



Chapter 6

Housing

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6.1 INTRODUCTION



This chapter addresses the housing needs and issues of the City of Spokane. The housing chapter includes topics such as affordable housing, the provision of housing choices, and the overall quality of housing.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a coordinated set of goals, guidelines, and policies to direct future growth and development in the City of Spokane. Citizens developed the guiding content of this chapter in order to raise the “quality of life” for the current and future

population. They recognized that housing satisfies the basic human need for shelter. Although many market factors affect the ability of the private sector to provide affordable housing, many local government actions - which include land use policies, development regulations, infrastructure finance, and permitting processes - impact housing affordability.

The housing chapter, along with the other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, provides the framework for the kind of growth and redevelopment that Spokane desires. The housing chapter outlines the direction that the city wishes to pursue in order to accommodate the housing needs of the population through the year 2037 and beyond. While housing is just one piece of the multifaceted landscape of Spokane, housing conditions have a direct impact upon the area’s quality of life and future economic growth.



The strong links between housing and social needs and services are reinforced by the social health chapter, which covers the provision of special needs housing and social service programs.

The land use chapter also addresses housing issues within its discussions concerning housing densities, types, and locations. Other land development issues, such as capacity for residential development and the land uses that are allowed near housing, are also discussed.

Finally, the direction this chapter provides needs to be monitored and adjusted when necessary. The last policy outlines a process for monitoring and reporting progress toward achieving the desired housing goals. This basic monitoring process provides data for future plan adjustments.



6.2 VISION AND VALUES

Spokane volunteers working on the Comprehensive Plan identified important themes in relation to Spokane's current and future growth. A series of visions and values was crafted for each element of the Comprehensive Plan that describes specific performance objectives. From the Visions and Values document, adopted in 1996 by the City Council, the Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies were generated.

Housing refers to housing availability, affordability, and mix.

Vision

"Affordable housing of all types will be available to all community residents in an environment that is safe, clean, and healthy. Renewed emphasis will be placed on preserving existing houses and rehabilitating older neighborhoods."

Values

"The things that are important to Spokane's future include:

- Keeping housing affordable;
- Encouraging home ownership;
- Maintaining pride in ownership;
- Developing a good mix of housing types;
- Encouraging housing for the low-income and homeless throughout the entire city;
- Preserving existing houses; and
- Rehabilitating older neighborhoods."



6.3 GOALS AND POLICIES

Goals and policies provide specificity for planning and decision-making. Overall, they indicate desired directions, accomplishments, or aims in relation to the growth and development of Spokane. Additional supporting materials for this chapter are located in the Draft Comprehensive Plan/EIS, Volume 2, Chapter 20, Housing.

H 1 HOUSING CHOICE AND DIVERSITY

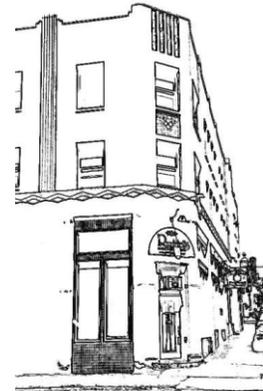
Goal: Provide opportunities for a variety of housing types that is safe and affordable for all income levels to meet the diverse housing needs of current and future residents.

Policies

H 1.1 Regional Coordination

Coordinate the city's comprehensive planning with other jurisdictions in the region to address housing-related needs and issues.

Discussion: It is critical to maximize the effectiveness of scarce public resources in improving housing opportunities throughout the region with coordination and management programs across jurisdictional boundaries.



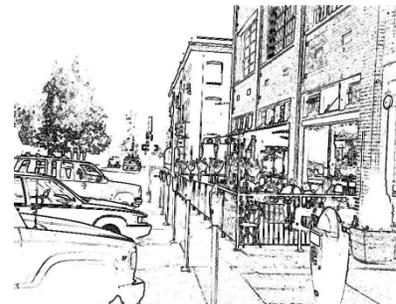
H 1.2 Regional Fair Share Housing

Participate in a process that monitors and adjusts the distribution of low-income housing throughout the region.

