

# Housing Targets and Capacity

## Growth Targets

Targets for growth between 2020 and 2044 have been identified by Pierce County through Ordinances [2022-46s](#) and [2023-22s](#). These growth targets have been informed by two major policy considerations:

- Compliance with the [PSRC VISION 2050 Regional Growth Strategy](#), which specifies both broad targets for growth at the County level and specified targets by community type.
- Fulfillment of state requirements under RCW [36.70A.070\(2\)\(c\)](#) to provide sufficient capacity to meet housing needs for moderate, low, very low, and extremely low-income households.

Under these requirements, Pierce County has provided the housing growth allocations shown in Exhibit 1 for Gig Harbor for the 2020–2044 period. These allocations are based on “area median income” for Pierce County, which is the projected median income assumed for a family of four that is typically used in housing affordability measures.

In addition to these targets on housing, the city is also committed to accommodating an additional **2,200 residents** and **2,747 jobs** in the city from 2020 to 2024 based on the targets provided under Ordinance [2023-22s](#).

**Exhibit 1. Gig Harbor 2020–2044 Housing Growth Targets.**

Target Category	Target Units
Extremely low-income (0–30% AMI)	
<i>Permanent supportive housing</i>	156
<i>Other housing units</i>	115
Very low-income (30–50% AMI)	165
Low-income (50–80% AMI)	131
Moderate-income (80–100% AMI)	56
Moderate-income (100–120% AMI)	51
Higher income (120% or more)	218
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>892</b>

Source: Pierce County, 2023; WA Department of Commerce, 2023.

These targets include the following categories:

- **Extremely low income**, making 30% or less of Area Median Income (AMI);
- **Very low income**, making 30–50% of AMI;
- **Low income**, making 50–80% of AMI;
- **Moderate income**, making 80–120% of AMI (divided between above and below median; and
- **Higher income** households making above 120% AMI.

The targets for residential development are typically divided according to the housing type, however. Although there is a clear understanding that affordability often requires a broader recognition of subsidies to allow low-income households to access available units, these targets are intended to focus development on types that are much more likely to be affordable.

The following exhibits highlight how these targets can be divided by housing type:

- Exhibit 2 presents the growth targets as shown in Exhibit 1, divided according to the approach provided by the WA Department of Commerce in guidance materials for compliance with these requirements.<sup>4</sup>
- Exhibit 3 provides a comparison between the estimates of existing housing stock by affordability in Gig Harbor in 2020, compared with the identified targets for 2044.

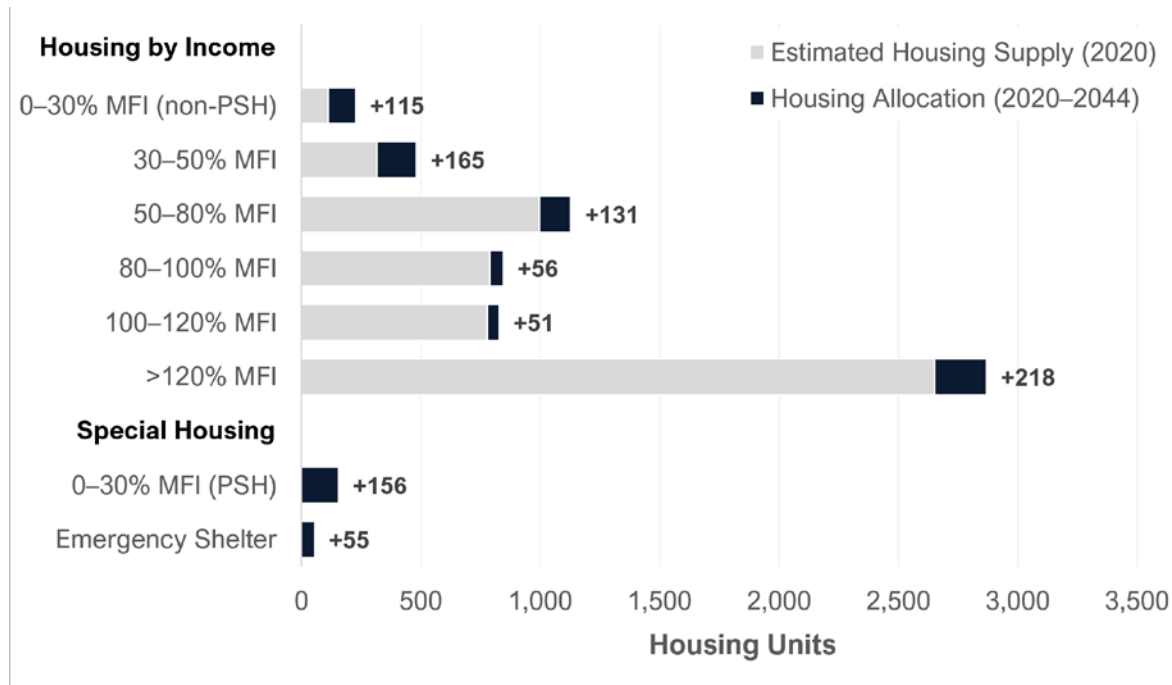
## Exhibit 2. Gig Harbor 2020–2044 Housing Growth Targets with Housing Types Needed.

