

City of Renton

HOUSING ACTION PLAN



Acknowledgements

The Housing Action Plan has been the work of numerous staff and stakeholders that have provided their time and effort to create a vision and roadmap for the future of housing in Renton. The City appreciates all the effort made in this area, as well as the diverse perspectives that helped in the development of a more inclusive plan for the entire community.

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Executive Summary

The Housing Action Plan (HAP or Plan) is the City of Renton’s short-term strategy for increasing housing options and affordability in the community to help achieve its vision of a more vibrant, inclusive, and equitable future. The Plan is the outcome of a review of the community’s housing needs and objectives, an evaluation of existing strategies to understand gaps, and recommendations of Renton-specific solutions. The strategies included in this Plan build on the City’s existing efforts to expand housing options and will help proactively guide the City’s actions over the next five years. It sets a policy direction for the City’s review of and updates to land use policies, programs, and regulations that set the stage for housing production and preservation in the medium and long term.

The creation of the HAP is supported by a grant administered by the Washington State Department of Commerce through the Urban Residential Building Capacity Grant Program, which was authorized and funded by the State Legislature in 2019 ([E2SHB 1923](#)) to help cities increase residential building capacity and develop expanded housing options.

The process to develop the HAP included a program of community outreach and engagement that occurred between March 2020 and March 2021. Outreach and engagement activities were conducted in accordance with the State’s public health guidelines in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Housing Action Plan Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) provided overall guidance on the project process and analysis, as well as the contents of the final Housing Action Plan. Key points of community contact included discussions with the Advisory Committee, as well as interviews with experts, property managers, and people who recently moved to or in Renton. Additionally, residents were engaged through Community Conversations, semi-structured conversations with community members about housing-related issues.

Response from community outreach and engagement emphasized that the City should not only seek to increase the amount of housing available to meet the community’s needs but also to expand opportunities for housing stability and wealth-building that high-quality, affordable, and attainable housing can provide.

Community members and the Advisory Committee provided input and guidance on the Plan’s principles and goals. Five Principles to guide HAP recommendations are:

- **Equitable Outcomes**
- **Healthy Housing Ecosystems**
- **Household Prosperity**
- **Effective Policy**
- **Collaboration with Partners**

These Principles guided the development of five Plan Goals:

- **Promote diverse neighborhoods**
- **Build sustainable and complete housing ecosystems**
- **Promote more market-rate housing production**
- **Expand local housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households**
- **Increase the supply of subsidized, income-qualified housing**

The South King County Subregional Housing Action Framework also informed the Plan. Developed in coordination with South King County cities, this planning effort provided a subregional perspective and initial guidance for inter-municipal coordination on affordable housing. The Subregional Housing Action Framework was used to inform the Renton-specific HAP.

A Renton Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) provided information on housing demand, housing costs and vacancies, expected housing production, demographics, and affordability in Renton. Projections of expected housing needs over the next 20 years from the Subregional Housing Action Framework are included in the HNA and indicate that a significant number of units will require some level of subsidy to maintain a desirable level of affordability.

The HAP puts forward six Strategic Recommendations aligned to the Principles to achieve the Goals. These represent a broad set of actions that the City can pursue over the next five years. These recommendations also consider long-term actions for the City to review as part of the Comprehensive Plan update in 2024. The City's progress on meeting the housing goals identified in this Plan will be reassessed as part of the Comprehensive Plan updates planned for 2024.

While the HAP seeks to make meaningful change in the housing market, addressing the broad range of Renton's housing needs will also need the continued participation of Renton's housing and human service partners. To that end, the HAP is designed to complement the City's existing collaborations, partnerships, commitments, and plans in these areas.

Contents

- Acknowledgements..... 1**
- Executive Summary 2**
- Contents 4**
- Introduction..... 6**
 - Overview..... 6
 - Housing Policy Framework and Scope 6
 - Housing Action Plan Principles 9
 - Housing Action Plan Goals 10
 - The Continuum of Housing Response..... 11
 - Subregional Coordination..... 12
- Assessing Housing Needs 14**
 - Overview..... 14
 - Public Engagement..... 14
 - Findings..... 17
- Current Housing Initiatives 21**
 - Overview..... 21
 - Partnerships..... 23
 - Incentives..... 25
 - Regulations 27
 - Plans and Statutes..... 30
 - Preservation..... 33
 - Funding 35
- Affordable Housing Barriers..... 38**
 - Overview..... 38
 - Support to Overcome Barriers 38
- Strategic Recommendations 41**
 - Overview..... 41

Recommendation 1: Support Partnerships to Meet Housing Goals	42
Recommendation 2: Promote Diverse Housing Types and Sizes in Neighborhoods	44
Recommendation 3: Incentivize Housing Development	54
Recommendation 4: Promote Affordable Housing Preservation and Development	58
Recommendation 5: Use Available Land for Affordable Housing Development	68
Recommendation 6: Align Comprehensive Plan Policies and Other Planning	72
Implementation	78
Overview.....	78
Key Implementation Actions.....	79
Comprehensive Plan Policy Integration	80
Recommendation 1: Support Partnerships to Meet Housing Goals	82
Recommendation 2: Promote Diverse Housing Types and Sizes in Neighborhoods	84
Recommendation 3: Incentivize Housing Development	86
Recommendation 4: Promote Affordable Housing Preservation & Development	87
Recommendation 5: Use Available Land for Affordable Housing Development	90
Recommendation 6: Align Comprehensive Plan Policies and Other Planning	93
Measuring Plan Progress.....	95
Appendix A: Definitions	100
Appendix B: What We Heard Report	105
Introduction.....	105
Summary of Community Input.....	109
Appendix C: Housing Needs Assessment	125
Overview.....	125
Community Context	129
Housing Supply	141
Housing Costs and Market Indicators.....	148
Community Profile	153
Housing Capacity and Targets	166

Introduction

OVERVIEW

The City of Renton has been at the forefront of addressing the housing crisis in the Puget Sound Region in cooperation with its partners, residents, businesses, schools, and other organizations. The City's efforts have included encouraging the development and preservation of quality of housing choices for all members of the community as well as supporting sustainable, attractive neighborhoods.

Although progress has been made in providing incentives for affordable housing, diversifying the housing stock, and addressing housing gaps, housing needs and gaps have grown in recent years. Housing cost increases are outpacing income growth, and housing production has not kept pace with need.

This Housing Action Plan (HAP or Plan) is the City of Renton's strategy for increasing housing availability and affordability to help achieve its vision of a more inclusive and equitable future. Not only does the City seek to increase the amount of housing available to meet the community's needs, but also to expand opportunities for housing stability and wealth-building that high-quality, affordable, and attainable housing can provide. The strategies included in this Plan will guide the City's actions over the next five years, with a focus on review and updates to land use policies, programs, and regulations that impact housing production and preservation. The City's progress on implementing the strategies and impacts to housing production and achieving the goals of the Plan will be assessed as part of the update to the Comprehensive Plan in 2024.

While the HAP seeks to make meaningful change in the housing market, addressing the broad range of Renton's housing needs will also need the continued participation of Renton's housing and human service partners. To that end, the HAP is designed to complement the City's existing collaborations, partnerships, commitments, and plans in these areas.

HOUSING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND SCOPE

In 2019, the Washington State Legislature passed [HB 1923](#), a bill intended to increase housing supply in cities across the state. Under this new legislation, cities have been encouraged to take actions to increase residential building capacity and promote the development of new housing to address affordability issues.¹

One option for cities under this bill is developing a Housing Action Plan (HAP). Under the statute:

The goal of any such housing plan must be to encourage construction of additional affordable and market-rate housing in a greater variety of housing types and at prices

¹ See [Final Bill Report: E2SHB 1923](#) for more details about the statute.

that are accessible to a greater variety of incomes, including strategies aimed at the for-profit single-family home market.²

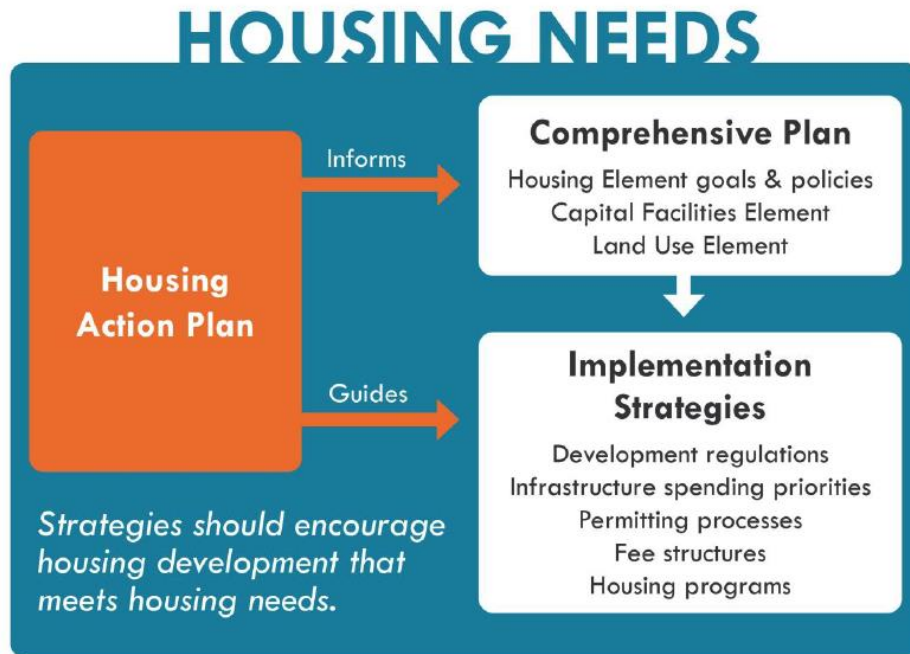
As passed, HB 1923 also includes several requirements for a HAP:

- Quantify existing and projected housing needs for all income levels, including extremely low-income households, with documentation of housing and household characteristics, and cost-burdened households
- Develop strategies to increase the supply of housing, and variety of housing types needed to serve the housing needs identified
- Analyze population and employment trends, with documentation of projections
- Consider strategies to minimize displacement of low-income residents resulting from redevelopment
- Review and evaluate the current housing element adopted pursuant to RCW 36.70A.070, including an evaluation of success in attaining planned housing types and units, achievement of goals and policies, and implementation of the schedule of programs and actions
- Provide for participation and input from community members, community groups, local builders, local realtors, nonprofit housing advocates, and local religious groups
- Include a schedule of programs and actions to implement the recommendations of the housing action plan.

Under this approach, the HAP is intended to review the community's housing needs and objectives, and evaluate them according to existing policies, plans, regulations, and strategies in the community to understand gaps in current approaches. A summary of the context for the HAP is given in Exhibit 1.

² [RCW 36.70A.600\(2\)](#).

Exhibit 1. Relationship of the Housing Action Plan to other city planning efforts.



Source: Washington State Department of Commerce, 2020.

The context for the HAP includes two primary considerations: the city’s Comprehensive Plan, and the implementation of housing policies.

Comprehensive Plan

Renton articulates its overall housing needs and policy objectives through its Comprehensive Plan, which is based on a collaborative public process prescribed by the *Growth Management Act*.³ The HAP is intended to inform the Comprehensive Plan policies and identify strategies to address housing gaps and achieve community objectives.⁴

Housing needs are addressed in the **Housing and Human Services Element** of the Comprehensive Plan, which presents policies for the development, preservation, and improvement of housing for all economic segments of the community.⁵ This Element is reviewed in this document and recommendations are made to inform future updates to the Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to the Housing and Human Services Element, policies in the **Land Use Element** are evaluated to determine how the overall planning of land uses in the community will help to achieve housing goals. The **Capital Facilities Plan Element** provides guidance on the development of new

³ [RCW 36.70A.040](#)

⁴ See the 2015 Renton Comprehensive Plan:

<https://edocs.rentonwa.gov/Documents/1/edoc/955864/Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf>

⁵ [RCW 36.70A.070](#)

capital facilities in the community that would be used to support planned housing growth over time. The **Transportation Element** is important for communities such as Renton that are looking to provide support for higher density transit-oriented development. Other sections of the Comprehensive Plan may also be applicable and should be reviewed as necessary to coordinate all the elements appropriately to meet housing goals.

Implementation of Housing Policies

Aside from the Comprehensive Plan, there are other policies and programs administered by the City that can also impact the production of housing:

- **Development regulations**, including zoning (Chapter 4-2), building codes (Chapter 4-5), and subdivision (Chapter 4-7) regulations under the Renton Municipal Code.⁶
- **Other housing regulations** such as tenant protections can help to keep residents secure in affordable, appropriate housing.
- **Fees and charges** for development, including potential reductions or waivers in the cases of affordable housing.
- **Incentives** for affordable and market-rate housing development, including tax exemptions and density bonuses.
- **Funding options** for the direct support of affordable housing development

Other areas administered by the City of Renton may also be relevant to policies that can promote new housing development as well. For example, City policies that manage the sale of vacant or underutilized City-owned properties can be amended to prioritize the release of these sites specifically for affordable housing.

The HAP provides recommendations for adjusting or changing these regulations, programs, and plans. This guidance is intended to help the City better manage these components of its housing strategy to meet current and future housing needs and better achieve its other housing goals. The focus of this guidance is on a broad set of actions that the City can pursue over the next five years to promote housing development and recommendations for long-term actions to review as part of the Comprehensive Plan update.

HOUSING ACTION PLAN PRINCIPLES

This Plan benefits from input from a broad variety of community members and careful consideration by members of the Housing Action Plan Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee). The Advisory Committee includes a cross-section of the Renton community with residents, representatives from the faith community, advocates of low-income families, architects, community service representatives,

⁶ See [Chapter 4-2 RMC](#) (zoning), [Chapter 4-5 RMC](#) (building codes), and [Chapter 4-7 RMC](#) (subdivision regulations).

housing developers, the business community, older adults, and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) community members. The public provided input on the values and principles that should shape Renton’s strategy development and policy making. These foundational principles include:

- **Equitable Outcomes.** Housing policy is an opportunity to correct historical inequities in the housing system and provide opportunities to support social, economic, and racial justice. The City should continue to strive for equitable social, economic, and racial and ethnic policy outcomes through actions to improve access to housing.
- **Healthy Housing Ecosystems.** Housing units alone will not deliver Renton’s desired future. Housing policy should consider the entire “housing ecosystem” to best meet the needs of all residents, current and future. This includes consideration of local neighborhood amenities, safety, employment, quality of life, access to transit, good urban design, and sufficient infrastructure.
- **Household Prosperity.** Housing cost burden is increasing in Renton, and many have been shut out of the housing altogether. The City needs more rental and owner-occupied housing opportunities that improve access to opportunity and encourage economic success. Given that housing is often the greatest component of wealth for households, promoting opportunities to build wealth through homeownership for lower-income households can also promote economic mobility and greater social, economic, and racial equity.
- **Effective Policy.** Housing policies should be simple and flexible to promote positive outcomes in Renton. To be effective, housing policy should not be difficult to administer and should be streamlined and transparent for developers and residents. Policies should also be future-oriented, with a focus on long-term sustainability. Long-term policy success should be monitored through performance metrics and ongoing evaluation.
- **Collaboration with Partners.** The City of Renton is an active leader and partner in meeting the community’s housing needs. The City’s land use policies and development regulations set the regulatory environment for all development, including the work of Renton’s non-profit and social service agencies. City policies should consider the City’s partners and opportunities for collaboration to reach mutually beneficial outcomes. This will require maintaining and strengthening ongoing relationships with neighborhoods and organizations to encourage collaboration to identify and pursue mutually beneficial outcomes that address local housing needs.

HOUSING ACTION PLAN GOALS

As noted, the Housing Action Plan is intended to expand housing options across Renton to address current and future housing needs.⁷ The HAP strategies also reflect the City’s commitment to social, economic, and racial justice by addressing the disproportionate impacts that a lack of affordable and

⁷ For more details, see the [Department of Commerce Growth Management Planning for Housing page](#).

appropriate housing supply has on people of color, low-income households, seniors, and other populations potentially at risk.

The HAP has five goals (not listed in order of importance):

- **Promote diverse neighborhoods** that support social, racial, and economic justice and address the inequities of the past.
- **Build sustainable and complete housing ecosystems** that meet the needs of current and future residents for high-quality housing and neighborhoods.
- **Promote more market-rate housing production** in Renton to accommodate more growth and reduce housing scarcity.
- **Expand local housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households** to reduce displacement and provide opportunities to build wealth.
- **Increase the supply of subsidized, income-qualified housing** for very low- and extremely low-income households to support members of the community that cannot afford appropriate housing.

In addition to providing overall policy recommendations, these goals frame actionable objectives and targets, as well as indicators to determine whether City actions are helping to achieve the desired outcomes.

THE CONTINUUM OF HOUSING RESPONSE

Throughout the conversations about housing in Renton by the Advisory Committee and with diverse groups of residents, a common conclusion was that **new housing alone would not be enough to fully address the community's housing needs**. In addition to expanding housing access, Renton will need to strengthen and support social services, transportation, employment services, and economic development as well as preserve existing affordable housing.

The scope of this Housing Action Plan is driven by the grant objectives established by the state legislature in 2019 and represents only a portion of the City's efforts to improve housing access, quality, and equity for residents. Renton works with partners and communities in the city and across the region to address housing needs. In addition, through collaboration and community engagement, housing efforts are addressed together with other community needs such as transportation, education, arts and culture, and recreation. This work is ongoing, and future efforts in housing policy and planning should continue to find ways to complement and strengthen the city and community's other policy goals.

Additional housing is also an important part of Renton's strategy to address homelessness. The City of Renton and its partners have a system of programs and services to address the continuum of housing and homelessness needs, as shown in Exhibit 2. This continuum extends between *homelessness response*, which provides emergency and short-term options for assistance to individuals and households, and *homelessness prevention*, where more stable and long-term options are available for

housing. The HAP addresses the types of housing and ownership models of housing that can meet the community’s long-term needs, and although it does not specifically address homelessness response, also includes homelessness prevention strategies such as preservation, tenant protections, and support for housing providers.

Exhibit 2. Continuum of Housing and Homelessness Policy.



In this spectrum, the Housing Action Plan plays a role in homelessness prevention by focusing on affordability needs and expanding local housing options. This is part of Renton’s long-term approach to addressing homelessness and is intended to complement other homelessness response programs in the community such as the REACH Center of Hope and Vision House.

SUBREGIONAL COORDINATION

Renton participates in the South King Housing and Homelessness Partners (SKHHP), a coalition dedicated to addressing housing issues. In the interest of creating cooperative strategies, the six cities of Auburn, Burien, Federal Way, Renton, Kent and Tukwila decided to develop a common Housing Action Plan Framework and high-level housing assessment for South King County. This Subregional Housing Action Framework was intended to provide a holistic approach that comprehensively addresses major issues and ensures that housing challenges are not merely shifted to surrounding communities.

The Framework incorporated three distinct elements:

- A [Housing Context Assessment](#) provided an evaluation of the underproduction and future needs for housing by income category across South King County, estimating that 63,090 units would need to be produced to meet the housing needs expected by 2040. This includes an overall distribution of these needs by income category, accounting for changes in household size and projecting current income distributions forwards. Note that these estimates are the basis for the future projection of housing needs used in this report.
- A [Housing Policy Assessment](#) evaluated five policy tools (Multi-family Tax Exemptions, Accessory Dwelling Units, Development Incentives, Fee Waivers, and Planned Action EIS) across all six communities to determine the effectiveness of these policies and recommendations for implementation and coordination.
- A [Housing Strategies Framework](#) provided descriptions of four categories of strategies (Preservation & Anti-displacement, Affordable Housing and Production, Middle Housing, and TOD

& Urban Centers) intended to accomplish three specific goals (Preserve Affordability, Create Affordable & Workforce Housing, and Increase Housing Options & Supply). This framework also includes discussions with stakeholders, as well as a housing policy tool to evaluate the feasibility of these strategies across the region.

Overall, the Subregional Housing Action Framework is intended to provide initial guidance for inter-municipal coordination with affordable housing. With communities across the region facing challenges with the resources available to meet needs for affordable and accessible housing, pooling resources can help to achieve joint housing goals in more efficient and effective ways. Ongoing efforts with SKHHP and the partners to collaborate will be supported by this work.

Assessing Housing Needs

OVERVIEW

The development of this Housing Action Plan was supported with two main sources of information:

- **Public engagement** was conducted as a primary means to collect important information on the current and expected needs of Renton residents. A “What We Heard” report summarizing feedback received during those sessions is available in Appendix B.
- A **Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)** was developed to provide relevant information on housing demand, housing costs and vacancies, expected housing production, demographics, and affordability for the city. This HNA incorporates projections of the housing required to meet needs in Renton in 2040, drawn from the Subregional Housing Action Framework. The full HNA can be found in Appendix C.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Overview

The City of Renton continuously reaches out to community members and stakeholders as part of its ongoing policy and regulatory decision-making. For the Housing Action Plan, the City made additional efforts to encourage community participation by reaching out to community members and stakeholders about housing needs, concerns, and opportunities.

Engagement activities included the following:

- **Housing Action Plan Advisory Committee.** A selected group of residents and representatives of organizations in the community were engaged through a series of five meetings to provide guidance on the principles and goals of the Plan, and the strategies to be implemented through the Plan.
- **Property manager interviews.** A series of five interviews were coordinated with property managers for rental properties in Renton, with a focus on the rapidly changing conditions in Renton’s apartment communities.
- **Expert interviews.** Eight interviews focused on housing issues and opportunities in Renton and best strategies for engaging the community were conducted with representatives of key organizations involved with housing.
- **Mover interviews.** A total of 17 interviews were conducted by members of the Advisory Committee to understand what recent movers were looking for in new housing and what was available to them in Renton.
- **Community conversations.** “Community Conversations” is a community engagement approach that can allow community representatives to help gather useful information through semi-

structured conversations with community members. Under this approach, nine conversations were coordinated with community organizations, four of which were headed by members of the community.

These activities took place between March 2020 and March 2021, during Washington state's Stay Home, Stay Healthy phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Outreach activities were designed and implemented in accordance with the state mandate for social distancing.

Engagement Themes

Several themes were reflected in the input received across the engagement activities:

Community members are proud to be a part of Renton.

There is a great deal of Renton pride in the comments on housing and housing needs. Community members value the central location, educational opportunity, employment options, and the cultural and community diversity of Renton. Residents appreciate the personality and character of Renton's existing neighborhoods. Indeed, not one person that participated in the process was hoping to leave Renton. Long-term residents commented that Renton used to be a place that people moved from once they could afford it, but now it is a place people hope to stay.

Displacement pressure is significant for both low- and moderate-income households.

Many Renton residents struggle to find housing that meets their needs at prices that they can afford. Many participants share stories of neighbors and colleagues leaving Renton and exchanging longer commutes for more affordable housing. The high cost of housing, and the rate at which housing costs have grown, is creating the experience of exclusion and displacement among Renton's community members.

Displacement pressure is shared across many segments of the community.

Entry-level professionals who wish to buy a home are being forced to look further south and southeast to find a home they can afford. Older adults who may have retired comfortably are seeing housing costs and displacement pressure rise around them. Working young adults are not able to afford housing on their own or with roommates, leaving them "stuck" at their parents' homes. While they may appreciate their parents, it creates feelings of personal failure that they are not financially able to take an important step into adulthood.

Displacement pressure intersects with race and Native status.

BIPOC residents express feelings of displacement associated with the changing economy of the region. People connect the growth of the technology sector with the economic struggle they experience in trying to secure housing. They do not see themselves reflected in the firms and workers of the tech giants, such as Amazon, Microsoft, and Facebook. They express concern that new housing

in Renton is for those workers, and that Renton, like Bellevue and Seattle before, is heading toward a future that does not include or value people like themselves.

Displacement pressure is experienced as fear, shame, and sadness.

Community representatives share the fear, shame, and sadness that people express when sharing the precariousness of their housing situation. Many are living on the edge of homelessness and are very disempowered against the backdrop of rising housing costs. Particularly vulnerable populations include older adults, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color), people with health conditions and disabilities, and people who have poor credit or rental histories.

Community members hope for more housing options necessary for an inclusive and diverse future. Rather than hoping for a different vision of Renton, a lot of public input reflects a desire to be included in Renton's future. People want housing options that they can afford and offer them security in the community going forward. Residents express a need for housing that is "right-sized" for their family and housing options that allow some individualism in the home. Resident input also reflects that homeownership opportunities should be provided for low-income households and BIPOC households. Many residents called for housing assistance and programs to improve homeownership opportunities for lower-income households.

Housing should be located with services and amenities in integrated communities.

Resident desires for housing often include a desire to be near services, transportation options, and other community amenities, both for themselves and for more disadvantaged members of the community. A love of Renton's greenspaces, parks, and natural amenities was expressed by all segments of the community. Affordable housing advocates observed gaps in services that can help vulnerable people stay housed.

More work is needed in improving equity in housing.

Community partners see Renton as being ahead of other jurisdictions in supporting the development of affordable housing, though need is still outstripping supply. In addition to the development capacity, community representatives wish to see continued and improved efforts at addressing historic inequities in housing. They urge Renton to make sure that housing strategies are race-informed and call for greater diversity and participation in policymaking for housing.

FINDINGS

Based on the overall analysis, several findings are relevant to the ongoing development of housing policy by the City of Renton. These major findings include:

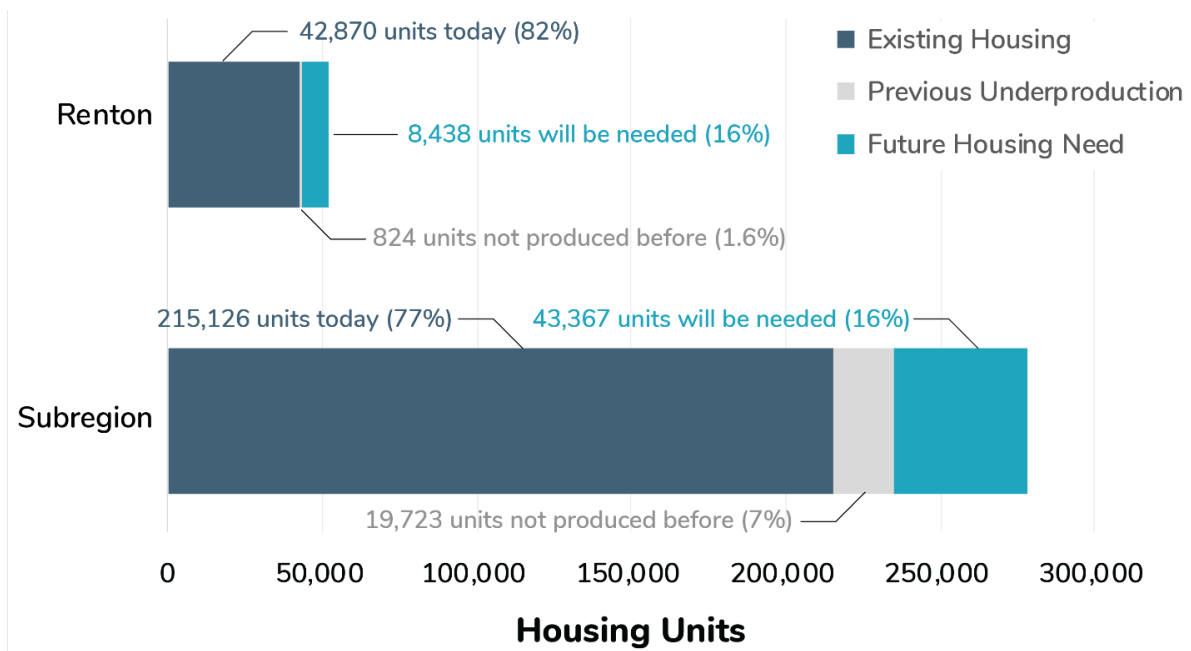
Finding 1: Renton will need at least another 9,300 housing units by 2040, which will require maintaining or slightly increasing the current rate of housing development.

Housing development in Renton has largely kept pace with expected demands from regional projections. However, lower than needed housing production across the region has led to shortfalls in housing supply putting pressure on the Renton market.

Meeting Renton’s share of projected regional growth over the next 20 years will require at least another 9,300 housing units, as shown in Exhibit 3. This will expand the local housing stock by 22% and require an increase in the rate of development by about 6% each year over recent averages. Additional office development in Renton and changes to regional growth targets in the VISION 2050 Regional Growth Strategy may require additional housing beyond this as well.

Although housing production in Renton has generally been strong compared to other communities, planning and coordination will be needed to address price increases, prevent displacement, provide options for lower-income households, and maintain growth rates as development sites that are easier to develop are expended. Additionally, contingencies to accommodate additional growth may be necessary if regional conditions change, or if other communities in the region are not able to expand their own housing stock to meet future demands.

Exhibit 3. Estimated Subregional and City Targets for Housing Production, 2020–2040.



Sources: EcoNorthwest, 2020; BERK, 2020.

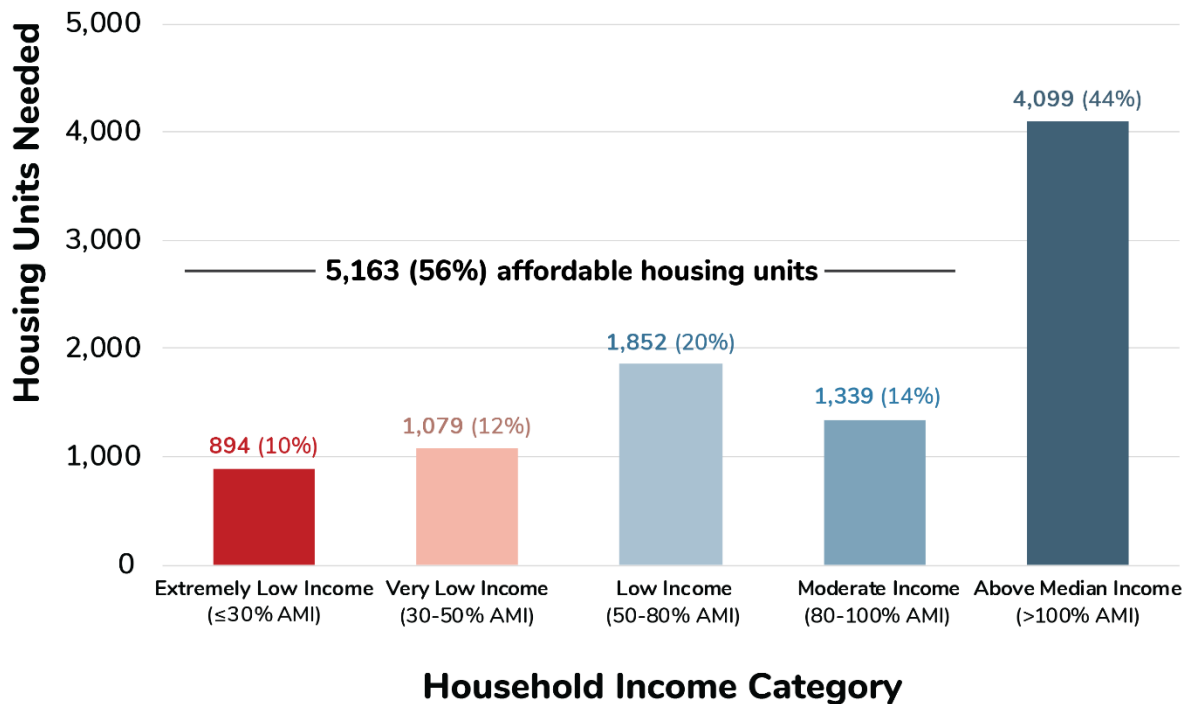
Finding 2: While housing at all price points will be needed, low- and moderate-income households in Renton are facing increased cost burdens in the market given higher costs of housing.

Renton has been an attractive option for many households with varied incomes. Renton is a welcoming community with affordable housing options that is within easy commuting distance of major regional employment centers. However, for low- and moderate-income households (up to 80% of area median income) looking to move to or stay in Renton, meeting their housing needs in the city has posed a significant and increasing burden on their income.

Based on the subregional assessment of expected housing needs over this period, about 56% of new units in Renton will need to be affordable to households at less than 100% of the King County Area Median Income (AMI), as shown in Exhibit 4. Additionally, about 22% of new units will need to be affordable to households with less than 50% of AMI, which suggests that nearly 2,000 units over the next 20 years will require a significant level of subsidy to maintain a desirable level of affordability.

Housing price increases will be a challenge for the long-term housing security of many households, especially those belonging to low-income households, communities of color, seniors, and other populations at risk for housing insecurity. To maintain the current diversity of families in the city and prevent displacement of residents, Renton will need to consider new options that provide affordable opportunities for housing.

Exhibit 4. Estimated Housing Needs by Income Category, 2020–2040.



Sources: EcoNorthwest, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Availability of affordable housing can also improve commuting patterns by Renton workers. Providing housing options affordable to people working in the city can give them the opportunity to live closer, which can reduce the need for local employees to travel long distances to access housing that is affordable and meets their needs.

Finding 3: Renton needs additional supplies of subsidized, income-qualified housing for very low- and extremely low-income households that cannot be addressed directly by the private market.

Maintaining and increasing available housing affordable to very low- and extremely low-income households is a challenge for the private market. The cost to develop housing cannot be covered directly by the rents affordable to this income group, and the demand for land for new development may also result in the demolition and loss of the existing affordable units. Additionally, many of the existing units may be unsuitable to given households because of size, location, or conditions. Therefore, these households often have greater burdens on their income to maintain appropriate housing, which increase when housing markets come under pressure.

Renton is fortunate to have housing that benefits from subsidies to make it accessible to very low-income households (earning between 30–50% AMI) and extremely low-income households (earning below 30% AMI). However, that supply is vastly outstripped by need, especially at the lowest end of the income range. Only about 10% of Renton’s rental units are affordable to households earning less than 30% AMI, and there are over two and a half times as many extremely low-income households as there are housing units affordable to them. This shortfall challenges the ability for these households to maintain housing in Renton and avoid homelessness.

Finding 4: The existing supply of developable land in Renton will be able to support local housing needs well into the future.

An ongoing challenge across the Puget Sound Region is that many communities face shortages of sites for new housing. These constraints are contributing to the challenges of maintaining housing production necessary in the region. In 2014, the King County Buildable Lands Report noted that among the “metropolitan” and “core” cities in the county, six of these twelve cities had substantial land shortfalls and action was necessary to expand capacity.

Unlike in other cities, however, local housing development in Renton is not currently constrained by developable land. In the 2014 report, Renton was the only city of its size in the region that reported enough development capacity to accommodate future growth targets to 2031. Updates to the Comprehensive Plan calculated that there was enough capacity to meet expected 2035 growth targets, and remaining capacity would likely accommodate existing growth to 2040 and beyond.

Because of this, Renton is not faced with an immediate need to increase capacity through zoning and development regulation changes. Any adjustments to these regulations should be oriented to building affordable, accessible, and more diverse market-rate housing and providing support for increased

production. Housing policies can also focus on providing options to residents and newcomers in walkable, complete communities, and to address historical issues of racial equity and justice related to housing.

Finding 5: There are diverse needs for housing-related support in Renton that extend beyond housing production and vary across groups in the community.

Housing security is not only linked to paying rent or making mortgage payments, but also to other financial challenges that can affect the ability of households to maintain healthy and appropriate housing that meets their needs. Lower-income tenants in the private rental market can face significant year-to-year price increases, difficulties with a unit's state of repair, temporary income disruptions, and relatively high relocation costs. Addressing these obstacles can make the difference between keeping people housed in the community and having them experience homelessness.

Other groups within the community may also face challenges to accessing and keeping affordable, appropriate housing. Seniors and people with disabilities may have additional requirements for housing, but potential financial limitations with meeting those requirements with fixed incomes. Immigrants and people of color may have strong support networks in the community but are challenged if they cannot find appropriate housing at a reasonable cost, and in some cases, are still affected by historical discrimination in the housing market.

Current Housing Initiatives

OVERVIEW

Although this Housing Action Plan highlights future housing needs and current gaps, the Plan has been developed in the context of significant efforts by the City and its partners to promote market-rate and affordable housing in the community. Renton is currently at the forefront of regional housing policies and initiatives and has been implementing significant changes to make housing more accessible and affordable.

Exhibit 5 provides a list of housing initiatives in the City of Renton, both previously implemented initiatives and new approaches that are in the process of being implemented. These are divided into six main categories:

- **Partnerships** with other organizations in the community
- **Incentives**, primarily directed towards supporting affordable housing
- Changes in **regulations** to promote housing development, including housing of new types
- **Plans and Statutes** that promote affordable and market-rate housing development
- Efforts at **preservation** of the current stock of housing, especially naturally occurring affordable housing
- Sources of **funding** beyond direct allocations from the General Fund

This list includes existing programs (in normal font) and current initiatives underway but not completed as of the completion of this Plan (in bold italic font). The HAP works to complement this ongoing work, recognizing that policy recommendations need to support ongoing efforts with housing policy being coordinated by the City of Renton.

The table in Exhibit 5 also includes the household incomes targeted by these policies. At one end of the spectrum, some policies focus on extremely low-income housing, available and affordable to households making less than 30% AMI. This reflects heavily subsidized and rent-restricted housing, potentially coordinated with additional services. On the other end of the spectrum, other policies are concerned with market-rate housing affordable at or above area median income, primarily with respect to maintaining and increasing the volume of housing development. Across this spectrum between these two extremes, other policies provide different levels of support to encourage solutions that meet the needs of all households in the community.

In this section, supporting details are provided to highlight the roles that these programs have been playing in making Renton a more accessible community for all, and supporting a healthy stock of housing to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Exhibit 5. Current City of Renton Housing Initiatives.

		0–30% AMI Extremely Low Income	30–60% AMI Very Low Income	60–80% AMI Low Income	80–100% AMI Moderate Income	>100% AMI Market Rate Housing
Partnerships	Renton Housing Authority	●	●	●		
	South King Housing & Homelessness Partners	●	●	●	●	
	Housing Development Consortium	●	●	●	●	●
	King County Affordable Housing Committee	●	●	●		
	King County Regional Homelessness Authority	●				
Incentives	Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE)		●	●	●	●
	Bonus Density for Affordable Housing		●	●		
	Waived Fees for Affordable Housing	●	●	●		
	Reduced Parking for Affordable Housing	●	●	●		
Regulations	Accessory Dwelling Units			●	●	●
	Cottage Housing Density Bonus			●	●	●
	Administrative CUP for Height Increase			●	●	●
	Parking Regulations	●	●	●	●	●
	Residential Manufactured Home Park Zoning		●	●	●	
	Planned Urban Development			●	●	●
Plans & Statutes	Comprehensive Plan	●	●	●	●	●
	Sunset Area Planned Action EIS	●	●	●	●	●
	Rainier/Grady Junction Subarea Plan		●	●	●	●
Preservation	Rental Registration Program (RRP)	●	●	●	●	●
	Housing Repair Assistance Program	●	●	●		
Funding	Housing Opportunity Fund	●	●	●		
	SHB 1406	●	●			
	HB 1590	●	●			

Sources: City of Renton, 2021; BERK, 2021.

PARTNERSHIPS

As noted previously in the Principles of this Plan, while the City has an important coordinating role to play in addressing local and regional housing needs, it is not the only participant in this field. For market-rate housing, private property owners and developers dominate local real estate, both with rental and for-sale housing. Likewise, the City does not develop or manage low-income housing directly but works with public housing authorities, non-profit organizations, and other partners to provide subsidized housing options.

This role means that the City must maintain and strengthen relationships with other participants in housing to achieve housing goals. Coordinating with these stakeholders can be essential in determining the best approaches to address housing needs for current and future residents.

Exhibit 6 includes a summary of major partnerships the City currently manages with other participants in the housing market. The focus of this list is largely on affordable housing and homelessness, with some focus on market-rate and overall housing issues.

Exhibit 6. Current City of Renton Housing Initiatives: Partnerships

	0-30% AMI Extremely Low Income	30-60% AMI Very Low Income	60-80% AMI Low Income	80-100% AMI Moderate Income	>100% AMI Market Rate Housing
Renton Housing Authority	●	●	●		
South King Housing & Homelessness Partners	●	●	●	●	
Housing Development Consortium	●	●	●	●	●
King County Affordable Housing Committee	●	●	●		
King County Regional Homelessness Authority	●				

Sources: City of Renton, 2021; BERK, 2021.

Renton Housing Authority

The City of Renton's partnership with the Renton Housing Authority (RHA) includes 80 years of providing quality, affordable housing to people in Renton. RHA was established in 1941 to work locally with the War Defense Corporation and provide housing to war effort workers. Following World War II, ownership of the housing was transferred from the federal government to RHA, which sold most of the residential units. In the 1960s, RHA developed Sunset Terrace, a 100-unit public housing project. More recently, RHA has collaborated with the City of Renton and other partners to redevelop the Sunset Area, bringing additional high-quality, affordable housing to Renton. RHA is governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners whose members are appointed by the Mayor of Renton.

South King Housing and Homelessness Partners

To improve the effectiveness with which local jurisdictions can address the regional housing crises, the City of Renton is partnering with other South King County jurisdictions through the South King Housing and Homelessness Partners (SKHHP). SKHHP is a joint board formed by an interlocal agreement and includes Renton, Auburn, Burien, Covington, Des Moines, Federal Way, Kent, Normandy Park, Tukwila, and King County. The mission is to work together and share resources to increase access to affordable housing for South King County residents. The partnership supports sharing technical information to promote sound housing policy, coordinating public resources, and providing a unified voice for South King County.

