

7.0 GOALS, OBJECTIVES & POLICIES

The following Goals, Objectives and Policies specific to Housing are organized into broad categories including:

- 7.1: Housing Availability
- 7.2: Protection of Existing Neighborhoods
- 7.3: Jobs to Housing Balance
- 7.4: Affordable and Subsidized Housing
- 7.5: Housing for Venerable Populations

~~7.1 HOUSING~~ 7.1 HOUSING AVAILABILITY

GOAL 1: Enhance Mount Vernon’s cultural and economic vitality by encouraging the development of housing solutions of all types of different types, that provide for varied densities, densities, sizes, costs and locations that are safe, decent, accessible, attractive, appealing and affordable to a diversity of ages, incomes, and cultural backgrounds. This requires a commitment to working with the for profit and non-profit housing development community to assure that the City of Mount Vernon is acting proactively to changing market conditions as part of a commitment to developing a culture of inclusiveness for all of our existing citizens and those who choose Mount Vernon as their City of residency.

Objective HO-1.1 The City’s Comprehensive Plan, Zoning, and land use regulations shall promote the development of housing solutions that are flexible and are consistently meeting the needs of all existing and future residents that are in need of housing. All regulations should be designed to be able to be adjusted from time to time to meet the changing market demands in a way that adds to the quality of life for all existing and future residents. In City plans and zoning regulations, accommodate a variety of housing types that are attractive and compatible in design, and available to all economic segments of the community.

Policy HO-1.1.1 The Comprehensive Plan shall provide housing capacity for all market segments to meet the growth targets identified for the City of Mount Vernon in the Skagit County Population and Employment Allocation adopted by County-Wide Planning Policies.

The existing serious deficit in available multi-family housing will be addressed through the setting of annual affordable housing development goals that encourage property owners, for profit housing developers and non-profit housing developers to develop housing solutions. These goals shall consist of targeted new development unit count that will allocate the amount of units needed at the beginning of each year starting in September of 2016. These targets shall address all segments of housing needs including:

1. Supportive housing for seniors, veterans, mentally ill and our homeless populations.
2. Low income family housing, farm worker housing, low income senior housing, low income individual studio unit housing.
3. Market rate individual studio and 1 bedroom housing, market rate 2 and 3 bedroom apartments and market rate condominium and cooperative housing solutions and
4. Student housing.

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Creative use of the C-1, C-2 and CLI zones should be encouraging using mixed use development plans that maintains prime location C-1, C-2 and CLI for commercial uses and allows portions of sites over 1 acres in size to have multifamily developments that creates opportunities for live / work environments.

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Cross utilization of parking facilities should be encouraged so that peak parking requirements for multifamily, between 6:00 pm and 7:00 am, complement the use of commercial retail, office and light industrial uses which have parking demand that are primarily between the hours of 7:00 am and 6:00 pm.

Mixed use in the C-1, C-2 and CLI zones located on land parcel or assemblage of land parcels greater than 1 acres shall have the option of developing under a Mixed Use Binding Site process that will allow the City to implement Design Criteria Guidelines to assure that a Mixed Use Development meets the goals, objectives and policies of this Housing element of the Comprehensive Plan.

~~Policy HO-1.1.1~~

Policy HO-1.1.2 In recognition of community needs, the City shall maintain a variety of future land use classifications and implementing zoning to accommodate a range of housing types with varying densities and sizes. Allowed densities for multifamily development shall be as follows:

R-3 zoning shall be considered to be medium density multifamily and shall have an allowed minimum density of 28 units per acre. Density Bonus's shall be made available for qualified affordable housing developments as defined by the revised Zoning Code.

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R-4 zoning shall be considered to be high density multifamily and shall have an allowed maximum density of 36 units per acre. Density Bonus's shall be made available for qualified affordable housing developments as defined by the revised Zoning Code

A new Zoning Code called R-S Student Multifamily zoning shall be created to provide for high density student housing and shall have an allowed maximum density of 60 bedrooms per acre or 40 units per acre. Density Bonus's shall be made available for qualified affordable housing developments as defined by the revised Zoning Code

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Policy HO-1.1.2

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Policy HO-1.1.3 Continue the use of variable densities, variable lot sizes, use allowances, and other methods, to encourage a range of housing types.