Target Category	Target Increase, 2020–2044	Type of Housing	Increase by Type, 2024–2044
<b>Extremely low-income (0–30% AMI)</b>			
<i>Permanent supportive housing</i>	+156	Low- and mid-rise apartments that include rental assistance and supportive services for residents, often serving as rapid re-housing for chronically homeless individuals.	+567
<i>Other housing units</i>	+115	Low- and mid-rise apartments, potentially with significant public support/subsidies	
<b>Very low-income (30–50% AMI)</b>	+165	Low- and mid-rise apartments and condos.	+107
<b>Low-income (50–80% AMI)</b>	+131	Low- and mid-rise apartments and condos, including ADUs.	
<b>Moderate-income (80–100% AMI)</b>	+56	Moderate “middle” housing, including plex and townhome development	
<b>Moderate-income (100–120% AMI)</b>	+51		+218
<b>Higher income (120% or more)</b>	+218	Low-density detached single-unit homes	
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>+892</b>		<b>+662</b>

Sources: Pierce County, 2023; WA Department of Commerce, 2023; WA Office of Financial Management, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> See [Guidance for Updating Your Housing Element](#) (March 2021), WA Department of Commerce.

**Exhibit 3. Gig Harbor 2020–2024 Housing Needs by Income Level and Allocation.**



Source: Pierce County, 2023.

Although these figures seem attainable, one challenge is with the nature of recent housing development, as shown in Exhibit 4. The 2021 Buildable Lands Report indicates that the city has sufficient capacity to meet broader housing targets, but these targets would largely be fulfilled with single-unit detached housing under those assumptions. According to OFM, development after the 2020 baseline exceeds the growth targets implied for this housing type,<sup>5</sup> meaning that additional development beyond the baseline target will be necessary to meet targets under Ordinance 2023-22s. Note that this should be resolved through future discussions with the County about appropriate growth targets.

**Exhibit 4. Gig Harbor 2020–2044 Housing Targets versus 2020–2024 Housing Development.**

Type of Housing	Target, 2020–2044	Net Change, 2020–2024	Remaining, 2024–2044
Low- and mid-rise housing	+567	+2	+565
Middle housing (plex, townhome)	+107	+10	+97
Low-density detached single-unit	+218	+500	-
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>+892</b>	<b>+512</b>	<b>+662</b>

Sources: City of Gig Harbor, 2024; Pierce County, 2023; WA Department of Commerce, 2023; WA Office of Financial Management, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Note that targets under RCW [36.70A.070\(2\)\(c\)](#) do not technically include single-unit detached housing for targets.