Housing Development Consortium

The City of Renton partners with the Housing Development Consortium (HDC) to help meet the needs of Renton residents with limited incomes. The Housing Development Consortium is a member organization that encompasses every major nonprofit housing developer and an increasing number of for-profit developers in King County as well as financial institutions, consultants, architects, building contractors, attorneys, labor, accountants, service providers, public housing authorities and government agencies. The HDC acts as a broker between the private and public sectors, an advocate for affordable housing and better tenant protections, a convener for collaboration and partnership, and offers training and events.

Affordable Housing Committee

The Affordable Housing Committee is a point for coordination and accountability for affordable housing efforts across King County. The Committee includes nineteen elected, nonprofit, and business leaders focused on eliminating housing cost burden for households earning 80% area median income and below, with a priority for serving households at or below 50% area median income.

King County Regional Homelessness Authority

As part of a regional approach to addressing homelessness, Seattle and King County developed the King County Regional Homelessness Authority through an interlocal agreement to provide support for

policy, funding, and services for people experiencing homelessness in communities across the county. This authority is intended to provide a consistent and unified approach for outreach, shelter, and transitional and permanent housing services across the region. Renton has participated through the Sound Cities Association and has worked to coordinate efforts and align services related to homelessness with the KCRHA.

INCENTIVES

Incentives present a means by which the city can support the development of housing by providing a financial benefit for specific types of housing, and particularly affordable housing. This is primarily done in two different ways:

- A direct financial incentive via a waiver or exemption from fees, charges, and taxes.
- An adjustment in underlying development regulations can allow housing to be more feasible or profitable, either by reducing costs or allowing more intense development.

There is also the potential for the City to provide direct funding to different organizations, which is discussed in the Funding category below. However, these incentives are typically applied for any project that qualifies under the parameters of the program, as opposed to targeted funding directed by the City.

Exhibit 7 summarizes the four major sources of City incentives for housing. Largely, these involve supporting low-income housing, although tax exemptions are also applied to some market-rate housing in targeted areas.

Exhibit 7. Current City of Renton Housing Initiatives: Incentives

	0–30% AMI Extremely Low Income	30–60% AMI Very Low Income	60–80% AMI Low Income	80–100% AMI Moderate Income	>100% AMI Market Rate Housing
Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE)		●	●	●	●
Bonus Density for Affordable Housing		●	●		
Waived Fees for Affordable Housing	●	●	●		
Reduced Parking for Affordable Housing	●	●	●		

Sources: City of Renton, 2021; BERK, 2021.

Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE)

The Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) is a program permitted under [Chapter 84.14 RCW](#) that allows cities that plan under the *Growth Management Act* to grant partial exemptions of property taxes for qualifying multi-family residential projects in designated “urban centers”. Within these areas, cities are allowed to grant an eight-year exemption for any multifamily residential project, and a 12-year exemption for projects affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

The City of Renton has implemented this program under [RMC 4-1-220](#) for the Sunset Area and Downtown. The most recent revisions that came into force in 2018 provide for the following general requirements:

- An eight-year exemption is available for eligible new market-rate projects.
- A 12-year exemption is available for eligible projects with new rental units if 20% or more of the units are affordable to households making 60% AMI or less.
- For eligible projects with new owner-occupied housing units, a 12-year exemption is available if 20% or more of the units are affordable at 80% AMI or less.

This element of the Code also includes requirements for the minimum number of units in a project, applicable zones, provisions for replacing existing housing, and the process for application. The total value of the property exempted is only for the residential portions of buildings, and not the value of the land or non-qualifying improvements.

Bonus Density

Under [RCW 36.70A.540](#), cities under the *Growth Management Act* are allowed to provide certain types of development incentives for projects that include affordable housing. This includes density, height, and bulk bonuses; fee waivers or reductions; parking reductions; and expedited permitting.

The City of Renton has implemented this for density under [RMC 4-9-065](#), where a project may receive bonus density for allocating some of the units to be affordable. Under this incentive, one new bonus market-rate unit is permitted when another unit is allocated to be affordable at 80% AMI for owner-occupied housing, or 50% AMI for rental housing, over the next 50 years. Bonus units are allowed in higher-density residential and mixed-use zones in the city CD, UC, CV, CO, COR, R-14, and RMF, and up to a 30% increase in maximum density is allowed. Separate allowances are provided for assisted living facilities through this section of the Code.

Waived Fees

Fee waivers are also allowed under [RCW 36.70A.540](#), and the City of Renton has implemented waivers for affordable housing under [RMC 4-9-065](#). Under this incentive, a project may receive a waiver under the following conditions:

- For affordable owner-occupied housing, 50% of units must be sold to be affordable at 80% AMI or below, and the remaining units must be affordable at 120% AMI or below for 30 years.

- For affordable rental housing, 100% of the units must be rented to be affordable to households making 60% AMI or below for 30 years.

Waived fees potentially include:

- Building permit fees
- Plan review and inspection fees
- System development charges
- Transportation, parks, and fire impact mitigation fees (typically a partial waiver of 80%)
- Technology surcharges

Reduced Parking for Affordable Housing

Parking requirements for affordable housing in Renton are also adjusted under [RCW 36.70A.540](#) as well. Under [RMC 4-4-080\(F\)\(10\)\(d\)](#), buildings with affordable units are only required to provide 1 stall for every 4 affordable units, with a maximum of 1.75 spaces per unit allowed in the Downtown area.

This provides a benefit as the cost of providing on-site parking for residential projects can often be quite high, especially if allowable densities and heights would require structured parking. Lower parking requirements can help to create affordable housing projects that balance the needs of parking with minimizing costs.

REGULATIONS

Changes in regulations can benefit housing development by allowing broader flexibility with projects in residential areas. Under this category, two types of regulation changes are included here:

- Changes to promote different housing types in residential areas
- Adjustments that provide additional flexibility in meeting development regulations

However, unlike incentives, these changes are not limited to housing accessible to lower-income households, and they provide developers and landowners more options with a range of different types of development. Therefore, these strategies focus more on encouraging more diversity with housing types within the community and allowing market-rate development to address gaps in the local housing stock.

Exhibit 8 provides a list of the four elements included under this category for the City of Renton. Note that in the case of both accessory dwelling units and cottage housing, they are currently allowed, but the changes currently being pursued by the City are intended to streamline the process and provide more support to build these projects.

Exhibit 8. Current City of Renton Housing Initiatives: Regulations

	0-30% AMI Extremely Low Income	30-60% AMI Very Low Income	60-80% AMI Low Income	80-100% AMI Moderate Income	>100% AMI Market Rate Housing
Accessory Dwelling Units			●	●	●
Cottage Housing Density Bonus			●	●	●
Administrative CUP for Height Increase			●	●	●
Parking Regulations	●	●	●	●	●
Residential Manufactured Home Park Zoning		●	●	●	
Planned Urban Development			●	●	●

Sources: City of Renton, 2021; BERK, 2021.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are dwelling units located on the same lot as a single-family housing unit, duplex, triplex, townhome, or other housing unit, and are secondary to the main dwellings on the site. These units can be “attached”, or located within or attached to the main housing structure, or “detached”, consisting partly or completely of a separate building.⁸

ADUs have been a particular focus of recent housing policy in the City of Renton. While the original ordinance allowing ADUs was passed in 2010, fees, permits, and regulatory requirements prevented these units from being more widely developed. An estimate suggested that only about eight applications were received for ADUs up to 2019.

The City has planned and been carrying out several recent changes to the ADU framework in response:

- Requirements for a conditional use permit have been removed.
- Some requirements for owner-occupancy have been removed, specifically for new construction of affordable units.
- Free, pre-approved base plans are available that provide cost and time savings for homeowners.
- A “permit-ready” ADU program has been developed to facilitate design and staff review and present a more predictable process.
- Off-site and shared parking requirements have changed to provide more flexibility for ADUs.
- City fees have been reduced for ADUs, with most fees waived.

⁸ See [RCW 36.70A.696](#)(1), (2), and (5).

- Size requirements have been relaxed, with the size of ADUs dependent on lot size and the size of the primary dwelling.

These reforms have been aimed specifically at streamlining the process and making ADUs more feasible for a wider range of homeowners.

Cottage Housing Density Bonus

“Cottage housing” typically references a development that includes a cluster of smaller housing units (generally less than 1,200 square feet), which can include a common open space, shared parking, and other common areas.⁹ This type of housing can provide an alternative to standard single-family housing, providing additional options for first-time homebuyers, aging households, singles, and other households that may not need as much space.

To promote this type of development as another option for developers, changes to land use regulations for cottage housing have been proposed. This would include:

- Permitting cottage development in most residential zones in the city
- Increasing allowable densities
- Setting a minimum and maximum number of units to be included
- Allowing smaller lot sizes and changes to site configuration
- Allowing for flexibility with meeting existing parking standards
- Using ADU free pre-approved base plan sets for cottage units

These adjustments are expected to increase the feasibility of these projects and improve the ability for developers to provide this type of housing in the community.

Administrative Conditional Use Permit for Height Increases

Under [RMC 4-2-120B](#), development may exceed height limits in particular zones with an administrative conditional use permit. This applies to Center Downtown (CD), Center Village (CV), and Commercial Arterial (CA) zones, and permits additional flexibility with allocating additional height in specific zones to achieve identified densities.

Parking Regulations

The City of Renton has pursued a policy to keep minimum parking requirements as low as possible to support the needs for new development projects. As such, minimizing these requirements for residential development included in [RMC 4-4-080](#) provide support to housing development projects by reducing the development costs for parking structures for denser development. Additionally, reducing

⁹ WA Department of Commerce, [Guidance for Development a Housing Action Plan](#), pg. 80.

the area devoted to parking on a site can help to accommodate more density in other locations where surface parking is the preferred option.¹⁰

Residential Manufactured Home Park Zoning

Under [RMC 4-2-020\(G\)](#), the Residential Manufactured Home Park (RMH) zone is intended to “protect established manufactured home parks and to expand the variety of affordable housing types available within the City”. The list of permitted residential uses in this zone (see [RMC 4-2-060](#)) only include manufactured homes, which restricts the potential for these sites to be redeveloped for market-rate housing. New housing projects proposed for these areas would need to change the existing zoning, which can provide additional protections to current occupants.

Planned Unit Development

Under [RMC 4-9-150](#), a planned unit development (PUD) provides options for development that are “not limited by the strict application of the City’s development, parking, street, and subdivision regulations in a comprehensive manner”. These agreements are typically created in cases either where natural features of the land need to be protected by specialized site design, or innovation and creativity in regards to a variety in the type, design, and arrangement of structures and improvements will result in superior development.

Under a PUD, the City cannot modify permitted uses or the maximum density allowed for development, but other development regulations dealing with topics such as parking, urban design, street requirements, lot sizes, and open space, among others, may be relaxed with the approval of the Hearing Examiner.

As a condition of providing flexibility with development requirements, a development is required to show that the development will not cause undue impacts to surrounding land uses, would be superior to development that would otherwise be possible without a PUD, and would provide a public benefit.

PLANS AND STATUTES

Statutory plans and other statutes provide the policies and frameworks that guide development across a community. While regulations will typically implement these policies in the City, these documents are required to be followed by the City as part of any of these actions. Therefore, broader changes to housing strategies will usually require high-level adjustments to these documents to ensure they comply with these high-level policies.

¹⁰ See [VIA Architecture, Right Size Parking: Final Report](#) for more information about strategies to manage parking requirements in the region.

Exhibit 9. Current City of Renton Housing Initiatives: Plans and Statutes

	0–30% AMI Extremely Low Income	30–60% AMI Very Low Income	60–80% AMI Low Income	80–100% AMI Moderate Income	>100% AMI Market Rate Housing
Comprehensive Plan	●	●	●	●	●
Sunset Area Planned Action EIS	●	●	●	●	●
Rainier/Grady Junction Subarea Plan		●	●	●	●

Sources: City of Renton, 2021; BERK, 2021.

Exhibit 9 presents three major statutory plans and other statutes that affect housing in the city. In this case, the Comprehensive Plan is applicable city-wide, while the Sunset Area Planned Action EIS and the Grady/Rainier Subarea Planning are only applicable over specific areas of the city.

Comprehensive Plan

The City of Renton’s Comprehensive Plan is the primary planning document for the City.¹¹ Under the *Growth Management Act* ([Chapter 36.70A RCW](#)), this is defined as “a generalized coordinated land use policy statement”, and it is required to include a land use map and specific Elements about defined topic areas, including land use, housing, capital facilities, utilities, transportation, economic development, and parks and recreation. This Plan has regulatory weight because all the City’s activities and budget decisions under law must follow the Plan.

Overall, several different Elements of the Renton Comprehensive Plan can impact affordable and market-rate housing in the community. Most relevant is the Housing and Human Services Element. This Element is directed towards addressing specific housing needs in the community, including available quality housing, neighborhood opportunity, economic opportunity, basic needs for families, and health and wellness.

One key element of housing policy in the Housing and Human Services Element is the goal that at least 40% of all housing in Renton should be low-income housing (according to statewide definitions used), with:

- 16% low-income housing (affordable at 50–80% AMI)
- 12% very low-income housing (30–50% AMI)
- 12% extremely low-income housing (0–30% AMI)¹²

Additionally, other housing needs are recognized, with the Element incorporating discussions about special housing needs for seniors, families, people with disabilities, and people experiencing

¹¹ [2015 City of Renton Comprehensive Plan](#),

¹² Renton Comprehensive Plan, Policy HHS-10

homelessness; the need for greater housing variety to meet changing needs; the importance of preserving affordable housing; and other issues of affordability in the community.

Many of the existing programs in place in the City of Renton have been enabled through the Comprehensive Plan, such as the Housing Repair Assistance Program and other sources of emergency assistance. Ongoing efforts to coordinate housing strategy should be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

Planned Action EIS

According to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA; [Chapter 43.21C RCW](#)), individual development projects done in accordance with a plan over a broader area, such as a subarea plan, can rely on a more detailed and comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) coordinated for the plan. If a planned action ordinance is passed, and a project is deemed to align with the EIS for the planned action, no further environmental review will be necessary.¹³

Although this can require costs for environmental review up front, a planned action EIS can reduce the costs of future development associated with the review process under SEPA. This can also provide a means by which a city can promote redevelopment in an area by taking on some of the associated costs of SEPA review in advance.

To this end, the City of Renton has developed a Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Sunset Area. This area is a 269-acre neighborhood located in the Highlands Community Planning Area which was originally developed in the 1940s. It has been the focus of planning initiatives since the mid-2000s for revitalization and affordable housing to support its low-income residents.

Rainier/Grady Junction Subarea Planning

The Rainier/Grady Junction Subarea Plan is an upcoming land use plan intended for the area surrounding the new Renton Transit Center. This new location for the Center, located at the intersection of Rainier Avenue South and South Grady Way, has been planned as a major stop for the Sound Transit I-405 Bus Rapid Transit, as well as the King County Metro RapidRide I Line expansion.

Accommodating Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) around this new facility is a priority, especially as the new transit lines provide more options to support greater density in this area. The Subarea Plan is expected to provide guidance on the improvements and development regulations necessary to support the transformation of the area into a distinct pedestrian-oriented neighborhood and multimodal center integrated with the downtown and other neighborhoods.

¹³ See [RCW 43.21C.440](#) and [WAC 197-11-164](#), [WAC 197-11-168](#), and [WAC 197-11-172](#) for more information.

With respect to housing, the Rainier/Grady Junction area is expected to provide significant opportunities for new high-density, mixed-use development. This will represent a notable addition of new housing units to the community, including units that can serve the needs for a range of household types, as well as options to promote affordable housing development close to transit. It also creates opportunities to include affordable housing in future projects.¹⁴

PRESERVATION

Housing preservation is an essential part of affordable housing policy. Although the community needs affordable options for housing to be built, there are often older affordable units in the area that already meet some local needs for housing by low-income households. In many cases, these units are older and have some level of depreciation and obsolescence but are still functional and provide less expensive options than new housing. Additionally, in the rental market, these older units provide housing options for larger households, given the limited availability of new family-sized rental units in the region.

Ensuring that naturally occurring affordable housing units can be effective in meeting local needs often depends on addressing two different factors:

- Providing oversight and support to ensure they continue to be safe and healthy to occupy and remain in a state of good repair.
- Supporting their ongoing use as affordable housing versus rehabilitation or redevelopment into more expensive units.

To date, the City of Renton has focused on providing support to ensure that existing units continue to be maintained appropriately to support the health and well-being of residents. The recommendations included in this report also provide actions that could be taken to help preserve existing naturally occurring affordable units in the community.

Exhibit 10. Current City of Renton Housing Initiatives: Preservation

	0–30% AMI Extremely Low Income	30–60% AMI Very Low Income	60–80% AMI Low Income	80–100% AMI Moderate Income	>100% AMI Market Rate Housing
Rental Registration Program (RRP)	●	●	●	●	●
Housing Repair Assistance Program	●	●	●		

Sources: City of Renton, 2021; BERK, 2021.

¹⁴ See the [City’s Rainier/Grady Subarea Plan](#) web page for more information.

Rental Registration Program (RRP)

The Rental Registration Program (RRP) under [RMC 4-5-125](#) was enacted to ensure maintenance of quality rental housing within the City. The RRP requires landlords and property managers to annually register all residential rental properties located in the City of Renton with certain exceptions, including hotels/motels, medical facilities, government agencies, and emergency shelters.

To register residential rental properties, landlords and property managers must:

- Complete and submit a declaration of compliance checklist by conducting a self-inspection to confirm that the rental complies with basic health and safety standards.
- Apply for a State licensing code and City of Renton business license, with the City license provided at no cost if the landlord does not engage in other business activity that would be subject to a license fee.

This program enforces the *Landlord-Tenant Act* ([Chapter 59.18 RCW](#)) and existing building and property standards of Renton. It does not add any additional standards on landlords beyond those already in place in city and state codes.

Housing Repair Assistance Program

The [Housing Repair Assistance Program](#) (HRAP) improves the environmental health and safety of citizens' homes in the City of Renton by providing minor repairs to homes of eligible Renton residents. To be eligible, a household must have owned and occupied a home in Renton for the last 12 months and have an income of 80% of AMI or less. Additionally, the household should not have plans to sell their home within a year.

Eligible services under HRAP include:

- Assessment
- Safety features, including smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Plumbing repair
- Electrical repair
- Weatherproofing
- Heating system repair/replacement
- Adaptations for disabilities
- Roof repair

The HRAP provides services at no cost to the homeowner based on the program coordinator's determination of need and available resources. The maximum expenditure per client per calendar year is \$6,000, with a maximum expenditure of \$10,000 over 10 years.

FUNDING

The final component of the City of Renton’s current strategies involves coordinating possible sources of funding for affordable housing. This is funding that can be directed either to support certain initiatives related to housing affordability (such as the Housing Repair Assistance Program) or to provide direct financial assistance to partners for developing, acquiring, or rehabilitating affordable housing projects.

This assessment covers two sources of funding:

- Funding allocated directly by the City of Renton from the General Fund.
- Funding derived from sales taxes that are specifically designated for affordable housing.

Exhibit 11 presents three significant sources of funding for affordable housing in the City of Renton. This includes two recent actions by the State Legislature regarding sales taxes that will result in additional resources available. While these programs have been enabled by City ordinance, planning is still ongoing for the uses of these resources.

Note that this does not cover the full range of possible funding options available to the City of Renton or affordable housing projects in the city. For example, Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development can provide funding that can be used for affordable housing rehabilitation. The sources identified here, however, provide the most likely sources of support from the City for maintaining and developing affordable housing.

Exhibit 11. Current City of Renton Housing Initiatives: Funding

	0–30% AMI Extremely Low Income	30–60% AMI Very Low Income	60–80% AMI Low Income	80–100% AMI Moderate Income	>100% AMI Market Rate Housing
Housing Opportunity Fund	●	●	●		
SHB 1406	●	●			
HB 1590	●	●			

Sources: City of Renton, 2021; BERK, 2021.

Housing Opportunity Fund

The City's Housing Opportunity Fund (HOF) is administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development.¹⁵ This account has been set up by the City specifically to support a range of affordable housing needs in the community, including new construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation.

To date, HOF funds have been used exclusively to support new construction of affordable rental and homeownership projects. Most recently, the City provided a \$25,000 HOF grant to support the 12-unit Willowcrest Homes affordable homeownership project being developed in the Sunset Area by the Homestead Community Land Trust.

No funding has been allocated to the HOF under the current budget, but the framework exists to allow the City to provide additional support through the HOF in the future to support affordable housing projects.

SHB 1406

In 2019, the State Legislature approved a sales tax revenue sharing program with municipal government under SHB 1406 after lobbying by the City of Renton and other municipal governments in the state.¹⁶ Under this approach, a portion of the State's sales tax rate is effectively diverted to participating cities and counties to offset an increase in a local sales tax for the next 20 years, which must be used for:

- Acquiring, rehabilitating, or constructing affordable housing (including supporting housing for behavioral health organizations) targeted at households making 60% AMI or below
- Operations and maintenance costs of new units of affordable housing¹⁷

Cities in King County have the option of charging a 0.0146% tax if they are also charging a "qualified local tax", or a 0.0073% tax if they are not, with a cap based on 2019 taxable retail sales. Qualified local taxes include:

- An affordable housing levy ([RCW 84.52.105](#)).
- A sales tax for affordable housing ([RCW 82.14.530](#)).
- A levy lid lift for affordable housing ([RCW 84.55.050](#)).
- A mental health and chemical dependency sales tax ([RCW 82.14.460](#)).

The City of Renton does not have a qualifying local tax, and because of this has imposed the 0.0073% option ([RMC 5-10-2\(B\)](#)). Projected revenues based on 2018 estimates indicate that this could raise

¹⁵ Note this is current as of June 2021. A City reorganization was announced in July 2021, and some of the references and responsibilities associated with City departments in the Housing Action Plan may change when the reorganization is implemented.

¹⁶ Codified as [RCW 82.14.540](#). See [Final Bill Report, SHB 1406](#) and MRSC, [SHB 1406: Understanding the Affordable Housing Sales Tax Credit](#) for more information.

¹⁷ Note that other cities with populations under 100,000 are also allowed to provide rental assistance.

about \$236,000 per year, or \$4.7 million during the 20-year period of the tax. In April 2021, Renton City Council joined an ILA to pool SHB 1406 funds to SKHHP to support joint opportunities for affordable housing development.

HB 1590

In 2015, the State Legislature authorized cities to impose a 0.1% voter-approved sales tax for affordable housing through [ESHB 2263](#). This was modified in 2019 by [HB 1590](#) to allow this tax to be imposed by Council action.¹⁸

Under the provisions of the statute, a minimum of 60% of the revenue from the 0.1% sales tax can be used for:

- Acquiring¹⁹ or constructing affordable housing, affordable housing units, facilities providing housing-related services, or mental and behavioral health-related services.
- Funding the operations and maintenance costs of newly constructed affordable housing, facilities providing housing-related services, or evaluation and treatment centers.

The remainder of the funding must be used for the operation, delivery, or evaluation of mental and behavioral health treatment programs and services or housing-related services.

These funds have a specific focus on households with incomes of 60% AMI or below, and in the following groups:

- Persons with behavioral health disabilities
- Veterans
- Senior citizens
- Homeless, or at-risk of being homeless, individuals or families
- Unaccompanied homeless youth or young adults
- Persons with disabilities
- Domestic violence survivors

The City of Renton implemented this new sales tax in January 2021 (see [RMC 5-10-2\(C\)](#)). Overall, this tax is expected to yield about \$3 million per year, and the City is currently coordinating how to leverage this funding effectively to address eligible local housing and human service needs.

¹⁸ See also [RCW 82.14.530](#).

¹⁹ Allowed after an amendment from [HB 1070](#).

Affordable Housing Barriers

OVERVIEW

The Puget Sound Region has experienced considerable employment and population growth recently. This has meant increased housing demand, resulting in higher prices and greater competition for homes.

In this environment, there are significant concerns about the availability of housing, especially affordable housing as the region has had an ongoing deficit of units. These concerns differ between existing and new affordable housing units:

- For **existing housing**, increased demand and prices can mean that housing currently on the private market that is affordable at lower incomes (“naturally occurring” affordable housing) will be demolished for new homes or remodeled or rehabilitated to allow higher rents or sales points than the existing unit. Preserving these units may need incentives that can offset the benefits received from redeveloping or rehabilitating the housing.
- For **new housing**, the housing costs affordable to low-income households can be lower than market rents or mortgages, making affordable housing development infeasible for a housing developer.

In both cases, regulatory and financial incentives as well as other types of support can be essential in an active real estate market to preserve and expand available affordable units. The City of Renton has been active in addressing the city’s policy and strategies to adapt to changing market circumstances.

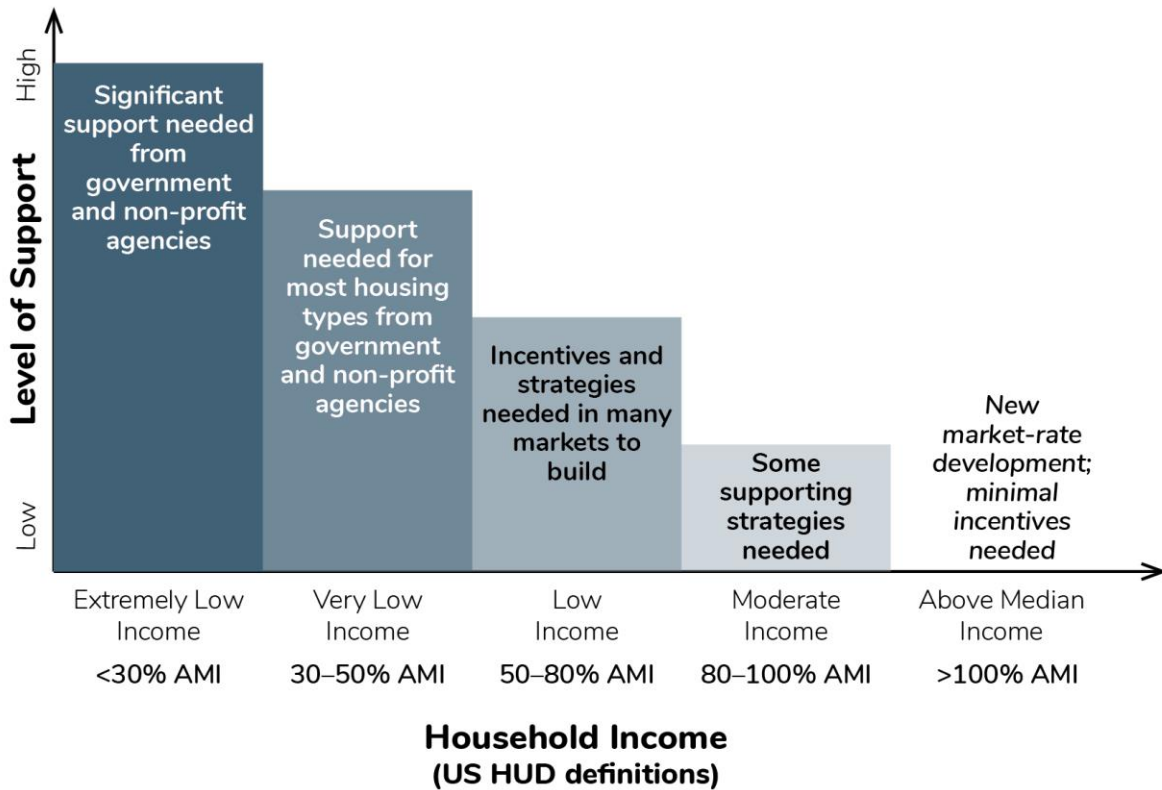
SUPPORT TO OVERCOME BARRIERS

Given barriers, building or rehabilitating new units for different affordability levels can be challenging. Exhibit 12. Levels of Support Needed by Household Income Category. highlights the general levels of support expected to be required to build or rehabilitate units affordable to different income categories:

At the lowest income levels, significant support from government agencies and non-profits is required. The net revenue received from the residents of an income-restricted housing development may be considerably lower than market rents. In some cases, this may not even be enough to cover the ongoing expenses of the building. Support is necessary to bridge the gap to ensure that projects remain feasible and sustainable.

As income increases and more net income can be received from a property, less support is needed. In some parts of the region, market-rate rents may even be affordable to low- and moderate-income households, requiring less support than in other locations.

Exhibit 12. Levels of Support Needed by Household Income Category.



Note: Under [RCW 84.14.010](#), “low income” in King County is considered to be household income at or below 100% of AMI, and “moderate income” is considered to be between 100 and 150% AMI.

Source: BERK, 2021.

The types of support that can be provided by governments for building and preserving affordable housing can range significantly, and include such elements as:

- **Direct financial support** for development, such as grants, loans, donated land, or tax credits
- **Indirect financial support** for development, such as fee waivers or tax exemptions
- **Regulatory incentives**, such as bonus site densities, lower parking requirements, or flexible development requirements
- **Financial support for residents**, such as housing vouchers or other types of rental assistance

One of the biggest challenges here, however, is that the available resources can often be outstripped by the need for affordable housing. Development costs can be upwards of \$300,000 per unit or more, depending on project characteristics and market conditions, and for many projects serving specialized populations, other on-site services may also be needed which require additional expenditures.

This rough estimate would suggest that in Renton, meeting the need of around 894 new units affordable to extremely low-income households by 2040²⁰ would require at least \$250–300 million in today’s dollars to build over the next 20 years. Different levels of support would also likely be needed for the 1,079 units that would be affordable to households at to 30-50% and the 1,852 units affordable to 50-80% AMI as well.

While new funding from sales taxes under the SHB 1406 and HB 1590 programs can help to address this gap, long-term solutions cannot be addressed by the City alone. Available resources in Renton need to be leveraged, and planning for achieving these goals should include a wide range of partners, including housing authorities, non-profits, the development community, and other stakeholders in the housing market.

²⁰ See Appendix C, Exhibit 79.

Strategic Recommendations

OVERVIEW

The HAP provides six recommendations to achieve the housing goals. These recommendations represent a broad set of actions that the City can pursue during the plan's five-year implementation horizon. They also consider additional long-term recommendations for the City to review as part of the Comprehensive Plan update in 2024 and beyond.

The strategic recommendations include the following, and are not listed in order of importance:

1. **Support partnerships to meet housing goals** that the City cannot achieve alone.
2. **Promote diverse housing types and sizes in neighborhoods** to provide a greater supply and diversity of housing while managing the impacts of growth on current and future residents.
3. **Incentivize housing development** to improve housing project feasibility and encourage more housing units to be built in Renton.
4. **Promote affordable housing preservation and development** to maintain and enhance current inventories of affordable housing, especially subsidized and naturally occurring low-income housing.
5. **Use available land for affordable housing development**, including surplus government land and vacant or underutilized land managed by other organizations.
6. **Align Comprehensive Plan policies** to ensure that the City's high-level housing policies consider racial equity and social justice considerations in land use and provide guidance to address other housing needs discussed in this Plan.

The following details are provided for each of the strategic recommendations:

- **Summary.** A short discussion of the intent of the recommendation.
- **Rationale.** A review of the relevant housing trends and findings from the HNA and other sources.
- **Policy Principles.** How the intent and expected effects of these policies align with the Housing Action Plan Principles.
- **Implementation.** The steps to implement the recommendation. More detail is provided in the Implementation Plan included as part of this document.
- **Considerations.** Issues and risks that should be considered as part of implementation, including approaches to managing potential risks.

RECOMMENDATION 1: SUPPORT PARTNERSHIPS TO MEET HOUSING GOALS

Summary

The City has been a proactive and effective partner in encouraging housing development that meets the housing needs of the community. This strategy aims to encourage future successes with housing policies and programs through new partnerships and strengthening existing partnerships.

Rationale

Gaps between housing supply and demand are regional in nature. While the City manages development regulations, developers build housing. Likewise, the City does not build or manage low-income housing. Developers, local housing-related non-profits, and public housing authorities provide low-income housing. In Renton, the Renton Housing Authority has a primary role as the public housing authority responsible for affordable housing development. Considering the needs of these stakeholders is essential in determining the best approaches to address housing needs for current and future residents.

The City should continue working with developers and residents to identify challenges and barriers to local development and growth. This can include local housing affordability challenges, increases in development costs, changes in community demands for housing types, and other trends. Maintaining long-term engagement with the community can help guide what actions the City should take in addressing future housing needs and integrating new housing into existing neighborhoods.

Policy Principles

Collaboration with Partners. Maintaining existing partnerships and expanding efforts with other agencies and organizations will encourage collaboration towards providing housing options and meeting housing need.

Effective Policy. As noted above, the City does not build or manage affordable or market-rate housing. Coordination with partners is the City's best option to ensure that changes in the City's policies, plans, and programs can help to achieve local housing goals.

Implementation

1.1 Create a Housing Advisory Committee to coordinate housing efforts across stakeholders. Given the importance of stakeholders in meeting housing needs in Renton, the City should foster continued coordination with partners on major housing issues. A committee would help the City coordinate policy across services and housing on an ongoing basis with other organizations and agencies working in the housing market. The City may have an opportunity to expand the scope of an existing committee to consider housing issues and act as an advisory body for the Housing Action Plan. This may require broadening participation to affordable housing developers and other housing service providers.

1.2 Continue efforts with neighboring communities to address housing needs in South King County.

The City should continue its participation in the South King Housing and Homelessness Partners (SKHHP), the other South King Housing (SoKiHo) group cities (Auburn, Burien, Federal Way, Kent, and Tukwila), and the South King County Joint Planners and Developers (SKCJPD). Where possible, the City should continue active efforts to pursue joint efforts to fund affordable housing, monitor affordable housing, and align local incentives and regulations.

1.3 Continue to coordinate with county and regional agencies on needs for affordable housing.

In addition to neighboring communities, the City should continue its advocacy and coordination with King County and associated entities with respect to developing more affordable housing. In particular, the City should focus on continuing collaboration with the County on planning in the unincorporated areas of the Renton Urban Growth Area, coordinating planning of extremely low-income housing development, and participating with the Affordable Housing Committee on regional solutions and accountability in King County.

1.4 Identify long-term funding sources for the Renton Housing Authority to promote the development of affordable housing options.

The Renton Housing Authority (RHA) has been a critical partner of the City in providing affordable housing options in the community. The City has demonstrated success in coordinating and partnering with RHA in planning and neighborhood development in the Sunset Area. The City can expand its support for RHA by prioritizing significant funding sources to support RHA's development pipeline, including potential TOD projects near the new Renton Transit Center. Potential funding for RHA and other affordable housing developers is identified in Recommendation 4.4.

1.5 Regularly conduct community planning that integrates housing goals. Coordinating housing actions requires planning at the community level. The City should work to conduct planning processes in Community Planning Areas and designated neighborhoods that encourage collaboration with residents on solutions to increase density and diversity in neighborhoods while supporting neighborhood character, local environmental quality, and high-quality local services.

Considerations

Managing affordable housing at a regional level may require coordination across jurisdictions and organizations. Ongoing efforts to coordinate housing goals with other organizations may require the City to share burdens with its neighbors in the region. This will require that the City take on additional responsibilities beyond what would be required to address housing issues within Renton, and to contribute to joint efforts to address regional housing issues that extend across multiple cities.

Effective and consistent planning over the long term is essential. Although individual projects can benefit from one-time collaboration, the most effective means to maintain successful partnerships is to ensure coordination between the City's short- and long-term goals and partner agencies. The City should continue to coordinate long-term planning to align objectives with potential partners and engage in ongoing dialogue to determine other actions the City or partners can carry out to meet housing goals.

RECOMMENDATION 2: PROMOTE DIVERSE HOUSING TYPES AND SIZES IN NEIGHBORHOODS

Summary

Providing for a wide range of housing needs in Renton into the future will require different types and formats of housing. In addition to single-family detached housing, “missing middle” housing—townhomes, duplexes, and other single-family attached housing—will also be important in giving future residents different options of formats and sizes of housing. Allowing for additional housing types and sizes at appropriate densities in targeted areas of Renton can provide opportunities to build new housing at a faster rate and give choices that can be more affordable and accessible to a range of households.

Rationale

Zoning in the City of Renton as of July 2020 is provided in Exhibit 13, with details about the land uses allowed in residential and mixed-use zones included in Exhibit 14 and the total inventory of housing provided and recent housing production in Exhibit 15.

According to current zoning regulations, residential zoning that permits primarily single-family detached homes²¹ (R-C to R-8) amounts to almost 6,500 acres of land, or about 51% of the zoned area of Renton.²² However, as Renton grows, the need for broader housing options will increase, as will the need for additional locations for siting diverse types of housing.

Encouraging the development of “missing middle” housing and multifamily housing developed at higher densities that can provide less expensive options than single-family detached housing. At this time in Renton, this would be primarily with an expansion of duplexes on corner lots and potential rezones.

²¹ Note that single-family residential zones in Renton also permit ADUs, congregate residences, adult family homes, and assisted living facilities in addition to single-family detached housing.

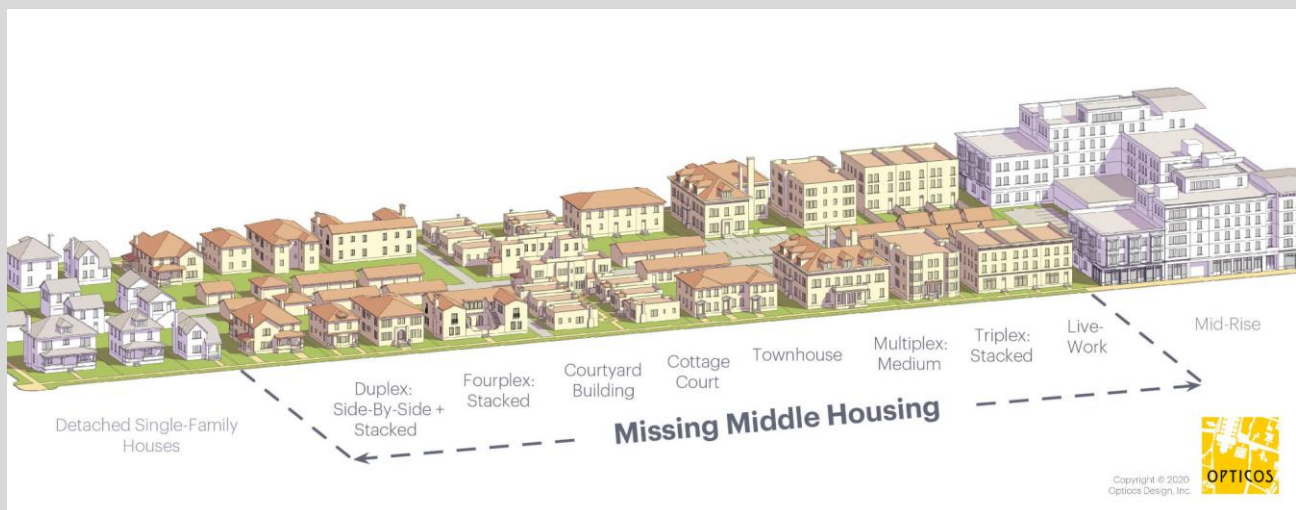
²² Note that much of the RC and R-1 zoned lands are constrained by critical areas and may not be suitable for development.

Missing Middle Housing

“Missing Middle” housing refers to housing that falls between single-family detached housing and mid-rise apartment buildings or condos in size. For example:

- Townhouses;
- Duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes (considered to be townhomes under the Renton Municipal Code);
- Courtyard apartments or cottages; and
- Stacked flats, among others.

These housing types, while common in older housing, have not been developed at the same volume as other types of housing in recent years. These building types are usually smaller and more affordable than single-family detached housing, while being more compatible with single-family detached housing than larger apartment buildings. Because of these advantages, incorporating missing middle housing can be an effective approach for creating housing options for low- and moderate-income households into existing neighborhoods that would otherwise be unavailable for lack of housing at the right size or at prices that they can afford. Additionally, promoting missing middle housing can also encourage greater densities and more efficient use of developable land to accommodate growth.



Source: Opticos Design, Inc.

There are important reasons for the City to consider expanding opportunities for housing beyond single-family detached homes:

- **Efficient use of available land supplies for development.** As noted previously, an estimate for the South King County subregion suggests that Renton will need to grow by at least 463 housing units per year to meet expected targets. Exhibit 16 provides estimates of capacity from the 2014 King County Buildable Land Report, compared with growth from 2014–2019. While overall supplies of developable land are expected to be sufficient for current projections, providing more options for locating a wider range of housing types and sizes can help to use these lands more efficiently, especially if Renton receives more growth than expected.
- **Provide more affordable options for homeownership.** Many developments in single-family neighborhoods maximize the home size and home price given land costs and may not provide affordable or attainable housing options for moderate-income households. Exhibits 17 and 18 show the distributions of new housing built since 2010 according to total living area (Exhibit 17) and assessed value (Exhibit 18). While it is expected that new housing will be more expensive in general, newer single-family homes are also larger than older houses. This may lock out moderate-income households who face greater cost burdens with homeownership (Exhibit 19).
- **Coordinate cost-efficient patterns of development.** Incorporating more density into the areas where the City of Renton is experiencing growth can increase the number of residents and improve access to transit and the ability of the City to provide more efficient services, such as utilities, and road maintenance.
- **Address historical patterns of inequity.** BIPOC households in Renton, primarily Black and Hispanic/Latino households, are more likely to be renters (Exhibit 20) and are more likely to be cost-burdened overall (Exhibit 21). Promoting greater production of new, lower-cost for-sale housing can provide more opportunities for moderate- and low-income households, including a greater proportion of Black and Hispanic/Latino households, to access homeownership.