Discussion: An issue within the greater Spokane region is the distribution of affordable housing for all income groups. Areas that continue to accommodate large shares of the low-income housing market have higher demands to satisfy social health and service needs. A regional process that periodically monitors progress toward achieving the region's housing goals and makes adjustments to policy, programs, and land use plans helps bring about the desired distribution of housing cost diversity.

H 1.3 Employer-Sponsored Housing

Provide incentives for employers to sponsor or develop affordable housing in proximity to their place of employment.



Discussion: Housing should be available near employment areas in order to provide transportation options, to increase accessibility to employment for those most in need and least able to afford personal vehicle transportation, and to create shorter trips.

H 1.4 Use of Existing Infrastructure

Direct new residential development into areas where community and human public services and facilities are available.

Discussion: Using existing services and infrastructure often reduces the cost of creating new housing. New construction that takes advantage of existing services and infrastructure conserves public resources that can then be redirected to other needs such as adding amenities to these projects.

H 1.5 Housing Information

Participate in and promote the development of educational resources and programs that assist low and moderate-income households in obtaining affordable and suitable housing.

Discussion: A lack of financial literacy or how to obtain housing and home financing is often an impediment to finding and maintaining suitable housing. A place such as a resource center where financing assistance is available and home purchasing techniques are taught can help households find suitable housing.

H 1.6 Fair Housing

Promote compliance with fair housing laws.

Discussion: Provide information to the general public about their rights and obligations under the fair housing laws and the grievance procedures available in case of violation. The city should document and forward violations of state and federal civil rights laws related to housing to the appropriate authorities.



H 1.7 Socioeconomic Integration

Promote socioeconomic integration throughout the city.

Discussion: Socioeconomic integration includes people of all races, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, disability, economic status, familial status, age, sexual orientation, or other arbitrary factors. Often, housing affordability acts as a barrier to integration of all socioeconomic groups throughout the community.



H 1.8 Affordable Housing Requirement

Include a percentage of affordable housing within all new developments that include housing.

Discussion: Requiring that affordable housing be incorporated in every new housing development helps reverse the economic segregation trends within the city. This has the positive effect of integrating households of varying incomes. Housing types such as smaller homes on smaller lots or townhouse structures should be allowed to accommodate this requirement. This housing should be priced so that it is available to households that earn up to eighty percent of the countywide median household income.

H 1.9 Mixed-Income Housing

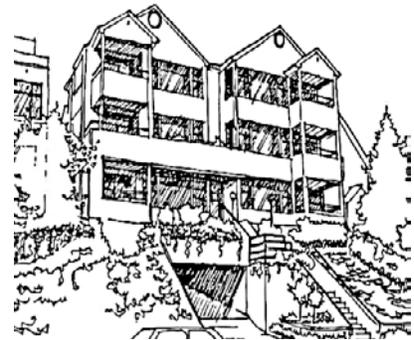
Encourage mixed-income developments throughout the city.

Discussion: Mixed-income housing provides housing for people with a broad range of incomes on the same site, development, or immediate neighborhood. Mixed-income housing provides socio-economic diversity that enhances community stability and ensures that low-income households are not isolated in concentrations of poverty.

H 1.10 Lower-Income Housing Development Incentives

Support and assist the public and private sectors to develop lower-income or subsidized housing for households that cannot compete in the market for housing by using federal, state, and local aid.

Discussion: When addressing the housing needs of lower-income households, public funding, incentive programs, and technical help may be needed in order for housing development projects to be successful. Local incentives to lower or subsidize the cost of developing new housing may include density bonuses, fee exemptions, priority permit processing, property tax deferral, increased options in housing types, and inclusionary zoning requirements.



H 1.11 Access to Transportation

Encourage housing that provides easy access to public transit and other efficient modes of transportation.

Discussion: Transportation is the second largest expenditure after housing and can range from 10 to 25 percent of household expenditures. Examining where housing is



located and the associated transportation costs may provide a more realistic evaluation of housing affordability in the future.

H 1.12 Affordable Housing Funding Sources

Support the development of affordable housing development funding sources.

Discussion: Lower-income housing development funding sources may include but are not limited to a community land trust, trust fund, mortgage revenue bonds, levies, or low-income housing tax credits.