Policy HO-1.1.4 Continue the use of opportunities and incentives through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process for a variety of housing types and site planning techniques that can achieve the maximum housing potential of the site while being designed in consideration of surrounding properties and the natural environment.

Policy HO-1.1.5 Continue to promote plans and policies that encourage in-fill multifamily residential projects in the C-1 and C-2 zone that are within or are in close proximity to neighborhood centers, shopping and retail facilities, parks, transit routes and other service uses in the C-1 and C-2, C-3 and C-4 zones. Expansion of the C-1 zone to areas south of the downtown core area shall be considered so that additional re-development opportunity.

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Policy HO-1.1.6 Plans and regulations should allow incentives such as bonus densities and flexible design standards that support and promote the construction of new innovative or affordable housing styles, compatible with the planned uses of surrounding sites. Ground related housing types such as cottages, townhouses, zero lot line developments and other types are examples of housing choices that promote individuality and ownership opportunities.

Policy HO-1.1.7 Continue to implement zoning requirements for manufactured homes on single family lots and ensure they provide for appropriate location and design criteria and meet state requirements.

Policy HO-1.1.8 The City should adopt programs and regulations that require the maintenance and development of safe, attractive and functional housing developments that are integrated into the community.

~~**Policy HO-1.1.9** Continue to promote high density development and re-development in the Central Business District (C-1 zone). Analyze ways to allow housing that steps down, or transitions, in density immediately surrounding the Central Business District.~~

~~7.2 PROTECTION~~ **7.2 PROTECTION OF EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS**

GOAL 2: Promote the preservation, maintenance and enhancement of existing housing and residential neighborhoods throughout the City.

Objective HO-2.1 Promote infill housing that is compatible with abutting housing styles and with the character of the existing neighborhood.

Policy HO-2.1.1 The City should encourage infill housing on vacant or underutilized parcels having adequate services, and ensure that the infill development is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.

~~**Policy HO-2.1.2** The City ~~should adopt~~ should adopt development regulations that protect existing single family neighborhoods by requiring transitional Zoning Code language wherein significant changes in density be transitioned near these existing neighborhoods. ~~Ways to~~ ~~Transition from higher-density to existing single-family neighborhoods by using setbacks and landscaping screening and fencing to mitigate the impact of multi-story multifamily housing where it is developed adjacent to single family homes.~~ ~~include (but are not limited to) the following: reducing densities and building heights closest to existing neighborhoods; and require landscaping treatments surrounding higher density developments to aid in such transitions.~~~~

~~**Policy HO-2.1.3**~~ **Policy HO-2.1.2** ~~Consider the e~~ evaluate and designate through the Zoning Code revisions which ~~ion of~~ areas within the City where mixed-use residential/commercial centers ~~can~~ could be feasibly located.

~~**Policy HO-2.1.4**~~ **Policy HO-2.1.3** ~~The City~~ ~~should consider~~ shall consider regulations such as flexible lot sizes that encourage infill development on small lots consistent with the neighborhood's character. Including adding a new Mixed-use zone ~~Use Zone (MU) that allows residential/commercial centers. The mixed use zone could have master plans for lots that create a PUD style construction with Multifamily and Commercial spaces as the primary goal in mind. The Buildings could be up to 43 stories tall and have no density requirements for residential as long as the commercial space was constructed and approved, parking was sufficient, and access to arterial streets for commerce were adjacent to the property. This MU zone could be used to~~

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~~spread out some neighborhood commercial throughout commercial throughout the city with-out the need for large commercial areas surrounding it. summarize~~

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~~Policy HO-2.1.5~~ **Policy HO-2.1.4** City regulations should continue to facilitate attached and detached accessory dwelling units in single-family districts subject to specific development, design and owner occupancy provisions.

Objective HO-2.2 Enhance the value and character of the City’s existing housing stock by improving and extending the life of such housing.