Policy Principles

Equitable Outcomes. Affordable and attainable housing options are necessary to achieve equitable outcomes in the housing market. Smaller single-family attached housing and multifamily housing types can be less expensive to develop and reduce the costs of new housing on the market. This can allow more new housing to be accessed by households with lower incomes, including a disproportionate number of Black and Hispanic or Latino households.

Healthy Housing Ecosystems. Diverse housing leads to a mix of households with different incomes in a neighborhood. This not only supports diversity within a community, but it can also provide options for households with different lifestyles: first-time homebuyers, households with children, “empty-nesters”, and singles.

Household Prosperity. Providing more affordable housing opportunities for buyers can give households the ability to build their wealth in the homes they own. Allowing more diverse housing

types can facilitate the development of more affordable units, which permits a broader range of households to invest in the community and improve their economic mobility.

Implementation

2.1 Consider permitting additional housing types. The City’s current zoning regulations establish allowed uses in each zone. In recent years, the City has expanded areas in which ADUs and cottage housing are allowed, providing the opportunity for more diverse housing in single-family neighborhoods. The City can create further options through appropriate attached housing by allowing corner lot duplexes in residential zones that permit single-family housing. Further, the City can encourage the use of Planned Unit Developments to provide for alternative housing types in exchange for public benefits.

2.2 Evaluate minimum densities in R-10, R-14, and RMF zones. Areas identified for multifamily residential development include zones that allow for a maximum density of 10 to 20 dwelling units per acre. However, while these areas are classified as Residential High Density designations, new lower-density developments consisting of single-family housing or duplexes may also be sited in these locations, effectively reducing the amount of housing that can be built in these areas and the efficiency of the use of buildable lands in the City. To address this, the City should explore higher minimum density requirements for these areas, requiring that new projects result in densities of at least 50–75% of the maximum density in Residential High Density areas.

2.3 Add a second higher-density RMF zone to allow for greater flexibility. Currently, multifamily residential development in Renton outside commercial areas is limited to a maximum density of 20 units per acre under the Residential Multi-Family zone. While higher densities are allowed under density bonuses in exchange for assisted living units or affordable housing (RMC 4-9-065), more dense market-rate multifamily units must largely be sited as mixed-use projects in commercial areas. Creating separate RMF-20 and RMF-40 zones that allow for targeted locations in RMF zones to accommodate up to 40 units per acre can help to increase housing capacity in higher-density neighborhoods.

2.4 Evaluate areas for targeted rezoning to R-10, R-14, and RMF to encourage more density and diverse housing types. As Renton grows over time, portions of existing lower-density residential zones will be more suitable for higher density development and a wider range of housing types, especially as older housing units decline in value. The City should explore targeted upzoning that will allow for more intensive residential development, specifically with the goal of increasing infill and redevelopment in these neighborhoods where practical. These rezones should be based on the following considerations:

- Proximity to existing higher-density zones and neighborhood centers
- Current or planned infrastructure and services capacity to meet requirements for additional growth
- Proximity to high-frequency transit connections
- High potential for redevelopment within a 10- to 20-year timeframe

- Low potential or planned mitigation for displacing low-income households, considering the likely achieved densities of new affordable housing versus losses of existing naturally occurring units

2.5 Coordinate outreach to ensure residential design standards promote high-quality design and compatibility. If updates to zoning are expected to have substantial impacts on neighborhoods in the city, there may be concerns by current residents about possible impacts of these changes to their community. The City should engage community members in aligning design guidelines for form, style, and massing of new housing forms in infill and redevelopment projects to ensure that new development is consistent with neighborhood character.

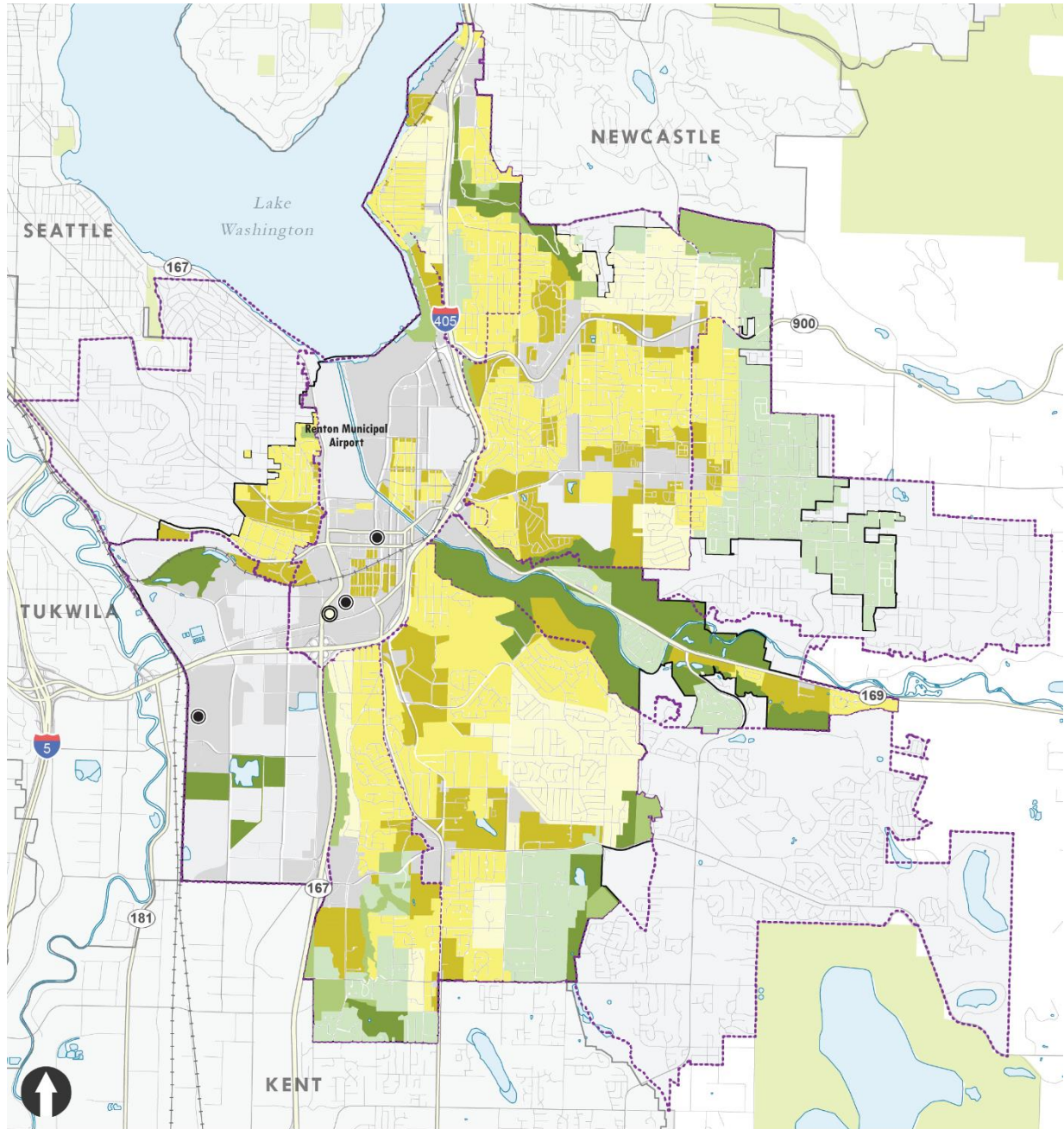
Considerations

Additional planning may be needed to accommodate potentially higher densities. Allowing for a greater variety of housing types and more households in a neighborhood may require conducting or updating community area plans if it results in higher demands for amenities and services. This may need to be supported by the tracking of achieved densities in neighborhoods and updating capital facilities and services planning to account for more households and greater needs than previously planned within an area.

Existing neighborhoods will require time for new infill development to occur. Accepting additional building types in existing neighborhoods that have already been built out will not result in significant short-term changes. Because of this, these recommendations will primarily result in slower and longer-term changes in housing types over time.

Neighborhood impacts will need to be considered through planning efforts. There are typically concerns from existing residents with incorporating other housing types in a neighborhood, especially as infill projects. Often these considerations involve concerns about height, massing, and style that may be addressed through design guidelines or development review. Communicating with residents about their concerns and collaborating through planning processes can help to achieve housing goals in ways that also protect neighborhood character, local services, and environmental quality.

Exhibit 13. City of Renton Residential Zoning.



LEGEND

Renton Zoning

- RC-Resource Conservation
- R1-Residential
- R4-Residential
- R6-Residential
- R8-Residential
- Multifamily Residential
- Commercial Zoning (all)
- Industrial Zoning

- City of Renton
- Community Planning Areas
- Other cities
- Urban Growth Areas
- Public lands
- Water
- Highways/State Routes
- Arterials
- Rail
- Major Transit Stations
- Future Transit Center



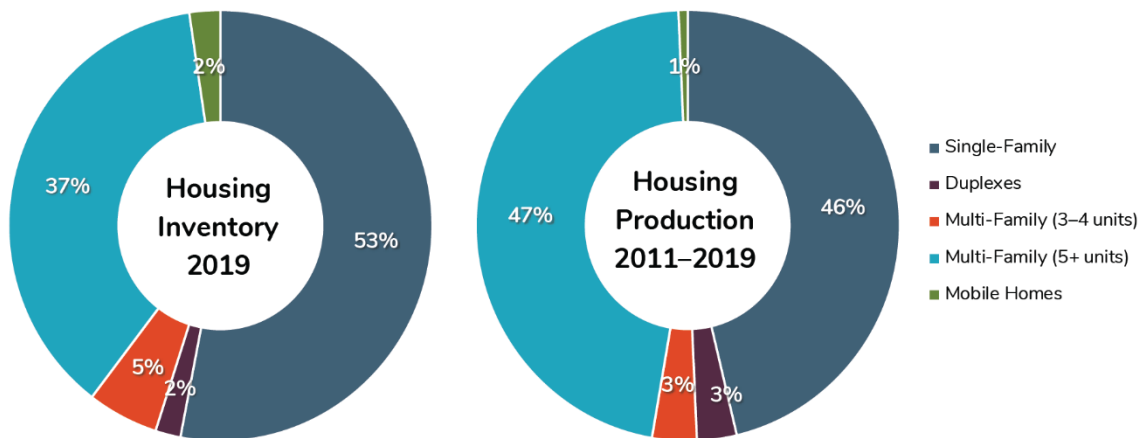
Sources: City of Renton, 2020; King County GIS, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 14. Allowable Housing Types by Zoning District, City of Renton.

	RESIDENTIAL ZONING DESIGNATIONS									COMMERCIAL ZONING DESIGNATIONS						
	RC	R-1	R-4	R-6	R-8	RMH	R-10	R-14	RMF	CN	CV	CA	CD	CO	COR	UC
Detached dwellings	P	P	P	P	P		P	P								
Attached dwellings																
Flats							P	P	P	P6	P6	P6	P6	P16	P6	P6
Garden style apartments									P	P6						
Townhouses							P	P	P13		P6	P6				
Carriage houses							P	P	P13	P6	P6					
Manufactured homes	P50	P50	P50	P50	P50	P	P50	P50								
Accessory dwelling units	AC7	AC7	AC7	AC7	AC7		AC7	AC7								
Live-work units								AD		AD		AD				

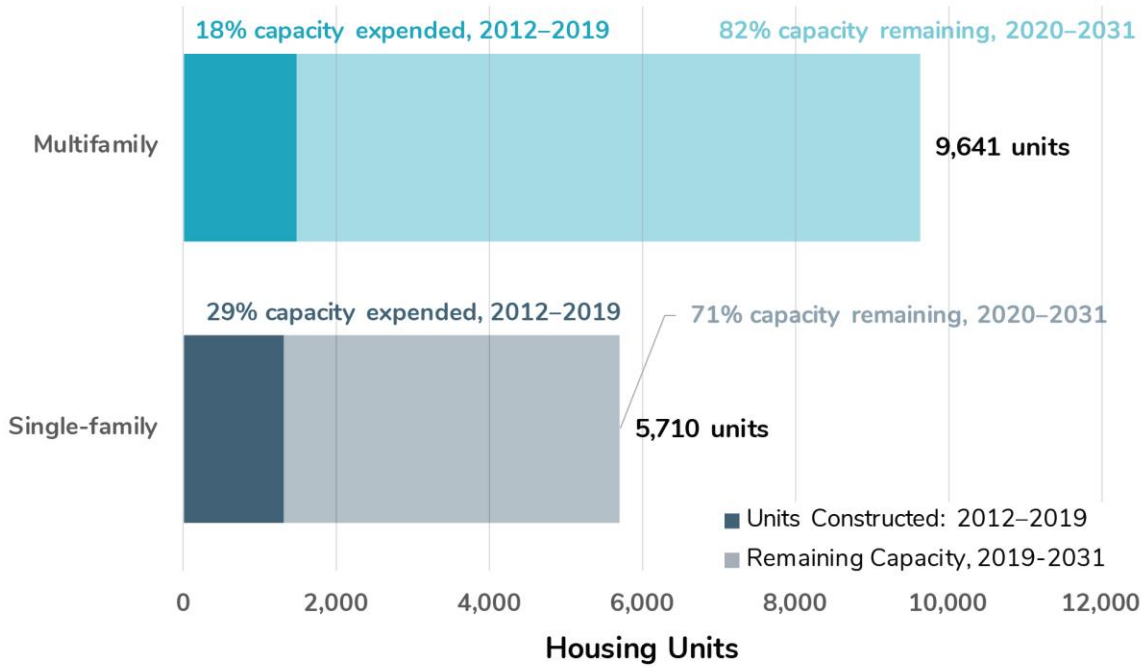
P: Permitted use
AD: Administrative Conditional Use
P#: Permitted use, subject to conditions under [RMC 4-2-080](#).
AC#: Accessory use, subject to conditions under [RMC 4-2-080](#).
Source: City of Renton [RMC 4-2-060](#), 2020.

Exhibit 15. Total Housing Inventory and Production in the Renton Market, 2011–2019.



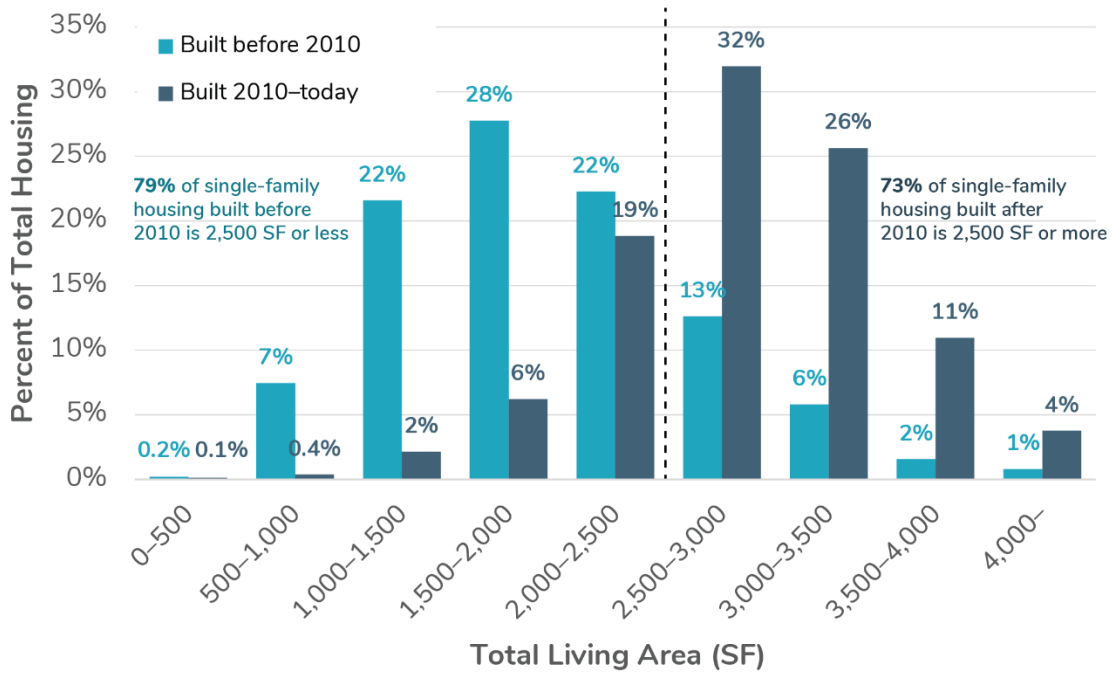
Sources: WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 16. 2014 Developable Land Capacity and Recent Development, City of Renton.



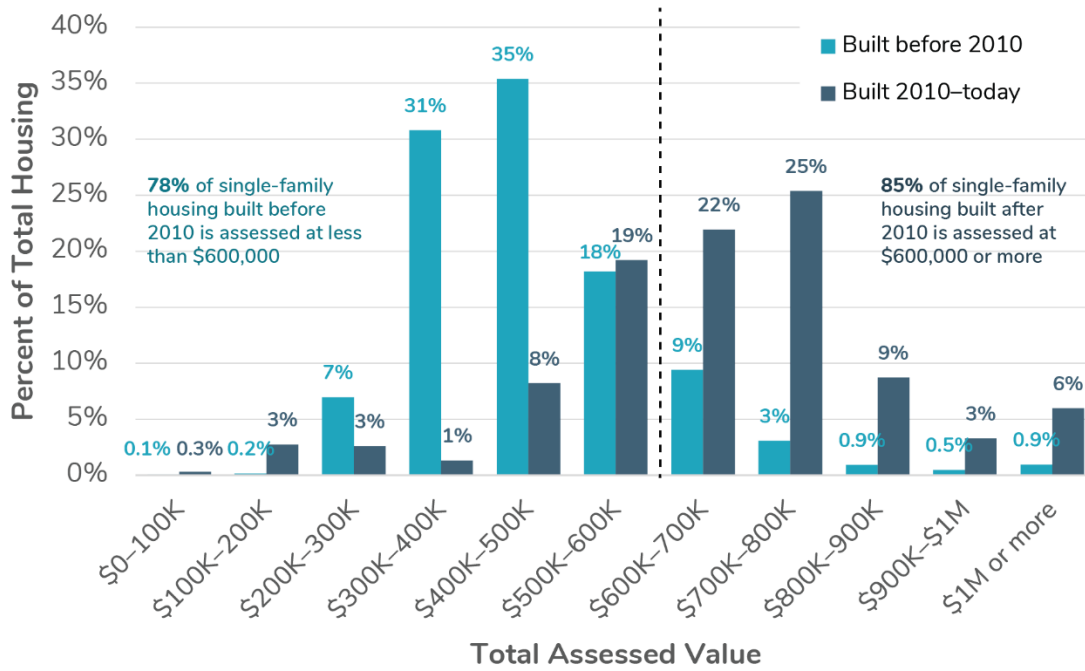
Source: King County Buildable Lands Report, 2014; WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 17. Single-Family Housing Units by Total Living Area and Year Built, City of Renton.



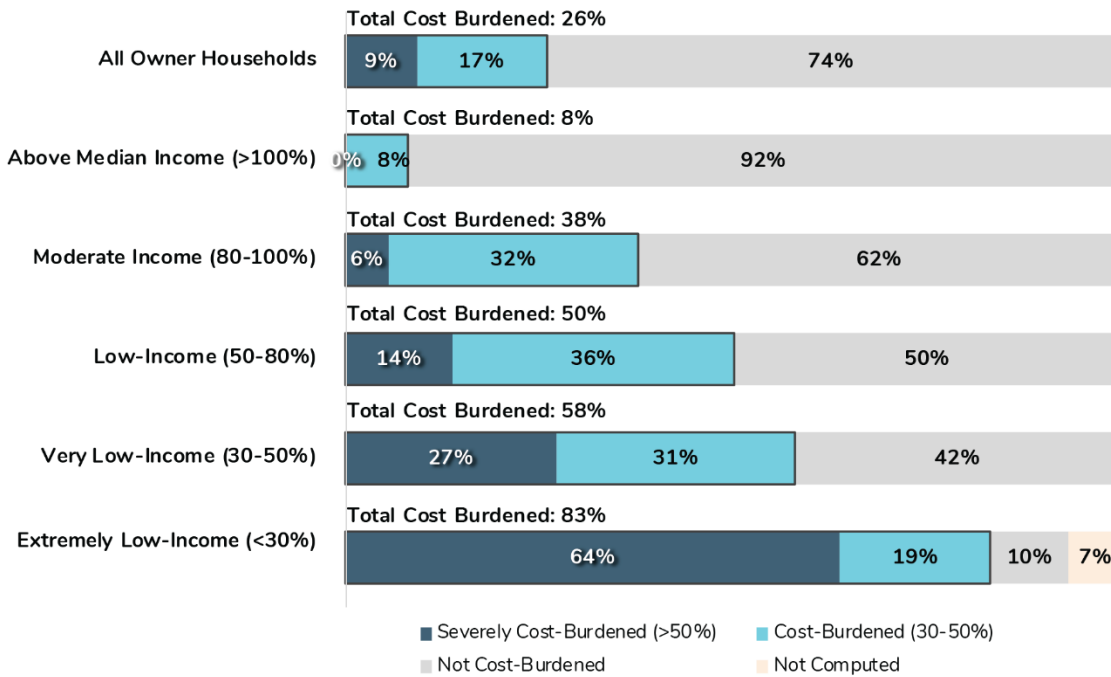
Source: King County Assessor, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 18. Single-Family Housing Units by Assessed Value and Year Built, City of Renton.



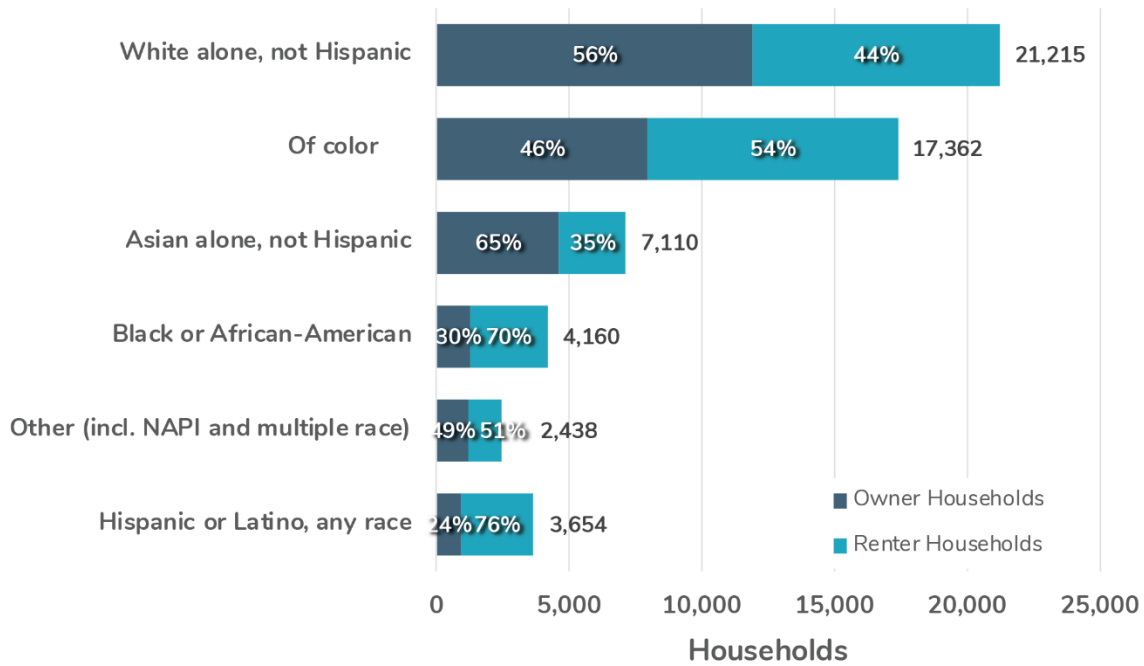
Source: King County Assessor, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 19. Cost Burden for Homeowners by Income Range, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



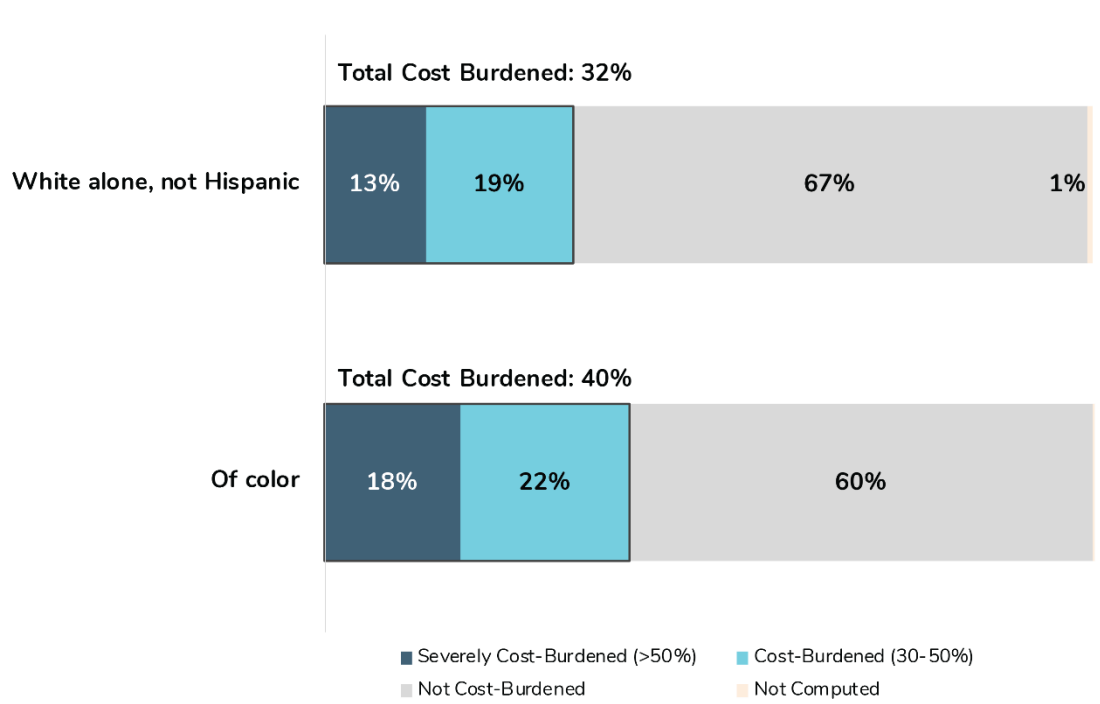
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 20. Renton Households by Race and Tenure, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 21. Cost Burden for Renton Households by Race, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

RECOMMENDATION 3: INCENTIVIZE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Summary

Renton is a desirable place to live and there is a strong market for new development. Given this strong demand, Renton has options to incentivize types of development through incentives and flexibility with requirements that will meet the community's current and future housing needs. Providing these considerations can help to promote the development of market-rate and affordable housing.

Rationale

Aside from changes related to the amount and type of housing that can be included in specific areas, housing development can also be promoted by targeted changes in City plans, policies, and code that can help reduce the costs of development. These can be wide-ranging, and include the following:

Parking Requirements

For developers, the cost of providing parking for residential projects can often be quite high, depending on the specific requirements and needs. For dense multifamily projects, providing parking within a parking garage (either above or below ground) can involve considerable costs. Providing flexible options with parking requirements can make a significant difference for housing affordability and project feasibility.

At present, the City of Renton has been strategic in minimizing the amount of parking required for new development, especially for affordable housing projects (which are only required at the rate of one space for every four affordable units). Under Comprehensive Plan Policy T-015, the City has expressed a clear need to “regularly review and refine parking ratios to account for existing parking supply, land use intensity, and access to transit.” The City also grants parking flexibility to developers that submit a supportive parking demand study. These efforts have allowed for effective management of parking requirements to date that have reduced costs of development.

Previous work from King County in 2015 determined Renton's parking requirements were below what was likely to be demanded by residents,²³ and minimum parking requirements are still lower than market expectations. However, ongoing efforts to keep parking costs minimized for developers could include the following considerations:

- Consider ongoing reductions in minimum parking requirements as part of regular reviews, if supported by increased transit access and development of walkable neighborhoods.

²³ VIA Architecture, Right Size Parking Final Report, August 2015. <http://metro.kingcounty.gov/programs-projects/right-size-parking/pdf/rsp-final-report-8-2015.pdf>. Also see the King County Multi-Family Residential Parking Calculator: <https://rightsizeparking.org/index.php>.

- Consider allowing internal parking to be converted to other spaces if parking demands decrease as neighborhoods develop over time. (Note that infill development is already allowed in surface parking lots).

Ground-Floor Commercial Space in Mixed-Use Buildings

High-density residential uses in Renton are typically mixed-use developments in commercial zones. Single-use residential buildings in these zones do not provide retail and service commercial spaces that support resident needs and promote walkability in neighborhoods. To that end, there are requirements under [RMC 4-4-150](#) for the CA, CN, and UC zones to accommodate commercial space in 50% of the gross square footage of the ground floor of mixed-use projects.

Ensuring walkability and neighborhood services is an important goal. However, some locations that are appropriate for residential development may not have sufficient demand to support these required commercial spaces. In these cases, commercial space may have a negative impact on the ability to finance or make returns on a project, especially those with affordability requirements.

To balance the short-term need for housing with the long-term need for affordable, walkable, complete urban neighborhoods, the City should consider reducing or waiving commercial space requirements in targeted locations or types.

Infrastructure and Stormwater Utilities

Development can also be constrained by the costs of providing services and infrastructure to support new projects. While a general review of the condition of Renton's infrastructure and planned investments under the Capital Facilities Plan did not suggest any specific limitations that would influence the overall rate of housing development, there may be case-by-case site limitations that may constrain development through the cost to extend utilities and provide services to development sites.

Stormwater infrastructure may benefit from greater coordination to help streamline development and reduce costs associated with projects. The City's surface water/drainage standards under [RMC 4-6-030](#) and the [2017 City of Renton Surface Water Design Manual](#) provide requirements for site drainage plans for almost all types of new residential development. These requirements address the mitigation necessary to comply with Renton's Phase II National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) municipal stormwater permit, with respect to both surface water runoff quantity and quality.

While a detailed analysis of stormwater management strategies and infrastructure is beyond the scope of this analysis, addressing requirements for conveyance, flow control, and water quality completely on-site can potentially be cost-prohibitive, especially for developments that may be otherwise constrained. An alternative approach that can take advantage of broader scales of management would be the development of a broader regional stormwater facility or stormwater park. Coordinating surface water management programs in this way can ensure that overall goals for stormwater management are achieved effectively and consistently. For housing development, this would allow the City to manage stormwater issues at broader scales, providing largely off-site solutions for drainage and

treatment in exchange for development charges and regular fees to support maintenance and upgrades. Waivers or reductions of these charges could also help to support affordable housing projects.

Policy Principles

Effective Policy. Being strategic and flexible with development requirements can help incentivize the types of housing that come to market. In terms of direct effects, this can reduce construction costs, improve development feasibility, and increase rates of development. More broadly, it can also support neighborhood livability, environmental protection, and associated goals in the city and neighborhood.

Equitable Outcomes. The market currently favors the development of more expensive housing. Flexibility in strategic areas of regulation can help reduce the costs for development, increase the feasibility of new development, and help to reduce the upward pressure on sale prices and rents. This can help to promote a more equitable and accessible housing market by maintaining options on the market for a broader range of renters and homebuyers.

Implementation

3.1 Maintain parking requirements and consider modified requirements in areas supported by frequent transit. The City of Renton has been strategic in minimizing the amount of parking required for new development, especially for affordable housing projects. The City should maintain current parking requirements to incentivize the development of housing that is affordable to moderate- and low-income households.

Under Policy T-15 of the Comprehensive Plan, the City sets a goal to carry out regular updates to minimum parking requirements to account for existing supplies, land use intensity, and access to transit. Future reviews of parking requirements should focus on mixed-use centers not currently zoned as Center Downtown. Areas currently or expected to be serviced with frequent transit should also be identified as potentially eligible for these lower parking minimums.

3.2 Allow flexibility in commercial space for affordability. Requirements for commercial space in mixed-use residential projects may potentially present unavoidable obstacles to development, especially for affordable housing. The City of Renton can use targeted flexibility in commercial space requirements to incentivize hard to develop sites or areas. This may be implemented by reducing or consider waiving commercial space requirements for affordable housing.

3.3 Explore the development of regional stormwater facilities to support residential development. The development of offsite regional stormwater facilities that can capture stormwater and/or provide water quality treatment to private development can reduce costs and preserve developable space on constrained sites. The City should study the creation of a regional stormwater facility or stormwater park that could be used to lower stormwater management costs associated with residential development projects. This evaluation should include an assessment of the impacts of one-time development charges, as well as ongoing utility charges necessary to support this facility.

3.4 Continue to encourage the use of innovative building techniques to reduce costs of construction.

While different building techniques are not directly associated with development regulations about density, the achieved density and development in an area can potentially be limited by the costs of construction. The use of innovative building techniques such as cross-laminated timber (CLT) and modular construction can potentially reduce costs and make projects feasible that use more of the development capacity of a site.

Considerations

Neighborhood impacts from changes in development requirements. Development requirements such as parking and commercial space could have an impact on the characteristics of a neighborhood, including other goals for developing walkable, complete communities. Coordinating changes to these requirements should endeavor to reduce costs for affordable housing projects where possible while supporting other goals and maintaining overall quality of life in these neighborhoods.

Needs for parking will change over time. The needs for parking in the city will not be the same in the future. As neighborhoods develop and more mixed-use and multifamily development is directed towards key centers and corridors, walkability and transit access will improve, potentially reducing the need for local vehicle trips. Similarly, a greater focus on attracting local employment can also support alternatives for commuting by Renton residents. As these changes can be expected to unfold over time, however, the demand for parking may also change over time. Reexamining parking over time can therefore be one way of keeping requirements reflective of current conditions and reducing developer's costs in providing parking.

Changing requirements for neighborhood-oriented commercial space could impact walkability. While reducing commercial space that may not be feasible to develop could move denser multifamily residential projects forward, a critical component to Renton's long-term planning is to encourage the development of walkable neighborhoods. Short-term flexibility with commercial requirements could potentially result in a loss of the spaces needed to serve the surrounding community, longer-term needs for growth must be considered or residents will need to rely on retail and services outside of the neighborhood increasing the communities dependency on cars.

RECOMMENDATION 4: PROMOTE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Summary

Trends in Renton’s housing costs and household income show that lower-income households in the community are facing affordability challenges. To help prevent these households from experiencing severe housing burdens and displacement, the City should work to preserve existing affordable housing and encourage new affordable housing development. The City is positioned to potentially provide funding for income-restricted units and incentivize property owners to maintain rents at affordable levels. The City can also support increased production of new income-restricted units, either as part of market-rate development or wholly affordable projects.

Rationale

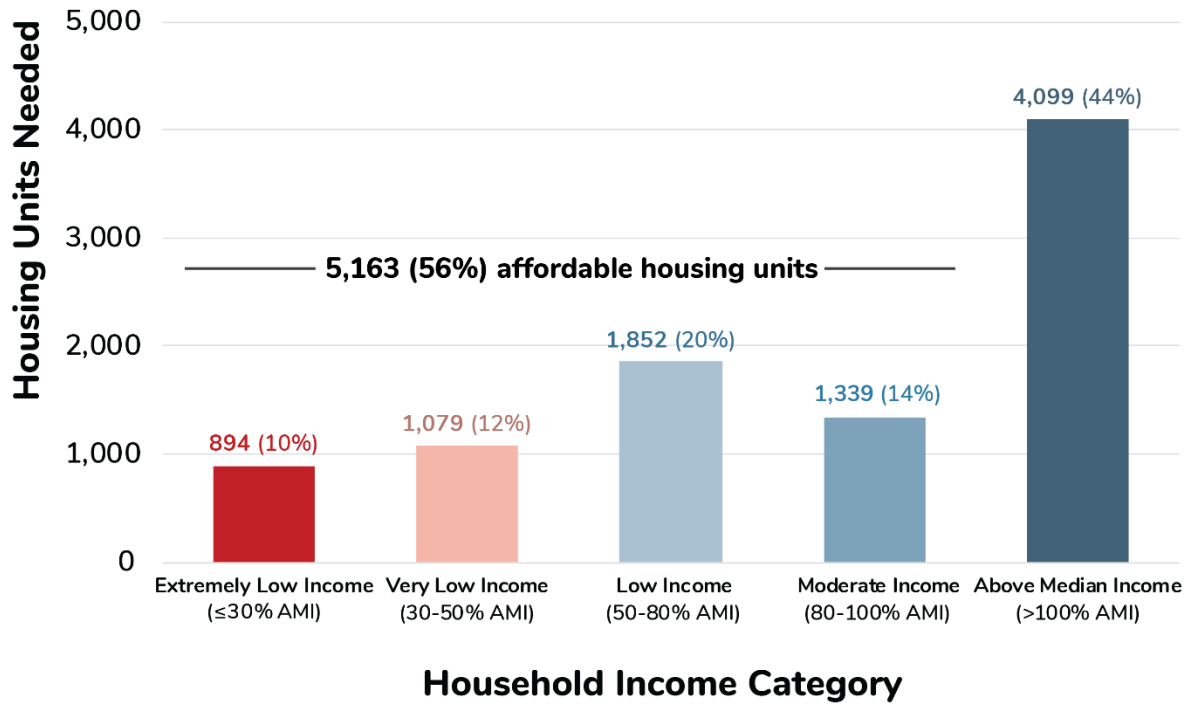
Increases in housing costs are a major challenge to many Renton residents and can mean being “priced out” of their community. This is particularly felt by renter and senior households. Community input reports that many people are leaving Renton to find housing that they can afford in other, further outlying, areas.

Exhibit 22 indicates the expected needs for housing over the next 20 years, divided by income category. Between expected growth and prior shortfalls, about 5,200 housing units, or 56% of total housing need, will be below median income, and 42% will be housing affordable to low-income households. As noted previously, the costs of building these units may vary depending on the availability of land and format of housing, but even addressing the needs for extremely low-income housing in Renton alone could amount to over \$250–300 million in today’s dollars.

Currently, there is a limited amount of housing available on the private market that is affordable to lower-income households. While affordable, this housing is often older and potentially in poor condition. As market pressures increase, increased rents can easily surpass the increased household incomes for current residents. With respect to displacement pressures, housing with lower rents can be either demolished for new projects or remodeled and rehabilitated so rents can be increased.

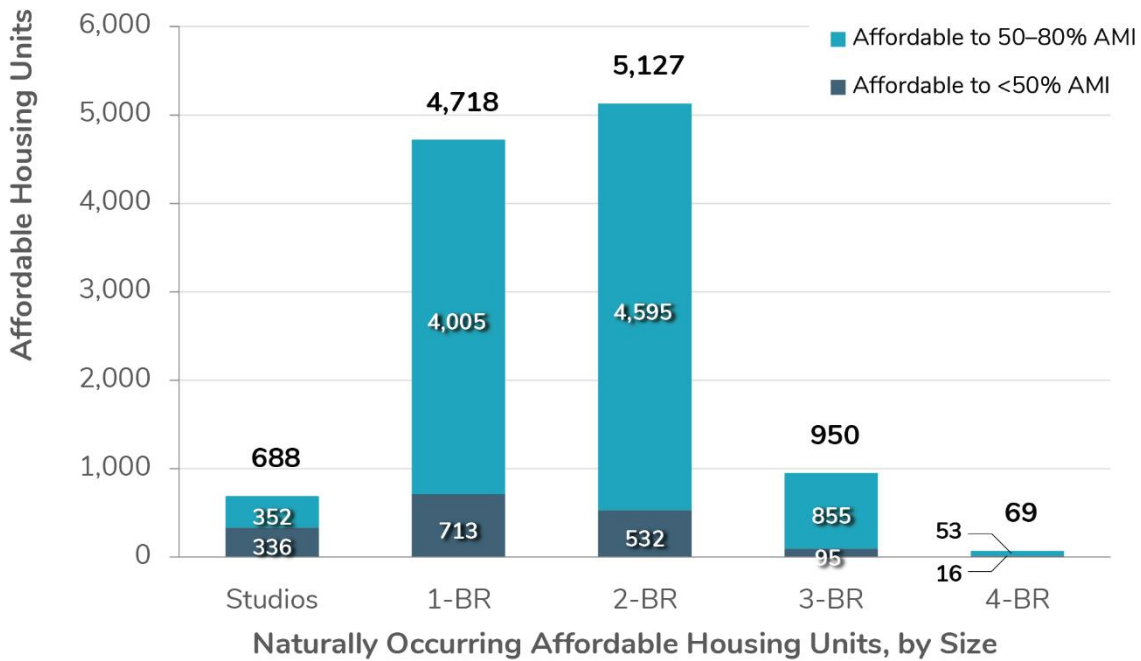
Many naturally occurring units also may not provide the types and amounts of housing that households in the market will need. Exhibit 23 provides an estimate of the current naturally occurring affordable housing in the Renton market, divided between units that are affordable to 50% AMI and below versus 50–80% AMI. This highlights that about 85% of the available low-income housing on the market is affordable only to households making 50% AMI or above, with only about 1,700 units available to very low- and extremely low-income households. Additionally, only about 7% of units affordable at 50% AMI or below and 9% of units affordable at 50–80% have three or more bedrooms, suggesting that there may be challenges with the availability of affordable housing for larger households, especially families with children.

Exhibit 22. Estimated Housing Needs by Income Category, 2020–2040.



Sources: EcoNorthwest, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 23. Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing by Size and Affordability, Renton.



