

**CITY OF BREMERTON, WASHINGTON
PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM**

AGENDA TITLE: Workshop for Comprehensive Plan Update: Housing Chapter

DEPARTMENT: Community Development

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BREMERTON 2035 - PROJECT OVERVIEW

“Bremerton2035” is title of the City of Bremerton’s Comprehensive Plan Update, which focuses on evaluating which aspects of the existing Comprehensive Plan are working and what needs to be adjusted. The City is taking this project on in accordance with the Growth Management Act. The City is required to evaluate and plan for growth over the next 20 years (2016 to 2035). The overarching principles and general concepts within the 2004 Comprehensive Plan continue to be applicable; however, some alterations are necessary to reflect changes related to the economic climate and overall goals of the community.

The Planning Commission is holding a series of workshops, each addressing a different component of the Comprehensive Plan Update (Bremerton 2035). A common theme the Plan update is to streamline and simplify the existing core elements of the Comprehensive Plan and to update the plan to ensure compliance with the Growth Management Act and other locally adopted planning policies.

MEETING TOPIC

This meeting will focus on the “Housing Chapter.” This chapter evaluates the existing housing stock and sets goals and policies to encourage new housing units in a way that protects existing developed neighborhoods, addresses affordability, and examines ways to encourage the growth of Bremerton’s housing options. Direction from the adopted work program and the District Profiling exercise done in 2014 with the City Council have been incorporated into the revisions proposed by Staff to this chapter. Generally, the draft language is intended to update, simplify and streamline. Staff is seeking Planning Commission’s guidance on the chapter’s readability and core principles. Does the draft chapter provide clear policy direction in an efficient and reader friendly format, while still meeting all Growth Management Act’s Requirements?

ATTACHMENTS

- *Attachment A: Draft Housing Chapter*

WORKSHOP DESIRED OUTCOME

Staff is requesting the Planning Commission consider and deliberate on the proposed Housing Chapter to determine if the goals and policies listed adequately address the fundamental principles necessary, while maintaining a user friendly readability.

MODIFICATIONS TO THE HOUSING CHAPTER

The Housing Chapter establishes the goals and policies intended to ensure that existing quality neighborhoods are maintained and protected and that the City allows for a wide variety of housing types in appropriate locations that address the changing needs of Bremerton's residents. As with the Land Use Chapter reviewed last month, the proposed modifications to this chapter are intended to streamline and consolidate the overarching principles contained within the existing Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, Staff has taken guidance from the adopted Work Plan and City Council District Profiling exercise done earlier this year. Based on Council direction and a thorough review of the key points of the existing document, Staff has streamlined the chapter. Significant efforts were taken to maintain the overall policy direction created in the 2004 plan. Changes are proposed to the wording and layout to better emphasize the goals and policy direction within the document. Generally, the changes proposed simplify, reorganize and combine items as follows:

- Reduction from 22 pages to 7 pages
- Consolidation of 10 goals to 4 goals
- Merging of 39 policies into 24 policies

At the onset of revising the Housing Chapter, Staff looked at the overall vision statement for the chapter and reflected upon the four citywide goals established in the Land Use Chapter. Based on these master principles of the entire document, Staff found it appropriate to revise the vision statement of the Housing Chapter to better reflect the larger Citywide vision and to refine this specific chapter's vision.

Keeping in line with the revised vision statement, Staff has re-organized and re-worded much of the language within the chapter to improve readability. Staff looked for language duplication and core principles that were woven into the document. Four primary themes stood out as reoccurring goals throughout the existing 22 page document. These four goals are now more specifically identified as the backbone of the Housing Chapter as follows:

H1 - Protect and enhance Bremerton's existing quality housing stock.

H2 - Encourage the development of a variety of new housing options and densities to meet the changing needs of Bremerton's residents.

H3 - Support access to quality and affordable housing for all of Bremerton's residents.

H4 - Implement and coordinate strategies that promote public and private efforts to facilitate improvements to the housing stock.

Staff believes that these four goals are at the heart of the current Housing Chapter and as re-worded provide a clearer articulation of the vision intended by the community. In addition, language has been revised and updated to ensure compliance with the Growth Management Act requirements and/or to ensure compliance with State and Federal requirements, Countywide and Multicounty-Wide Planning Policies, including Vision 2040.

The current Comprehensive Plan, all public released public documents and more information on this process can be reviewed at www.Bremerton2035.com.

Housing Element

Housing Vision

To encourage the growth of Bremerton by strategically locating a wide variety of housing types throughout the City in a way that protects the environment and fosters community health.



Existing

Future

Affordable

Coordinated

Housing Introduction

Housing Introduction

The housing element focuses on the most basic function of community living, shelter for the local population. As a metropolitan City, Bremerton is expected to grow substantially over the next 20 years. This document intends to identify ways to accommodate the anticipated population growth while protecting existing single family areas. In order to quantify Bremerton's housing needs significant amounts of data have been collected and reviewed. A full analysis of this data is available in the Housing Appendix (*Not yet available for review*).