# Housing Capacity

## Previous Analysis

The [2021 Pierce County Buildable Lands Report](#) outlines the methodology used to assess the capacity for housing and employment within urban growth areas in Pierce County, including Gig Harbor. This framework has been developed to evaluate whether sufficient land and infrastructure exist to accommodate growth targets through 2044, as required by the GMA.

The methodology applies standardized processes for categorizing land, analyzing development potential, and calculating capacity for residential and non-residential uses. Major steps include:

- Classifying land parcels according to their current level of development (e.g., vacant, underutilized, built-out) and identifying which sites are included in a community's current development pipeline.
- Determining the environmental constraints, zoning restrictions, and infrastructure limitations that would impact whether a site is developable.
- Calculating total housing and employment capacity through assumptions based on previous development patterns and expected growth.
- Determining effective capacity based on deductions for properties unlikely to develop within the planning horizon, and reductions for other uses.
- Comparing effective capacity by city and UGA with projected growth to identify available shortfalls.

Although this method from the 2021 report included provisions for separating single- and multi-unit housing types, the distinction was not sufficient to meet the current requirements under the UGA for compliance with income targets.

Model spreadsheets have been made available to cities by Pierce County to show the process used for the calculations. This includes base assumptions according to each zoning classification, which include:

- The **net acres** available for development from the parcel inventory.
- The estimated **housing units per net acre** assumed for the zone.
- The estimated **jobs per gross acre** assumed for the zone.
- The expected percent of land in each zone to be used for **residential versus non-residential** development.

Exhibit 4 includes these assumptions for the base scenario under the 2021 report, based on zoning classifications and the development pipeline at that time. This report determined that the 2021 housing capacity in the city could accommodate another 1,976 units.

**Exhibit 5. Base Assumptions from the 2021 Buildable Lands Report, Gig Harbor.**

Zone	Zone Name	Net Acres	Units / Acre	Empl. / Acre	% Res	% Non-Res
B-1	Neighborhood Commercial District	0.6	-	20	-	100%
B-2	General Business District	230.8	6	20	20%	80%
C-1	Commercial District	54.4	-	20	-	100%
DB	Downtown Business District	30.9	8	20	20%	80%
ED	Employment District	232.4	-	9	-	100%
PCD-BP	PCD Business Park District	151.4	-	20	-	100%
PCD-C	PCD Commercial	74.9	-	20	-	100%
PCD-RMD	PCD Medium Density Residential	39.3	-	-	-	-
PI	Public-Institutional District	140.6	-	20	-	100%
PRD	Planned Residential Development	214.2	-	-	-	-
R-1	Single-Family Residential	1,279.3	4	20	100%	-
R-2	Medium-Density Residential	394.6	6	20	100%	-
R-3	Multiple-Family Residential	49.4	8	20	100%	-
RB-1	Residential and Business District	39.1	4	20	30%	70%
RB-2	Residential and Business District	196.3	8	20	30%	70%
WC	Waterfront Commercial	26.1	4	20	20%	80%
WM	Waterfront Millville	13.5	4	20	20%	80%
WR	Waterfront Residential	16.3	4	20	100%	-
WTR	Water (Not Zoned)	10.1	-	-	-	-

Source: Pierce County, 2024.

While these calculations are used in the evaluation of capacity to meet County requirements, note that the densities in the B-2 and RB-2 zones were observed to be substantially higher than these assumptions. According to Table 11-11 in the 2021 BLR:

- Observed multifamily density in the B-2 zone was at 33 units per acre but assumed to be eight in the calculations provided above.
- Similarly, the RB-2 zone had observed densities of about 12 units per acre, with higher densities for single-unit residential plats, but the assumed densities were set to eight units per acre.