Policy HO-2.2.1 In cooperation with the County and public or private housing agencies, the City should periodically assess housing conditions to identify areas of the city needing rehabilitation and to monitor previous rehabilitation efforts, contingent upon funding availability.

Policy HO-2.2.2 The City should encourage private reinvestment in residential neighborhoods and private rehabilitation of existing housing by providing information, technical assistance, and referrals to appropriate agencies and organizations.

Policy HO-2.2.3 Consider additional funding to strengthen the City’s existing code enforcement efforts with the goal of reducing the amount of substandard housing, renovation of homes in need of repair, and the preservations of the City’s existing housing stock.

Policy HO-2.2.4 Continue to provide regular and appropriate levels of investment in transportation, surface water, and parks maintenance and improvements within residential neighborhoods, consistent with the City’s capital improvement priorities.

Policy HO-2.2.5 In cooperation with Skagit County, the City should encourage the preservation of existing housing. Private investment should be encouraged in older residential neighborhoods, manufactured home parks, and multifamily complexes. Programs supporting weatherization, home repair and rehabilitation, and infrastructure maintenance should be supported.

~~7.3 JOBS~~ **7.3 JOBS-HOUSING BALANCE**

GOAL 3: Encourage ~~housing solutions that attract living wage employers whose employees need affordable housing as a prerequisite to the creation living of living-wage jobs, retention and creation in the City so that residents are not forced to commute out of Mount Vernon to work.~~

Objective HO-3.1 Promote policies to increase the ratio of living wage jobs to housing within the City.

Policy HO-3.1.1 The City should encourage employers located in the City to implement employer assisted housing programs for resident employees.

~~7.4 AFFORDABLE~~ **7.4 AFFORDABLE AND SUBSIDIZED HOUSING**

GOAL 4: Encourage safe, decent, accessible, attractive and affordable housing development that meets community needs and is integrated into, and throughout, the community including areas of higher land cost where greater subsidies may be needed.

Objective HO-4.1 Encourage ownership and rental housing that is affordable for all households within the City.

Policy HO-4.1.1 Continue to ~~annually-periodically~~ assess its existing and projected affordable housing need. The City should determine if its Comprehensive land use plan and zoning can accommodate future housing needs and make adjustments to plans and regulations as needed.

Policy HO-4.1.2 The City should adopt inclusionary zoning regulations targeted at otherwise market-rate developments that require a minimum percentage of new dwelling units and/or lots that are created (whether multi-family or single-family) be income restricted consistent with the following:

- a. The City should approve an increase in density, along with the modification of other development regulations, to accommodate the increased density for a development in exchange for the creation of income restricted housing units.
- b. For affordable multi-family developments the following percentages of income restricted units should be created: a minimum of ~~57%~~ shall be for those earning ~~530%~~ or less of the area median income, a minimum of ~~53%~~ shall be for those earning between ~~5134%~~ and ~~6050%~~ of the area median income.
- c. In single-family residential neighborhoods the following percentages and types of income restricted units should be created: a minimum of 7% of the units to be constructed on the site shall be for those earning 80% or less of the area median income. The income-restricted units can be in the form of single-family detached housing or they can be in the form of vertical, common wall, townhouse type development that is allowed in the City's existing Duplex and Townhouse (R-2) development regulations.
- d. Regardless of whether the income restricted housing is multi-family or single-family mechanisms shall be put in place to ensure that the income restriction is in place for a minimum of ~~450~~ years.

Policy HO-4.1.3 The City should be an active participant in the multi-jurisdictional affordable housing program and cooperative efforts that will be guided by the Skagit County of Governments in 2016/2017 that will identify strategies to promote an adequate and diversified supply of countywide housing for all residents.