Sources: EcoNorthwest, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Understanding risk of displacement can be difficult at the neighborhood level. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) has developed a “displacement risk index”, shown in Exhibit 24, which combined data at the Census tract level about socio-demographics, transportation, neighborhood characteristics, housing, and civic engagement to determine areas that are likely to be the most vulnerable to displacement in the region. According to this regional measure, western portions of the city, the City Center, North Renton, and South Renton, as well as the Sunset neighborhood, all have aggregate data at the tract level that would suggest the households in these areas would be at a greater risk for displacement. When these areas with higher displacement risks are compared with the locations of housing with low improvement values that may be at risk for redevelopment, as shown in Exhibit 25, the City Center and Sunset neighborhoods are at particular risk for displacement. (Note that there are some areas identified in Exhibits 24 and 25 that include mainly industrial and other non-residential uses.)

Preservation

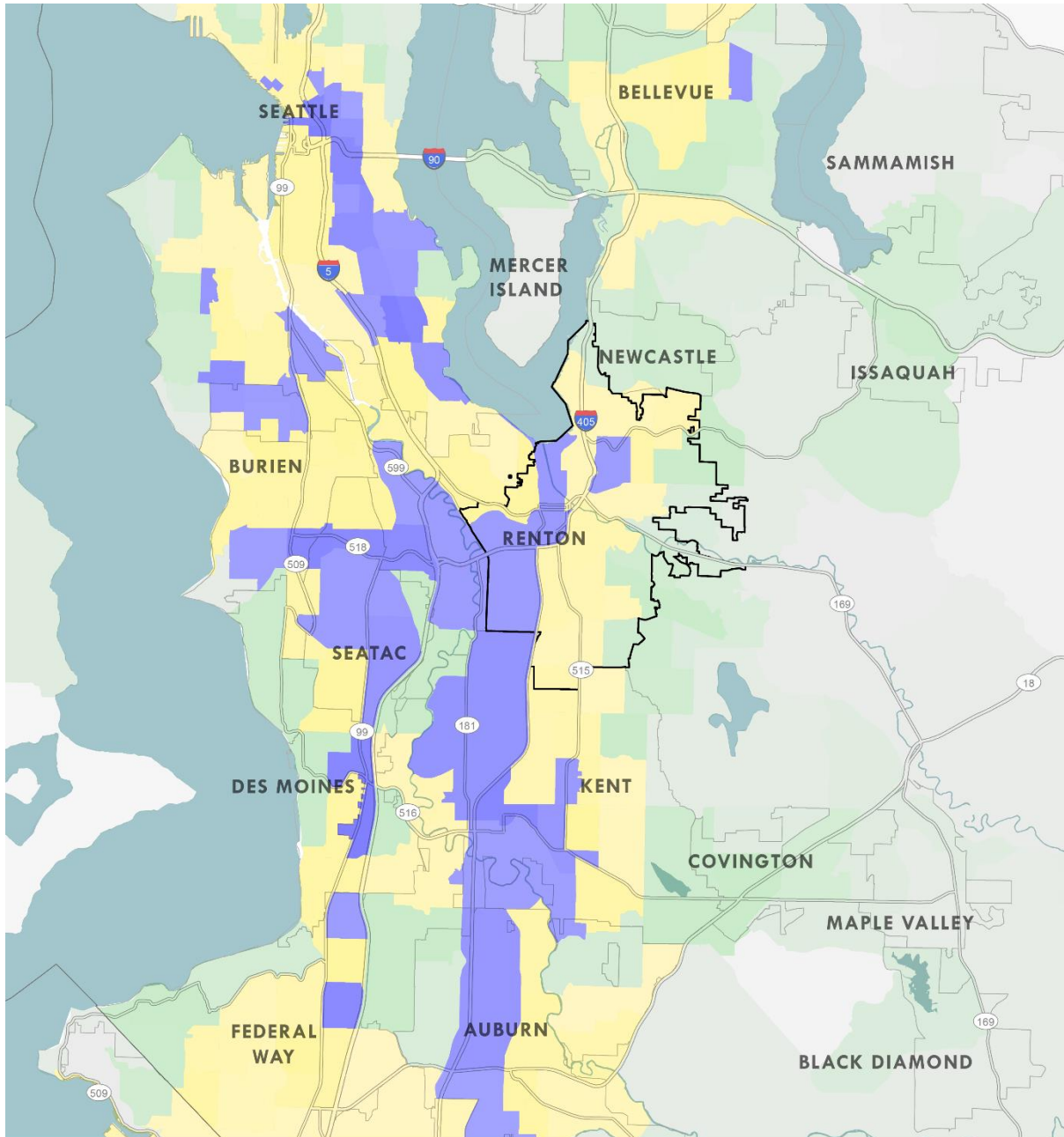
One solution to addressing housing affordability and potential displacement is to provide ways to preserve existing units. Preservation tactics include funding for acquisition of existing housing by non-profit developers and incentives to allow for the rehabilitation of existing housing in exchange for commitments to maintain these units as affordable housing into the future. Supporting efforts to acquire and restore these units can both increase the quality of these units for lower-income residents, as well as maintain their affordability and reduce displacement pressures.

This could be provided through four general approaches:

- Support **acquisition and rehabilitation** in a funding strategy by encouraging funding and support to RHA or other non-profit developers to provide for long-term affordability in existing apartment buildings.
- A **rotating loan fund** could be capitalized by the City, with loans provided for qualifying expenses to property owners, which would then be required to pay back the amount with low or zero interest, potentially with the option for loan forgiveness under certain conditions.
- A **grant program** could be regularly funded by the City to provide direct cash awards to property owners in exchange for agreements to keep a certain number of units affordable to lower-income households. This may require a covenant or other legal agreement to maintain over a fixed period, which would likely be calculated based on the value of the benefit received.
- **Property tax forgiveness** for the cost of residential improvements can also be provided through the City’s multifamily tax exemption (MFTE) program. In addition to an MFTE program for new market-rate and affordable construction in the Sunset and Downtown areas, the City has also allowed a rehabilitation project in Downtown Renton that created new housing units to receive the MFTE for the new residential units. Extending eligibility to allow the 12-year MFTE to be used for rehabilitation of existing housing units if the project provides affordable housing and meets the required State laws could support additional preservation of affordable housing.

These types of incentive programs and funding can help keep lower-income households in their current homes, reduce displacement in neighborhoods, and protect certain types of units that may be rarer in newer housing (e.g., larger affordable family-sized apartment units).

Exhibit 24. Displacement Risk by Census Tract, City of Renton and Surrounding Area.

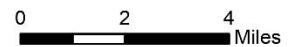


LEGEND

- City of Renton
- Other Cities
- Counties
- Highways/State Routes

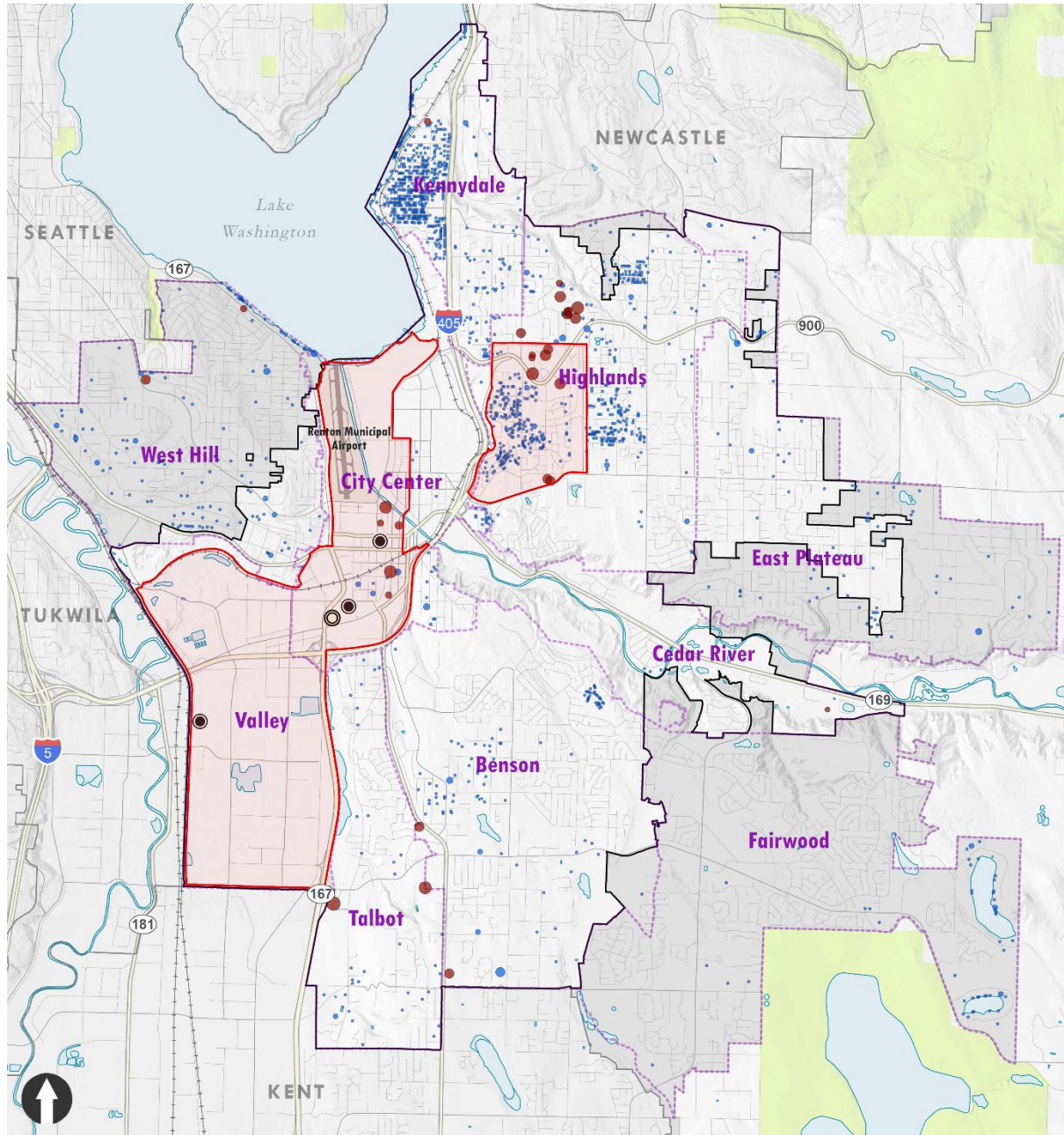
PSRC Displacement Risk Index

- Lower
- Moderate
- Higher



Sources: PSRC, 2019; King County GIS, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 25. Low Improvement Value Ratios and Higher Displacement Risk Areas, City of Renton.



LEGEND

Low Improvement/Land Value

- Units per Parcel**
- 1
 - 2
 - 3-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-20
 - 21-50
 - 51-100
 - 101-200

Unit Types

- Single-family, duplex, triplex, townhouse
- Multifamily and condo

Higher Displacement Risk (PSRC Regional Displacement Index)

- City of Renton
- Community Planning Areas
- Other cities
- Urban Growth Areas
- Major Transit Stations
- Future Transit Center
- Highways/State Routes
- Arterials
- Other streets
- Public lands
- Water



Map Date: November 2020



Sources: PSRC, 2019; King County GIS, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Development

Building new affordable housing projects can be more challenging, as the costs of new construction are higher, and timelines are longer. Generally, new construction requires greater subsidy than preserving existing housing. However, there are cases where the City can provide ways to encourage the development of new income-restricted units:

- Current programs, including **density bonuses**, **fee waivers**, and the 12-year option for the **MFTE** require that income-restricted housing units be set aside in new projects for low-income households. Additionally, the State recently provided the option for a **20-year MFTE** for projects that sell at least 25% of their units to a government or nonprofit to ensure long-term affordability.²⁴
- **Direct funding** and cooperation with partners can help to support development of low-income housing by these external agencies.
- Releasing **surplus lands** can also provide a means of promoting the construction of affordable units through wholly affordable projects or even through agreements with private developers to provide mixed-income projects. (See Strategic Recommendation 5 for more details.)

Although some of these solutions such as density bonuses will not require outlays by the City, others will require indirect costs (e.g., loss of fees waived for eligible new affordable housing projects) or direct support (e.g., grants and loans). Sources of support for these programs will need to be coordinated appropriately to encourage sustainability of these resources.

Policy Principles

Equitable Outcomes. Affordable housing in the private market can often be challenging to develop and maintain when rents and demand in the community are rising. By providing support for new subsidized development and upgrades to naturally occurring affordable multifamily residential units, the City can maintain the housing that serves lower-income households. It can be especially important to support certain types of affordable housing that would address needs that are difficult to meet in the market, such as deeply affordable units or affordable units that can support larger households with children.

Collaboration with Partners. These policies provide an opportunity to work collaboratively with property owners on the private market to develop and preserve existing affordable units. By providing targeted support through these programs, the City can maintain affordable housing in the private real estate market by leveraging public funding. The City can also work through non-profit developers and the Renton Housing Authority to provide new income-restricted units or acquire and rehabilitate housing without the need for direct management by the City.

²⁴ See [Section 7, 5287-S2.SL](#)

Effective Policy. The use of funding to leverage the development and preservation of affordable units in cooperation with private owners, non-profit organizations, and local housing authorities can be a more effective way of promoting access to affordable housing than for the City to pursue these efforts directly.

Implementation

4.1 Pass requirements for the distribution of information to tenants. The City can create requirements for landlords to provide clear and consistent information to tenants about their rights under the lease to ensure that all tenants in the City are informed about ways that they can learn about and enforce their rights under the law. This legal provision can include requirements at discrete stages of a lease (e.g., signing, receiving deposits, rent increases, eviction/termination, etc.). The information provided can include a description of tenant and landlord rights under the law, current code enforcement actions on the property, resources for further information, and options for disputes.

4.2 Adjust the Renton MFTE program to further promote affordable housing. Under [Chapter 84.14 RCW](#), cities can provide property tax exemptions under an MFTE program for both new and rehabilitated properties in urban centers. Currently, the City's MFTE program permits tax exemptions for new market-rate and affordable construction in Sunset and Downtown.

The City also has precedent extending the tax exemption to rehabilitation projects adding new units in the Downtown. Extending MFTE eligibility to rehabilitation projects as allowed under State law for new *and* existing units while requiring the provision of affordable units can ensure there are incentives to upgrade the quality of older multifamily housing units while preserving units for low-income households.

In addition, recent changes to statutes regarding MFTE under [SB 5287](#) allow for a 20-year MFTE to be granted to projects where at least 25% of units are sold to a government or affordable housing organization to support long-term housing for low-income households. This would provide an even greater benefit for organizations such as religious organizations and non-profits interested in supporting affordable housing options.

Finally, the City can promote longer term affordability to allow for a 12 year MFTE extension for existing 8-year or 12-year MFTE projects if the owner commits to a minimum of 20% of the units in the project as affordable housing for 12 years as provided for in SB 5287.

4.3 Develop other property rehabilitation grants and loans. The City may work to provide opportunities to access funding through grants or loans for property rehabilitation. An application process should be developed for such programs, and this may be targeted to address housing in lower-income neighborhoods at risk for displacement, including those with higher proportions of Black and Hispanic/Latino households. This should also involve requiring covenants from landowners to ensure that affordable housing is maintained after renovations are complete. The City may consider administering this program in conjunction with the existing Housing Repair Assistance Program

(HRAP) available to low-income homeowners that need support to make necessary repairs and retrofits to their homes.

4.4 Coordinate sources of funding to address unmet needs. Although the City cannot be the only source of funding, dedicated local dollars can work as leverage for affordable housing projects. By coordinating funding sources and targeted dollars to address local needs, the City can effectively support the construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation of affordable housing that cannot be met by the private market.

There are new sources of funding now available to the City of Renton through sales taxes that can be used for new construction or acquisition of existing affordable housing projects in the city. Other, new sources of funding may also provide resources for affordable housing development and preservation. By implementing a variety of revenue sources, consistency is built into the funding process for affordable housing to mitigate the impact of fluctuations in the economy.

Potential funding from the City may be provided to affordable housing projects from different possible sources, including:

- The Affordable Housing Tax Credit ([RCW 82.14.540](#))
- Increased sales taxes allowed under HB 1590 ([RCW 82.14.530](#))
- Additional funding committed to the Housing Opportunity Fund
- Linkage fees charged on new employment space
- A Housing Levy passed by ballot measure

4.5 Include affordable housing as a potential public benefit for a Planned Urban Development. Under [RMC 4-9-150](#), applicants interested in development projects not limited by the strict application of the City’s development, parking, street, and subdivision regulations may receive modifications to the regulations regarding allowable uses, urban design, street standards, and other requirements as part of a “planned urban development” or PUD. The proposed departures from regulations with a PUD design must be supported by a “public benefit”, which can include protection of critical areas and natural features, provision of public facilities, demonstration of sustainable development techniques, and application of superior urban design techniques (see RMC 4-9-150(D)2).

The City should specifically include affordable housing in the public benefits which can be provided as part of a PUD, which can provide these projects with additional flexibility with meeting regulations.

4.6 Explore increases to the density bonuses available for affordable housing. Under [RMC 4-9-060](#), density bonuses of up to 30% can be provided in CD, UC, CV, CO, COR, R-14, and RMF zones, with one bonus market-rate unit provided for each affordable dwelling unit constructed on-site (assumed to be 80% AMI for owner-occupied housing and 50% AMI for rental housing). The City should explore the following:

- Allowing bonusing in other zones allowing residential development, such as R-10 zoning

- Increasing the maximum density bonus provided beyond the existing 30% increase in exchange for targeting units for the lowest income households

These may be incorporated into a broader incentives report, and the recommendations should be used to evaluate potential changes to achieve greater affordable housing development through this program. This may require a longer-term approach and careful coordination with efforts to increase density in Strategic Recommendation 2.

Considerations

Preservation policies typically only maintain existing affordable units. Devoting resources to affordable housing preservation can be effective at maintaining the existing stock of affordable units on the market and preventing rehabilitation or redevelopment that would significantly increase rents. However, these approaches do not create new units or increase the available stock and need to be supplemented with other approaches to increase access to affordable housing.

The City cannot be the only source of funding. The City cannot be the only potential source of funding to support affordable housing development and preservation. Affordable housing developers and providers may look to access Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) through the Washington State Housing Finance Commission¹¹, Section 221(d)(4) mortgage insurance through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development,¹² and other federal, state, county, and even private sources of funding. The City can assist in providing information and application support to owners and managers with properties that may qualify for these programs to help layer incentives to make rehabilitation of existing affordable housing units more feasible.

Oversight is necessary to ensure that recipients comply with requirements. Ensuring that recipients of funding or incentives are complying with requirements for providing low-income housing will need oversight by the City. For new programs, this will require regular review processes that may need additional coordination, staffing, and overhead from the City for effective administration.

RECOMMENDATION 5: USE AVAILABLE LAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Summary

For developers of affordable housing in Renton, competing with the private market in finding sites for projects can be challenging. Providing opportunities to dispose of unused public or quasi-public lands at reduced or no cost can be one way of addressing costs for affordable housing projects and increasing the rate of production of affordable units in the community.

Rationale

In many cases, the high cost of residential land can mean that affordable income-restricted housing projects will be more expensive, which both reduces the total number of units that can be built and can threaten the feasibility of individual projects. Efforts to reduce or eliminate the costs of land required for affordable housing projects can help facilitate new affordable housing by reducing total project costs by 10–20%.

In Renton, there are parcels of developable land available that are not owned by private interests, but instead by the municipal, county, state, and federal government agencies; religious organizations; and non-profit housing groups. Implementing policies that encourage the disposal of available land by the City or other entities or organizations for low-income housing can support new projects where the cost of land acquisition on the private market would make it more challenging.

State law provides specific requirements for the transfer, lease, or disposal of public property for affordable housing under [RCW 39.33.015](#). Under these requirements, any state agency, including cities and counties, can transfer, lease, or dispose of property for low- and very low-income housing (and related facilities) for no cost. These transfers must follow rules established to regulate the disposition of property for public benefit purposes and must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Other requirements exist under statute for general disposal of real property, including property acquired for public utilities.²⁵

The City of Renton follows an approach for managing surplus properties as outlined in [City Policy 100-12](#). This policy outlines a public process for transferring or selling these lands, which includes requirements for public hearings, property appraisal, and property sales. However, this policy does not explicitly mention the use of these properties for affordable housing purposes or include any policies

²⁵ For the general disposition of surplus real property, municipalities are allowed to sell, transfer, exchange, lease, or dispose of property under [RCW 39.33.010](#). Public hearing requirements for this process are provided under [RCW 39.33.020](#). The disposition of lands originally acquired for public utilities is empowered under [RCW 35.94.040](#), but note that these provisions are superseded when the process used to dispose of property for affordable housing is applied.

that align with the provisions of [RCW 39.33.015](#). Incorporating explicit statements in the policy about this priority can ensure that appropriate sites can be diverted for use in affordable housing.

Beyond surplusing City-owned land, there is an important role that the City can play in coordinating between other public entities and religious or non-profit organizations with available land that could be developed for affordable housing. By engaging early and linking sites with potential for housing development with organizations involved with affordable housing projects, the City can help to facilitate these projects moving forward.

Policy Principles

Equitable Outcomes. Reducing the costs of land can be a significant boost to the feasibility of development, especially in cases where high local land prices can impact residential project costs. Providing surplus land to developers of affordable housing can be an effective way of supporting the creation of income-restricted subsidized units.

Effective Policy. Encouraging the use of surplus land available at minimal cost for affordable housing can provide a strong incentive that can help partnering agencies move forward with projects. Although some costs may be associated with the City disposing of public land for these purposes, this can be more effective than providing direct funding, especially if available sites for affordable housing are scarce.

Collaboration with Partners. The development of available or surplus public lands would not typically be coordinated by the City directly but would instead be managed by a public housing authority or non-profit organization. As such, this policy would require significant collaboration with these types of organizations to ensure that the City's housing goals would be met.

Implementation

5.1 Develop a general inventory of available properties. To coordinate the use of available properties for housing, the City should develop a process to identify properties that may be available for reuse for affordable housing. In conjunction with key stakeholders, the City should work to develop criteria to inventory available lands and identify properties that have the potential to be used for affordable housing. The inventory could include City-owned properties that are vacant, underutilized, or could be vacated, as well as those owned by other public entities and religious or non-profit organizations.

Properties identified as suitable for affordable housing should have additional information compiled to support planning and coordination necessary to bring these sites into use for affordable housing. This information should highlight the likely timelines and steps necessary to bring these sites into use for affordable housing.

The final inventory and suitable properties should be presented to City Council for discussion and direction on how to bring surplus sites into use for affordable housing, and possible avenues for cooperation with other organizations. The final approach should be developed as a consistent work plan to bring these properties into use for housing.

5.2 Coordinate with property owners to use vacant and underutilized sites for affordable housing. For properties controlled by other agencies or organizations, the City should reach out early to coordinate efforts to use available and appropriate sites for affordable housing. This may require discussions to determine the current disposition of properties and the likely processes involved with each organization in releasing these sites for use at reduced or no cost.

5.3 Identify partners for development of these available sites. As the City of Renton is not likely to pursue development of these sites directly, these sites will need to be released to other organizations for development and long-term management. The City should create specific processes for soliciting agencies that may be interested in developing specific sites for affordable housing, as well as coordinating with key partners such as the Renton Housing Authority to determine how the use of surplus sites could align with their own planning.

5.4 Update the City's real property disposal policy to explicitly consider the use of the City's surplus properties for affordable housing. [City Policy 100-12](#) outlines the process necessary for the City to dispose of surplus properties. This Policy should be updated to prioritize the use of appropriate sites for affordable housing projects and allow the City to allocate real property to affordable housing as part of the process in accordance with [RCW 39.33.015](#). It should also incorporate findings and considerations from Recommendations 5.1 – 5.3 as needed to facilitate the use of these sites for affordable housing.

5.5 Coordinate land acquisition and banking to preserve land for affordable housing. The City should work to coordinate land acquisition, management, and surplus disposal policies with Sound Transit, King County Metro, non-profits, and other agencies to implement land banking for affordable housing in transit station areas. This should be coordinated specifically to acquire or preserve land ideal for mixed-use development and provide affordable housing options that can leverage access to high-frequency transit services.

Considerations

There are specific statutory conditions for the transfers of surplus lands owned by the City or other governments. Under State law, there are specific conditions that must be applied for the disposal of surplus property which may impact their use for affordable housing. Providing clear direction on how to keep in compliance with these requirements will be necessary when updating our City code and policy documents as suggested.

Efforts for the sale of public property should be transparent, especially if for-profit businesses are involved. The sale of surplus public properties can be contentious, especially in existing neighborhoods. State law and City of Renton policies require a public hearing where Council determines whether properties should be determined as surplus and transferred or sold. Providing an understanding of the expected use of surplus properties for affordable housing during this process can be essential to ensure that the public is confident that proper procedures are followed, especially if for-profit and market-rate interests are involved.

Sales of surplus lands by other agencies are not determined by the City. Surplus lands managed by federal, state, and county agencies, as well as other organizations such as religious groups, local school districts, and non-profits, can also play a role in supporting affordable housing. However, these groups may not follow the City's priorities with respect to specific housing goals. Proactively engaging these groups on key parcels will be necessary to capitalize on opportunities for affordable housing.

All surplus lands are not guaranteed to be appropriate for housing. While the property portfolio of the City and other government and non-profit agencies may be considerable, with potential sites for surplus available, many of these properties have been acquired for specific reasons and may not be useful for housing. This could include sites that are contaminated or have other development limitations like critical areas, properties that are located in industrial areas and not zoned for housing, parcels with geometries that are not suitable for development such as future road rights-of-way, and so on. A selective review of sites to determine whether they would be appropriate for use for affordable housing can be essential.

RECOMMENDATION 6: ALIGN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES AND OTHER PLANNING

Summary

The City's required update to its Comprehensive Plan, due in 2024, presents an opportunity to align the City's long-range vision, goals, and policies to the identified housing needs in a way that is aligned to the community's values and hopes for the future of Renton. This can include statements that support the goals identified in this set of policy recommendations, as well as more specific targets to assist in implementation. Overall, changes to the Comprehensive Plan can provide broad guidance to all City departments and other agencies about how to address housing issues in the community.

Rationale

As noted previously, the Renton Comprehensive Plan is the focus of local planning, and all development regulations, zoning, capital investments, and related policies of the City must conform to the Comprehensive Plan. The next update for the Renton Comprehensive Plan is expected to be complete for 2024, which will ensure that the Plan aligns with ongoing regional and countywide planning, including countywide growth targets for the city.

The structure of the Renton Comprehensive Plan includes topics under several major Elements, with the two most relevant to housing development being **Land Use** and **Housing and Human Services**. Both Elements include goals and policies directly relevant to housing, with the components describing housing affordability, equity, and access incorporated in the Housing and Human Services element.

One key housing policy in the Comprehensive Plan is the goal that at least 40% of all housing in Renton should be low-income housing (according to statewide definitions used), with:

- 16% low-income housing (50–80% AMI)
- 12% very low-income housing (30–50% AMI)
- 12% extremely low-income housing (0–30% AMI)²⁶

This goal is based on the 2012 King County Countywide Planning Policies and the distribution of household incomes in Renton and the County overall. For these discussions, this assumes that housing is affordable if housing costs amount to 30% of household income or less. For context, housing cost burdens for households in the city are provided in Exhibits 26 (by number in each income category) and 27 (by percent of each income category)

Although goals for housing affordability are important to include in the Comprehensive Plan, there are challenges with accommodating these types of goals overall:

²⁶ [Renton Comprehensive Plan](#), Policy HHS-10

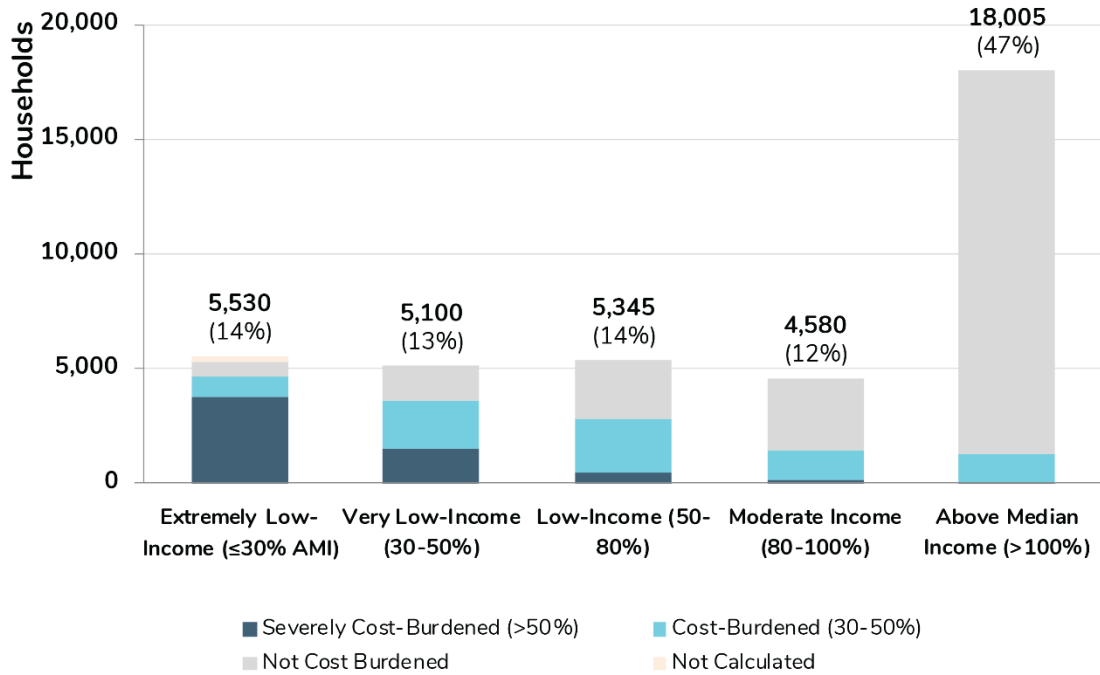
- The current policy sets goals based on the entire housing stock and does not provide information about the production of new housing or changes to existing housing needed to address these housing challenges.
- Households may choose to “downrent” and spend less of their income on housing, occupying housing that would otherwise be affordable to lower-income households. This means that naturally occurring affordable units may not actually be occupied by the population that needs affordable housing options.
- While rental costs are changing and impacting residents, increases in housing sale prices will reduce housing access for newcomers to the market but increase current homeowner wealth. Given that existing goals are set on overall shares of households by income, it does not consider households with low incomes but significant housing wealth.
- Households have other considerations for their housing choices beyond price, including accessibility for mobility-impaired householders, unit size/number of bedrooms in relation to household size, general condition and upkeep, and other factors.
- Other housing costs not related to rent or mortgage payments may be a greater source of financial uncertainty, such as property taxes or maintenance costs, especially for residents with fixed incomes, including seniors and residents with disabilities.

Exhibit 28 provides Renton’s overall projected housing need based on subregional modeling coordinated across south King County, which indicates that a total of around 9,300 new housing units will need to be constructed between 2020 and 2040. This estimate also assumes that 56% of these new units will need to be affordable to households below the median income, assuming current housing costs do not change.

These projections and estimates of housing need should be used in an expanded suite of indicators and aspirational goals under the Comprehensive Plan that address separate needs for housing in the community. This may include:

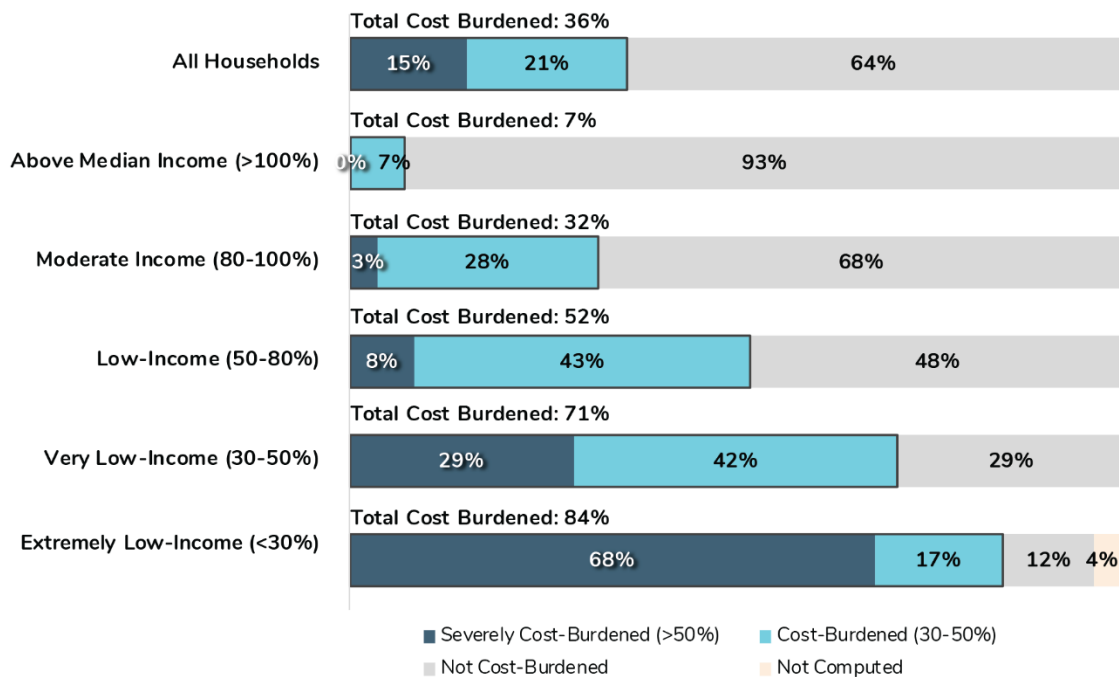
- Overall housing production rates and net change that can meet the goals as identified in this HAP and in the Countywide Planning Policies
- Overall aspirational goals for reducing housing cost burdens and inequity among households in the City.
- Production goals for subsidized income-restricted housing, with estimates for production as part of market-rate projects (likely at 50–80% AMI) versus subsidized affordable housing projects (at 50% AMI and below).
- Production goals for affordable family rental housing (e.g., affordable units with two or more bedrooms) and ADA-accessible units to meet expected needs across all income levels below the median.
- Production and net change in affordable owner-occupied units and change in homeownership rates for households below median income.

Exhibit 26. Housing Cost Burden, All Households by Income Range, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



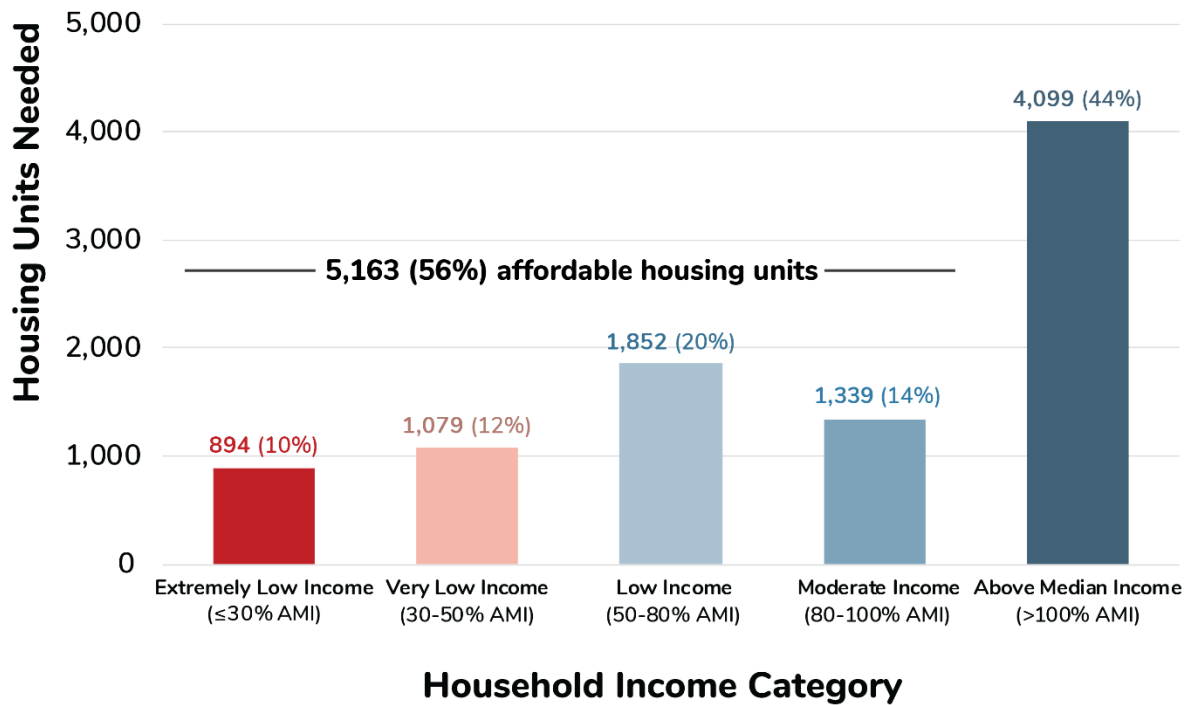
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 27. Housing Cost Burden, Percent Households by Income Range, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 28. Estimated Base Housing Needs by Income Category, 2020–2040.



Sources: EcoNorthwest, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Aside from addressing affordability, there is also the need to make other targeted adjustments to the Comprehensive Plan to help meet the overall goals of the HAP. The Comprehensive Plan governs the actions the City takes with respect to planning and development regulations, and changes are needed to help to guide the City based on the findings and recommendations of this report. Other plans and policy documents may also need to be adjusted to address the materials included in this document.

Policy Principles

Equitable Outcomes. Increasing the emphasis on equity and explicitly stating goals for equitable housing outcomes in the Comprehensive Plan can help to center equity in future housing discussions. This can involve including explicit statements in the Comprehensive Plan about housing affordability and the need for diverse types of housing and increases to housing production rates as well.

Healthy Housing Ecosystems. The Comprehensive Plan includes policies focused on transportation, infrastructure, human services, and other city functions. Increasing the emphasis on improving the variety and affordability of housing can promote coordination with other policy objectives. This can promote policies and programs that holistically meet the needs of households of all income categories.

Effective Policy. Incorporating a greater emphasis on inclusive and affordable housing in the Comprehensive Plan ensures that these priorities become part of the on-going policy directives of the

City. Additionally, updates to the Comprehensive Plan will also be necessary to implement other recommendations noted in this document.

Implementation

6.1 Reinforce the commitment of the City to address racial equity in housing across the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan includes references to social equity in terms of its overall Vision and efforts to achieve broad sustainability. However, clear statements about addressing issues of racial equity in the Land Use and Housing and Human Services Elements (and elsewhere), can help to achieve housing outcomes in the City that manage long-term issues of access to the housing market.

6.2 Increase the emphasis on housing affordability and reducing displacement with goals and policies across the Comprehensive Plan. While the needs of low-income households in the community are highlighted in the Comprehensive Plan, the risks of displacement in the community may be high, especially among lower-income households renting in the city. Clear policy statements should be made to express support for the City's efforts to combat displacement, improve affordability for current and potential residents, and expand options for subsidized, income-restricted housing.

6.3 Amend the Land Use Element to accommodate more diversity and flexibility under residential land use designations. Under the Renton Comprehensive Plan, policies L-14 through L-16 manage the general types of housing allowed in areas under the three residential designations: Residential Low Density (RLD), Residential Medium Density (RMD), and Residential High Density (RHD). These policies and others should reflect a more flexible approach to the types of housing allowed as outlined in the HAP, especially with respect to achieving a more diverse range of housing options in RMD areas for households with different incomes and needs.

6.4 Update goals and identified needs for affordable housing. Needs for affordable units in Renton are described under Policy HHS-10 in the Comprehensive Plan. This policy should be refined to account for the availability of data, the intent of policies, and the findings of this Plan. While these should be based on meeting general estimated needs for housing growth, they should also clearly identify needs with respect to other aspects of the housing market, including the production of subsidized affordable housing projects, the production of affordable units in the private housing market, and maintenance of homeownership options for low- and moderate-income households.

6.5 Provide regular reporting on indicators to measure progress on housing goals in the Comprehensive Plan. As part of the implementation plan for the overall HAP, the City should commit to a monitoring and review process to track housing production compared to the identified need specified in 6.4 above. This tracking effort should be supported by expanded resources to the Department of Community and Economic Development, with the expectation of regular reporting to Council on progress towards housing goals.

Considerations

Certain Comprehensive Plan amendments should be managed as part of the upcoming update in 2024. Under the requirements of Washington’s *Growth Management Act*, the City of Renton and other communities in King County will be required to update their Comprehensive Plans in 2024. Although some updates to the Comprehensive Plan may be made between updates, the requirements for engagement and review, together with commitments by the City to consider racial and social equity concerns across the entire Comprehensive Plan, means that the identified changes in this section may be better to include as part of the broader updates.

There is a need for integration of housing goals into other Comprehensive Plan Elements.

Amendments to the Transportation, Utilities, Parks, and other elements should be coordinated with respect to increased rates of housing development and potential increases in density as discussed elsewhere in this Housing Action Plan. Local amenities and services supported by the City will also need to be considered. A full consideration of necessary changes is outside the scope of this Housing Action Plan but should be implemented to facilitate the goals outlined in this document.

Implementation

OVERVIEW

As part of the Housing Action Plan, it is essential to understand the steps necessary to implement the strategic recommendations. This Implementation Plan is intended to guide budgeting and work planning for City departments, coordination with partners, and ongoing efforts to update City policies.

This Implementation Plan is divided between three different recommended timeframes:

- **Short-term actions** are generally expected to be accomplished within the next two years and prior to the expected regular update to the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Medium-term actions** include actions to be accomplished over the next three to four years, including updates to the Comprehensive Plan coordinated as part of the regular update cycle.
- **Long-term and ongoing actions** are actions expected to occur beyond five or more years. This would include actions that may need to be coordinated through updates to the Comprehensive Plan, and actions that may depend on success with earlier identified actions.