What is also important to note when viewing these results is the effect that HB [1110](#) and [1337](#) have had on these assumptions. Under these new requirements, at least two housing units and two accessory dwelling units are allowed (with some restrictions) on all residential-zoned parcels in the city.<sup>6</sup> Understanding the expected changes in capacity due to these new requirements will be especially difficult, as this new growth will rely on infill development which is not well-understood in this market.

<sup>6</sup> See RCW [36.70A.635](#)(1)(c) and RCW [36.70A.681](#) for more information.

## Revised Analysis for the Comprehensive Plan

In developing a land use strategy for the revised Comprehensive Plan that meets the requirements under Pierce County Ordinance 2023-22s, the choice was made to maintain the current structure of the zoning code but change the development assumptions (and associated development regulations) to meet these targets. This was done for three main reasons:

- Many of the zones do not require any changes for compliance, especially as employment targets have not changed substantially since the 2021 BLR.
- For the residential zones that would require changes, most of these would require changes to underlying assumptions that would be consistent with the designation names and concepts.
- Maintaining the current structure of the zoning code would maintain consistency and reduce confusion.

A revised model based on the 2021 BLR spreadsheet model from Pierce County was created to evaluate new capacity and whether estimated capacity would meet estimated targets. These revisions included:

- Updating the pipeline data in the model to include permit data from 462 parcels up to summer 2024.
- Changing the model parameters to adjust residential density and capacity.
- Identifying the likely development types from Exhibit 2 that would be accommodated within each zoning district.

Exhibit 6 summarizes the changes made to the existing 2021 BLR assumptions, with the first four columns after the zoning districts providing the 2021 assumptions, and the second four providing the revised assumptions for the model. These include the following:

- Increasing densities to **12 units per acre** in the **B-2, DB, R-3, and RB-1** zones.
- Increasing densities to **32 units per acre** in the **RB-2** zone.
- Increasing the **proportion of residential development** in the **RB-1** and **RB-2** zones from **30% to 50%** of available capacity.

For the purposes of affordability calculations, applications of capacity to targets from the 2021 BLR are based on densities and the types currently allowed in these zones, or the type of housing indicated in the pipeline. For the proposed 2024 changes:

- **RB-1 zones** are assumed to allow **middle housing** formats.
- **RB-2 zones** are assumed to allow **low- and mid-rise housing** to meet requirements for low-income households and below (80% AMI and lower)

Note that this model does not explore changes to zoning in the R-1, R-2, and waterfront areas. As discussed above, changes to the zoning code will be necessary to allow duplexes and ADUs for infill development, but the effective yields of these development types are unknown over the longer term and will not contribute units that can fulfill lower-income housing needs.

These changes are intended to address the lack of available development capacity for denser, more affordable housing types. Exhibit 7 compares the expected yields under previous zoning assumptions and the proposed land use concept provided in the Comprehensive Plan.

**Exhibit 6. Revisions to BLR Assumptions under the 2024 Gig Harbor Comprehensive Plan Update.**

Zone	Zone Name	2021 Buildable Lands Report				2024 Comprehensive Plan			
		Units / Acre	Empl. / Acre	% Res	% Non-Res	Units / Acre	Empl. / Acre	% Res	% Non-Res
B-1	Neighborhood Commercial District	-	20	-	100%	-	20	-	100%
B-2	General Business District	6	20	20%	80%	12	20	20%	80%
C-1	Commercial District	-	20	-	100%	-	20	-	100%
DB	Downtown Business District	8	20	20%	80%	12	20	20%	80%
ED	Employment District	-	9	-	100%	-	9	-	100%
PCD-BP	PCD Business Park District	-	20	-	100%	-	20	-	100%
PCD-C	PCD Commercial	-	20	-	100%	-	20	-	100%
PCD-RMD	PCD Medium Density Residential	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PI	Public-Institutional District	-	20	-	100%	-	20	-	100%
PRD	Planned Residential Development	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
R-1	Single-Family Residential	4	20	100%	-	4	20	100%	-
R-2	Medium-Density Residential	6	20	100%	-	6	20	100%	-
R-3	Multiple-Family Residential	8	20	100%	-	12	20	100%	-
RB-1	Residential and Business District	4	20	30%	70%	12	20	50%	50%
RB-2	Residential and Business District	8	20	30%	70%	32	20	50%	50%
WC	Waterfront Commercial	4	20	20%	80%	4	20	20%	80%
WM	Waterfront Millville	4	20	20%	80%	4	20	20%	80%
WR	Waterfront Residential	4	20	100%	-	4	20	100%	-
WTR	Water (Not Zoned)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: City of Gig Harbor, 2024; Pierce County, 2024.