Population growth of the City is anticipated to grow from 37,729 residents to 52,017 residents by the year 2035, and the number of housing units associated with that growth is approximately 6,400 new units. In order to effectively accommodate this growth without detracting from our existing attractive neighborhoods, the City has established goals and policies that will guide growth of housing towards designated Centers and by targeting infill towards areas with large lots and or areas that have deteriorated housing stock.

Before addressing the goals and policies for future growth, it is essential to reflect backwards to understand how past growth has shaped Bremerton's current conditions. Originally founded in conjunction with its major employer, the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton's distinctive neighborhoods have survived various growth cycles. The most impactful was the housing boom associated with World War II in the 1940's. At the height of the war, housing stock came under severe stress when the population grew from approximately 15,000 to 72,500 seemingly overnight. That housing crisis still influences the type, size, cost and quality of Bremerton's existing housing stock available today.

The end of World War II signaled a population decline in the 1950's and 1960's. Since then Bremerton's population has remained mostly unchanged. Some minor increases and decreases of as many as 2,000 people have been seen over the last 40 years; however these changes are negligible (approximately 1%) and easily dismissed amid Bremerton's regular fluctuations in the military population. The lack of growth over the last 40 years, despite land use capacity, continues to elude growth forecasts.

The 2010 Census count identified 37,729 residents and the 2014 census estimate shows approximately 38,180 residents. While this is an increase, it is not as substantial of an increase as growth forecasts had anticipated in the 2004 update of the Comprehensive Plan. More importantly, Bremerton's growth is has not kept pace with surrounding county and regional areas where unprecedented growth has occurred. Between 1980 and 2000 Kitsap County as a whole witnessed a population increase of nearly 60%, and since 2000 the County's population has continued to grow by 12%. Bremerton on the other hand has had negligible growth between 2000 and 2010 of +470 people, or 0.01%.

To understand this gap, the City has evaluated national and regional housing trends which provide insights into differences between Bremerton's housing market and other local markets. In terms of supply, Bremerton does not have as many green field or empty canvas opportunities as are available in other parts of the County. While infrastructure is often more expensive to construct in these areas, they often represent a less complicated design than infill typically requires. In terms of demand, Bremerton's somewhat outdated housing stock, dating back to the previous growth periods of the 1940's and 1960's, often fails to address today's contemporary market demands. Market demands and demographic changes have occurred in areas such as household type, size income level, and special needs that make Bremerton's existing housing stock less desirable than newer more modern homes being developed elsewhere.

Planning for Bremerton's unique existing population and allowing flexibility to accommodate for growing demographic groups is essential. For example, there has been a substantial growth of senior citizens, singles, and single parent households throughout the region, which indicates a need for greater diversity in housing type.

Accounting for the unique needs of the military population associated with the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard is an important factor. Bremerton has a higher than average number of rental properties, high turnover rates, and lower household size than other neighboring Cities. These rates are often associated with a more transient population typically found in Cities with high military populations. Ensuring adequate housing options for the military is critical for the City's growth.

The overall income levels of the Bremerton's population cannot be overlooked in developing a successful growth strategy. 20.4% of Bremerton's residents are currently below the poverty line, compared to 10.4% in Kitsap County as a whole. Bremerton's median household income is \$43,183, compared to Kitsap County's median \$62,413. The median home value in Bremerton is \$194,700, compared to \$268,000 in Kitsap County¹. This is a sign that cost and choice of housing are problematic for much of the existing population.

In order for Bremerton to compete with the housing market in surrounding areas the Comprehensive Plan must carefully balance the needs of existing residents with that of the anticipated needs of the future population. Special consideration must be paid to the economic diversity and resource scarcity within the community. Ensuring Bremerton remains an affordable City for its residents is critical. New growth must be strategically located to achieve a new, more intense and vibrant urban setting without detracting from existing attractive single family neighborhoods. The following goals and policies of the Housing Element intend to ensure the rediscovery of Bremerton as a great place to live.

¹ Data is from the 2010 Census and Kitsap County Assessor records.
City of Bremerton Comprehensive Plan
Housing Element - DRAFT (February 2014)

Housing Goals & Policies

Discussion: Goals & Policies

The 2004 version of this Plan had a very thorough goal and policy section which identified 10 goals and 39 policies. During the development of the 2016 Update of the plan it was recognized that many of the original goals have communal objectives which could be consolidated into 4 goals (as seen below).

As for the policies, majority of the policies from the 2004 version remain in today's Plan, however to create a user friendly plan, the corresponding policy has been reorganized and re-worded in the text to aid in readability.

Housing Goals

The following summarizes the intent of the four Housing goals for the City of Bremerton:

H1. Protect existing quality housing stock

H2. Encourage development of a variety new housing types

H3. Support access to affordable housing

H4. Coordinate strategies with public and private entities to improve the housing stock

Housing Policies

The four housing goals support the overall growth strategy of the City specifically related to existing and new housing stock. Associated policies have been created to support and implement the vision established by the goals.