As part of this plan, the following sections detail the following for the expected steps:

- A summary of the **action** to be taken.
- References to the **implementation step** referenced in the Strategic Recommendations section
- Potential **partners** for the implementation of the action.
- The expected **priority** of the action, where:
 - **Very high** priority actions are essential in achieving the housing goals identified in this Plan and should be a commitment by the City under the Plan
 - **High** priority actions are important for achieving the goals of this Plan and should be strongly considered during Plan implementation
 - **Moderate** priority actions are important for long-term implementation of the Plan but are not identified as part of the critical path in achieving identified goals
- The expected **investment** required, where:
 - **Very high** investment would require significant budget allocations by the City, including significant capital expenditures and external support.
 - **High** investment would require specific budget allocations by the City, including the use of existing sources of support specifically targeted to housing-related actions.
 - **Moderate** investment would require a significant focus of staff time and resources from involved City departments, potentially including the use of external consultants.
 - **Low** investment would be expected to involve staff time and resources as allocated to regular tasks, potentially with changes to identified priorities.

KEY IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Although there are several actions described in this section that are involved with implementing the Housing Action Plan, there are topic areas in the Plan that will require further coordination and guidelines for detailed tasks. Although these have been identified at a high level in this HAP, full implementation will need additional coordination and effort.

This will include the following:

- **Residential Land Use Analysis.** To implement Recommendation 2, the City should determine specific changes with land uses and zoning districts to achieve increased production and diversity of housing. This Study should be coordinated with and inform the Comprehensive Plan updates expected in 2024, and highlight opportunities for the following changes to the Code and Comprehensive Plan policies:
 - Minimum density requirements across different zoning districts to reduce lower-density development.
 - Targeted rezoning of certain locations to allow for increased development densities, especially in areas close to transit options.
 - Implementation of a new Residential Multi Family (RMF) zone to provide an option for a higher-density residential zoning district.
 - Allowances for new housing types in residential areas.

The Study should focus specifically on identifying changes that would result in new capacity and diversity in the city's housing stock. To support this objective, it should examine the feasibility and likelihood of development under different land use changes, and highlight options that would help achieve a diversity of housing types and sizes across the city through development, redevelopment, and infill across the city. Ongoing efforts should be coordinated to monitor the long-term effects of these changes and to adjust these policies and provisions as needed.

- **Development Incentives Study.** A more detailed review of the financial and economic considerations of development will be necessary to accommodate some of the targeted changes to affordable housing incentives identified as part of this plan. Specifically, this would cover the evaluation of both the adjustments to affordable housing incentives with density bonusing. This type of evaluation should determine how these programs would impact the feasibility of development, and whether there would be any additional concerns with impacts to overall housing production rates.
- **Affordable Housing Funding Strategy.** There are new sources of funding now available to the City of Renton through sales taxes that can be allocated to the Renton Housing Authority and other affordable housing developers to support projects in the city. Additionally, other sources of funding such as housing levies and linkage fees may also provide resources for affordable housing development. The City should develop a coordinated strategy to determine how these sources of

funding should be applied to maximize the yield of affordable housing and address critical gaps in the availability of local affordable housing.

- **Affordable Housing Land Strategy.** In addition to coordinating financial resources under the Affordable Housing Funding Strategy, the City of Renton should also look to coordinate available land resources for accommodating affordable housing. This includes possible options for infill, redevelopment, and rehabilitation of properties across the city, which may be owned by the City of Renton, other government agencies, non-profits, school districts, or religious organizations.
- **TOD Land Banking Strategy.** In addition to coordinating a broader land strategy, the City should also work with partners to provide land banking for affordable housing in transit station areas in the City. This should be done to ensure that affordable housing can be provided in these areas over time and that increases in land value due to changes in zoning or development regulations, new development, and increased transit access do not hinder efforts to provide affordable housing for lower-income households that areas supported by transit.
- **Ongoing monitoring and review.** Ensuring that these programs have the intended effects and will meet the overall goals identified in this Housing Action Plan and the 2024 Comprehensive Plan will require long-term efforts to monitor the development of market-rate and affordable housing in the City. Because of this, the overall implementation of the HAP should be reviewed with a series of indicators, as well as regular reviews within the next five years.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICY INTEGRATION

A substantial portion of the actions identified in this Housing Action Plan will either need to be implemented directly through changes to the Comprehensive Plan or will need to be supported through changes to policies in the Comprehensive Plan. Because of this, these revisions should be specifically identified and incorporated into the initial planning processes for the Comprehensive Plan update.

Under the recommendations in this document, the following step would be necessary to coordinate potential revisions for the Comprehensive Plan update:

- **Overall policy focus:** Develop a series of clear policy statements based on recommendations from the HAP that reinforce the commitment of the City in specific topic areas related to housing, including racial equity in the real estate market, anti-displacement efforts, and the demand for diverse housing types.
- **Affordable housing goals:** Amend the goals for affordable housing production based on the projections included in this report. These may be adjusted to account for 2021 revisions to the Countywide Planning Policies but should consider the identified need for additional affordable housing across income categories in the community.
- **Residential Land Use Study:** Coordinate a detailed review of current zoning and development feasibility to determine potential areas where increased development densities and new housing types would result in housing production. From this assessment, establish recommended areas

where zoning regulations should be changed through targeted rezones, minimum density requirements, and/or allowances for new housing types within these areas. These changes should be provided as revisions to the land use map and related policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

- **Development Incentives Study:** Develop a more detailed review of financial and economic considerations of higher density development to identify potential adjustments to density bonusing that would need to be implemented through the Comprehensive Plan process. As part of this work, provide recommendations for policies to be included in the Comprehensive Plan to implement these programs.
- **Affordable Housing Land Strategy/TOD Land Banking Strategy:** Coordinate the development of policies for land management to be included in the Comprehensive Plan that accommodate the overall goals of the Affordable Housing Land Strategy. This includes clear policy statements regarding the use of surplus lands for affordable housing where applicable, as well as the need to coordinate land management and banking with efforts by partners and ongoing planning in transit station areas.

RECOMMENDATION 1: SUPPORT PARTNERSHIPS TO MEET HOUSING GOALS

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
Short-term Implementation (1–2 years)				
Create a Housing Advisory Committee in partnership with the Human Services Advisory Committee.	1.1 Create Housing Advisory Committee	Human Services Advisory Committee	High	Moderate
Continue participation with SKHHP and SoKiHo cities on housing-related goals, including pooling of resources for affordable housing development and planning for increased subregional housing production.	1.2 Continue efforts with neighboring communities	SKHHP; SoKiHo cities (Auburn, Burien, Kent, Federal Way, Tukwila); other cities in South King County	High	Low
Continue the ongoing partnership with the Housing Development Consortium to promote increased market-rate and affordable housing development.	1.3 Continue to coordinate with County and regional agencies	Housing Development Consortium; Renton Housing Authority, private, public, and non-profit development partners	High	Low
Continue the ongoing partnership with the Affordable Housing Committee to implement recommendations from the Regional Affordable Housing Task Force’s five-year action plan.	1.3 Continue to coordinate with County and regional agencies	Affordable Housing Committee	High	Low
Provide for ongoing outreach to other County and regional agencies working with affordable housing.	1.3 Continue to coordinate with County and regional agencies	King County Housing Authority; PSRC; other state, regional, county, and local agencies	Moderate	Low
Develop an Affordable Housing Funding Strategy (see Recommendation 4)	1.4 Identify long-term funding sources for the Renton Housing Authority and non-profit development organizations	Housing Advisory Committee; Renton Housing Authority; regional, state, and local affordable housing agencies	Very High	Moderate/High
Incorporate discussions of housing needs and increasing housing production into community planning materials.	1.5 Regularly conduct community planning	Neighborhood organizations	Moderate	Low
	2.5 Coordinate neighborhood outreach			

RECOMMENDATION 1 (CONTINUED)

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
Medium- and Long-term Implementation (3+ years)				
Continue internal and external coordination on meeting housing needs and increasing housing production	1.1 Create Housing Advisory Committee	Human Services Advisory Committee; Affordable Housing Committee; SKHHP; SoKiHo cities (Auburn, Burien, Kent, Federal Way, Tukwila); other agencies; development partners	High	Low
	1.2 Continue efforts with neighboring communities			
	1.3 Continue to coordinate with County and regional agencies			
Implement the Affordable Housing Funding Strategy (see Recommendation 4)	1.4 Identify long-term funding sources for the Renton Housing Authority and non-profit development organizations	Housing Advisory Committee; Renton Housing Authority; regional, state, and local affordable housing agencies	Very High	Moderate/High
Continue to provide for community discussions about housing and intended changes to residential development regulations as part of regular planning activities.	1.5 Regularly conduct community planning	Neighborhood organizations	Moderate	Low
	2.5 Coordinate neighborhood outreach			

RECOMMENDATION 2: PROMOTE DIVERSE HOUSING TYPES AND SIZES IN NEIGHBORHOODS

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
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Short-term Implementation (1–2 years)

<p>Coordinate a Residential Land Use Study to determine specific recommendations for Code and Comprehensive Plan changes that would provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more diverse housing types in new subdivisions. targeted rezones to higher-density residential areas. minimum density requirements in higher-density residential zones. a higher-density Residential Multi-Family (RMF) zone. 	2.1	Consider permitting additional housing types	External consultant (optional); city departments; private, public, and non-profit development partners; residents	Very High	Moderate
	2.2	Evaluate minimum densities in R-10, R-14, and RMF zones			
	2.3	Add a second higher-density RMF designation			
	2.4	Evaluate areas for targeted rezoning to R-10, R-14, and RMF			

Medium-term Implementation (3–4 years)

<p>Based on the findings of the Residential Land Use Study, implement recommendations for Comprehensive Plan changes to allow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more diverse housing types in new subdivisions. targeted rezones. minimum density requirements. additional residential zones. 	2.1	Consider permitting additional housing types	External consultant (optional); City departments; private, public, and non-profit development partners; residents	Very High	Moderate
	2.2	Evaluate minimum densities in R-10, R-14, and RMF zones			
	2.3	Add a second higher-density RMF designation			
	2.4	Evaluate areas for targeted rezoning to R-10, R-14, and RMF			
<p>Coordinate the development of Code changes to implement the recommendations of the Residential Land Use Study.</p>	2.1	Consider permitting additional housing types in new subdivisions	External consultant (optional); City departments; private, public, and non-profit development partners; residents	Very High	Moderate
	2.2	Evaluate minimum densities in R-10, R-14, and RMF zones			
	2.3	Add a second higher-density RMF designation			
	2.4	Evaluate areas for targeted rezoning to R-10, R-14, and RMF			

RECOMMENDATION 2 (CONTINUED)

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
Long-term Implementation (5+ years)				
Monitor outcomes from changes to land use and development regulations under the Residential Land Use Study.	2.1 Consider permitting additional housing types	External consultant (optional); city departments; private, public, and non-profit development partners; residents	Very High	Low
	2.2 Evaluate minimum densities in R-10, R-14, and RMF zones			
	2.3 Add a second higher-density RMF designation			
	2.4 Evaluate areas for targeted rezoning to R-10, R-14, and RMF			

RECOMMENDATION 3: INCENTIVIZE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
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Short-term Implementation (1–2 years)

Support potential changes to parking under the Rainier/Grady Junction Subarea Plan.	3.1 Maintain parking requirements and consider modified requirements in areas supported by frequent transit	Housing Development Consortium; private, public, and non-profit development partners	High	Low
Study the potential for updated development regulations to permit alternatives for ground-floor commercial space.	3.2 Allow flexibility in commercial space for affordability	Housing Development Consortium; private, public, and non-profit development partners	Moderate	Low
Coordinate with Public Works to determine the potential for developing regional stormwater facilities to support new development, and possible locations.	3.3 Explore the development of regional stormwater facilities	Renton Public Works Department	High	Low
Continue to coordinate with the Housing Development Consortium and other regional partners to identify new building techniques.	3.4 Continue innovative building techniques	Housing Development Consortium; private, public, and non-profit development partners	Moderate	Low

Medium- and Long-term Implementation (3+ years)

Provide ongoing monitoring of parking utilization in neighborhoods to identify any changes in demand.	3.1 Maintain parking requirements and consider modified requirements in areas supported by frequent transit	Housing Development Consortium; private, public, and non-profit development partners	Moderate	Low
Implement any recommended changes to development regulations to permit alternatives for ground-floor commercial space.	3.2 Allow flexibility in commercial space for affordability	Housing Development Consortium; private, public, and non-profit development partners	Moderate	Moderate
Continue to coordinate with Public Works to implement regional stormwater facilities to support new development as recommended.	3.3 Explore the development of regional stormwater facilities	Renton Public Works Department	High	Moderate/High

RECOMMENDATION 4: PROMOTE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
Short-term Implementation (1–2 years)				
Coordinate the development of City regulations to require information on tenants' rights to be provided to renters as part of a contract.	4.1 Pass requirements for the distribution of information to tenants	Tenants' rights organizations; landlords and property managers	High	Low
Study and potentially develop recommended code changes to allow for a 20-year MFTE option and the use of MFTE for property rehabilitation.	4.2 Adjust the Renton MFTE program	Private, public, and non-profit development partners	Very High	Low
Develop an Affordable Housing Funding Strategy that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordination of revenue from sales taxes under SHB 1406 and HB 1590 to support affordable housing projects. ▪ Review of additional potential funding for affordable housing, such as General Fund allocations, linkage fees, and voter-approved levies. ▪ Identification of targeted affordable housing needs and associated public, private, and philanthropic partners. ▪ Development of grant and loan programs for property rehabilitation and affordable housing preservation. ▪ Coordination of support for property acquisition and rehabilitation. ▪ Coordination of support for capital and operations and maintenance by partners from available funding. 	1.4 Identify long-term funding sources for the Renton Housing Authority and non-profit development organizations 4.3 Develop other property rehabilitation grants and loans 4.4 Coordinate other sources of funding	Housing Advisory Committee; Renton Housing Authority; SKHHP Foundation; corporate and philanthropic partners; and regional, state, and local affordable housing agencies	Very High	Moderate/High
Amend the Planned Urban Development regulations under RMC 4-9-150 to include affordable housing as a public benefit.	4.5 Include affordable housing as a potential public benefit for a Planned Urban Development.	Private, public, and non-profit development partners	High	Low

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
Coordinate a Development Incentives Study to determine recommendations for potential adjustments to available density bonuses.	4.2 Adjust the Renton MFTE program 4.6 Explore increases to density bonuses	Housing Development Consortium; private, public, and non-profit development partners	Very High	Moderate

Medium-term Implementation (3–4 years)

Monitor compliance with the developed City regulations to require information on tenants' rights to be provided to renters as part of a contract.	4.1 Pass requirements for the distribution of information to tenants	Tenants' rights organizations; landlords and property managers	High	Low
Implement the provisions of the Affordable Housing Funding Strategy : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to allocate revenue from sales taxes under HB 1590 and from General Fund allocations to support affordable housing projects. ▪ Implement additional recommended funding options such as linkage fees and voter-approved levies. ▪ Implement grant and/or loan programs for property rehabilitation and affordable housing preservation (see above). 	1.4 Identify long-term funding sources for the Renton Housing Authority and non-profit development organizations 4.3 Develop other property rehabilitation grants and loans 4.4 Coordinate other sources of funding	Housing Advisory Committee; Renton Housing Authority; regional, state, and local affordable housing agencies	Very High	Moderate/High
Monitor the inclusion of affordable housing as a public benefit as part of the Planned Urban Development regulations under RMC 4-9-150.	4.5 Include affordable housing as a potential public benefit for a Planned Urban Development.	Private, public, and non-profit development partners	High	Low
Develop a series of proposed statutory and program changes based on the Development Incentives Study , potentially including adjustments to available density bonuses and MFTE program.	4.2 Adjust the Renton MFTE program 4.6 Explore increases to density bonuses	Private, public, and non-profit development partners; downtown organizations	Very High	High

RECOMMENDATION 4 (CONTINUED)

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
Long-term Implementation (5+ years)				
Continue to implement and update the Affordable Housing Funding Strategy : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify priorities for dedicated sources of funding for affordable housing, including sales taxes, General Fund allocations, and new instruments. ▪ continue to investigate and implement new sources of funding for housing. ▪ review the efficacy of the funding programs. 	1.4 Identify long-term funding sources for the Renton Housing Authority and non-profit development organizations	Housing Advisory Committee; Renton Housing Authority; regional, state, and local affordable housing agencies	Very High	Moderate/High
	4.3 Develop other property rehabilitation grants and loans			
	4.4 Coordinate other sources of funding			
Monitor the implemented statutory and program changes to development incentives based on the Development Incentives Study and provide for additional adjustments to available density bonuses and MFTE program, as required.	4.2 Adjust the Renton MFTE program 4.6 Explore increases to density bonuses	External consultant (optional); private, public, and non-profit development partners; downtown organizations	Very High	Moderate

RECOMMENDATION 5: USE AVAILABLE LAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
Short-term Implementation (1–2 years)				
<p>Begin development of an Affordable Housing Infill Strategy that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a general inventory of City-owned properties that are currently or expected to be vacant or underutilized and suitable for housing redevelopment. ▪ an assessment of other public or quasi-public vacant or underutilized properties that could provide sites for housing through redevelopment or infill. ▪ a list of affordable housing partners with the capacity and interest for developing on these sites. 	<p>5.1 Develop a general inventory of available properties</p>	<p>Renton Housing Authority; City, County, State, and Federal agencies; non-profit agencies; local school districts; religious organizations; affordable housing developers</p>	<p>Very High</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
	<p>5.2 Coordinate with property owners to use vacant and underutilized sites</p>			
	<p>5.3 Identify partners for development</p>			
<p>Develop amendments to City Policy 100-12 to identify affordable housing as a priority for surplus City land and prioritize the use of suitable properties for housing in cooperation with partners. This should be aligned with work on the Affordable Housing Infill Strategy, below.</p>	<p>5.4 Update the City's real property disposal policy</p>	<p>Renton Housing Authority, private, public, and non-profit development partners</p>	<p>Very High</p>	<p>Low</p>
<p>Coordinate the development of a TOD Land Banking Strategy in parallel with the Affordable Housing Infill Strategy that identifies opportunities for banking properties for affordable housing development</p>	<p>5.5 Coordinate land acquisition and banking to preserve land for affordable housing</p>	<p>Renton Housing Authority; City, County, State, and Federal agencies; non-profit agencies; local school districts; religious organizations; affordable housing developers</p>	<p>Very High</p>	<p>Moderate</p>

RECOMMENDATION 5 (CONTINUED)

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
Medium-term Implementation (3–4 years)				
Continue the development and implementation of the Affordable Housing Land Strategy , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing updates to potential public and quasi-public properties for affordable housing development and interested partners. prioritization of identified sites for affordable housing development. steps necessary to allow for affordable housing development on the most suitable sites identified. 	5.1 Develop a general inventory of available properties	Renton Housing Authority; City, County, State, and Federal agencies; non-profit agencies; local school districts; religious organizations; affordable housing developers	Very High	Moderate
	5.2 Coordinate with property owners to use vacant and underutilized sites			
	5.3 Identify partners for development			
Implement the TOD Land Banking Strategy in parallel with the Affordable Housing Infill Strategy by coordinating strategic land acquisitions with partners.	5.5 Coordinate land acquisition and banking to preserve land for affordable housing	Renton Housing Authority; City, County, State, and Federal agencies; non-profit agencies; local school districts; religious organizations; affordable housing developers	Very High	High
Long-term Implementation (5+ years)				
Continue the implementation of the Affordable Housing Land Strategy , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing updates to potential public or quasi-public properties for affordable housing development, interested partners, and processes for achieving affordable housing. monitoring and review of the efficacy of these efforts. 	5.1 Develop a general inventory of available properties	External consultant (optional); Renton Housing Authority; City, County, State, and Federal agencies; non-profit agencies; local school districts; religious organizations; affordable housing developers	Very High	Moderate
	5.2 Coordinate with property owners to use vacant and underutilized sites			
	5.3 Identify partners for development			

RECOMMENDATION 5 (CONTINUED)

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
Continue to implement and monitor the TOD Land Banking Strategy in parallel with the Affordable Housing Infill Strategy by coordinating strategic land acquisitions with partners.	5.5 Coordinate land acquisition and banking to preserve land for affordable housing	Renton Housing Authority; City, County, State, and Federal agencies; non-profit agencies; local school districts; religious organizations; affordable housing developers	Very High	High

RECOMMENDATION 6: ALIGN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES AND OTHER PLANNING

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
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Short-term Implementation (1–2 years)

<p>Coordinate an internal housing policy review for the Comprehensive Plan update to determine necessary changes with respect to specific topics, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall goals and identified needs Racial equity in housing Affordability and anti-displacement goals Allowable housing diversity and development flexibility Housing indicators to be used for regular monitoring and reporting of progress 	6.1	Reinforce the commitment of the City to address racial equity	Planning Commission; Housing Advisory Committee	High	Low
	6.2	Increase the emphasis on housing affordability and reducing displacement			
	6.3	Amend the Land Use Element to accommodate more diversity and flexibility			
	6.4	Update goals and identified needs for affordable housing			
	6.5	Provide regular reporting on indicators to measure progress on housing goals in the Comprehensive Plan			

Medium-term Implementation (3–4 years)

<p>Compile identified revisions to the Comprehensive Plan based on the recommendations in the Housing Action Plan and incorporate them into the review process.</p>	6.1	Reinforce the commitment of the City to address racial equity	Planning Commission; Housing Advisory Committee	High	Moderate
	6.2	Increase the emphasis on housing affordability and reducing displacement			
	6.3	Amend the Land Use Element to accommodate more diversity and flexibility			
	6.4	Update goals and identified needs for affordable housing			

RECOMMENDATION 6 (CONTINUED)

Action	Implementation Steps	Partners	Priority	Investment
Incorporate identified housing indicators for regular monitoring and reporting of progress towards housing goals into the Comprehensive Plan.	6.5 Provide regular reporting on indicators to measure progress on housing goals in the Comprehensive Plan	Planning Commission; Housing Advisory Committee	High	Moderate
Long-term Implementation (5+ years)				
Coordinate regular monitoring and reporting of progress towards housing goals into the Comprehensive Plan.	6.5 Provide regular reporting on indicators to measure progress on housing goals in the Comprehensive Plan	Planning Commission; Housing Advisory Committee	High	Moderate

MEASURING PLAN PROGRESS

To ensure that the Housing Action Plan is accomplishing its goals of supporting additional market-rate and affordable housing development in Renton, it is important to understand how progress towards the goals identified in the HAP will change over time. These may be related to the metrics defined in the Housing Action Plan, as well as other measures that may show progress on different topic areas.

For this Plan, recommended indicators are provided below in Exhibit 29 that describe how progress towards goals can be evaluated. This would include evaluating data both for Renton and for surrounding communities for comparison. References to figures in the Housing Needs Assessment in Appendix C have been provided here.

Exhibit 29. Recommended Indicators, Renton Housing Action Plan.

Indicator	Intent	Source/Reference
Promote diverse neighborhoods		
Housing development completed, total and by housing type	Understanding whether the city is maintaining production of diverse housing types over time to meet needs will require monitoring the rate at which new housing units of different types are produced	Exhibits 46–49 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Internal City construction permit tracking</i> ▪ <i>King County Assessor’s Office</i> ▪ <i>WA State Office of Financial Management, Postcensal Estimates of Housing</i>
Housing losses, total and by type	Additionally, understanding whether Renton is losing certain housing types more than others can be important to highlight whether diversity in housing types is being supported in the local housing stock	Exhibit 46 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Internal City demolition permit tracking</i> ▪ <i>King County Assessor’s Office</i> <i>WA State Office of Financial Management, Postcensal Estimates of Housing</i>

Indicator	Intent	Source/Reference
Housing production by size and square footages	Achieving housing diversity goals will require reviewing new housing unit by size and square footage to assess changes in building patterns	Exhibit 3417-18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal City permit tracking WA State Office of Financial Management, <i>Postcensal Estimates of Housing</i>
Build sustainable and complete housing ecosystems		
Housing development completed, total and by housing type	Understanding whether the city is maintaining production of diverse housing types over time to meet needs will require monitoring the rate at which new housing units of different types are produced	Exhibits 46–49 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal City construction permit tracking King County Assessor’s Office WA State Office of Financial Management, <i>Postcensal Estimates of Housing</i>
Housing losses, total and by type	Additionally, understanding whether Renton is losing certain housing types more than others can be important to highlight whether diversity in housing types is being supported in the local housing stock	Exhibit 46 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal City demolition permit tracking King County Assessor’s Office WA State Office of Financial Management, <i>Postcensal Estimates of Housing</i>
Housing price index	Significant increases in housing prices over time may suggest that homeownership is becoming less accessible for households.	Exhibit 53 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zillow King County Assessor’s Office
Rent increases (Year Over Year)	Significant increases in rents over time may suggest that households are at risk of being priced out of the community.	Exhibits 54–55 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zillow CoStar

Indicator	Intent	Source/Reference
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Promote more market-rate housing production

Net housing production	Achieving housing production goals will require reviewing the net increase in housing units in the community over time in comparison to production goals. In addition to measurements of housing development, this would also include housing demolitions.	Exhibit 34 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Internal City permit tracking</i> ▪ <i>WA State Office of Financial Management, Postcensal Estimates of Housing</i>
Vacancy rates	Vacancy rates in the rental market can highlight whether local supplies of housing are low in comparison to demand, and whether short-term production is meeting local needs.	Exhibit 57 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Zillow</i> ▪ <i>CoStar</i>
Months of supply	With the market for owner-occupied housing, another major indicator for the health of the market is how quickly existing housing is being sold, expressed as the number of housing units sold in a month versus the current inventory of housing available for sale, expressed in months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Northwest Multiple Listings Service</i>

Expand local housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households

Housing supply by income category	Housing supplies for low- and moderate-income households can be important to understand if there are shortfalls specifically with lower-cost housing in the city, and whether new development and existing stocks can be sufficient to meet changing needs.	Exhibits 63 and 66 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, 5-year estimates</i> ▪ <i>Zillow</i> ▪ <i>CoStar</i>
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Indicator	Intent	Source/Reference
Homeownership rates, total and by race/ethnicity	Understand the access of households to homeownership in Renton, especially BIPOC and other groups that have often been challenged to access homeownership in the past.	<p>Exhibit 70</p> <p><i>US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates</i></p>
Housing cost burden by household type and income category	In addition to identifying the potential supply of housing for low- and moderate-income households, it can also be important to understand changes in the housing burden these households are facing in accessing appropriate housing for them.	<p>Exhibits 64–65, 67–69</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, 5-year estimates</i> ▪ <i>US Census Bureau, Public Use Microdata Sample data, 5-year estimates</i>

Increase subsidized, income-qualified housing

Development of income-restricted housing units by target income range and type of builder	Understanding how much income-restricted affordable housing units are produced, both in mixed-income projects and in 100% affordable housing projects, will be a main indicator to determine whether housing production targets for low-income households are being achieved. Additionally, information should be tracked about the agency responsible for building these units, to understand how which agencies may be more successful with affordable housing production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>City tracking of affordable housing incentive use</i> ▪ <i>Permit data for development of affordable housing projects</i>
Use of City funds and incentives to support development of income-restricted housing units	In addition to general targets for creating new rent-restricted housing for low-income households, it is also important to understand how the City’s funding and incentive programs are being used to support these goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>City tracking of housing expenditures</i>

Note that one of the major challenges with this full suite of indicators is that information on Renton residents, including both renters and homeowners, can be challenging for the City to collect promptly. While data from the State Office of Financial Management and Zillow are typically up-to-date, available sources of household-level information such as the American Community Survey often have a lag due to the reliance on surveys. Because of this, the time scale of these indicators should be explicitly considered and explained in any reporting.

Appendix A: Definitions

The following are housing terms used in this report:

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)

According to state law, an accessory dwelling unit is a dwelling unit located on the same lot as a single-family housing unit, duplex, triplex, townhome, or other housing unit. These can be “attached”, or located within or attached to the housing unit, or “detached”, consisting partly or completely of a separate building.²⁷

Affordable Housing

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers housing to be affordable if the household is spending no more than 30 percent of its income on housing costs, which is also the definition provided in state law. Under the Washington State *Growth Management Act*, this is defined as not exceeding 30 percent of monthly income for households at 60 percent of median household income for rental housing, 80 percent median household income for owner-occupied housing.²⁸

The term “affordable housing” is often used to describe income-restricted housing available only to qualifying low-income households. It can also include “naturally occurring” market-rate housing that is affordable at this income level.

American Community Survey (ACS)

This is an ongoing nationwide survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau that is designed to provide communities with current data about how they are changing. The ACS collects information such as age, race, income, commute time to work, home value, veteran status, and other important data from U.S. households. ACS data is commonly used for the Community Profile section of a housing needs assessment.

Note that the availability of data depends on the size of the jurisdiction. Currently, the most precise and detailed data is only available for smaller jurisdictions through 5-year estimates, based on data collected and averaged over a five-year period.

American Disability Act (ADA)

This is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same

²⁷ See [RCW 36.70A.696](#)(1), (2), and (5).

²⁸ See [RCW 36.70A.030](#)(1)

rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.

Area Median Income (AMI)

This is a term that commonly refers to the area-wide median family income (MFI) calculation provided by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for a county or metropolitan region. Income limits to qualify for affordable housing are often set relative to AMI or MFI. In this report, unless otherwise indicated, both AMI and MFI refer to the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI).

Note that for federal, state, and local policies, Renton relies on the AMI calculated for King and Snohomish Counties.

Cost Burdened

When a household pays more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing, including utilities, they are “cost-burdened.” When a household pays more than 50 percent of their gross income on housing, including utilities, they are “severely cost-burdened.” Cost-burdened households have less money available for other essentials, like food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.

Household

A household is a group of people living within the same housing unit. The people can be related, such as family. A person living alone in a housing unit, or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit, is also counted as a household. Group quarters population, such as those living in a college dormitory, military barrack, or nursing home, are not considered to be living in households.

Household, Family

According to the US Census Bureau, a family is a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people are considered as members of one family.

Household, nonfamily

According to the US Census Bureau, a nonfamily household consists of a householder living alone (a one-person household) or where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom they are not related.

Household Income

The census defines household income as the sum of the income of all people 15 years and older living together in a household.

Income-Restricted Housing

This term refers to housing units that are only available to households with incomes at or below a set income limit and are offered for rent or sale at a below-market-rates. Income-restricted housing can be in public, nonprofit, or for-profit housing developments. It can also include households using vouchers to help pay for market-rate housing.

Note that for privately-owned properties, the owners typically receive a subsidy in the form of a tax credit or property tax exemption. As a condition of this subsidy, these owners must offer a set percentage of all units as income-restricted and affordable to household at a designated income level.

Low-Income

Families that are designated as low-income may qualify for income-subsidized housing units. HUD categorizes families as low-income, very low-income, or extremely low-income relative to area median family incomes (MFI), with consideration for family size. These levels are set in the state *Growth Management Act* as follows²⁹:

- Moderate income: 80–100% AMI
- Low-income: 50–80% AMI
- Very low-income: 30–50% AMI
- Extremely low-income: 0–30% AMI

Note that in high-cost areas, including King County and Renton, “low income” can include households with income at 100% AMI or lower.

Median Family Income (MFI)

The median income (the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having incomes above the median, half having incomes below the median) of all family households in the metropolitan region or county. Analyses of housing affordability typically group all households by income level relative to area median family income. Median income of non-family households is typically lower than for family households. In this report, both MFI and AMI refer to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Area Median Family Income (HAMFI).

Note that for federal, state, and local policies, Renton relies on the MFI calculated for King and Snohomish Counties.

Missing Middle Housing

“Missing Middle” housing refers to housing that falls between single-family detached housing and mid-rise apartment buildings or condos in size. This can include duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes;

²⁹ See [RCW 36.70A.030](#).

townhouses; courtyard apartments or cottages; and stacked flats, among others. These housing types, while common in older housing, have not been developed at the same volume as other types of housing in recent years.

Permanent Supportive Housing

Under state law, permanent supportive housing is 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.

Permanent supportive housing is paired with on-site or off-site voluntary services designed to support a person living with a complex and disabling behavioral health or physical health condition who was experiencing homelessness or was at imminent risk of homelessness prior to moving into housing to retain their housing and be a successful tenant in a housing arrangement, improve the resident's health status, and connect the resident of the housing with community-based health care, treatment, or employment services.³⁰

Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

A planned action environmental impact statement (EIS) simplifies and expedites the environmental review of future individual projects in a study area. Detailed and comprehensive environmental analysis occurs upfront during the planning stage for a study area, thereby streamlining the permit review process and reducing or eliminating the possibility of legal challenges to individual projects within the study area.

A planned action EIS can reduce the overall costs for project developers, which may translate into lower final housing costs. It can also help to attract growth to a priority planning area of a community.

Surplus Land

Surplus land is property that is owned by cities, towns, or counties that is no longer needed to fulfill their needs and can be transferred or sold. For Renton, the authority to manage surplus property is granted by [RCW 35.22.280\(3\)](#), and the internal process for surplus property disposal is managed through [City Policy 100-12](#)

Tenure

Tenure references the ownership of a housing unit in relation to the household occupying the unit. According to the US Census Bureau, a housing unit is "owned" if the owner or co-owner lives in the

³⁰ See [RCW 36.70A.030\(16\)](#)

unit, even if it is mortgaged or not fully paid for. A cooperative or condominium unit is "owned" only if the owner or co-owner lives in it. All other occupied units are classified as "rented," including units rented for cash rent and those occupied without payment of cash rent.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

The development of housing, commercial space, services, and job opportunities near public transportation. Such development is intended to reduce dependency on automobiles, as well as to improve mobility and access between residences, jobs, and services.

Appendix B: What We Heard Report

INTRODUCTION

Renton's Housing Action Plan planning process included a program of community outreach and engagement to gather input on housing needs and opportunities in Renton. The planning process took place between March 2020 and March 2021, during Washington's Stay Home, Stay Healthy order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Outreach and engagement activities were conducted in accordance with the State's public health guidelines.

The outreach and engagement activities were designed to satisfy both the **information needs** of the project as well as **process needs**. These include:

Information Needs

The planning process sought community member input on:

1. The nature and extent of barriers and challenges Renton residents currently face in meeting their housing needs.
2. How housing needs will change over the next 20 years.
3. Current constraints to increasing housing supply across housing types (single-family, multifamily, infill development, etc.)
4. Community preferences for meeting current and future housing needs.
5. Necessary conditions to ensure actions and strategies are feasible.

Process Needs

The planning process also aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

6. Raise awareness of the Housing Action Plan process, preliminary findings, and potential strategies.
7. Include ways to reach community members who speak a language other than English, or who have limited English-language skills.
8. Participation in defining the problem and building strategies by those most closely affected by the City's current housing policies and processes (residents, housing providers/navigators, developers).
9. Increase understanding of the barriers and challenges Renton residents currently face in meeting their housing needs among City leaders and city residents not experiencing barriers.

10. Provide simple, plain-speak information on complex housing data to facilitate meaningful engagement by non-experts.

Summary of Community Engagement Activities

This document describes the outreach and engagement activities conducted as part of the project and summarizes community input by theme. The document does not review the communications activities of the project including media and web materials. Summaries of the Housing Action Plan Advisory Committee meetings are presented on their own.

Activity	With whom/ by whom?	When?
<p>Housing Action Plan Advisory Committee The Advisory Committee provided guidance on the project process and analysis, as well as the contents of the final Housing Action Plan.</p>	<p>Residents and organization representatives in Renton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Angela San Filippo, South King County Housing and Homelessness Partners ▪ Benita R. Horn, Renton Community ▪ James Alberson, Renton Planning Commission ▪ Kathleen Hosfeld, Homestead Community Land Trust ▪ Linda Smith, SKY Urban Empowerment Center ▪ Melissa Glenn, King County Library System ▪ Millie Phung, Renton Housing Authority ▪ Nancy G. Osborn, Elder of United Christian Church of Renton ▪ Roberto Perez, Centro Rendu of St. Vincent de Paul Society ▪ Rocale Timmons, SECO Development ▪ Rich Wagner, Community Member 	<p>June 2020 – February 2021</p>

Activity	With whom/ by whom?	When?
<p>Property Manager Interviews</p> <p>Brief phone interviews with property managers focused on rapidly changing conditions in Renton’s apartment communities.</p>	<p>Property managers of apartment housing in Renton.</p> <p>Conducted by Berk Consulting. Five property managers, 1,652 households.</p>	<p>April 2020</p> <p>Right after Stay home, Stay Healthy order</p>
<p>Expert Interviews</p> <p>Interviews focused on housing issues and opportunities in Renton and best strategies for engaging community members.</p>	<p>Housing and Community Need Experts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Matt Feldmeyer, Renton School District ▪ Benita Horn, Renton Mayor’s Inclusionary Task Force ▪ Kathleen Hosfeld, Homestead Community Land Trust ▪ Millie Phung, Renton Housing Authority ▪ Rocale Timmons, SECO Development ▪ Guy Williams, Human Services Manager ▪ Mayor’s Inclusion Task Force ▪ Debbie Little, Renton Senior Services <p>Conducted by BERK Consulting</p>	<p>May – June 2020</p>
<p>Mover Interviews</p> <p>Interviews focused on what recent movers were looking for in new housing and what was available to them in Renton.</p>	<p>Residents who have moved in the last two years (either to Renton, from Renton, or within Renton).</p> <p>Conducted by Advisory Committee members. 17 households.³¹</p>	<p>June – July 2020</p>

³¹ Summary of Mover Interviews is presented in the Advisory Committee Meeting #2 Summary.

Activity	With whom/ by whom?	When?
<p>Community Conversations</p> <p>Community Conversations is a community engagement approach to enable community representatives to gather useful information for the Housing Action Plan through semi-structured conversations with community members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Renton Mayor’s Inclusion Task Force, conducted by BERK consulting ▪ Renton African American Pastoral Group (RAAP), conducted by Hannah Bahnmilller ▪ Latino High School Students, conducted by a Renton High School student ▪ Senior Advisory Committee, conducted by BERK Consulting ▪ Latino Community Members, conducted by Julio Amador ▪ Renton Sunset Area Transformation Resource Council, conducted by BERK consulting ▪ Renton Downtown Association, conducted by BERK consulting ▪ Renton Vietnamese Residents, conducted by Brian Do ▪ Residents, conducted by Monique Taylor-Swan 	<p>September – November 2020</p>

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT

The following summarizes community input gathered through the Property Manager Interviews, Expert Interviews, and Community Conversations. Findings are organized by theme with selected quotes illustrating the theme. All quotes are paraphrased comments from the interviews with each quote representing the thoughts of one individual.

Renton's Strengths and Assets

We did not explicitly solicit resident input on Renton's strengths and assets for housing. Nevertheless, some residents and service providers highlighted some of the community's strengths.

Satisfaction with Current Housing

- Some residents, particularly older adults, expressed satisfaction with the housing they have.

"We used to have a lot of nice activities in our community room, but now because of COVID it's all shut down. I really value those activities."

"The 55+ communities in the south have really taken off because people like to be with people that like to do the same things as they do. Golf, games, bunko, poker-- people like to be where other people enjoy their hobbies."

"For homeowners it is a joy because they find Renton to be a good place to live in, low crime, and close to everything that one desires to do. But also know the value of their home is going up."

- Residents who live in income-restricted housing expressed gratitude for their housing. Residents report high levels of satisfaction with safety, maintenance, and the walkability of their communities.

Strong Community

- Early in the pandemic property managers observed mutual support in terms of childcare.

"The community has come together a lot, watching each other's kids playing outside. The school district comes by and provides meals. A lot of more outside time, a lot of people at home."

Renton Pride

- Many expressed a sense of pride about living in Renton and being from Renton.

Partnerships

The City has had effective partnerships with other agencies that create new opportunities for housing.

- Cross-sector partnerships are critical to securing funding for community development and housing projects.

“The City works with their partners. They are planning a bus rapid transit line through the area. It is things like that that make the area competitive when looking for tax credits or funding and grants...There are aspects of the neighborhood and services that allow Renton to be more competitive in getting those funds.”

City Initiative and Leadership

- Housing providers speak highly of the City’s initiative in housing programs:

“Renton is light years ahead of the other SKC cities in thinking about incentives.”

“Renton is at least approachable - A lot of other cities are really insulated; things happen behind closed doors and you don't really know the network that is behind the scenes.”

- Others see an opportunity for Renton to adapt its leadership to the changing circumstances.

“Renton has not accepted that it has transitioned from a small town into a city. Because of that it doesn't have the resources and the thought leadership and policy leadership on what it means to grow and scale to create the housing necessary to meet Renton's needs and population growth. It is behind the curve. [Do you have an example of a jurisdiction that is not behind the curve?] Bellevue is an example of a place that has accepted the need for growth. Housing, transportation, schools, etc. They took a holistic approach and understood that their proximity to Seattle meant they needed to account for growth to do the best by their community to provide housing. They didn't do a good job providing affordable housing, but Renton can do it better.”

- Renton is seen as having a functional approach to design review.

“What the city has done right is not to have design review by committee. That is where a lot of judgements fall off the cliff. ... I would hate to have that change because I think that is something Renton has done well. If you look at any jurisdiction, Seattle being the poster child for what goes wrong with design review. It is a costly process that does not add value to the project. You want community input but not in a way that derails the whole thing...The whole design review process creates a lot of cost, you can't design by committee, it becomes a process for the sake of process, it can delay your project by six months or a year, I can put a monetary value on that process. Then in the end, all it does is change the window colors. It can be very, very expensive for the soft costs like keeping the architects engaged and managing the design iterations.”