**Exhibit 7. Calculated Housing Capacity in Gig Harbor, 2021 BLR / 2024 Comp Plan Assumptions.**

Type of Housing	Target, 2020–2044	2021 BLR Capacity	2024 Comp Plan Capacity
Low- and mid-rise housing	+567	-	756
Middle housing (plex, townhome)	+107	144	152
Low-density detached single-unit	+218	1,646	1,675
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>+892</b>	<b>1,790</b>	<b>2,582</b>

Source: City of Gig Harbor, 2024; Pierce County, 2024.

Key observations and notes from this analysis include the following:

- **Changes to zoning are specifically driven by housing targets for lower-income households.** As noted in Exhibit 7, meeting the 2044 target to include 567 units of low- and mid-rise housing targeted to be accessible to lower-income households requires upzoning and changes to development regulations as these housing types are more challenging to accommodate in Gig Harbor under the current code. As meeting this requirement relies on buildable capacity from the RB-2 zone, which includes a majority of the remaining capacity for middle housing, other areas need to be upzoned to make up the difference.
- **There is substantial single-detached residential capacity remaining.** A major challenge for local housing policy in Gig Harbor is that there is a substantive amount of capacity remaining for single-unit detached housing, primarily in the R-1 and R-2 zones. Additionally, as noted in Exhibit 4, recent development since 2020 has completely taken up the growth associated with lower density single-detached housing. This suggests that no net growth of this housing type would be allowed before 2044 under current targets. This should be addressed in future policy, both for revisions to Pierce County policies and the expected five-year review of the Plan in 2029.
- **Additional incentives and subsidies will be necessary to build accessible housing.** Although upzoning the RB-2 zoning district to allow for higher density housing can help with affordability issues, about 436 units will need to be built to accommodate households making less than half of the area median income, and 156 units will need to be built as permanent supportive housing with associated services for residents. This will require a substantial investment of subsidies, both in terms of capital support and ongoing operating costs. As these demands will exceed what the city can give for support, it is essential to coordinate with nonprofits, government agencies, and other housing providers to meet these needs.



# Capacity for Emergency Shelters

## Overview

Determining the capacity to meet needs for emergency shelters can be more challenging. Emergency shelter spaces are normally not provided by the private real estate market, and there are usually a relatively small number of facilities sited within communities as opposed to other types of housing. Although the capacity of these organizations to build and run these facilities is often a limiting factor in their development, it is essential to ensure that these facilities are supported by land use regulations that support their development and operation in the community.

Recent revisions to state law have provided several requirements that must be considered as part of a city's zoning code. As per RCW [36.70A.070](#)(2)(a)(ii) and (c), cities must identify the needs for and sufficient capacities of land to accommodate:<sup>7</sup>

- **Permanent supportive housing**, defined as subsidized, leased housing with no limit on length of stay that prioritizes people who need comprehensive support services to retain tenancy and utilizes admissions practices designed to use lower barriers to entry than would be typical for other subsidized or unsubsidized rental housing, especially related to rental history, criminal history, and personal behaviors.
- **Emergency housing**, defined as temporary indoor accommodations for individuals or families who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless that is intended to address the basic health, food, clothing, and personal hygiene needs of individuals or families.
- **Emergency shelters**, defined as facilities that provide for individuals or families who are currently homeless.