Goal H1: Protect and Enhance Bremerton's Existing Quality Housing Stock

Implementing Policies:

H1(A): *Promote preservation of structures in good repair, including establishing incentives that encourage private property owner's efforts to preserve homes having historical and or architectural significance.*

H1(B): *Support replacement of substandard structures, including encouraging rehabilitation and maintenance of existing housing units; or replacing substandard structures which have excessive rehabilitation costs with new structures*

H1(C): *Promote, and incentivize, private commitments to improve existing housing stock so that all housing is safe, sanitary, and in good repair.*

H1(D): *Promoting financial assistance for essential repairs to substandard structures that provide housing for low and moderate income persons.*

H1(E): *Enhance livability in neighborhoods by maintaining and upgrading City services such as sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, and utilities in order to enhance the overall affordability and health of the community.*

H1(F): *Promoting a robust code enforcement program to protect the safety and aesthetic quality of existing neighborhoods.*

H1(G): *Promote a sense of community within existing neighborhoods by creating spaces where residents can interact by encouraging walkability, and supporting identification of distinctive neighborhoods.*

Goal H2: Encourage the development of a variety of new housing options and densities to meet the changing needs of Bremerton's residents.

Implementing Policies:

H2(A) *Support the private sector's efforts to provide a full range of housing options to meet the needs of all ages and demographics.*

H2(B) *Encourage all new development to blend with the character of the existing neighborhood context.*

H2(C): *Supporting infill development and increased densities to ensure efficient and cost effective utilization of existing public utilities.*

H2(D): *Enhance livability in neighborhoods by upgrading and installing City services such as sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, and utilities in order to enhance livability.*

H2(E) *Support efforts to provide for wide array of housing options such as:*

- *Emergency group housing, homeless shelters and short term housing to meet the needs of those in the lower income categories.*
- *Promote housing for to the special needs of students, particularly in the vicinity of Olympic College. Encourage apartments and dormitories in locations that directly service the college.*
- *Plan for and support episodic surges and reductions in military personnel. Provide opportunities to allow for different housing densities to accommodate the diverse needs of military personnel.*
- *Respond to the special needs of the growing elderly population within the City. Encourage a full range of housing options including retirement housing complexes in all residential zones particularly in areas with direct proximity to services and amenities. Encourage programs which allow elderly to remain in their homes as long as possible.*
- *Provide for integration of special needs housing within the community by allowing for government-assisted housing, housing for low-income families, manufactured housing, group homes, and foster care facilities. Encourage construction to meet and exceed ADA standards whenever possible.*

H2(F): *Promote a sense of community, or gathering places, within new neighborhoods by crating spaces where residents can interact by encouraging walkability, and supporting identification in distinctive neighborhoods.*

H2(g): *Partner with Community Development Block Grant and other applicable programs and funding sources to encourage removal or abatement of blighting influences in and around residential areas.*

Goal H3: Support access to quality and affordable housing for all Bremerton residents.

Implementing Policies:

H3(A): *Provide opportunities for the production of new housing for all incomes, ages, and family types through infill by stimulating growth of non-traditional housing types such as townhomes, carriage units, accessory dwelling units, and duplexes in locations where they will seamlessly infill into the fabric of the existing neighborhoods.*

H3(B): *Disperse below market rate, publically assisted, affordable, and rental housing throughout the City in a way that accommodates Bremerton's fair share of the Countywide need. Disperse such housing throughout the City to avoid concentrations in any particular area and encouraging development close to employment and public transportation.*

H3(C): *Support increased densities and infill projects in order to capitalize on the cost efficiency of utilization of existing utility services. Additionally, encourage maintenance of City services such as sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, and utilities in order to enhance the overall affordability and health of the community.*

H3(D): *Encourage expanded availability for incentives for development within the City such as the Multi-Family Tax Exemption, Community Empowerment Zone, Historically Underutilized Business zone, etc.*

H3(E): *Eliminate unnecessary regulatory impediments to the development of affordable housing.*

Goal H4 Implement and coordinate strategies that promote public and private efforts to facilitate improvements to the housing stock.

Implementing Policies:

H4(A): *Promote private and public efforts to provide adequate capital for rehabilitation of housing projects; such efforts should include commitments to remove or abate blighting influences near or within residential areas.*

H4(B): *Promote financial assistance for low and moderate incomes that assist in essential repairs to substandard structures. Support private sector low interest loan programs for such repairs, combined with public resources when available.*

H4(C): *Target and enhance the use of tax incentives to improve affordable housing throughout the City and particularly in Centers where housing is intended to be in close proximity to public transportation and employment.*

H4(D): *Encourage efficient permit review by eliminating unnecessary regulatory impediments, improving certainty in development regulations, and providing an expedited permit process.*

H4(E): *Aim to improve coordinated, effective planning programs that improve access to affordable housing. Specifically promote intergovernmental cooperation and agreements that support strategies and programs to achieve City housing goals.*

H4(F): *Promote increased housing density to provide a broader customer base for more affordable public services including utilities.*