Element 3

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.

Housing Contents

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.

Population growth of the City is anticipated to grow from 39,650 residents to 53,407 residents by the year 2036, 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[1], 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 existing housing stock available today.

The end of World War II signaled a population decline in the 1950s and 1960s. 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 2010 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%.

---

[1] The term "Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS)" is used interchangeably throughout the Comprehensive Plan with "Naval Base Kitsap (NBK)." It is recognized that Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton is comprised of the Navy's area and Controlled Industrial Area that has multiple large employers, with Puget Sound Naval Shipyard as the largest tenant that has the most direct impact with Bremerton.

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 site development than infill typically requires. In terms of demand, Bremerton's somewhat outdated housing stock, dating back to the previous growth periods of the 1940s and 1960s, 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 also 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 according to the 2010 census. 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 County[2]. 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 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.

---

[2] Data is from the 2010 Census and Kitsap County Assessor records.

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.

Goals & Policies

The following goals and policies form the foundation of Bremerton's housing strategy for the future. These goals and policies are to support the overall housing vision stated above.

Housing Goals

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 Bremerton residents.

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

Housing Policies

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

Implementing Policies for Goal H1:

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): Promote 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): Promote 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 if 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 for Goal H2:

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 new development to blend with positive characteristics of surrounding neighborhoods.

H2(C): Supporting infill development and increased densities and the use of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques and Best Management Practices (BMPs) to ensure efficient and cost effective utilization of existing public utilities.

H2(D): Enhance livability in neighborhoods by upgrading and installing sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, safety improvements and utilities in order to enhance livability.

H2(E): Support efforts to provide for a variety 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 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 creating spaces where residents can interact.

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 for Goal H3:

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, publicly 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 and the use of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques and Best Management Practices (BMPs) 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 of incentives for development within the City such as the Multifamily 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 for Goal H4:

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 provide 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.