Although each of these requires significant financial support and subsidies to operate, identifying capacity for permanent supportive housing is typically included under the process to understand available space for multi-unit housing as above. However, as emergency housing and emergency shelters specifically do not require leases or occupancy agreements, they are not managed in the same way.

Under Pierce County Ordinance [2023-22s](#), no shelter space is currently identified in the city and under the 20-year targets, there is a need to identify capacity for adding **55 beds of emergency housing**. As per guidance from the WA Department of Commerce under the 2024 [Guidance for Updating Your Housing Element](#), capacity for emergency housing and emergency shelters can be evaluated in two general ways:

- Conversion of existing hotel spaces into emergency housing and shelter space.

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<sup>7</sup> Note that these housing types typically are considered as “STEP” housing (indoor emergency Shelter, Transitional housing, Emergency housing and Permanent supportive housing) together with “transitional housing”, which is defined separately under RCW [59.18.030](#)(38) as “housing units owned, operated, or managed by a nonprofit organization or governmental entity in which supportive services are provided to individuals and families that were formerly homeless, with the intent to stabilize them and move them to permanent housing within a period of not more than 24 months, or longer if the program is limited to tenants within a specified age range or the program is intended for tenants in need of time to complete and transition from educational or training or service programs.” As these units require tenancy agreements, they are typically evaluated as “multi-unit housing” according to growth targets.

- Evaluating capacity of lands available for emergency housing and shelter where current zoning permits these uses (including areas where hotels and motels are allowed, as per RCW [35A.21.430](#)).

The sections below provide an assessment of the potential capacity for achieving targets in both ways. It is important to note that this is only intended to highlight the available capacity for shelter space, and not to indicate that 20-year plans specifically endorse any of these approaches. As part of long-term implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, the City will need to coordinate the best approaches for meeting these needs, which may include a mix of different possible strategies.

## Available Hotel/Motel Conversion Capacity

Currently, there are several hotels and motels located within the City, some of which over a 20-year period could be acquired and repurposed for use as shelter space. Excluding bed-and-breakfasts and small-scale accommodations located within the harbor area, two hotels are currently located in the city with sufficient capacity to accommodate these targets, as shown in Exhibit 8:

**Exhibit 8. Hotel/Motel Capacity for Emergency Housing Targets, Gig Harbor.**

Hotel/Motel Name	Address	Capacity	Property Area	Intensity
Best Western Wesley Inn and Suites	6575 Kimball Drive	82 rooms	2.38 acres	34.4 rooms/acre
The Inn at Gig Harbor	3211 56 <sup>th</sup> Street	64 rooms	1.62 acres	39.5 rooms/acre

Source: Costar, 2025.

Altogether, a 1:1 conversion of either property would result in sufficient emergency housing capacity to exceed the identified targets. Again, while no plans are currently in place for either of these facilities to be converted, they remain as a potential long-term option for meeting these needs.

## Available Development Capacity

An alternate approach to demonstrating capacity is to highlight the potential for new development to meet emergency shelter needs with new facilities. This assumes that this new construction on buildable lands would be able to accommodate demand, but does not include other potential options, such as the development of shelter space associated with existing institutional uses such as places of worship.

According to current use regulations under Chapter [17.04](#) GHMC, lodging as a use is divided into three categories:<sup>8</sup>

- Level 1 is defined as a single-family residence that includes no more than eight guest rooms, comparable to a bed-and-breakfast or comparable short-stay accommodation.
- Level 2 includes accommodations with rooms that have direct access to the outside, comparable to a motel format.

<sup>8</sup> Note that neither emergency shelters nor emergency housing are included as explicit uses under Chapter [17.14](#) GHMC.

- Level 3 includes accommodations with rooms with shared access through a lobby, comparable to a hotel format.