“Renton has done this well as part of the pre-application process and having the developer engage the community on the front end.”

Strong Community and Neighborhood Quality

- Residents appreciate the quality of Renton’s neighborhoods.

“Renton has a lot personality in its single-family neighborhoods. The City has done a good job preserving neighborhood character. But the single-family neighborhoods are not accessible to a lot of people who have historically lived in Renton.”

“Renton has done a great job with parks. The city’s parks are really great, and there is a good overlay between the school playgrounds and city parks.”

Renton’s Housing Challenges

High Housing Costs

- While Renton used to be known as an “affordable area,” many feel that it is no longer the case.

“Cost is a barrier; Renton is becoming Seattle.”

- While people’s incomes have increased, housing costs have increased even faster.

“In the past five years her parents had to pay more rent every year because the owners keep raising the prices. She feels like it was normal especially since Renton is going up in price for house-owners and renters. She is one of three kids and feels like money is tight since rent gets higher every year.”

- Rents are higher in Renton than other parts of the county, making federal subsidies less effective. Housing programs may need to use additional funds to cover the discrepancy between the federal programs and the market.

- Housing insecurity impacts a lot of people, even people with steady, professional employment.

“What’s interesting is that our model serves people who you don’t think as needing subsidized housing: teachers, nurses, technicians, bus drivers, taxi drivers, firefighters-folks that you think of as having a good job.”

- Housing cost increases may be accelerating.

“See people who have lived in the same place for 10-15 years and now are seeing rent increases all the time. Every year there is a rent increase, but seniors can’t afford it because there is no increase in their income.”

Barriers to Housing Outside of Cost

Cost is not the only obstacle to finding adequate housing. Residents report other barriers that restrict a household's ability to access housing.

- Access to financing.

"One issue is that lots of people do not qualify for financing. Even with interest rates so low, many people cannot get a mortgage. The low interest rates mean a down payment requirements are strict."

"When it comes to Renton - a lot of people are working in cash, which prevents them from getting a loan. For a lot of people, the lending requirements are difficult. They need more assistance with the down payment, they have difficulty because they are paid in cash, they do not speak English, so it is difficult to work with the lenders. Difficult to meet the lending requirements."

- Lack of living wage jobs. Some suggest the need to focus on improving incomes and addressing income inequality.
- Past evictions
- Lots of tenant stipulations and requirements that are difficult to meet, such as prohibiting family members as live-in caregivers in senior housing.

"One specific challenge is the restrictions on the number of people in a home"

- Lack of wrap around services to help people maintain their housing, especially affordable housing.

"Not having wrap around services for folks to be able to maintain the affordable unit they are in and remain housed. Especially true of Section 8 housing and needing support of wrap around services."

"Agencies that manage housing have to understand the barrier and need for flexibility for residents; for affordable housing, there is a need for staff to resolve conflict and work with residents to promote stability."

"We face a lot of challenges - mostly around our tenants. Most of our tenants have issues finding and retaining a home. Because they have issues with their personal lives, they've also had challenges with deposits and keeping up with the higher cost with utilities, they don't receive as much support through living on their own as they would in project-based subsidies...they pay about 30% of their income towards rent, but there are other costs that come up in life. They also have really complex personal problems. Psychological health issues, some have had past gang affiliations, PTSD."

“We get the vouchers and are supposed to find the services and intensive case management that are necessary to keep them housed. We don't have the capacity for that, and the Veteran's Administration has limited capacity as well. We struggle to keep them in housing. A lot of our veterans will break the lease policies, many have a lot of behavioral health issues and need intensive support services.”

- Fair housing concerns exist, particularly for rental housing. Some note that with more Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and other privately-owned homes available for rent, there may need to be some landlord education around fair housing.

“There is a lot of racism when it comes down to lending. There are a lot of gaps in who has access to income. There are so many barriers we'll have to break down.”

- Some participants feel there is still too much of a disconnect between the city, the school district, and the housing authority.

Challenges with Cost Burden

- People can typically find a house that meets their needs, but often must pay more than 40% of their income in rent. This was common among Latinx households.

“The rent was 40% of their net income. It is difficult for these people to survive. If you take into consideration all the other bills. It became obvious to me that it was an impossibility. It was painful for people to explain the difficulties they were going through at this moment.”

- High cost burdens have led to stretched budgets and perilously low savings.

“A lot of us are a couple of a paychecks away from homelessness.”

Crowded Housing

- Residents spoke to the challenge of shifting to online school given the lack of space in their homes.

“When people are living in one or two bedrooms with a four-person family, it makes it hard for students to focus on their work.”

Displacement Pressure

- Families are being displaced, their income has increased, but not enough to match the rise in housing costs.

“I am hearing about families that moved out of the Renton School District ... their salaries have not gone up but their housing costs have so families are moving to more affordable areas.”

- Residents report accepting a higher commute burden to take advantage of lower housing costs in Renton compared to other cities such as Kirkland.

“The closer you get to Seattle or Bellevue the worse it is. People are moving further away to be able to afford something, but that increases commuting costs which is a financial strain, not to mention costs to the region and environment.”

“I have overheard staff say that they have been trying to find a rental in Renton but can't. Staff have to live out in Maple Valley. It creates a dissatisfaction with trying to find an apartment they can afford. Teachers with kids, they are probably struggling, they get paid more than other staff, but even then, I am sure it is a struggle.”

- Displacement negatively impacts the education system.

“Relocations also create challenges, people having to move multiple times. Student retention becomes a challenge and teacher retention rates are lower. Retention has a correlation to student success. When students have been at a school longer, they are more comfortable and able to do better. They don't have to play catch up and get up to speed all the time. It is similar for teachers.”

“When the school environment ends up with a lot of housing insecure students, it creates higher discipline issues, which creates a feeling of discomfort or dissatisfaction on the part of teachers.”

- The changing economy and income equality leave some people out.

“We know it is easy for Renton to serve and please people who work for Boeing, Microsoft, Amazon, and Google because their income is greater than any other job in the Pacific Northwest. People who are white or Southeast Asian had the highest probability of being represented and served within Renton because they have the money available to be house owners.”

- Senior residents are particularly vulnerable to rising rents which can lead to displacement pressure. While they may have started within the mid-range of incomes in their community, as prices rise but their income stays the same, their relative position decreases.

“You find yourself moving toward the lower brackets of the income range. The house next to mine just sold for \$800,000. My neighborhood has been changing. Last night I found people left clothes in my yard that are not mine, so these are things that are changing around me.”

“We know seniors have fixed incomes that do not keep pace with rent ... Some folks think it’s better to move out to assisted living because everything is taken care of. Homes are hard to maintain and have other costs than rent – e.g. yard, HOA dues, utilities, etc. These extra costs didn’t used to increase at the rate they do now. With all the other challenges and costs to staying, a rent increase is always on top of it all.”

“For a senior, a family of just me living by myself, it was hard finding something that I can afford. My small income is just social security plus a little bit of retirement. It is not easy. I am lucky that the park I live in is for lower income people, but these parks are slowly moving out. Everything is going up and our income is not going up.”

“Regardless of where you are, as you get older you don’t have an increase in income, but the value of your housing is increasing. Other costs are also increasing—food, transportation, etc.”

- Rising taxes is also a challenge for seniors. There are programs to help seniors with property taxes, but they are only for very low-income households. Residents recommend adjusting the eligibility threshold to account for local conditions.

Limited New Housing

- The housing supply is too limited.

“It seems like Renton is running out of land and there are supply issues. The inventory is really short.”

- People who want newly built housing have a hard time finding what they need.
- Need more housing and new types of housing with lower prices.

“Any housing we build is going to be helpful. More housing means more options for people. Having more supply is going to mean more options.”

“I love Renton. I brag about Renton-- people come here and want to live here and they can’t. We have all these draws, but people can’t come in. If we had the housing more people would want to come.”

Lack of Housing Options for Some

- Housing that is **right sized** to a household’s needs:

“More mansion-sized houses are being built. For the whole family that is more than what we would need. We are looking for regular single-family homes.”

- **Larger families** are unable to find suitable housing.

“Larger family units are also a challenge to find because developers are trying to maximize the number of units. [What size is missing?] Family size = three+ bedrooms, units to fit five to six people including kids and/or blended families”

“We need housing of different sizes, more medium and larger size housing. People are looking for housing that is suitable for their family size.”

- **Lower income households** struggle to find adequate housing. Income requirements of 2.5 times the rent can present a barrier to housing in the form of higher deposit requirements or the need for a cosigner.
- Subsidy programs have **minimum income requirements** that continue to rise due to housing costs. Households that earn less than \$25,000 are not eligible for rental assistance unless they have another qualifying factor.
- **Younger** people are not able to afford the rent.

“I spoke with some younger kids, they are adults but still young, and they are unable to live here due to their income. They cannot afford the rent if they are by themselves. This is a challenge for a lot of the younger generation. Housing is just overwhelming for their income.”

- **People living with disabilities** have a difficult time finding appropriate housing.

“In new development, they don’t have homes for handicapped. There isn’t a home for people that use wheelchairs.”

Lack of Services Near Housing

- Some areas in and close to Renton lack access to needed services.

“I live in the Skyway area, but I have a Seattle address. I am on a youth leadership group and a lot of what we focused on is affordable housing. We talked about the fact that there are no dentists, no doctors, or main grocery stores in Skyway. There isn't anywhere for children to go to afterschool. There isn't anything in the Skyway area also in West Hill area. There aren't any medical services there.”

Older Housing Stock

- Renton has a lot of housing stock that is more than 50 years old. Some of this housing stock is past its useful life and needs replacing. Renton’s Home Repair program encounters challenges in addressing repair requests in old housing.

“Cascade Vista, Highline manufactured home parks, those communities are impacted because they are occupied by seniors living in poorly-maintained manufactured homes.”

We go in and do a lot, when we [assess the situation], we're finding a lot of deferred problems. The needs are past preservation by that point. The housing stock is from the World War II era if not older...they are mostly single, aging white women. We do the assessment first, then we try to lead the customer to a path to make them the most whole. Our goal is to make the home safe and healthy...dry and warm."

Economic Segregation

- With respect to education, low-income students in the Renton School District are concentrated in some areas of the city, typically where housing is denser.
- There is greater need in the unincorporated areas outside of the city limits.

"There are more pockets of need in the unincorporated areas than in the City of Renton. I remember when Renton tried to annex the West Hill area it didn't pass with voters and that was when there was potentially federal money to address the infrastructure needs. That federal money is long gone, so I think there is even less of a chance for annexation."

Housing Needs

Appealing Downsizing Options for Seniors

- Renton needs **more housing** appropriate for seniors.

"There are also retirees that are living in larger homes but can't afford the property taxes and other costs. When they are looking at a one-bedroom apartment rent, it looks too expensive for them to downsize. So there could be more housing if these seniors could find an affordable apartment. If there was a program where they could pay their rent at a discount, that would give someone else the chance to buy their house."

- Housing **designed** for older adults.

"They need more affordable homes. Single story homes with no stairs. For a senior that would be great. For younger people, they could probably handle two stories."

"The lots are getting smaller, so they are building up, which makes for a lot of stairs."

More Participation by Property Owners in the Housing Choice Voucher Program

- Greater participation by landlords in the Housing Choice Voucher program

"On the landlord side, we struggle to get landlords to participate in the program. There is a bias against voucher users."

Improvements to Existing Housing Stock

- There is a concentration of WWII era housing stock. Emphasis on renovation and replacement are needed.

Better Management of Rental Housing

- Enforcing basic standards for rental housing quality can be a challenge, especially for immigrant or refugee households who are reticent to report housing problems to the City.

Housing That Aligns to Income

“If you work in Renton, you should be able to choose to live here if you want to.”

“Low-income housing is needed especially near schools, because a family with kids is more likely to be of low income than an individual.”

Homeownership

A common theme throughout the community conversations was the need for homeownership opportunities for a greater range of economic segments of the community. This is considered an important aspect of creating a more equitable community.

- Many are locked out of homeownership opportunities: *“The possibility to buy a house is nonexistent.”*
- There is a strong desire for homeownership opportunities for a broader spectrum of incomes. *“There is a thirst for low-income housing that can be owned rather than rented.”*
- Residents value homeownership for the stability it can bring households. This would support stronger communities.

“Also homeownership as a way to pass on wealth. There’s a real cost, both monetary and emotional, to moving from place to place. Homeownership emphasizes stability, including for families and kids. It allows for folks to build community relationships and invest money back into their community.”

- Quickly rising home prices continue to push homeownership out of reach. Even if people can find a home to buy, other expenses make it unaffordable.

“In the time it takes to save for a home, prices increase.”

Service Needs

- Programs that provide financial assistance to **help households stay in Renton**, particularly for low-income and disadvantaged households.
- **Programs for financial assistance for homeownership**. There is a need to have programs targeted to moderate income households in addition to programs for lower income households. Otherwise, given current market conditions, you end up with heavily subsidized housing for low-income people and market-rate housing for upper income people and thus hollow out your city.
- Need **homeownership affordability tools** for ownership beyond down-payment assistance.

“The County does not currently have resources for home ownership...we need to work with the County to structure a form a financing that will work for homeownership. When they think of homeownership assistance, they only think about down payment assistant... they will not give enough to make that work. The cities will need access to other resources, if we rely only on the County it won't be enough.”

- Renton's **Home Repair Program** is very popular, but there are constraints in how federal funds are used.
- There is a **gap in services** between housing and mental health. A provider may be able to address the housing issue, but without the mental health support the resident is not likely to stay in healthy, safe housing.
- Some felt that **rent control** was necessary to ebb quickly rising rents, others were concerned that rent control would be a disincentive to further development.

“We want to start putting caps on the rent. Some of the people who are owning the complexes are raising the rents every six months or every year and that is pushing people out.”

“If the City was able to put that restriction [rent control] in it would be less competitive. We may chase the investments away.”

“When I think about living here, even though you may get a 3% increase in your social security, it doesn't cover the \$30 -\$50 dollar increase in your lot rent. It is hard to manage that, it is hard to keep living here.”

“The only thing the City can do is rent control. That is the only weapon that a city or state can have to slow down the throttle of capitalism. The rent can't go higher than the persons income increase. That's all the City can do because the City doesn't build housing.”

“Avoid price increases at all costs. The City of Renton could put a ban for a limited time, a policy that denies the landlords the right to increase the price of their home/apartment if they already know the area is low income.”

Housing Desires

- Housing at prices people can afford, including apartments in areas of the community with more amenities.

“We need to come up with an apartment style where the housing prices can be lower. Housing in more areas and more apartment type of housing.”

- Residents want access to transit and other quality of life amenities, both for themselves and for the disadvantaged parts of the community. Areas that currently connect transit, services, and housing tend to be available more to higher-income households, and some would like to see expanded affordable options in these areas as well.

“A community that is active and has events in order to form bonds. They find it difficult to go outside when there are not that many parks available or in walking distance. But they did point out their desire for trails and hiking places to be in Renton.”

“A place that has amenities and public transportation close – it can’t be affordable but with no quality of life”

“Community amenities, housing where there are green spaces and playgrounds things for children. Families can get out together and do some activities.”

“For me, to have a successful community we’re going to have to have amenities. The Doug Baldwin Community Center, the partnership with the schools, are all really good. I would like to make some strategic mapping to ensure we are providing attractive features for student-age kids. Are we doing it in a smart way to make a community a community and not just a block of housing?”

“We need to be focusing on multifamily housing in those areas that are affordable to families with average incomes. Something that offers a sense of identity for the homeowner. A lot of the new developments are 3,000 to 4,000 square feet and close to \$800,000. We need more affordable, attached housing for families. For example, townhomes. I’m not typically a fan of townhomes because they are often built for the lowest cost possible and lack any individual identity. They are good if they can be built in a more affordable way than large, single-family homes. I’m not a big fan of condos, since I don’t want to own an apartment. We need something that offers a sense of pride for the homeowner that is built in an efficient manner. I don’t want to see Renton turned into tower after tower.”

- Some frame their desire in terms of **density**. They want to see density around retail, grocery stores, and mixed-used developments, particularly in the downtown area and the Landing.
- Housing connections to **transit** is a priority.

“Renton does not have rail and it is something that we have worked hard to try to get. We know that as there is more density and development there is a need for strong transportation infrastructure. The region must remember that should go hand in hand for there to be the connectivity. Keep in mind these things work together and regional and legislative investment need to work together.”

- For multifamily housing, desired unit amenities include basic amenities such as microwaves, in-home laundry appliances. Development amenities include a gym and facilities for pets.
- Including affordable housing in the redeveloped downtown.

“There should be new housing plans for low income in downtown Renton. This is because they think many of the people there will be removed for new house plans.”

- Property managers report a strong preference for nature views.

Development

Challenges to New Development

- **Construction and development cost are quickly rising** due to labor shortages and tariffs, particularly for larger projects.
- **Family housing** is currently disincentivized in the market.

“Right now, because construction costs are so high, building codes are stricter, land costs are going up, multifamily in general is having a hard time penciling. Specifically, family units. You can make micro-units pencil, but larger units that can accommodate families are becoming harder to make work. You are seeing that challenge already, there has already been a slowdown in Renton.”

- **Subsidies and incentives** have become highly competitive and more difficult to access.

“Looking at the development potential of those parcels, the ability to underwrite property with respect to the subsidies. There are conversations related to building supportive housing and assisted living. We’ve had conversations about the feasibility of developing on these lands, but it is a challenge. The competitive nature of the tax credit programs... they used to be more accessible, but now they are highly competitive and at capacity. Now we’re seeing the bond abilities at capacity as well.”

“HUDs funding has declined for decades. I don't see a huge change in that. It's where the politics will take us... having talked to a number of public housing authorities, these entities have had to be so creative to figure out to use their funds.”

Current Development Trends

- Future development is likely to be more diverse than just single-family homes.

“I see a host of products coming into the market: micro-units, denser single-family homes, smaller lots, new way to densify our neighborhoods. We could hopefully see some new condominium development if the state can get their laws right. It has been a really long time since new condos have been built in the region and in Renton. Given COVID-19, there might be more live-work units needed, where people are working from home a lot more. Given that a lot of our region is based around the tech industry, and a lot of their workforce is comfortable working for home. That will have an impact on the product being developed, it has an impact on developments and the bottom line.”

- There may be more resources to fund senior housing, housing in response to homelessness, and veterans' housing.

“Senior housing is an area of growth because the available subsidies can make those developments pencil, affordable housing is feasible because when you see those subsidies roll out.”

“I see a political leaning shift when it comes to HUD; the homeless crisis is very prominent, and a lot of its programs are tailored to those populations.”

Negative Impacts of New Development

- Residents expressed concern about development impacts to **parking**.

“With respect to development we have a lot more traffic and not enough parking. Traffic and parking is a problem. Usually families have more than one vehicle.”

“Downtown parking is terrible, it is almost impossible to go to restaurants, the post office, or to go into the state offices. That is terrible. You need to find some way for businesses to get more parking.”

- When new development happens quickly it can overwhelm the **schools**.

“I live in the Renton Highland area and there are a lot of new houses that have been constructed recently. That has led to building the new school, creating a huge influx of students and causing the school to put mobile classrooms around the school buildings.”

- Residents also expressed concerns over **loss of green spaces** and forests.

- Seniors expressed concern that new development may stimulate displacement due to **gentrification**, causing rising property values.

“One concern is gentrification; I would like to see more development in the Highlands area, but this increases property taxes and can cause rent increases”

Housing Equity

Need More Equitable Outcomes in Housing

- Addressing equity in housing is critical, as housing can perpetuate the inequities in other parts of life.

“The same standards of excluding people of color have led to the wealth gap today.”

“I hope it makes more options for the African American community. I hope we can shorten the gap between the black and the white in the community. There is a very thin line... I hope we do something that we can model for other communities.”

- Equity means having true choice in housing.

“Affordable is also the option to choose something else, having only one affordable option isn’t sufficient because it likely doesn’t fit the need.”

“The figures are disturbing, especially since the assumption is that the crisis is only going to get worse. See equity as having a diversity of costs that align with the incomes we have.”

Strategies Must Be Race-Informed

- Some expressed concern that the way the Housing Needs Assessment defined housing needs did not put enough attention to race.

“\$108,000 is the median for whom? But what about by race? This isn’t the median for black folks, so looking at the median is going to leave some folks behind. If we build for a median, we’re going to leave POC folks to fall through the cracks.”

“Equity is looking at the specific needs of each population group by race. And integrate that perspective into building housing.”

Need for More Diversity in City Staff

- Diversity in staff is a need.

“Given the environment that we’re in, the built environment is the largest manifestation of the social constructs we have. There is a lot to be done in terms of equity. One thing I will say, whoever is in the position in creating policy needs to be literate in race relations in the United States and how it manifests in development. Figuring out how to break down those barriers... white people, excuse me for peeling off the veneer, are not as literate. As a black woman, this is an issue close to my heart. I was seeped in some of the issues, there isn't an awareness of the invisible hand that creates the segregation, but we feel it, it's a cage. Housing policy can be developed to break down some of those boundaries if there was a will and if it was meaningful.”

“Equity is also in hiring of staff at the City – you have to see it reflected in the leadership.”

Appendix C: Housing Needs Assessment

OVERVIEW

This section provides context on the Renton housing market through a local housing needs assessment. This evaluation covers a range of housing-related topics, including:

- Population and household characteristics of Renton residents
- Local workforce
- Current Renton housing inventory and historical rates of housing production
- Local housing market characteristics
- Cost burden and existing housing gaps

This data provides a foundation for subsequent steps in developing the Housing Action Plan. The Housing Action Plan will also include a policy evaluation as well as an assessment of potential actions that the City could take to improve options with local housing.

Study Area

The assessment addresses the housing market and housing inventory found within the boundaries of the City of Renton, as shown in Exhibit 30. The assessment focused on city-wide evaluations of housing, with a focus on Community Planning Areas where available. The Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) surrounding Renton are not assessed given the minimal likelihood of significant future annexations.

The analysis does include all lands in Renton that present potential opportunities for housing development. Exhibit 13 provides zoning designations for the City of Renton as of June 2020; according to current zoning, some type of residential development is permitted in all residential and commercial zoning designations across the city and prohibited only in industrial-designated areas³².

Subregional Framework

Parallel to this work, Renton and five other cities in south King County (Auburn, Burien, Federal Way, Kent, and Tukwila) allocated funding for a collaborative effort to develop a subregional housing action framework. This work was specifically directed to evaluate how these cities could coordinate strategies to address the common housing challenges facing the area.

This effort included:

- Evaluating the sociodemographic and economic trends in the subregion that would impact housing needs.

³² *Renton Municipal Code 4-2-060.*

- Projecting housing needs within the subregion and individual cities from expected population growth, including unmet housing needs from underproduction in previous years. This projection includes breakdowns by household income levels.
- Assessing existing housing policies to understand the considerations with new local policies to increase production.

The results from this work are highlighted in the discussion of housing targets identified in this report. Future efforts between these partners to coordinate their policies will be guided by these conclusions, with the potential for additional collaboration as regional and county planning moves forward.

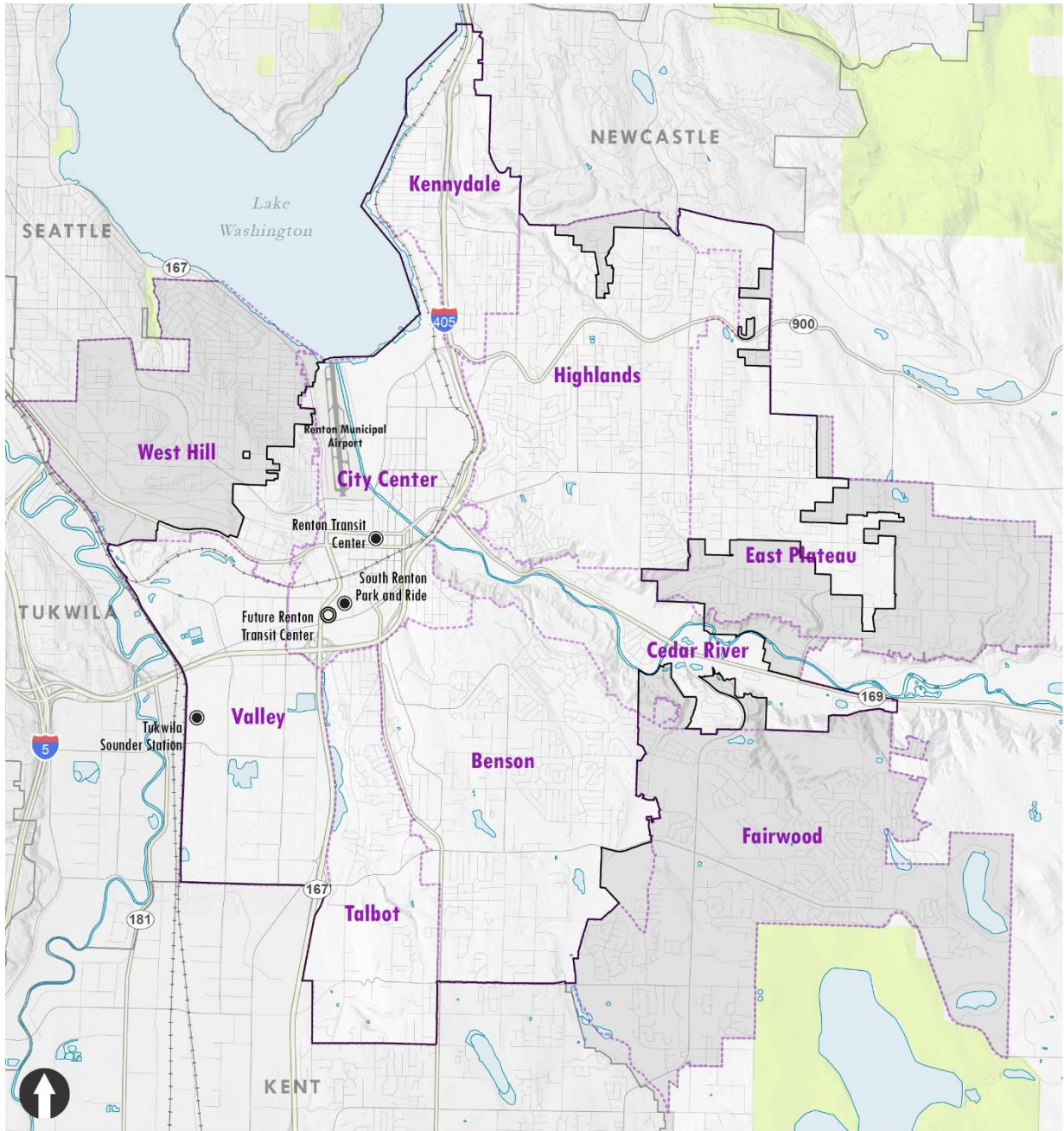
Report Structure

This report provides summaries of the local and regional housing markets related to current housing issues in Renton. This is included in five distinct elements:

- The **community context**, including discussions of regional residential markets and employment that will impact ongoing housing demand in Renton.
- **Housing costs and market characteristics**, including a review of major real estate market indicators at the regional and city levels, as well as notes about current costs faced by households.
- A summary of **current and future development** in Renton, including discussions of housing characteristics, recent development trends, and future growth potential.
- Statistics on **population characteristics and diversity**, describing the current Renton population, major trends related to demographic changes, and how future changes may impact housing need.
- **Future residential development targets** assessed as part of the subregional analysis, with a supporting discussion regarding the considerations that would need to be made for future growth.

Each section presents a high-level summary of major findings, as well as supporting exhibits showing important information related to each of these themes.

Exhibit 30. City of Renton and Community Planning Areas.



LEGEND

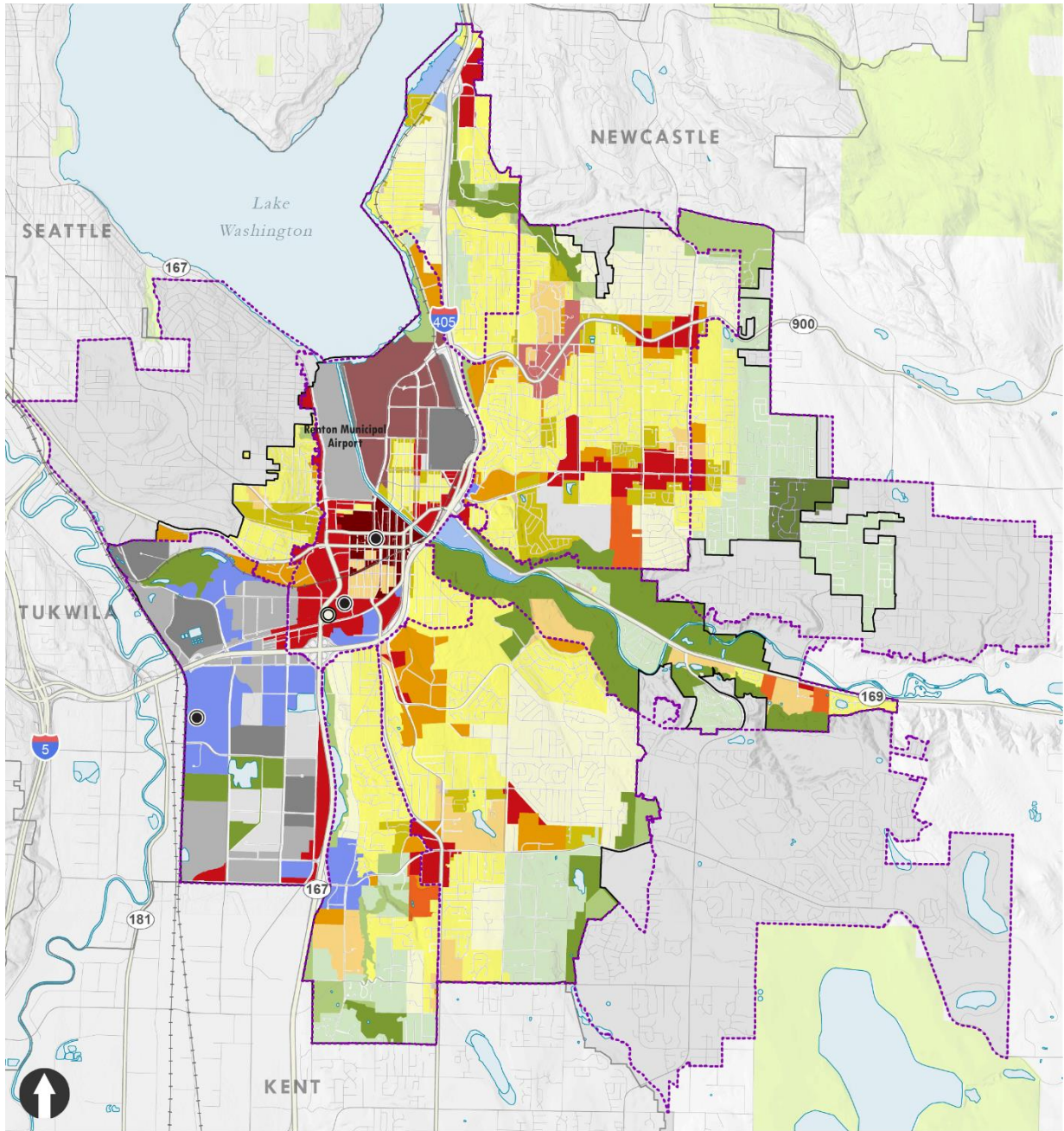
- City of Renton
- Community Planning Areas
- Other cities
- Urban Growth Areas
- Public lands
- Water
- Highways/State Routes
- Arterials
- Other streets
- Rail
- Major Transit Stations
- Future Transit Center

BERK
Map Date: July 2020



Sources: City of Renton, 2020; King County GIS, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 31. City of Renton Zoning.



LEGEND

Renton Zoning

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| RC-Resource Conservation | CN-Commercial Neighborhood |
| R1-Residential | CV-Center Village |
| R4-Residential | CA-Commercial Arterial |
| R6-Residential | UC-Urban Center |
| R8-Residential | CD-Center Downtown |
| R10-Residential | COR-Commercial Office/Residential |
| R14-Residential | CO-Commercial Office |
| RMF-Residential Multi-Family | IL-Industrial - Light |
| RMH-Residential Manufactured Homes | IM-Industrial - Medium |
| | IH-Industrial - Heavy |

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| City of Renton | Highways/State Routes |
| Community Planning Areas | Arterials |
| Other cities | Rail |
| Urban Growth Areas | Major Transit Stations |
| Public lands | Future Transit Center |
| Water | |
- 0 1 2 Miles



Map Date: July 2020

Sources: City of Renton, 2020; King County GIS, 2020; BERK, 2020.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Supply and demand pressures do not end at the boundaries of Renton. Overall, the Puget Sound Region is a fast-growing metro area, with King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties growing by 1.8% per year since 2011.³³ Comparatively over this same period, this has exceeded the population growth rate of Washington State (1.5%) and the United States overall (0.7%).³⁴

Regionally, this population growth has been supported by a strong employment base in strategic clusters, including information and communications technology, aerospace, tourism, healthcare, and business services.³⁵ Activities based in Renton are an important component of this economy, most notably with the Boeing Renton Factory, healthcare providers, and associated local suppliers and support businesses providing major sources for employment in the city.

Renton also serves a role as the home of commuters to regional employment centers. Proximity to both I-5 and I-405 places Renton within easy reach of major job centers in Seattle and Bellevue. The development of the I-405 BRT by Sound Transit, as well as overall long-term improvements to regional transit systems will also provide additional opportunities for Renton residents to access major job centers in the future.

Key Conclusions

Renton is one of the faster-growing communities in south King County.

As shown in Exhibit 32, over the past two decades Renton's population has more than doubled from approximately 50,000 to over 105,000. This has been due in part to annexation, such as the 2008 annexation of the Benson Hill Communities which increased the city's population by over 17,000 residents.

Since 2011, the city's population grew at an average of about 1.6% per year, expanding by almost 14% between 2011 and 2020. As shown in Exhibit 33, this growth in population was slightly below overall growth in King County (about 1.8% per year, or 16.4% since 2011). This is still above the growth of many other peer cities in south King County though, with lower growth rates in communities such as Tukwila (12.1%), Kent (10.4%), and Burien (9.7%).

Renton has not added new housing units at the same rate as population growth.

Although the population in Renton has grown, the housing stock has not expanded at the same rate. Exhibit 34 shows that from 2011 to 2020, annual net new housing growth averaged 0.9% per year, or 8.5% total, which is less than the rate of population growth of 1.6% per year.

³³ WA Office of Financial Management, 2020; BERK, 2020.

³⁴ US Census Bureau, Population, Population Change, and Estimated Components of Population Change: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019 (NST-EST2019).

³⁵ Puget Sound Regional Council, *Amazing Place: Growing Jobs and Opportunity in the Central Puget Sound Region*, 2020.

Exhibit 35 shows that from 2011–2020, housing growth in King County overall was at a rate of about 1.5% per year, or an overall increase of 13.5%, indicating that with respect to housing development Renton is also growing slower than the county overall. This rate of growth is larger than neighboring cities, however; although Tukwila added 11.6% of housing over the same time period, other cities in south King County have not added housing at the same rate.

Across the region, Renton and south King County have not grown as fast as Seattle and the Eastside.

Exhibits 36 and 37 highlight how housing growth in Renton compares to the other cities in King County on a relative and absolute basis, respectively. The 8% increase in the housing stock in Renton is notably lower than the average over all incorporated communities in King County (18%), and lower than cities such as Seattle (21%), Issaquah (24%), Redmond (25%), and Sammamish (39%).

Looking at the absolute amount of housing developed in Renton in Exhibit 37, however, Renton was number eight among cities in building new housing. (Note that Seattle is not on this chart but provided over 65,000 housing units during this period.) This contributed about 2.5% of the net new housing in cities during this period. While 335 units of this total represent existing housing annexed into in the city, over new 3,000 housing units, or about 2.7% of new housing developed in King County, was provided in Renton.

In part, this is evidence that regional growth has been focused on other markets, with Seattle providing about 58% of the net new housing units in King County, and Eastside communities such as Issaquah and Sammamish taking up a considerable amount of growth. However, if these communities are unable to keep pace with the rate of development in the future, more growth could spill over into south King County and Renton in the future.

The Renton housing market provides close access to Seattle and Bellevue.

Exhibit 38 provides statistics on the work locations for employed Renton residents, with locations accounting for more than 1% of the total mapped in Exhibit 39. These figures show that while many Renton residents—about 12% of the residential population—work within city boundaries, more residents travel to Seattle (27%) and Bellevue (13%) for their jobs. Although local employment will affect housing demand, Renton is at the intersection of high-growth, high housing price conditions to the north and lagging growth and lower price points to the south. Job growth in Seattle and Bellevue will continue to put pressure on housing prices and availability in Renton.

Renton also provides a local hub for employment that attracts workers from across the area.

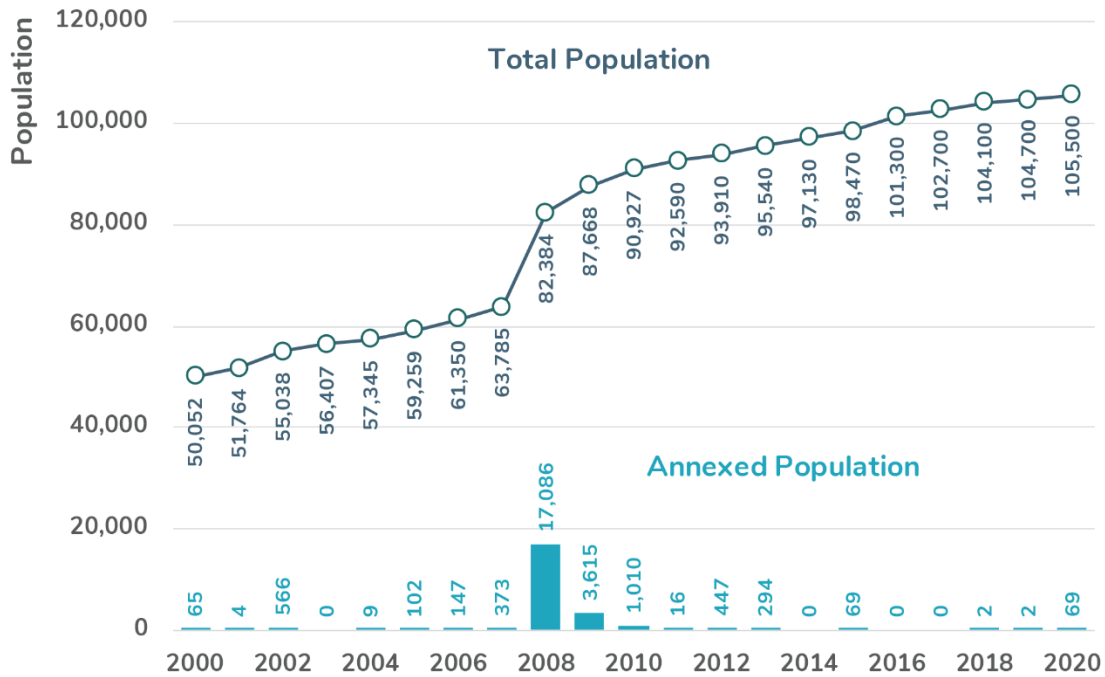
Renton also includes significant employment as well. Exhibit 40 gives statistics on where Renton workers live, with a map of all destinations accounting for at least 1% of this total in Exhibit 41. The city's workforce is distributed across the region, with over 90% residing outside of Renton's boundaries. Workers in Renton are most likely to reside in Seattle, representing 11% of Renton's workforce, a higher number than the nearly 10% of the Renton's workforce resides in Renton.

The proportion of residents working in Renton is comparable to other communities, but there is also a regional draw for workers.

Exhibits 42 and 43 highlight the proportion of local workers for comparable cities, calculated as the percent of all employed residents working in the same city (Exhibit 42) and the percent of all workers residing in the same city (Exhibit 43).

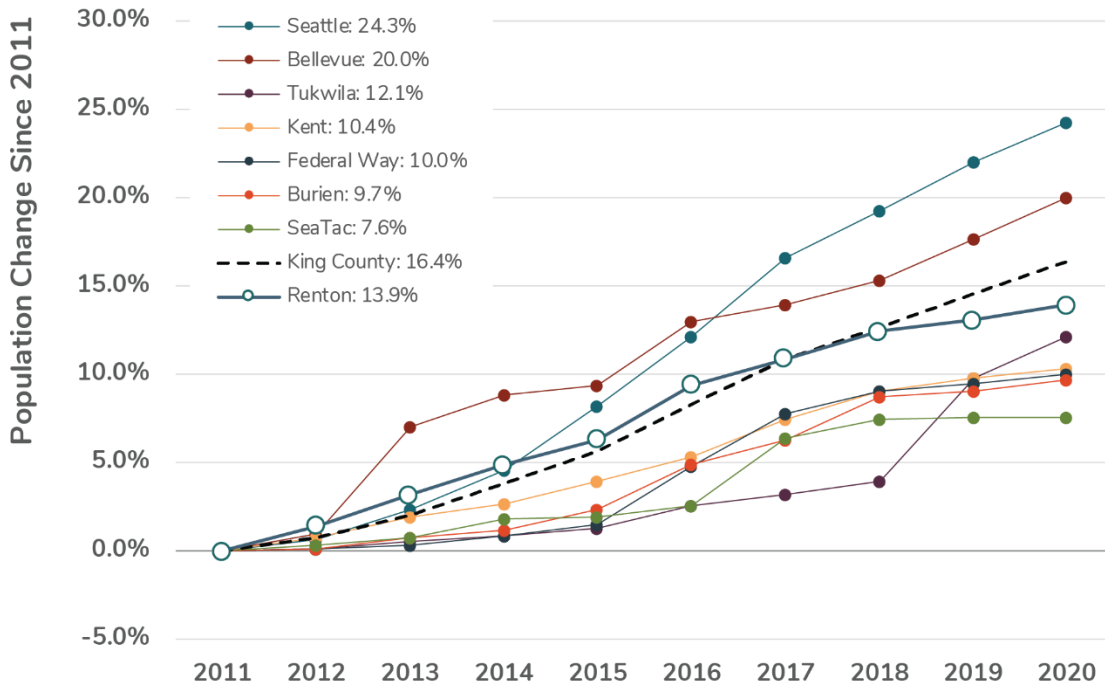
Although these proportions are not as high as for Seattle, about 12% of employed Renton residents are working in the city as well, which is comparable to other cities in the area. The lower proportion of residents among the workers in Renton highlights that there is a net inflow of commuters for employment in Renton. This is a blend of regional commuters for major employers such as Boeing and Valley Medical Center, as well as local commuters from surrounding communities for retail and service employment.