Policy HO-4.1.4 The City should adopt zoning regulations that would allow income-restricted multi-family residential developments, ~~owned and maintained by not for profit organizations (such as the Skagit County Housing Authority, Catholic Community Services, Mercy Housing, Salem Village Corp and others)~~ to be located in zoning districts other than multi-family residential contingent on the following:

- a. The income-restricted developments must be dispersed throughout the City; ~~specifically;~~ specifically, within each Census tract.
- b. To avoid incompatible uses being located in close proximity these multi-family developments shall not be allowed within the City's zoning designations that allow intense industrial uses including: the M-1 ~~and~~, M-2, ~~and C-L~~ zoning designations.
- ~~b-c. The developments shall be would have to be professionally managedd meet new design standard guidelines.~~
- ~~e-d. Should the income restricted development wish to locate on any type of commercially zoned land other than those specified within item "b" (directly above) the proposed development~~

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~~should include commercial building footprints that occupy no less than 50-75% of the net site area.~~

~~i. The net site area should be defined as the gross site area minus any critical areas and their associated buffers, surface parking and its associated drive lanes specifically provided for the commercial uses, landscaping, and public or private roads. On sites larger than 2 acres, mixed use can be based upon an approved site plan that shows at least 50% of the site being designated for a use that is permitted in the underlying zone while up to 50% of the useable area can be designated for Multi-family use governed by the densities allowed in multifamily zones with consideration for the area that may be subject to cross utilization of parking facilities that can be demonstrated by a Parking Cross Utilization Study prepared by a professional prepared Traffic and Parking Study Analysis. This means that the proposed housing units will need to primarily be constructed on top of the commercial uses/areas.~~

~~d. There should be requirements that tie the occupancy of the housing units to the occupancy of the commercial spaces to ensure that the City's jobs to housing balance is not further negatively impacted.~~

~~e. The initial multi-family density allowed should be no more than 20 dwelling units per acre with the opportunity to earn additional density that is outlined within Policy HO-4.1.5 (directly below).~~

Policy HO-4.1.5 The City ~~shall~~**ould** adopt zoning regulations that provide up to 75% bonuses in density on sites owned and maintained by ~~not-for-profit~~ organizations that create income restricted units aimed at those earning less than ~~65~~**50**% of the area median income, ~~such as the Skagit County Housing Authority, Catholic Community Services, and many others.~~ The bonuses in density should be conditioned with the following:

~~a. The bonuses in density should be tied to the creation of housing serving the lowest income thresholds, i.e., higher bonuses should be given for housing those earning less than ~~43~~**40**% of the area median income with lesser bonuses for units aimed at those earning ~~43-41~~**40-1**% to 50% of the area median income.~~

~~b. The development shall include features that mitigate potential impacts to neighboring properties by requiring that the new development transition its density and building heights. This means that lower density buildings, and building heights that match neighboring properties, will be constructed at the periphery of the new development next to the existing developments.~~

~~e.a.~~ Fencing and landscape screening shall also be integrated into the new development to mitigate its impacts to neighboring properties.

~~d. The bonuses in density should be conditioned upon: 1) the development having a site manager that lives on the site and is charged with ensuring adequate site maintenance; 2) the developer demonstrating that they have the financial ability to ensure site maintenance over the life of the project.~~

~~e. The income restricted units shall remain for the longest term possible with a minimum timeframe of 50 years.~~

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Policy HO-4.1.6 ~~The~~The City ~~will should~~ adopt zoning regulations that provide up to 50% bonuses in density on sites zoned single-family to be owned and maintained by mission driven organizations that create income restricted units aimed at those earning less than 80% of the area median income, ~~such as the Housing Trust of Skagit.~~ ~~The adopted zoning regulations should allow no more than 35% of the units to be constructed as vertical, common wall, townhouse type units consistent with the City's Duplex and Townhouse (R-2) zoning code.~~

Policy HO-4.1.7 The City ~~will should~~ encourage interjurisdictional cooperative efforts and public-private partnerships to advance the creation of affordable and special needs housing targeting those making less than ~~65~~0% of the area median income.

Policy HO-4.1.8 The City should monitor the rental market and the value of homes using ~~reliable locally available data that are constructed to determine how housing is serving each income classification and shall publish annually a "Housing Affordability Index". This index will be a source of information regarding the state of housing affordability in the City and will provide guidance to the City Council such that annual adjustments of the established housing goals can be made to assure that the City is reacting in a positive manner to the changing housing needs of its citizens.~~

Policy HO-4.1.9 The City should encourage affordable housing to be dispersed throughout the City, within each Census tract, rather than overly concentrated in a few locations.