Although technically level 1 lodging under land use regulations could accommodate emergency housing, the scale and format of these developments would make it unlikely to be the location of larger shelter facilities. As shown in Exhibit 9, the following zones currently allow level 2 or 3 accommodations:

**Exhibit 9. Zoning Districts Allowing Lodging Uses, Gig Harbor.**

Lodging Type	B-2	C-1	DB	MUD	PCD-BP	PCD-C	RB-2	WC
<b>Level 2</b>	P	P	P	P	-	P	C	C
<b>Level 3</b>	P	P	P	P	P	P	C	C

P = permitted use, C = conditional use

Source: City of Gig Harbor, 2024.

Under the assessment of land capacity described in the Land Use Element, there is an **employment target of 2,747 additional jobs** to be accommodated in Gig Harbor by 2044. Under current estimates, the city has the capacity to accommodate an additional 3,692 jobs through pipeline development after 2019 and additional available capacity. This represents an excess capacity that can support 945 jobs in areas that can accommodate employment. This additional capacity can represent locations where new emergency shelter locations can be sited.

Based on the assumptions for the Future Land Use Map defined in the Land Use Element, Exhibit 10 highlights how available excess employment capacity would be sufficient to meet available needs for emergency housing. This table includes the following:

- **Estimated total employment** capacity calculated according to the land use model.
- **Employees per net acre** by zoning district used as an assumption in the land use model.
- The **effective net acres available** for employment uses, based on capacity and employment density.
- **Estimated emergency housing capacity** based on an assumption of 25 beds/acre.

Estimated emergency housing capacity is calculated based on conservative estimates aligned with the guidance provided by the Department of Commerce. While examples for the intensity of beds per acre for emergency housing and emergency congregate housing in that guide can be as high as 150–200 beds per acre for multistory urban shelters, the lowest end of estimates is about 25 beds/acre. While this is lower than the hotel rooms per acre measure provided for existing hotels in the city provided in Exhibit 8 (which is around 35–40 rooms per acre), this measure is intended to present an extremely conservative evaluation of available capacity.

#### Exhibit 10. Potential Capacity for Emergency Housing by Zoning District, Gig Harbor.

Zoning District							
Employment Capacity	520	213	88	613	-	451	18
Employees per Net Acre	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
Net Acres Available (empl.)	26.0	10.7	4.4	30.7	-	22.6	0.9
Emergency Housing Capacity	650	266	110	766		563	22

Source: Pierce County, 2021; WA Department of Commerce, 2023.

Although not all of the emergency housing capacity indicated in Exhibit 10 is available as much of this will be required to fulfill the City's goals for employment growth, this highlights that there is more than sufficient capacity to meet the need for 55 emergency shelter beds through new construction. In terms of base capacity, almost every zone could accommodate the entire emergency housing need alone without concerns about meeting the indicated employment targets. Even if separation requirements are considered for shelter space in amendments to the City's zoning code,<sup>9</sup> this capacity is spread out amongst a large number of zones such that a small number of facilities could meet this target.

### Conclusion and Next Steps

Meeting the needs for emergency housing and shelter space as identified in the Comprehensive Plan does not appear to be limited by capacity concerns in Gig Harbor over the next 20 years. Capacity exists both in terms of available space that would otherwise be assigned to employment uses, as well as with existing hotels that could be positioned to be converted into shelter space in the moderate to long term.

It should be noted that while this exercise is intended to demonstrate available capacity, there may be other options that the City may take in the future to accommodate emergency housing options. In particular, development in partnership with institutions and religious organizations may help reach these identified targets.

As part of the zoning code updates coordinated by the City, more details should be provided regarding emergency housing as an allowable use in identified zones. Additionally, the City should engage in long-range planning to refine strategies to expand emergency housing capacity and encourage the development of related support services.

<sup>9</sup> See RCW [9.94A.030](#)(6), which recommends a buffer of 880 feet from compatible uses.