Exhibit 32. Population in Renton, 2000-2020.



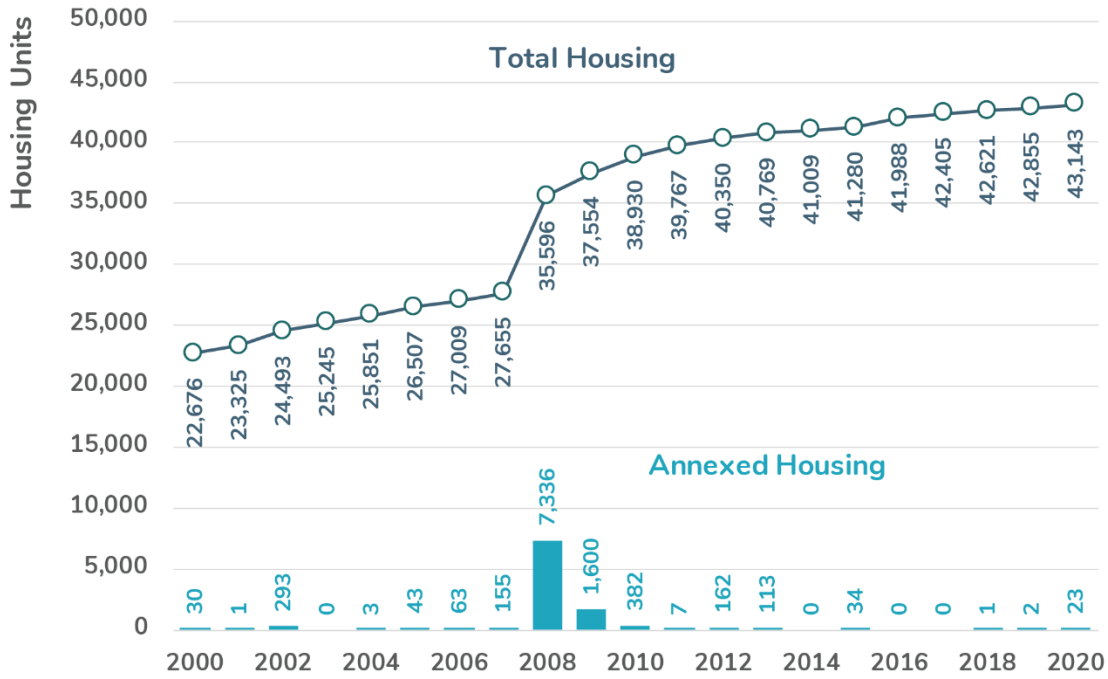
Sources: WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 33. Population Growth in Renton and Neighboring Cities, 2011-2020.



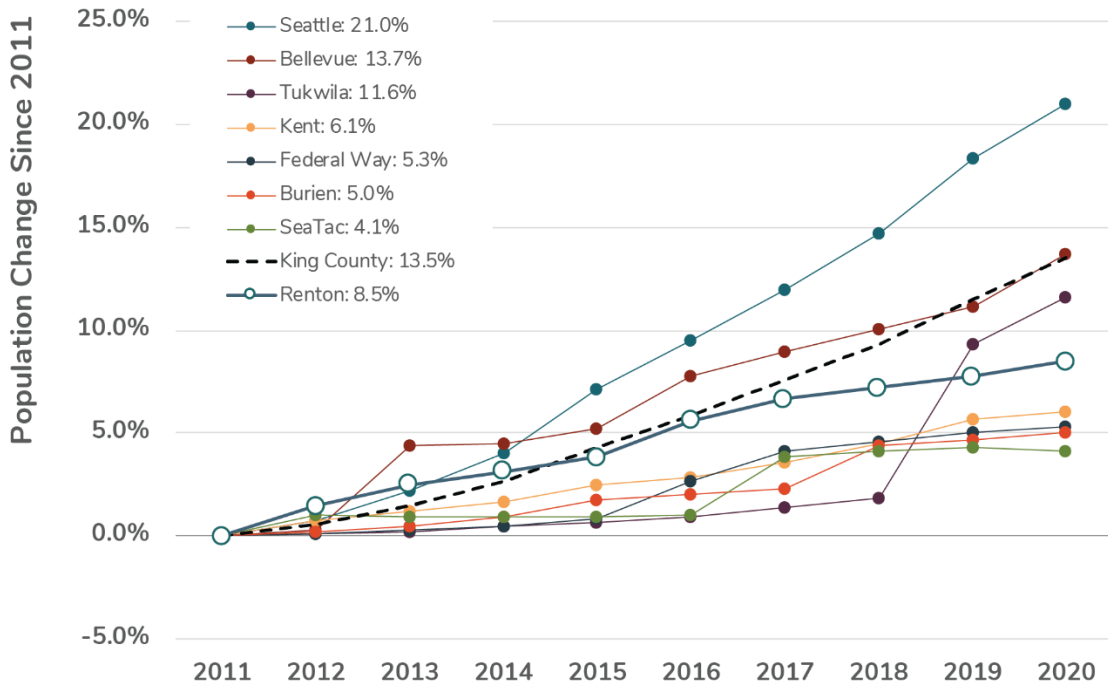
Sources: WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 34. Housing in Renton, 2000-2020.



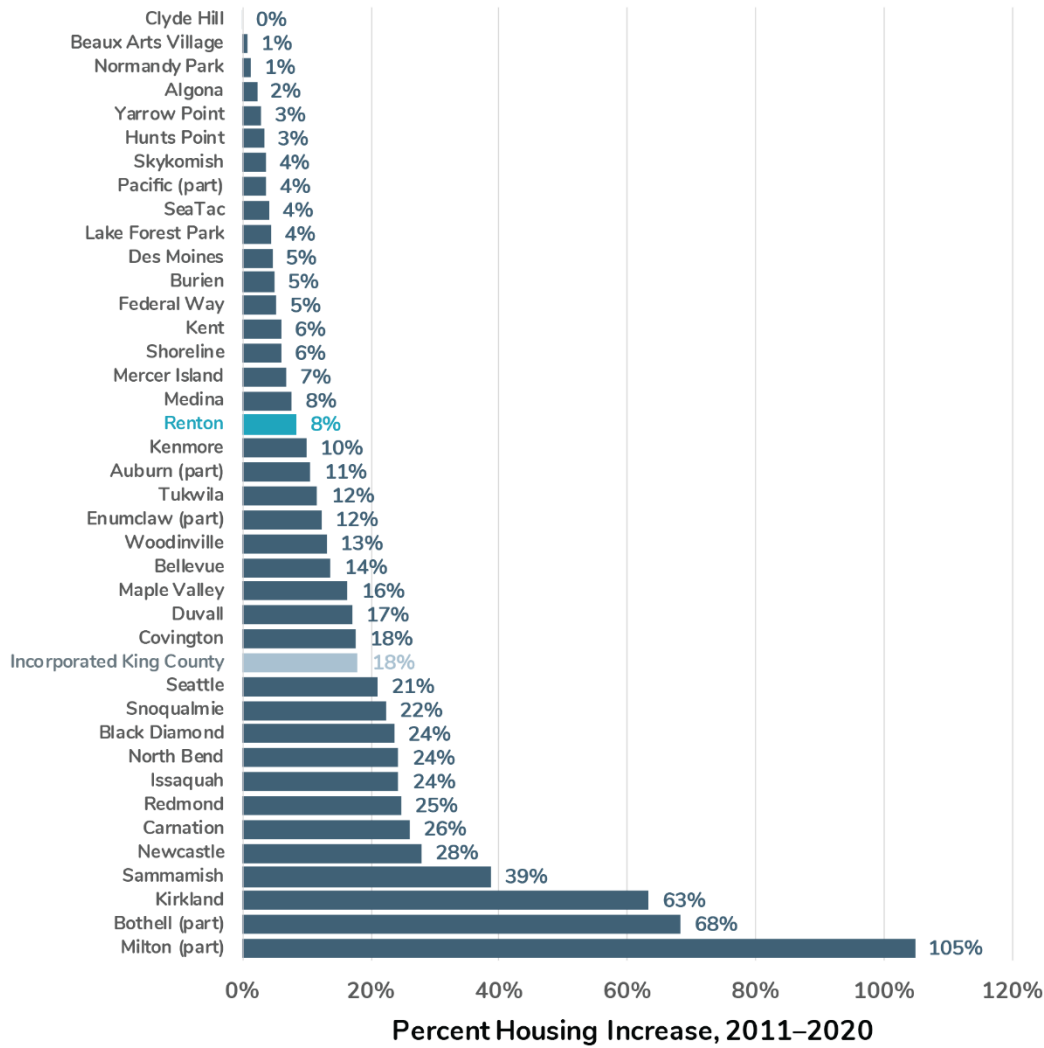
Sources: WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 35. Housing Growth in Renton and Neighboring Cities, 2011-2020.



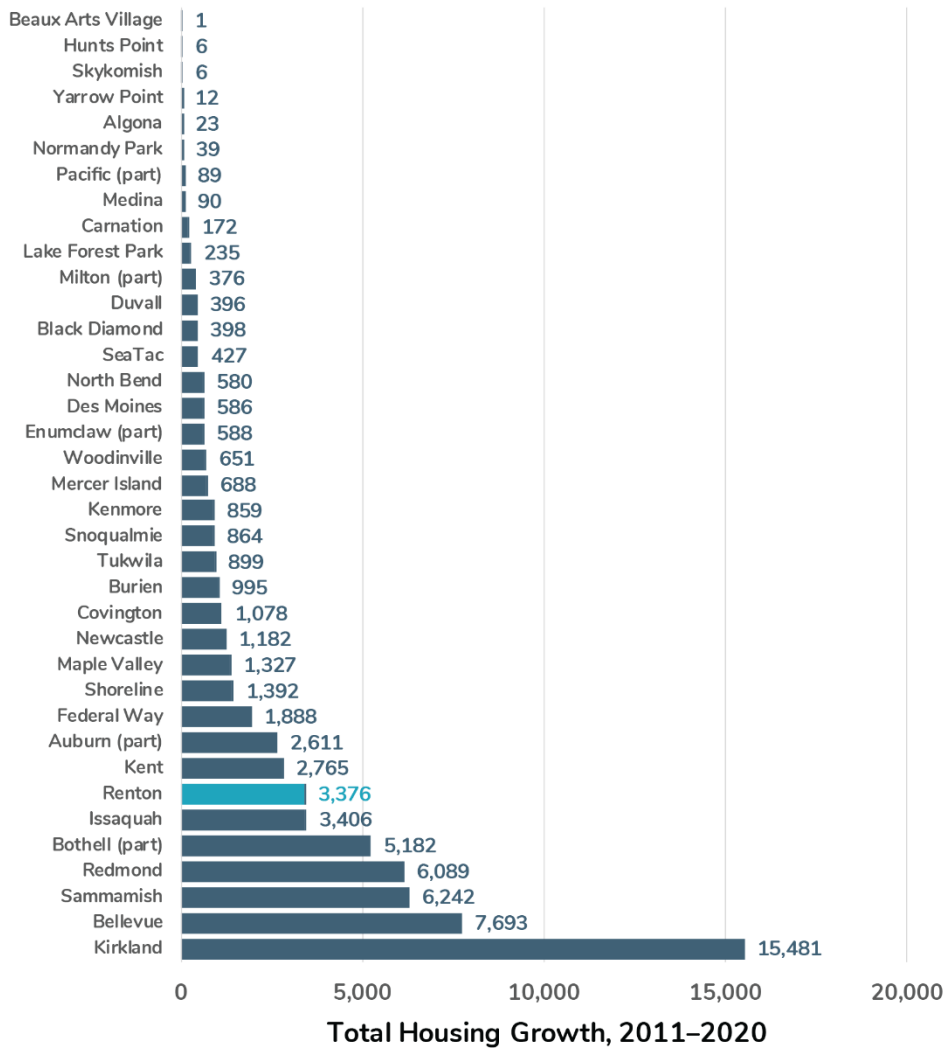
Sources: WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 36. Percent Housing Growth, Cities in King County, 2011–2020.



Sources: WA OFM, 2020; King County GIS, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 37. Total Housing Growth, Cities in King County (excluding Seattle), 2011–2020.



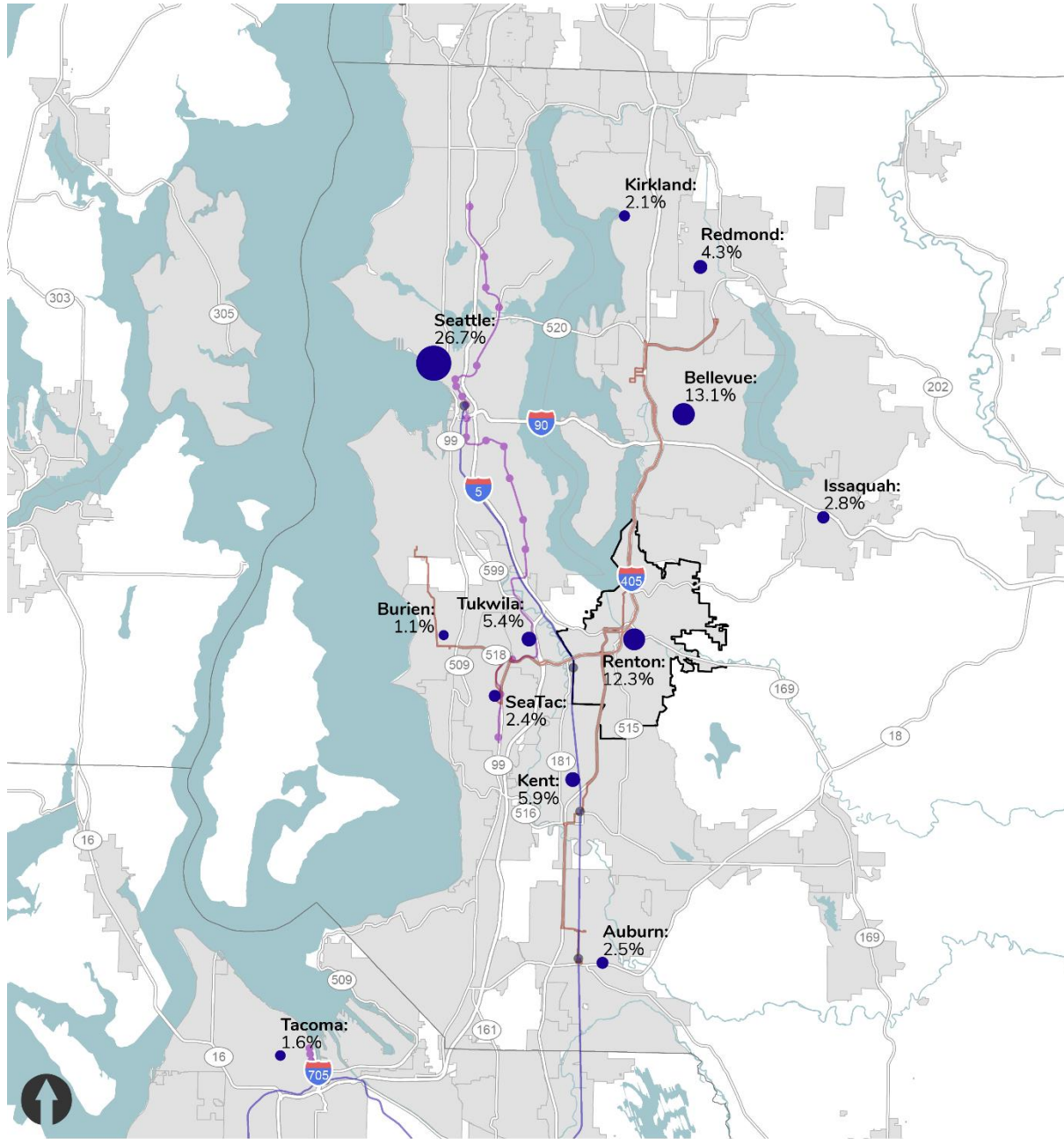
Sources: WA OFM, 2020; King County GIS, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 38. Statistics of Work Locations of Employed Renton Residents (All Jobs), 2017.

Work Location	Residents	% of Total
Counties		
King County, WA	43,277	86.4%
Pierce County, WA	2,152	4.3%
Snohomish County, WA	2,067	4.1%
Cities/Places		
Seattle city, WA	13,358	26.7%
Bellevue city, WA	6,546	13.1%
Renton city, WA	6,161	12.3%
Kent city, WA	2,932	5.9%
Tukwila city, WA	2,695	5.4%
Redmond city, WA	2,161	4.3%
Issaquah city, WA	1,406	2.8%
Auburn city, WA	1,242	2.5%
SeaTac city, WA	1,218	2.4%
Kirkland city, WA	1,076	2.1%

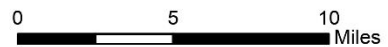
Sources: US Census On The Map, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 39. Work Locations of Employed Renton Residents (All Jobs), 2017.



LEGEND

- City of Renton
- Other Cities
- Counties
- Highways/State Routes
- Work Locations of Employed Renton Residents
- Sounder Line and Stations
- Sound Transit Link Light Rail
- Sound Transit Express



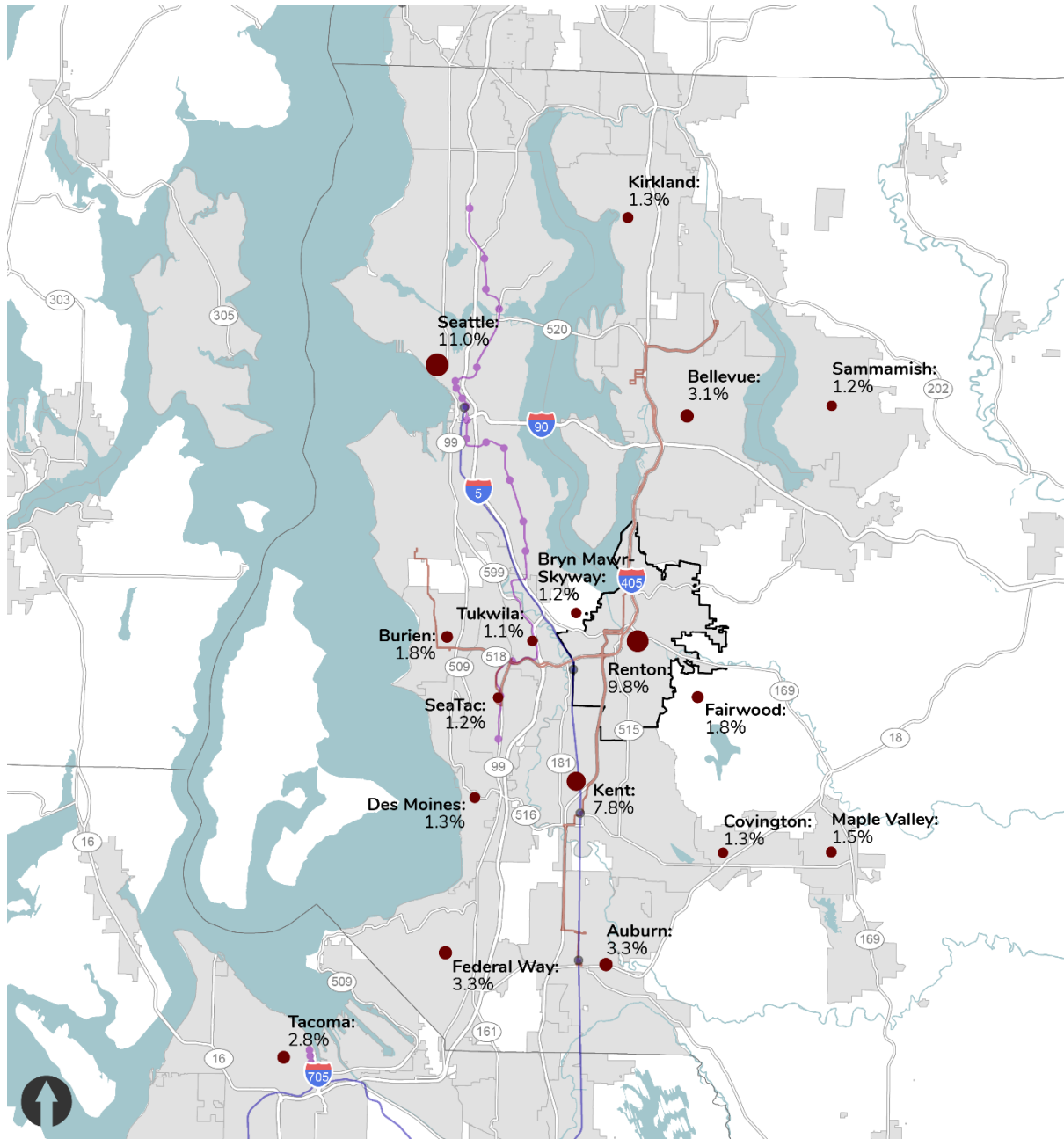
Sources: US Census On The Map, 2020; King County GIS, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 40. Statistics of Residence Locations of Renton Workers (All Jobs), 2017.

Residence Location	Workers	% of Total
Counties		
King County, WA	40,445	64.6%
Pierce County, WA	8,490	13.6%
Snohomish County, WA	6,111	9.8%
Cities/Places		
Seattle city, WA	6,857	11.0%
Renton city, WA	6,161	9.8%
Kent city, WA	4,877	7.8%
Auburn city, WA	2,093	3.3%
Federal Way city, WA	2,051	3.3%
Bellevue city, WA	1,916	3.1%
Tacoma city, WA	1,759	2.8%
Fairwood CDP, WA	1,152	1.8%
Burien city, WA	1,117	1.8%
Maple Valley city, WA	954	1.5%

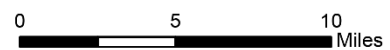
Sources: US Census On The Map, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 41. Residence Locations of Renton Workers (All Jobs), 2017.



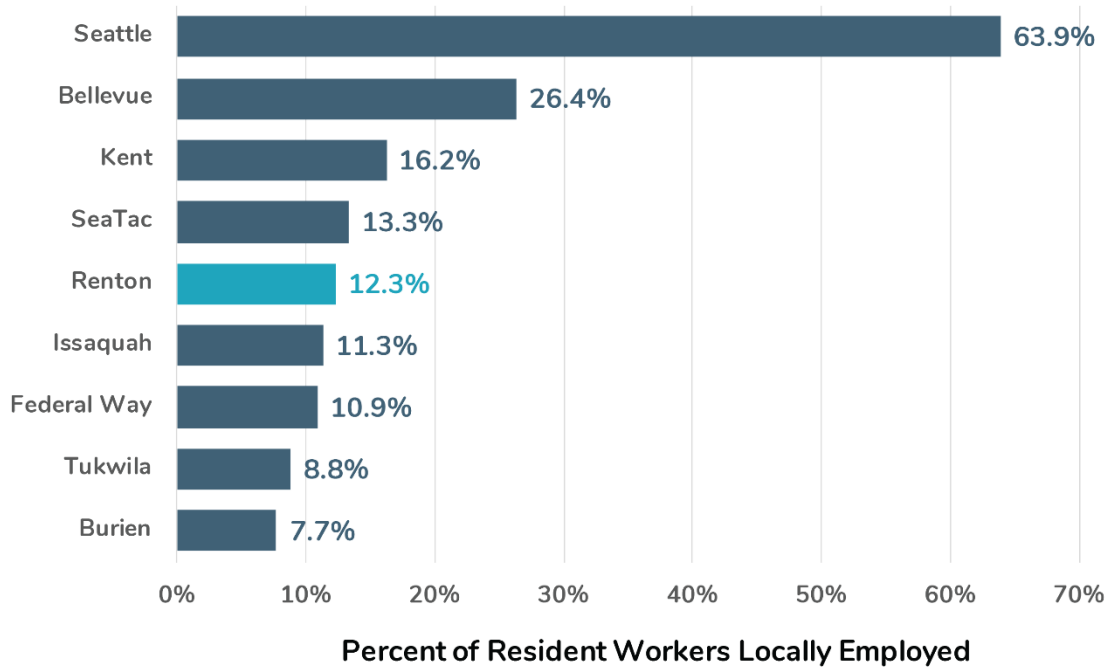
LEGEND

- City of Renton
- Other Cities
- Counties
- Highways/State Routes
- Residence Locations for Renton Workers
- Sounder Line and Stations
- Sound Transit Link Light Rail
- Sound Transit Express



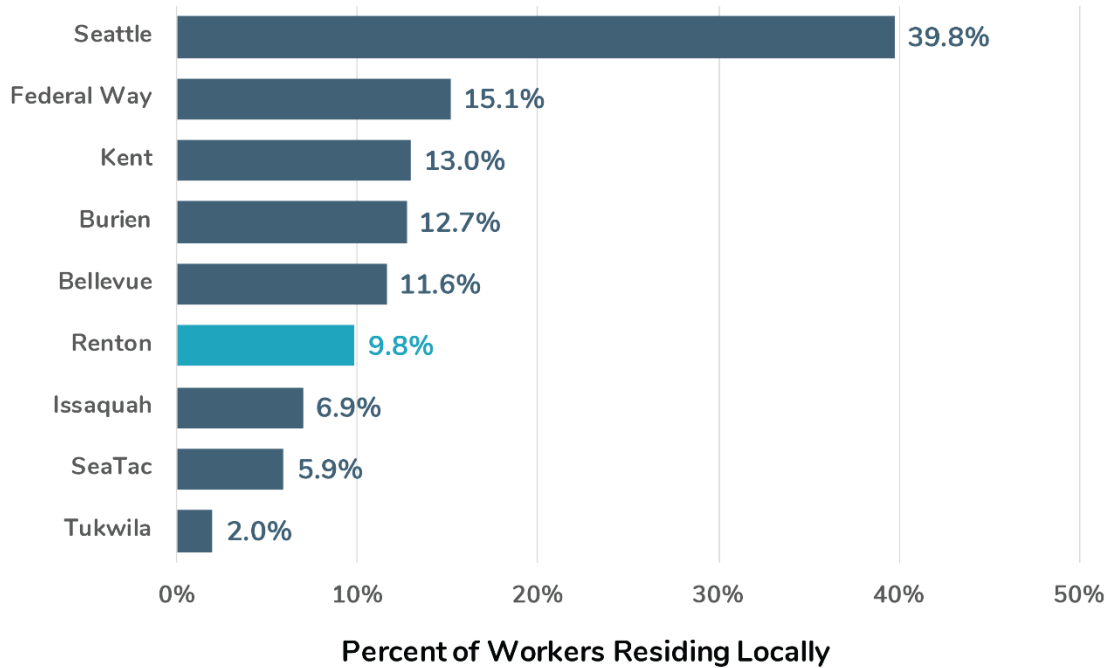
Sources: US Census On The Map, 2020; King County GIS, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 42. Percent of Resident Workers Locally Employed, Renton and Other Cities, 2017.



Sources: US Census On The Map, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 43. Percent of Workers Residing Locally, Renton and Nearby Cities, 2017.



Sources: US Census On The Map, 2020; BERK, 2020.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Since 2010, about half of housing production in Renton has been focused on single-family homes, including replacements for depreciated housing stock, infill projects, and new subdivisions on undeveloped land. However, there has also been a notable increase in the diversity of housing types, with new apartment, multi-plex, and townhome projects increasing the number of these units across the city.

Although there will be enough developable land in Renton to meet local needs over the coming years, demands for future growth will require a wide range of housing opportunities for the city. This will include both single- and multifamily development, as well as units sized for individuals, couples, and families. Efforts to promote housing growth should also focus on development that is supported by complete neighborhoods, local amenities, and transit options.

Key Conclusions

A slight majority of the current housing stock in Renton consists of single-family detached housing.

Exhibit 15 provides the current breakdown of the housing inventory in Renton by development type. Single-family housing comprises about 53% of the local housing stock as of 2019, with an additional 37% of housing as multifamily, 8% as plex development and 2% as mobile homes.

With respect to the proportion of single-family homes in the community, Exhibit 45 provides a comparison between other cities in King County. For comparison, about 51% of the housing stock in across all cities is single-family housing (or 59% excluding Seattle), and the amount of single-family housing is comparable to other communities in south King County such as SeaTac (52%), Federal Way (54%), Auburn (54%), and Kent (55%). This mix of unit types is consistent with older “inner-ring” suburbs with a more balanced stock of housing options.

Since 2011, there has been slightly higher housing growth in multifamily housing units, but single-family housing is still a considerable part of housing development.

Exhibit 15 provides statistics for the total housing development that occurred in Renton between 2011–2019. Overall, single-family housing units have been about 46% of the total amount developed during this period, slightly below the number of units in multifamily projects (47%). Contrasted with the current inventory, this suggests that the city is moving towards a greater diversity of housing units.

This is also accomplished with a relatively low rate of housing demolition, as can be seen in Exhibit 46. From 2011 to 2019, only 257 units were lost, or about 7% of the new units gained during this same time period.

The statistics in Exhibit 47 show the net change in housing units between single-family and multifamily units. This highlights that over time, growth in multifamily units has been more variable from year to year, with very low numbers in 2013–2015, and significant spikes in 2011 and 2016.

Renton has had more housing development than surrounding communities in south King County, but there are different mixes of unit types between communities.

Comparing the development of new housing between communities, Renton has experienced a considerable amount of new growth. As shown in Exhibit 48 (and previously in Exhibit 37), there have been more housing units built in Renton than in other communities in south King County. Additionally, Renton has developed the most multifamily housing than other communities in the area.

Comparing the mix of new units between communities as seen in Exhibit 49, Renton has developed a mix that appears closest to Burien. This stands apart from cities like Tukwila and Kent with a greater proportion of new single-family homes (58% and 69% of the total new units, respectively, versus 46% in Renton). This is also different than communities like Federal Way and SeaTac which have had a greater proportion of larger multifamily projects as new development (67% and 76%, respectively).

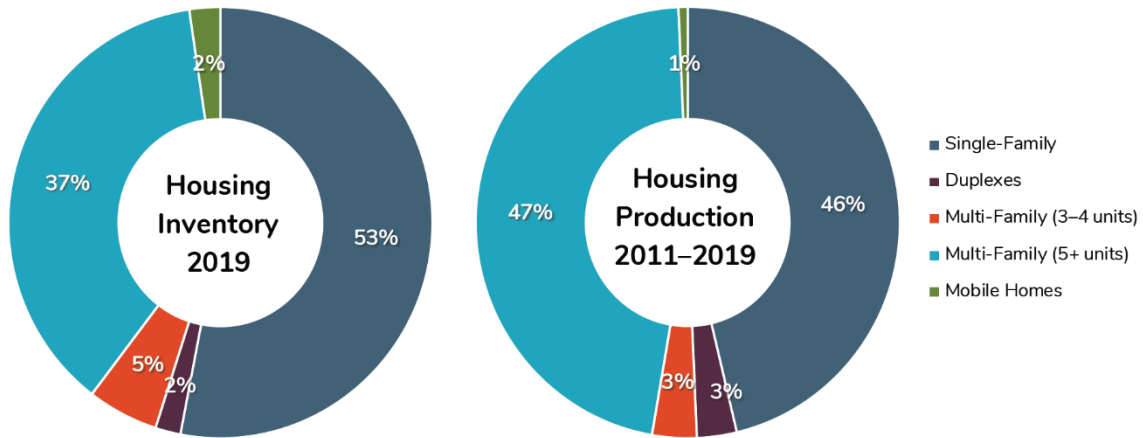
While housing in Renton largely consists of post-war development, the vintage of housing includes a balance of single-family and multifamily properties built since the 1960s.

Exhibit 50 provides statistics on the current age of housing in Renton overall, divided between single- and multi-family units. Examples of pre-war development are somewhat limited, with only about 1,100 units built before 1940. Although housing built in the 1940s and 1950s included mostly single-family homes, there was a notable mix of single- and multifamily properties built in the 1960s and after.

Development that has occurred in Renton over the past several years has been focused on infill and subdivisions in the Highlands and East Plateau communities.

Exhibit 51 shows that much of the development in the Highlands and East Plateau has been single-family units, duplexes, triplexes, or townhouses, with a cluster of multifamily units and condos along State Highway 900 and near I-405. The communities of Benson, Valley, Talbot, and the City Center have seen more increases in multifamily units and condos over this period due to the availability of infill sites in zones allowing multifamily development.

Exhibit 44. Total Housing Inventory and Total Housing Production in the Renton Market, 2011-2019.



Sources: WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 45. Percent of Housing Stock as Single-Family Housing, King County Cities, 2019.

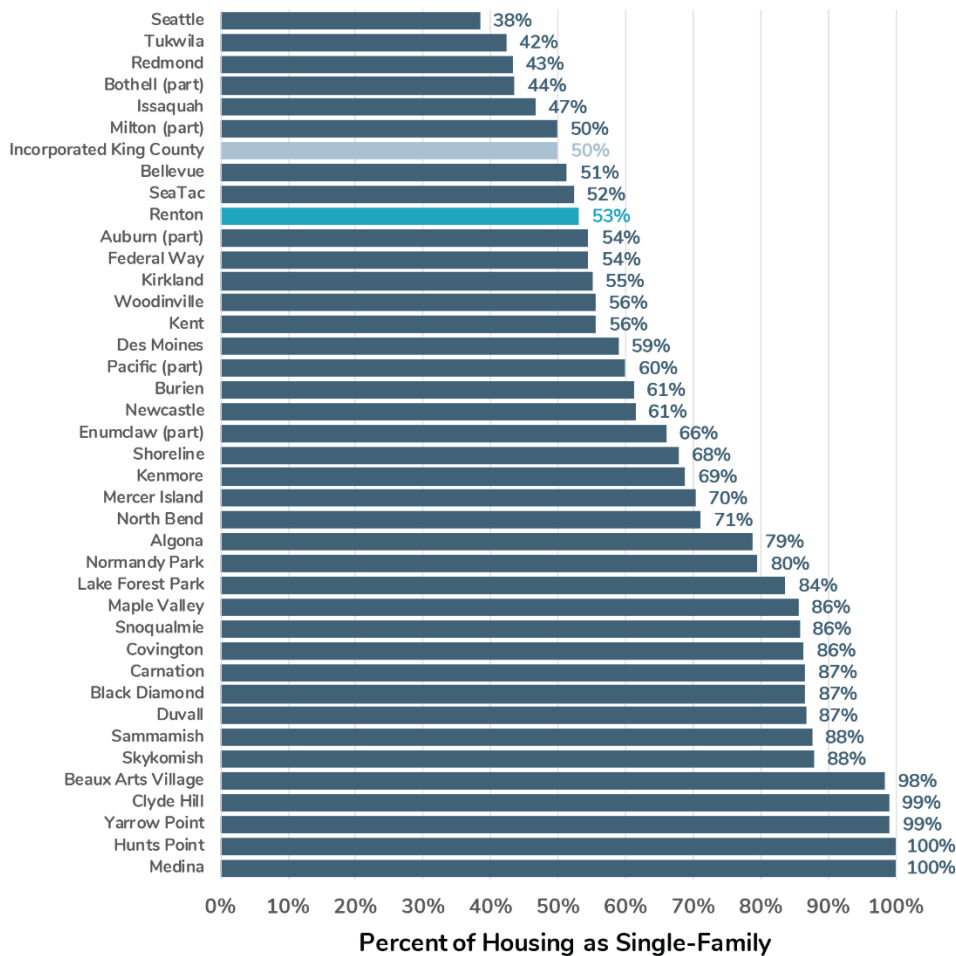
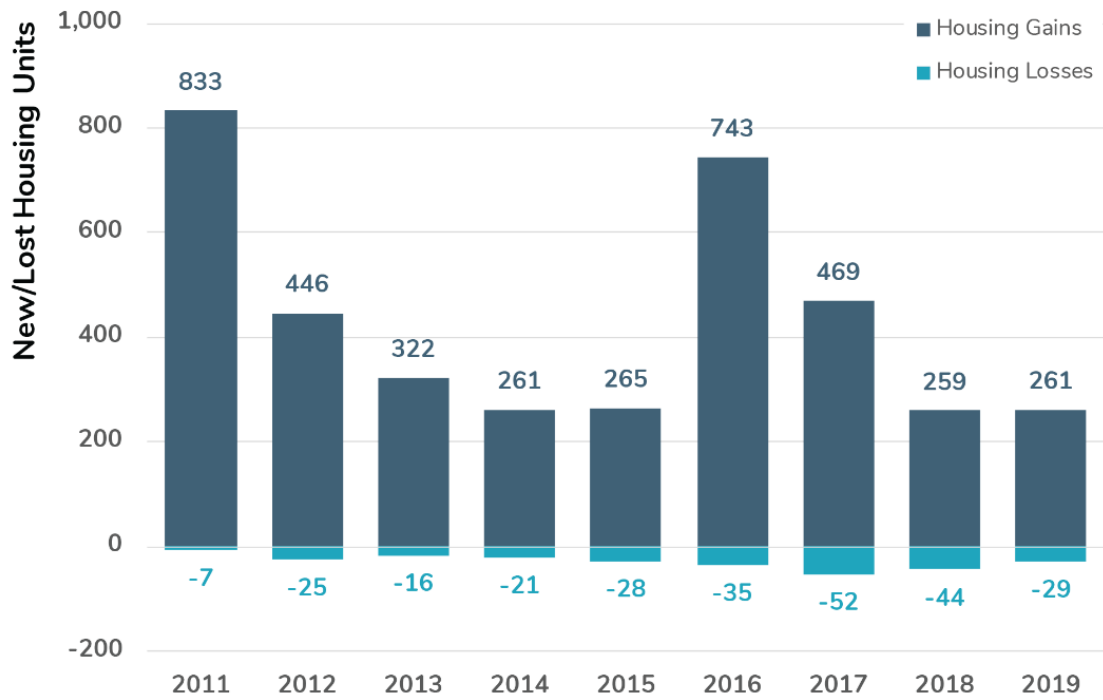
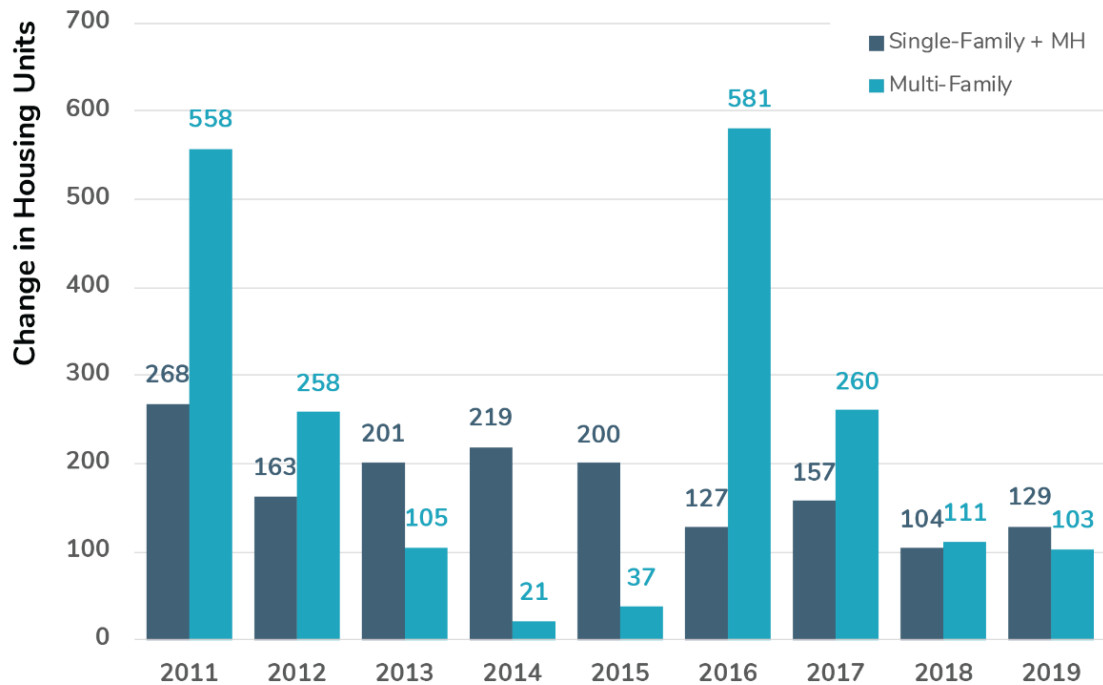


Exhibit 46. Gains and Losses in Housing Units, 2011–2019.