H 1.13 Siting of Subsidized Low-Income Housing

Set clear site selection criteria for publicly subsidized housing to minimize geographic concentrations of publicly subsidized housing projects in neighborhoods with a high percent of minority or low-income households.

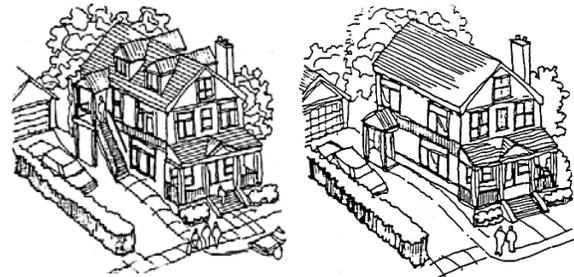


See Chapter 7, Policy ED 7.6 for information on permitting related, in part, to housing provision.

H 1.14 Building, Fire, Infrastructure, and Land Use Standards

Review periodically and, when needed, revise building, fire, infrastructure, and land use standards and requirements to ensure community standards are implemented and that new or rehabilitated housing remains affordable.

Discussion: City standards need to be reviewed periodically to ensure that they are efficient, cost effective, reflect current technology, and maintain the goal of affordable housing.



H 1.15 Performance Standards

Create a flexible project review process that allows for the use of alternative standards, but only if their use results in a project that is equal or superior to using existing standards.

Discussion: Often several ways of achieving a standard exist. Health and safety concerns must be preserved but flexibility in how to achieve the desired standard is needed. A review process should be available to address a proposed development

practice that is different from the existing development standards. When the proposed development practice is demonstrated to achieve the same ends as those prescribed in the existing development standards, the procedure should be approved. Different methods should be allowed when the results of the development practice achieve identical results in comparison to the prescribed standards. In many cases, allowing alternative development methods to be used can reduce development costs.

H 1.16 New Manufactured Housing

Permit manufactured homes on individual lots in all areas where residential uses are allowed.

Discussion: Courts have ruled against discriminatory ordinances which restrict the location of Uniform Building Code compliant manufactured housing. Manufactured housing cannot be regulated differently than on-site built housing.

H 1.17 Partnerships to Increase Housing Opportunities

Create partnerships with public and private lending institutions to find solutions that increase opportunities and reduce financial barriers for builders and consumers of affordable and lower-income housing.

H 1.18 Distribution of Housing Options

Promote a wide range of housing types and housing diversity to meet the needs of the diverse population and ensure that this housing is available throughout the community for people of all income levels and special needs.



Discussion: A variety of housing types should be available in each neighborhood. Diversity includes styles, types, size, and cost of housing. Many different housing forms can exist in an area and still exhibit an aesthetic continuity. Development of a diversity of housing must take into account the context of the area and should result in an improvement to the existing surrounding neighborhood.

H 1.19 Senior Housing

Encourage and support accessible design and housing strategies that provide seniors the opportunity to remain within their neighborhoods as their housing needs change.



Discussion: Accessory dwelling units, condominiums, and existing home conversions within centers are examples of other arrangements that reduce maintenance worries and increase access to services.



H 1.20 Accessory Dwelling Units

Allow one accessory dwelling unit as an ancillary use to single-family homes in all designated residential areas as an affordable housing option.

Discussion: Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) increase the amount and variety of available affordable housing. Increasing the variety of housing can help to satisfy changing family needs and the trend of smaller households. ADUs help provide an avenue for seniors, single parents, and families with grown children to remain in their homes and neighborhoods while obtaining extra income, security, companionship and services. Often ADUs allow a more efficient use of existing housing and infrastructure.

Accessory dwelling units should be built in a manner that does not adversely affect the neighborhood. They should be designed to be physically and visually compatible with surrounding structures.

H 1.21 Development of Single-Room Occupancy Housing

Allow development of single-room occupancy units in downtown Spokane and in other areas where high-density housing is permitted.

Discussion: Single-room occupancy (SRO) housing contains units for occupancy by one person. These units may contain food preparation areas, sanitary facilities, or both. Due to their small size, SRO units are less expensive to rent than regular apartments, so they often serve as the only affordable housing option for many lower-income individuals. Maintaining and increasing the supply of SRO housing is an important part of the lower-income housing market.