Policy HO-4.1.10 Where affordable housing is proposed together with market rate housing, affordable housing units should be comparable in ~~size and~~ design, integrated into the whole development, and should match the tenure of the whole development. ~~Affordable housing in Planned Unit Developments (PUD) will likely be placed on smaller lots than the average lot size within a PUD. As part of the approval of a PUD the developer will be required to provide schematic design for any proposed affordable housing such that the City Staff and the City Council can determine if the proposed affordable housing is consistent with the intent of the MVMC PUD Ordinance. For purposes of defining "Affordable Housing" as it applies to PUD developments, affordable shall mean that the housing proposed as affordable must be affordable to individuals and families that are at 80% or less of the Area Median Income for the City of Mount Vernon.~~

Policy HO-4.1.11 The City should explore with the County, other local jurisdictions, and private lending institutions the availability and enhancement of educational programs for first time homebuyers.

Policy HO-4.1.12 The City should coordinate with private lending institutions to encourage the creation and availability of financing mechanisms such as reverse mortgage programs, housing trust funds, and loan pools for local financing of affordable housing.

Policy HO-4.1.13 The City should continue to promote home ownership for Low-Income Households earning up to 80% of the median income through an integrated approach that involves increasing housing supply, increasing financial options for both housing providers and purchasers, and increasing individual capacity to purchase.

Policy HO-4.1.14 The City should maintain or enhance regulatory incentives to encourage affordable ownership and rental housing such as through density bonuses, impact fee reductions, ~~permit fast tracking,~~ or other methods. ~~Impact fee reduction shall be instituted that takes into consideration the lower impacts that smaller affordable apartment units and affordable senior housing have on transportation, schools, fire protection and parks. Lower sanitary sewer connection charges shall be established that recognize the lower impact that smaller housing units and senior housing units have on schools, fire, parks and sewer. "Market~~

Rate” Studio and one bedroom units designed for habitation by 1 or 2 residents shall pay no school impact fees and the fees charged for parks and fire for such apartments shall be based upon a factor of .50 of the regular apartment charge for fire and parks. Sewer charges for market rate studio and one bedroom apartments shall be .50 of the amount charged for a 2 bedroom apartment. Apartments that are developed to be rented to residents that are at 60% or less of AMI Shall have all parks, fire, school and transportation impact fees 100% waived if the apartment units are committed to being only available to those at 60% or less of AMI for a minimum of 40 years..

Policy HO-4.1.14

Policy HO-4.1.15 The City should ensure during development review processes that all affordable housing created in the city with public funds or by regulatory incentives remains affordable for the longest possible term but in no case a shorter time than the time that is required by the public funding mechanism used for the financing of the development. As an example a project funded through the Washington State Housing Finance Commission using Federal Tax Credit allocation would, under present regulations, require a commitment of being made available to low income residents for a minimum of 40 years. -at a minimum 50 years.

Policy HO-4.1.16 In conjunction with public and private housing providers, the City should identify and encourage preservation of affordable units in publicly assisted housing developments that are at risk of converting to market-rate housing.

Policy HO-4.1.17 The City should encourage relocation assistance and replacement housing to be developed, where feasible, to help low-income households when displacement is unavoidable.

Policy HO-4.1.18 The City should identify and catalogue real property owned by the City that is no longer required for its purposes and is suitable for the development of affordable housing for very-low to moderate income households. The inventory should be provided to the State Office of Community Development in accordance with state law.

~~Policy HO-4.1.18~~ **Policy HO-4.1.19** The City shall expand on the create a downtown redevelopment plan that incorporates 3 things—increases multifamily construction by; expanding the C1 zone to create an expanded -much larger area of downtown and encourage the redevelopment of existing properties to accommodate mixed commercial and residential uses; impact fee credits for developers who redevelop much needed areas to include multifamily and commercial uses. The intent is to expand the downtown area and feel to allow for developers to not only restore current downtown buildings but to also encourage developers to build new buildings that focus on upward construction on lots that need new to be redeveloped.

