupancy of either the primary or secondary unit.
2. Allow both attached and detached accessory dwelling units and detached carriage units, at a maximum of one per single-family house, exempt from the maximum density requirement of the applicable zone.
3. Require an additional parking space for each accessory dwelling unit, with the ability to waive this requirement for extenuating circumstances.
4. Allow a variety of entry locations and treatments while ensuring compatibility with existing neighborhoods.

Implementing code will be in place within three years of the adoption of the GMA update.

## **H. Manufactured Housing Zone**

**Objective H-H:** Continue to allow manufactured home parks and manufactured home subdivisions on land that is specifically zoned for these uses.

**Policy H-45.** Maintain existing manufactured housing developments that meet the following criteria:

1. The development provides market rate housing alternatives for moderate and low-income households.
2. The housing is maintained and certified as built to the International Building Code and Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development standards.
3. Site planning includes pedestrian amenities, landscaping, and a community facility.

## **I. Manufactured, Modular, and Factory Built Homes**

**Objective H-I:** Allow the use of quality modular or factory-built homes on permanent foundations.

**Policy H-46.** Allow and encourage the use of "gold seal" modular homes built to the standards of the International Building Code, and "red seal" manufactured homes built to the standards of the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development in any zone allowing residential uses, as long as the housing meets all applicable city codes, looks similar to site-built housing, and is placed on a permanent foundation.

## **J. Preservation of Existing Housing**

**Objective H-J:** Preserve and protect the existing housing stock.

**Policy H-47.** Preserve existing housing stock where residential uses conform to zoning requirements.

**Policy H-48.** Encourage replacement of demolished housing units within redevelopment projects.

**Policy H-49.** Target code enforcement to correct health and safety violations.

**Policy H-50.** Identify areas in the City for priority funding for rehabilitation by non-profit housing sponsors.

**Policy H-51.** Continue City funding of housing rehabilitation and repair.

**Policy H-52.** Encourage creative re-use of existing buildings for housing within the City, where housing can be included at zoned capacity.

## **K. Quality of Neighborhoods**

**Objective H-K:** Develop and maintain livable neighborhoods with a desirable quality of life.

**Policy H-53.** Promote high quality residential living environments in all types of neighborhoods.

**Policy H-54.** Promote community identity, pride, and involvement in neighborhoods.

Strategy H-54.1. Continue to support the City's neighborhood program to encourage neighborhood involvement, address local conditions, and provide neighborhood enhancements.

**Policy H-55.** Protect the character of existing single-family neighborhoods by promoting high quality development.

Strategy H-55.1. Use design standards to encourage housing types that protect privacy, provide landscaping or other buffering features between structures of different scale, and /or promote investments that increase property values where housing that is more dense is allowed in existing single-family neighborhoods.  
Strategy H-55.2. Development standards for flats and triplex developments should encourage design at the scale of single-family developments by limiting building length and height.

**Policy H-56.** Relate the size of structures to the size of lots in order to create development that fits into a neighborhood.

**Policy H-57.** New single-family subdivisions should provide pedestrian and vehicular connections to adjoining residential development unless a determination is made that a physical feature of the site, such as a ravine, wetland or pre-existing developed property prevents practical implementation of this provision.

## **L. Homeownership**

**Objective H-L:** Increase the percentage of homeownership in the City.

**Policy H-58.** Allow zero lot line developments and flats with common wall construction on separately platted lots in designations that permit attached unit types.

Strategy H-59.1. Encourage condominium and fee simple townhouse developments with ground access and small yards.  
Strategy H-59.2. Encourage the development of small-detached houses on platted lots, or condominium developments where lot areas with yards are established without platting.

**Policy H-59.** Support first time homebuyer programs such as those available through the Washington State Housing Finance Commission and other similar private or not-for-profit programs with similar or better program elements and rates.

## **M. Housing in Mixed-Use Areas**

**Objective H-M:** Develop location designated residential living environments in mixed-use developments, as defined in the Land Use Element.

**Policy H-60.** Encourage a range of housing types in the Urban Center and those commercial designations allowing mixed-use.

**Policy H-61.** Through non-conforming use policies in Section V, Land Use Element, maintain existing housing units until property is redeveloped as part of a higher density residential or mixed-use project.

**Policy H-62.** Encourage housing in the Urban Center that provides opportunities for all economic segments of the population.