H 1.22 Special Needs Housing

Encourage the retention, inclusion, and development of special needs and assisted living housing.

Discussion: Both the Growth Management Act and Countywide Planning Policies require that essential public facilities be fairly and equitably distributed. This applies within jurisdictions, as well as between neighboring jurisdictions. This policy does not apply to criminal or prerelease transitional housing.



H 1.23 Distribution of Special Needs Housing

Include units that are affordable for low-income special need families in all housing developments.



Discussion: Adequate housing for special needs populations is in very short supply. New units required within housing developments help fill this need while also helping to distribute the supply of special needs housing throughout the community.

H 1.24 Taxes and Tax Structure

Support state consideration of property tax reform measures that provide increased local options that contribute to housing choice and diversity.

Discussion: Other methods of taxing land have shown different effects on the long-term use of land. Local options for property taxation methods furnish increased tools to guide the health and development of the region.

Providing tax relief for low-income housing improvements is one way to encourage community revitalization. Tax increment financing is also a tool for housing improvement in target areas. Taxing land based upon the current use of residential property rather than taxing land on the basis of the highest and best use can help preserve lower-income housing. Developing a tax structure that does not hinder home and land improvements will encourage community revitalization.

H 2 HOUSING QUALITY

Goal: Improve the overall quality of the City of Spokane’s housing.

Policies

H 2.1 Housing Rehabilitation

Provide assistance for housing rehabilitation beyond housing maintenance code requirements if the assistance is supportive of general community development activity and is on a voluntary basis.



H 2.2 Property Responsibility and Maintenance

Assist in and promote improved and increased public and private property maintenance and property responsibility throughout the city.

Discussion: Recognition of “good” property owners can help set the standard for others to follow. The city should lead by example and maintain its property to community standards, at a minimum.



Additionally, the city should continue to support and fund the repair and rehabilitation of single-



family and multifamily housing using federal, state, and local funding sources. Emergency code compliance loans are another method of maintaining standards.

When other methods of maintaining minimum community standards fail, a strong code enforcement program is needed to protect surrounding property owners. Enforcement of city codes should not depend solely on complaints filed by neighbors but should be driven by the city's awareness of a violation.

H 2.3 Housing Preservation

Encourage preservation of viable housing.

Discussion: Housing that is susceptible to redevelopment is often serving lower-income households and is an important part of the housing mix within the city. Future sub-area plans should preserve existing viable housing outside of designated center or corridor environments where redevelopment and intensification are encouraged. Often the housing that is destroyed cannot be replaced by new housing elsewhere at the same cost level. Sub-area plans should permit the transfer of unused development rights from low-income housing to eligible sites elsewhere in the planning area or the city as a preservation strategy.

Information about soon-to-be-demolished housing should be made available to the public, such as on the internet, so that concerned housing-related groups can determine if there are alternatives to demolition when the structure is worth preserving. Options might include purchase of the property or relocation of the housing.

H 2.4 Linking Housing With Other Uses

Ensure that plans provide increased physical connection between housing, employment, transportation, recreation, daily-needs services, and educational uses.

Discussion: The location of housing in relation to other land uses is a part of what determines the quality of housing. The desirability and viability of housing changes for different segments of the community, based on an area's mix of land uses. As complementary land uses become spread further apart, transportation options decrease while transportation costs increase. These added transportation costs reduce the amount of household income available for housing and other household needs. This affects lower-income households first. In urban areas, basic services, such as grocery stores, public transportation, and public parks, should be available within a mile walk of all housing.



H 2.5 Housing Goal Monitoring

Provide a report annually to the City Plan Commission that monitors progress toward achieving the housing goals and includes recommended policy change if positive direction toward achieving the housing goals is not occurring.

Discussion: Using readily available datasets as a basis for a simple set of indicators can illustrate progress that has been made to achieve housing goals and policies and provide assistance in determining what actions are needed to implement the goals and policies and whether revisions to the policies are needed. The public can provide feedback about the indicators that are most important to them.