Objective HO-4.2 Ensure that regulations do not have an unreasonable negative impact on the cost or supply of housing.

~~Policy HO-4.2.1~~ The City should create a priority permit procedure system for housing provided to those earning less than 80% of the area median income. The City should consult with the inquire to the building industry to find out what codes and regulations have resulted in impacted the higher costs of housing and review these regulations to determine if see a reduction of regulation and impacts fees is feasible in an effort to decrease the costs of housing.

Policy HO-4.2.2 Consider using the substantive authority of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) to require new housing developments mitigate potential impacts on housing affordable to households earning less than 850% of the area median income. Density bonus should be used to incentivize project proponents to build affordable housing in both single family and multifamily projects.

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~~7.5 HOUSING~~ 7.5 HOUSING FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

GOAL 5: Promote the development and collaborate with service providers ~~vide to develop~~ a variety of housing ~~solutions~~opportunities for those with special needs including, but not limited to:

- Victims of domestic violence;
- Persons afflicted with alcohol/drug addiction;
- Persons afflicted with ~~behavior health issues~~psychiatric illnesses;
- Persons coming from corrections and psychiatric institutions, nursing homes and foster care; and,
- The homeless.

Objective HO-5.1 Work closely with appropriate agencies in the region to develop and implement policies and programs addressing special ~~housing~~ needs ~~for vulnerable~~ populations.

Policy HO-5.1.1 The City should allow opportunities for assisted housing, for people with special needs, by:

~~a. Adopting land use policies and regulations that treat government assisted housing and other low income housing the same as housing of a similar size and density;~~

b. Permitting group living situations, including those where residents receive such supportive services as counseling, foster care or medical supervision in accordance with State and Federal Laws; and,

c. Encouraging developers and owners of assisted housing units to undertake activities to establish and maintain positive relationships with neighbors.

Policy HO-5.1.2 The City should encourage coordination among providers of social, health, counseling, and other services to families, children, and persons with special needs including ~~seniors~~senior's citizens, persons with physical or mental disabilities, persons with terminal illness, or other special needs.

Policy HO-5.1.3 The City should ~~collaborate and support social service agencies that~~ support the development and implementation of a comprehensive approach to the prevention, transition, and stabilization of the homeless. Programs and services that decrease potential homelessness, stop recurring homelessness, and to promote long-term self-sufficiency should be encouraged.

Policy HO-5.1.4 The City should support the development of facilities and services for chronically homeless, homeless, and those who are at-risk of becoming homeless by:

- a. Adopting land use regulations that streamline the citing of facilities such as, the creation of an overlay zone or a demonstration zoning ordinance.
- b. By ~~encouraging~~requiring that agencies and housing providers that wish to cite these facilities in the City will be implementing social and health services this population needs to end their cycle of homelessness.

- c. ~~By encouraging At a minimum,~~ the social and health services agencies to provide~~be implemented shall include:~~ in-facility health care, out-patient mental health treatment, out-patient substance abuse treatment, employment counseling, and permanent housing placement assistance.
- d. Requiring that agencies/housing providers that wish to cite these facilities to reasonable demonstrate that they have ~~the long-term funding~~the funding mechanisms in place to provide all of the social and health service needs of this population.

Policy HO-5.1.5 The City should consider incentives to encourage the establishment of fully accessible housing for people with disabilities, which meet or exceed the minimum requirements for accessible units otherwise mandated by federal and state law, including providing density bonuses for additional units that incorporate universal design or other similar design principles.

~~**Policy HO-5.1.6**—Facilities and services to meet the health care, transit or social service needs of households with special needs should be part of housing development plans.~~

~~**Policy HO-5.1.7**~~**Policy HO-5.1.6** Through the City's plans and regulations, location of housing for disabled persons and/or seniors should be promoted near or within the sites where neighborhood centers, shopping centers, public transportation and/or parks or open space to facilitate their maximum participation in the community.