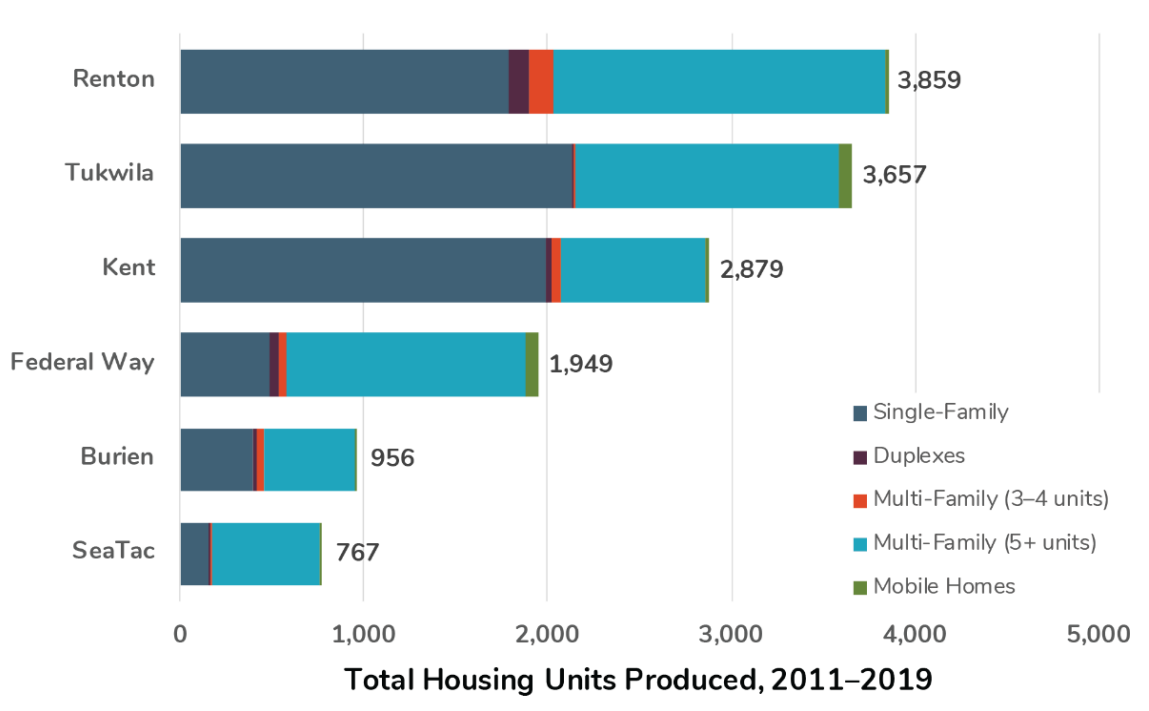
Sources: WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 47. Net Change in Housing Units in Renton by Type, 2011–2019.



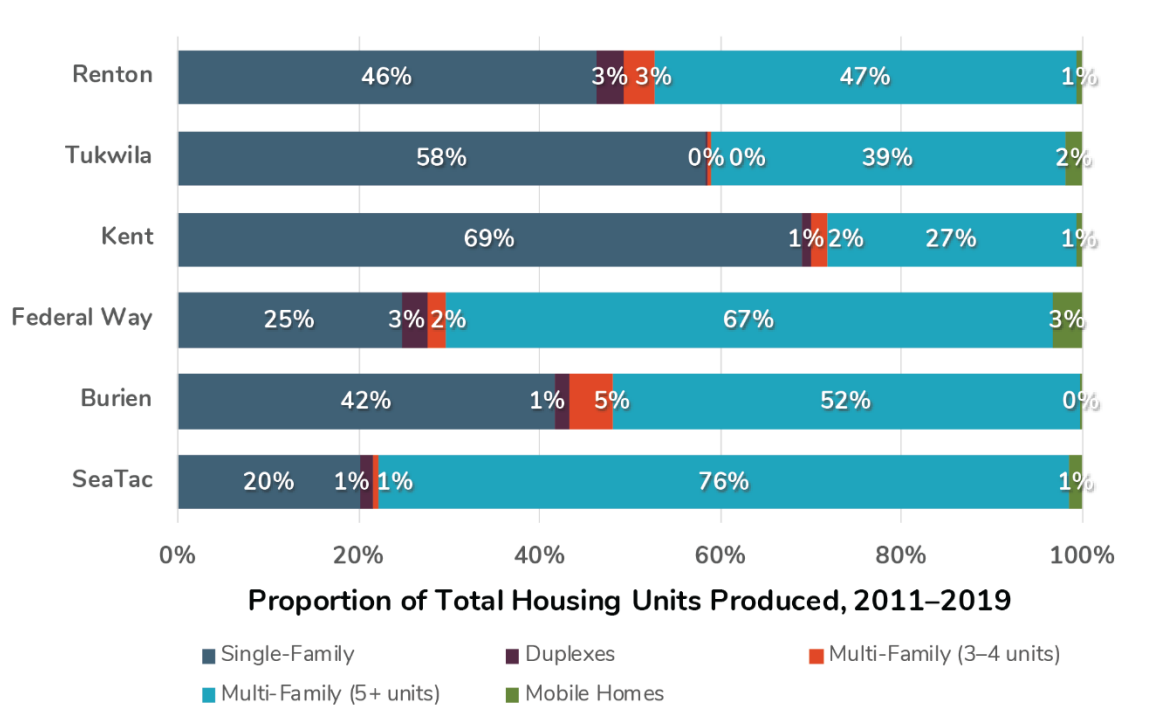
Sources: WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 48. Total Housing Unit Production by Type, Renton and Neighboring Cities, 2011-2019.



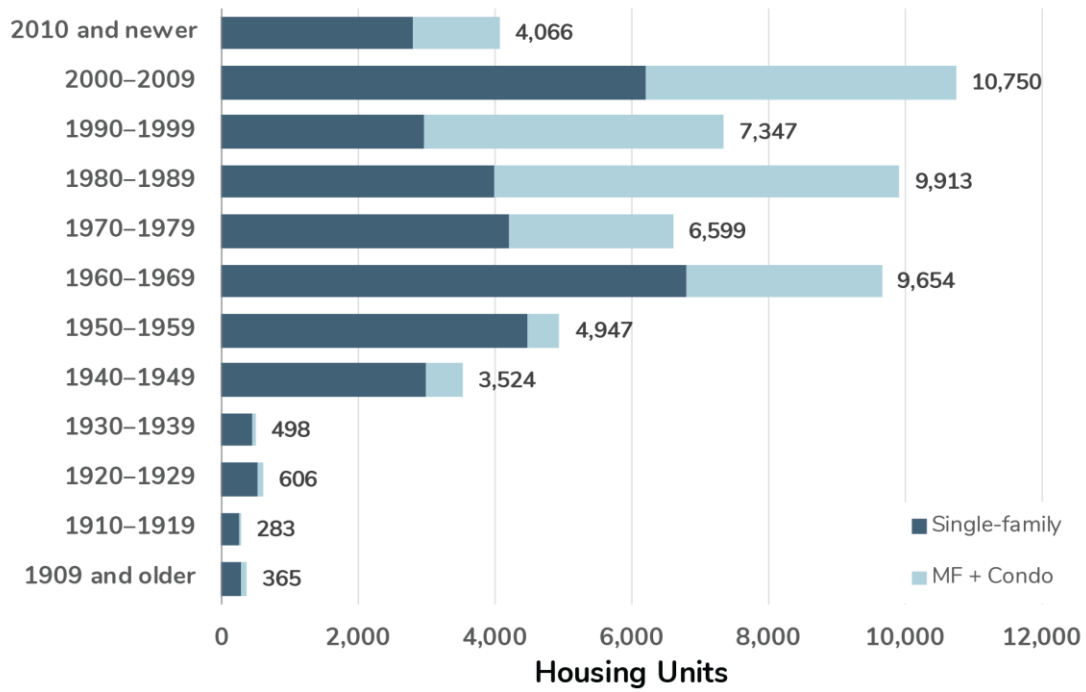
Sources: WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 49. Total Housing Unit Production by Proportion of Type, Renton and Neighboring Cities, 2011-2019.



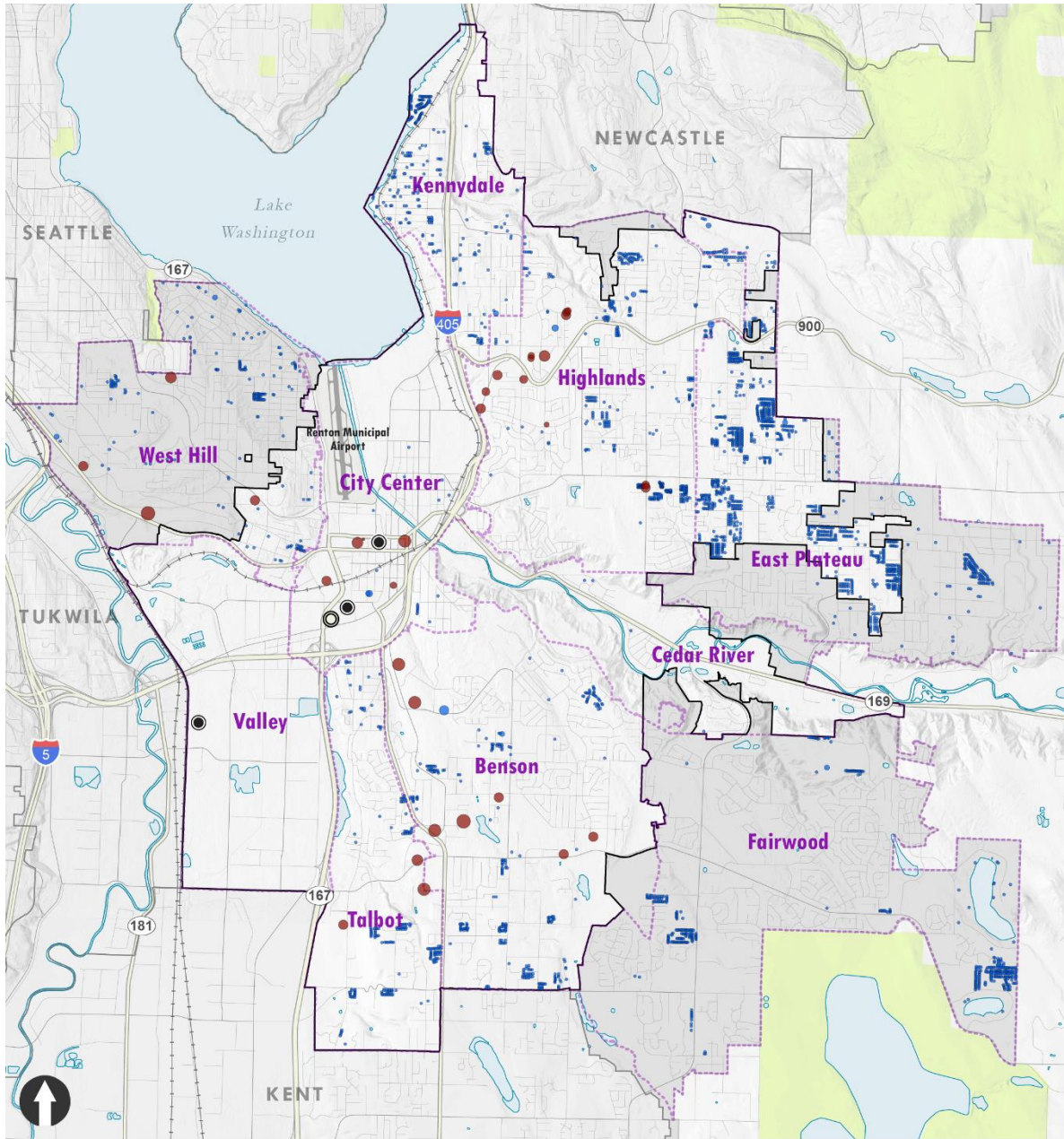
Sources: WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 50. Renton Housing Units by Year Built, 2020.



Sources: King County Assessor, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 51. Renton Housing Units Built, 2010–June 2020.



LEGEND

Renton Housing Built Since 2010

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Units per Parcel | Unit Types |
| • 1 | ● Single-family, duplex, triplex, townhouse |
| • 2 | ● Multifamily and condo |
| • 3-5 | |
| • 6-10 | |
| • 11-20 | |
| • 21-50 | |
| • 51-100 | |
| • 101-200 | |

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| □ City of Renton | — Highways/State Routes |
| □ Community Planning Areas | — Arterials |
| □ Other cities | — Other streets |
| □ Urban Growth Areas | ■ Public lands |
| ● Major Transit Stations | ■ Water |
| ● Future Transit Center | |

BERK
Map Date: July 2020



Sources: King County Assessor, 2020; King County GIS, 2020; City of Renton, 2020; BERK, 2020.

HOUSING COSTS AND MARKET INDICATORS

Housing in Renton is more affordable than in cities to the north and east, especially for certain housing formats such as single-family homes. As such, it has been attractive as an option for homeowners and renters alike looking for accessible housing within commuting distance of other major employment centers.

Ongoing regional pressures in the market have had some effect on the local Renton market. While available statistics do not show significant reductions in local rental vacancy rates over the past few years, homebuyers are suffering from a tight market. However, both renters and homebuyers have been challenged to find appropriate housing for them at affordable price points.

Key Conclusions

The price of homes has increased considerably since the last recession.

Housing sale prices in Renton per square foot since 2010 are shown in Exhibit 52. Additionally, the Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI), the estimated median of all home values, is provided in Exhibit 53 for Renton and other cities in the region. Both indicators note that housing prices have increased considerably from the previous recession and the low housing prices experienced in 2012.

From these figures, prices per square foot have increased from around \$150 per square foot in 2012 to around \$300 per square foot today. Correspondingly, the home value index for Renton has increased from approximately \$300,000 in January 2010 to over \$520,000 in January 2020, increasing by an average of 9.8% per year since the market lows in 2012. Variance has also increased, suggesting that there may be higher sale prices associated with new construction. These trends have tracked closely with other increases found in the region.

There is considerable tightness in local markets with low supply available for homebuyers, which is consistent across the region.

Recent market statistics from the Northwest Multiple Listing Service (NWMLS) have indicated widespread tightness in local markets, with regional supplies well under the four-month supply recognized as an indicator of a regular market. August 2020 statistics for NWMLS subareas that include the city indicate that there is between 0.6 and 1.1 months of supply of housing available in Renton, indicating a significant lack of available housing on the market consistent with the County as a whole (0.9 months supply).³⁶

Rents are lower than regional averages and are steadily increasing, but relative affordability is increasing, especially with respect to areas to the north and east.

³⁶ NWMLS, 2020.

Exhibit 54 shows that rental housing costs in Renton have increased steadily over the past decade and at a similar rate to nearby cities. As of 2020, the average rent for a 2-bedroom unit in Renton is \$1,728, and these rents have been increasing by about 4.8% per year since 2010.

Exhibit 55 compares Renton's effective market rent to King County's AMI and shows that Renton's rent has increased more gradually than AMI in King County overall. Although growth in rents in Renton were somewhat higher than AMI increases from 2010–2014, there have been notably higher rates of growth with regional AMI since 2017.

Overall this highlights that housing in Renton is still generally affordable in the market overall, but there may still be issues with affordability with specific income groups.

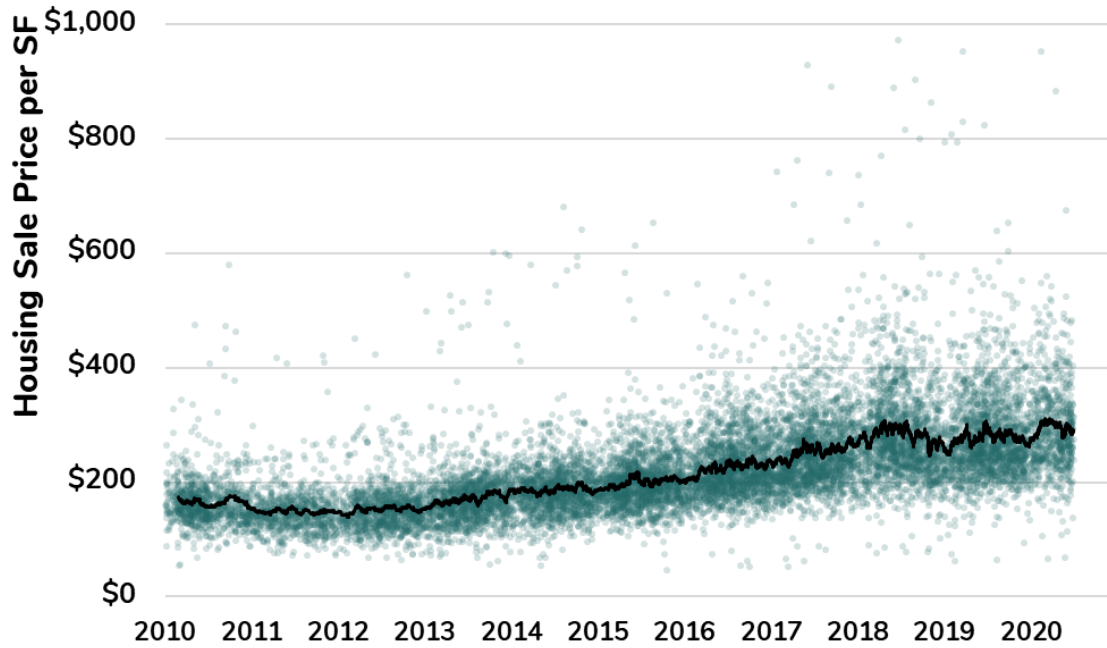
Rents have increased significantly since 2014, with rental vacancy rates experiencing some sharp declines aligned with these rent increases.

Exhibit 56 presents a comparison of rent increases from the previous year from 2002 to 2020. This highlights that historically, there were significant rent increases of over 5% in 2006–2008, but recent increases have been especially high, with over 10% increases in rent experienced in the market in 2015.

Exhibit 57 provides general multifamily vacancy rates across the city along the same scale from 2002 to 2020. There have been periods around previous recessions where Renton did experience significant vacancies in the local market. Vacancies exceeding 8% in 2002–2003 and 2010–2011, due in part to recessions.

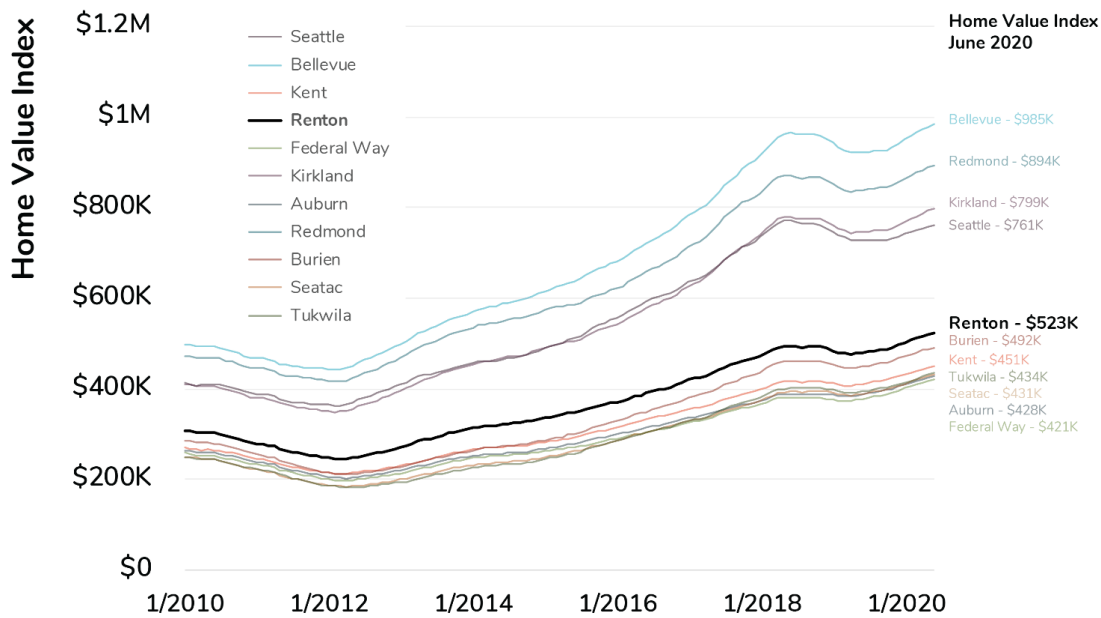
However, although vacancies are now around 6%, there was a dramatic drop in vacancy rates after 2011 when vacancy rates went down from 8% to 4% in 2015. This is aligned with the spike in rents noted in Exhibit 56. Although vacancy rates in the rental market have still not dropped below 4%, this highlights that increased demand for rental units in the Renton market around this time likely resulted in significant market shifts.

Exhibit 52. Housing Sale Prices per SF in Renton, 2010-2020



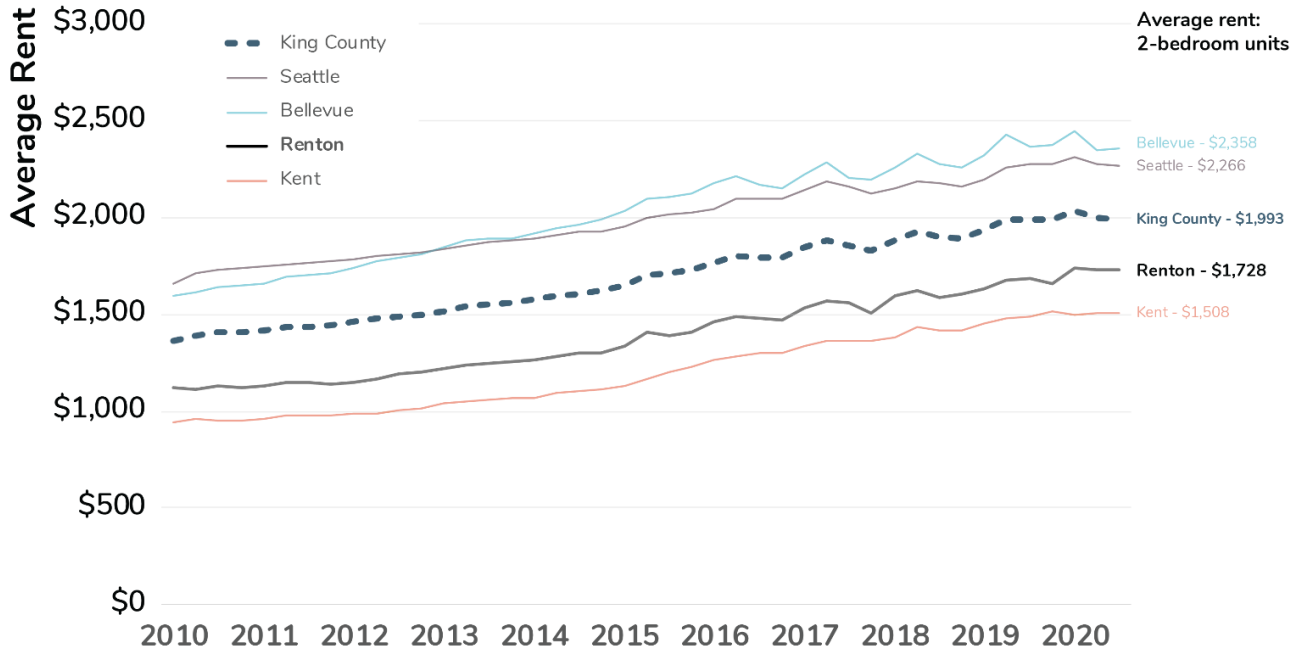
Sources: King County Assessor, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 53. Zillow Home Value Index of Median Price in Renton and Other Cities, 2012-2020



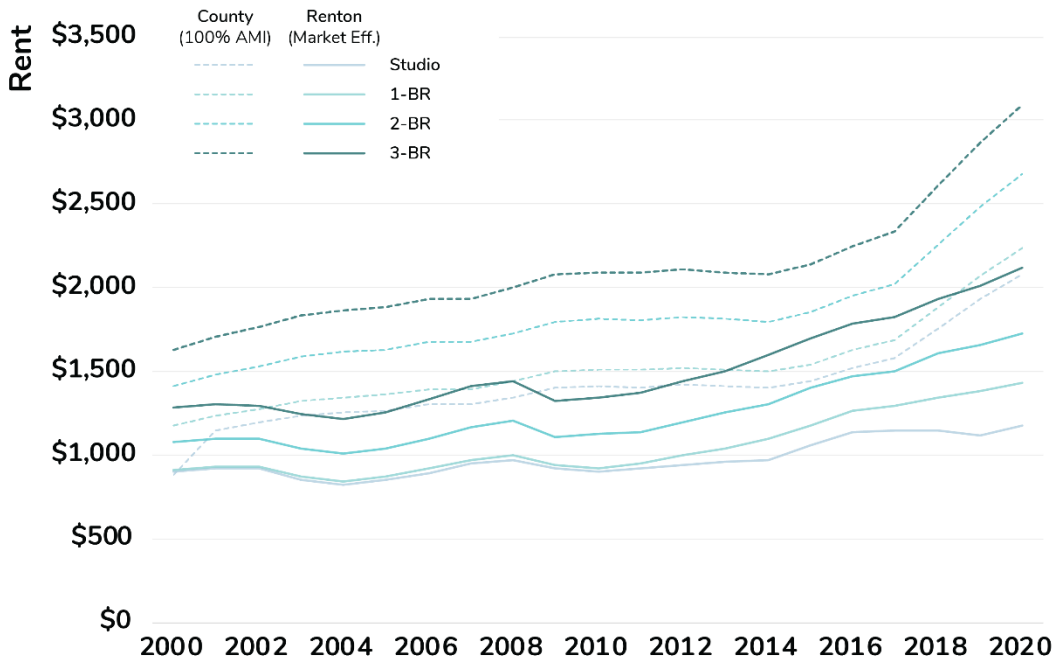
Sources: Zillow, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 54. Rental Housing Costs in Renton and Nearby Cities, 2010-2020



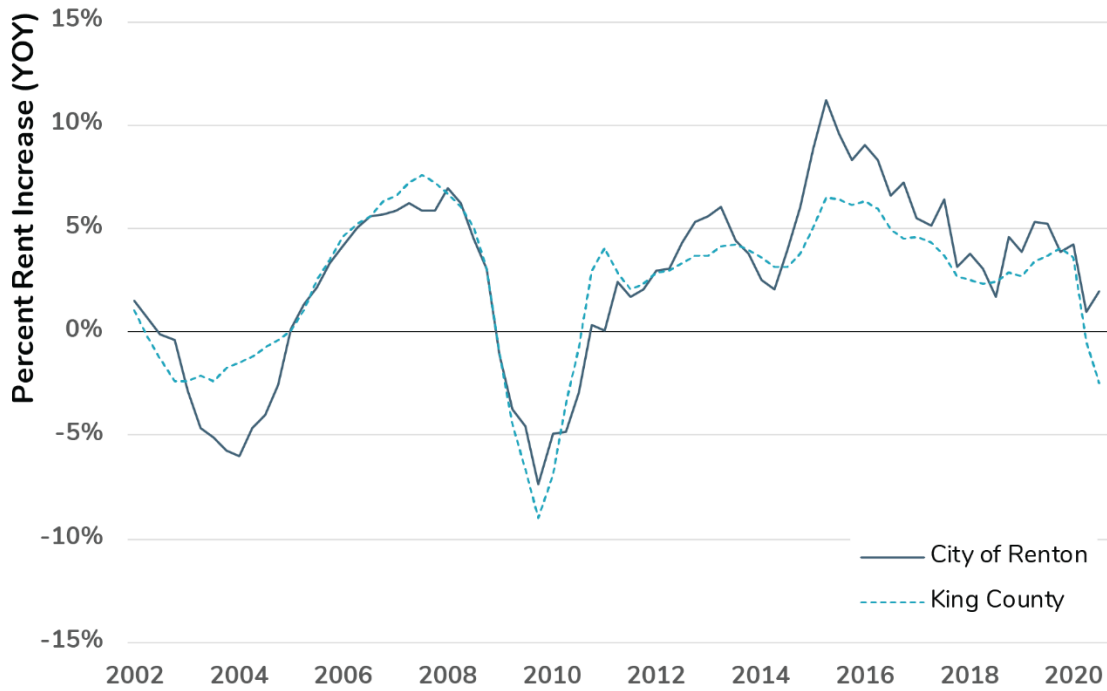
Sources: CoStar, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 55. Effective Market Rent for the City of Renton versus County AMI, 2000-2020



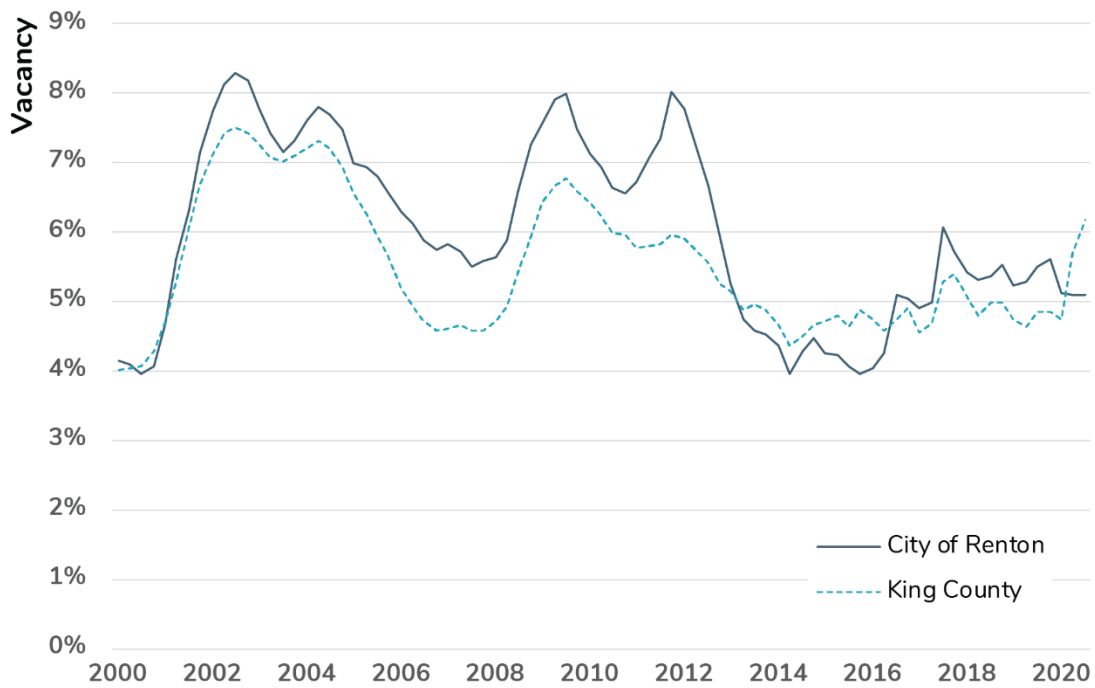
Sources: CoStar, 2020; US HUD, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 56. Year-Over-Year Multifamily Rent Increases, Renton and King County, 2002–2020.



Sources: CoStar, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 57. Multifamily Rental Stabilized Vacancy Rates, Renton and King County, 2002-2020



Sources: CoStar, 2020; BERK, 2020.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Although Renton include affordable housing options, greater housing burdens are felt a diverse range of households. Over the entire community, about 37% of all households are facing some type of cost burden, calculated as where housing costs are over 30% of household income. These cost burdens can be related to a mismatch between housing costs and income or can be related to seniors or others on fixed incomes that have increasing living expenses. In Renton, there are a considerable number of renters faced with housing burdens: about 46% of renter households are committing at least 30% of income to housing, and for low-income households these burdens are even higher.

Issues of race, housing access, and cost burdens to households are also a concern. Housing affordability and accessibility are related to differences in household income and given correlations between income and race there are clear differences in cost burden across groups.

Key Conclusions

Renton has about an equal number of renters and homeowners.

Renton has a generally even distribution of homeowners and renters in the community overall, with 52% of households owning their own home. This is comparable to SeaTac (50%), Redmond (50%), and Burien (53%), but is substantially higher than Tukwila (40%). Exhibit 58 indicates that one- and two-person households are the most common, with renters more common with one-person households and the split about even with two-person households.

Renton has an age distribution comparable to the county overall.

As shown in Exhibit 59, Renton has an age profile that is close to King County as a whole: about 21% of its population is 18 years of age or under (compared to 20% in the county as a whole), and about 13% of the populations of both Renton and King County as a whole are 65 or over. This age distribution highlights that Renton does have age groups which have slightly greater representation than in King County overall, most notably with residents 9 years and younger, 25 to 29 years, and 35 to 39 years.

Household incomes suggest that Renton includes a higher proportion of lower-income households than in the region overall.

The figures in Exhibits 60 and 61 highlight that household incomes in Renton are slightly lower than the County and region overall. About 47% of households are above the median income for the region, indicating that Renton currently has a higher proportion of households that are at moderate income or below.

The household income distributions are categorized by the race and ethnicity of the household in Exhibit 62. This highlights that in Renton there are distinct differences in income for people of color. Most notably, over half of Black and African American and Hispanic or Latino households in Renton

have incomes that are considered low-income or below (less than 80% of MFI). This difference in household income may affect the ability of these communities to access housing in Renton.

Statistics on housing costs and household income suggest there are local affordability issues for low-income households.

Exhibit 63 highlights the number of housing units that are considered affordable at certain income levels, versus the number of households in household income categories. A gap also exists for households with less than 30% AMI, with about 2.5 times the number of households with this income than units that are affordable to this population. This gap at the low end of the market is supported by Exhibit 65, which highlights that about 84% of extremely low-income households are facing some level of burden, and around 68% are paying more than half their income.

Down-renting by higher income households may also be a concern.

Exhibit 63 also shows that there are about 50% more renting households with incomes above 80% AMI than there are rental units available that are affordable to this population. Given the number of units available to households in lower income categories, this suggests that lower-income housing in Renton may be impacted by down-renting, with households taking up cheaper units with housing costs lower than 30% of household income.

Housing situations and cost burdens are different across racial and ethnic groups in the city.

Examining the available data suggests that there are distinct differences in cost burden between racial and ethnic groups in Renton. Exhibit 20 provides statistics on the race of households, highlighting that generally households headed by people of color, which make up about 45% of the total households in Renton, include more renters (54%) versus white-headed households (44%).

Within these statistics, 70% of Black or African American households and 76% of Hispanic or Latino households are renters. This difference may involve the differences in household incomes between these groups, but issues related to renting disproportionately fall on households of color.

Differences by race and ethnicity also extends to the housing burdens faced by households. Exhibit 21 indicates that about 40% of households of color reported some type of housing cost burden, while only 32% of white households reporting a burden of housing costs over 30% of income.

Exhibit 72 provides more detail for renters, which highlights that 53% of Black or African American households and 53% of Hispanic or Latino households renting are cost-burdened, compared to 36% of Asian households and 43% of white households. These concerns are part of larger discussions of equity in the community and should be considered in policies addressing structural racial issues with housing access.

Households in Renton neighborhoods may be at higher risk for economic displacement.

As housing costs rise and there is pressure for older housing to be redeveloped, some households in Renton may be facing significant risks of displacement. If there is a loss of affordable housing in the

community, some households may need to leave the city and move to other locations to find appropriate and affordable housing. Understanding where there is the potential for displacement can be important in crafting policies to mitigate these effects.

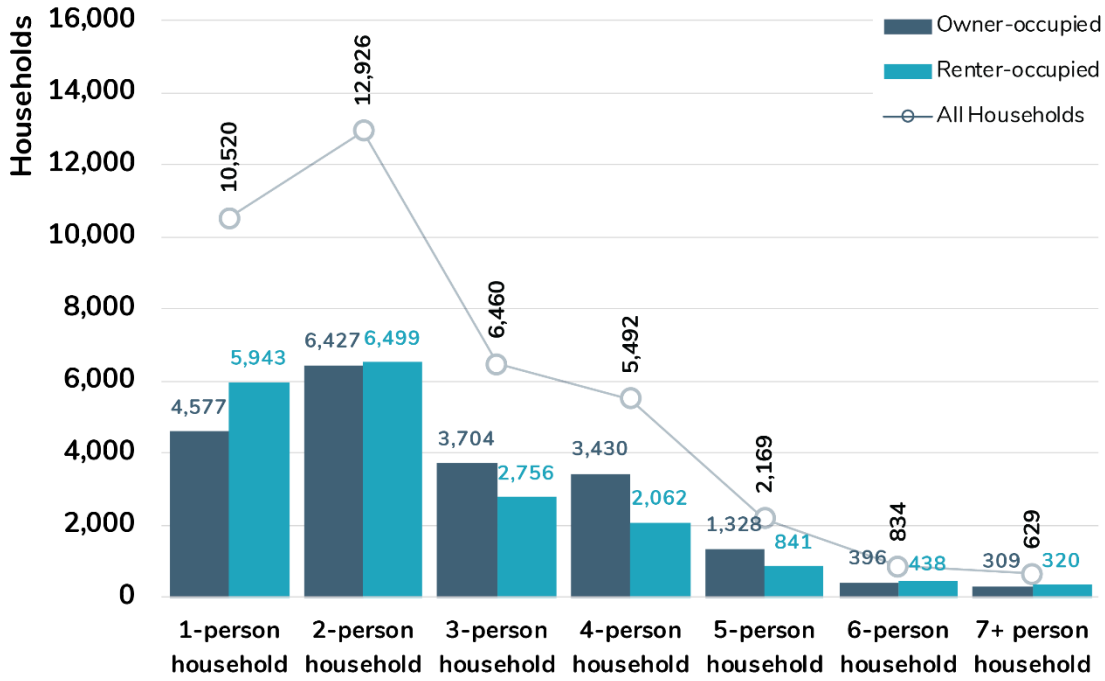
Exhibit 24 shows a map of a Regional Displacement Risk Index, created by the Puget Sound Regional Council as part of the VISION 2050 long-range regional growth strategy effort. This index combined data at the census tract level about socio-demographics, transportation, neighborhood characteristics, housing, and civic engagement to determine areas which are likely to be the most vulnerable to displacement in the region. The census tracts with the highest index scores are assumed to be at the most risk: as developed, the top 10% scoring tracts in the Puget Sound Region are assumed to be at “higher” risk for displacement (colored blue on the map), while the next 40% of tracts are assumed to be at “moderate” risk.

Exhibit 25 looks specifically at the “higher risk” areas in Renton according to the index, and it compares these with residential properties which have a value for the house and other improvements at less than the value of the land itself according to the King County Assessor. This is one measure that can show residential properties that have a lower value and may be at risk for redevelopment.

While this index is broadly calculated, it highlights several key characteristics of the potential displacement risk in Renton. Overall, almost all of the city is at “moderate” risk or above, excluding the eastern portion of the city with newer development. This is typical across south King County, however, with most of the surrounding communities considered to be at risk as well.

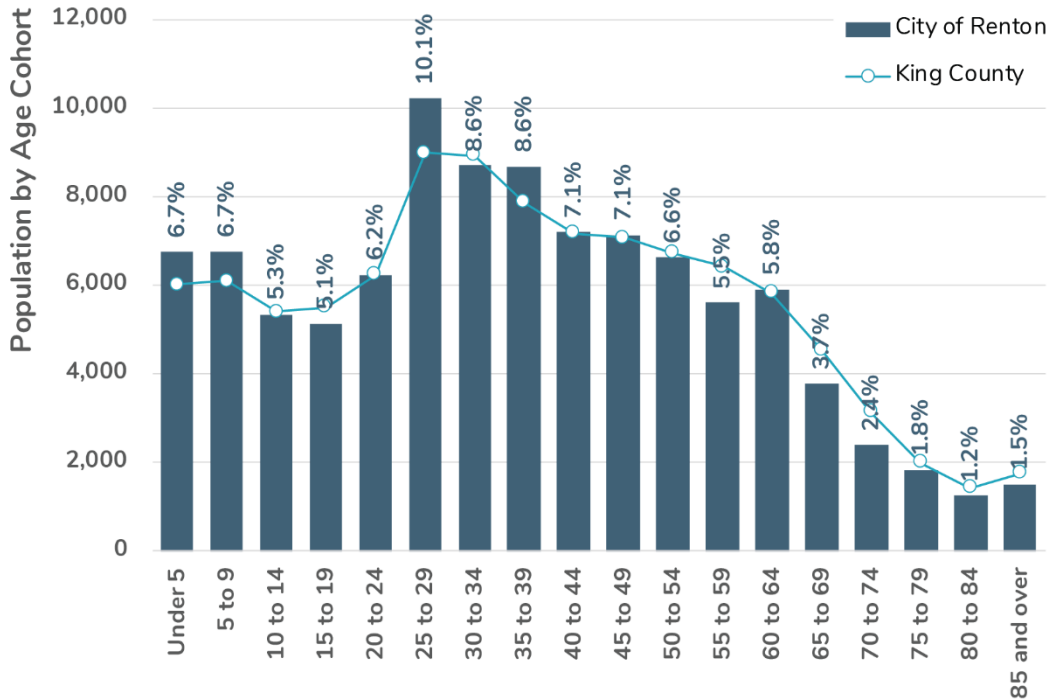
In Renton however, the risks appear to be greatest in most of the City Center, as well as the western portion of the Highlands Community Planning Area where the Sunset area is located. The property map highlights that for the City Center area, this is largely with multifamily residential buildings, likely older and somewhat depreciated. For the Sunset area, this includes both multifamily housing as well as single-family attached and detached housing.

Exhibit 58. Renton Households by Size and Tenure, ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates.



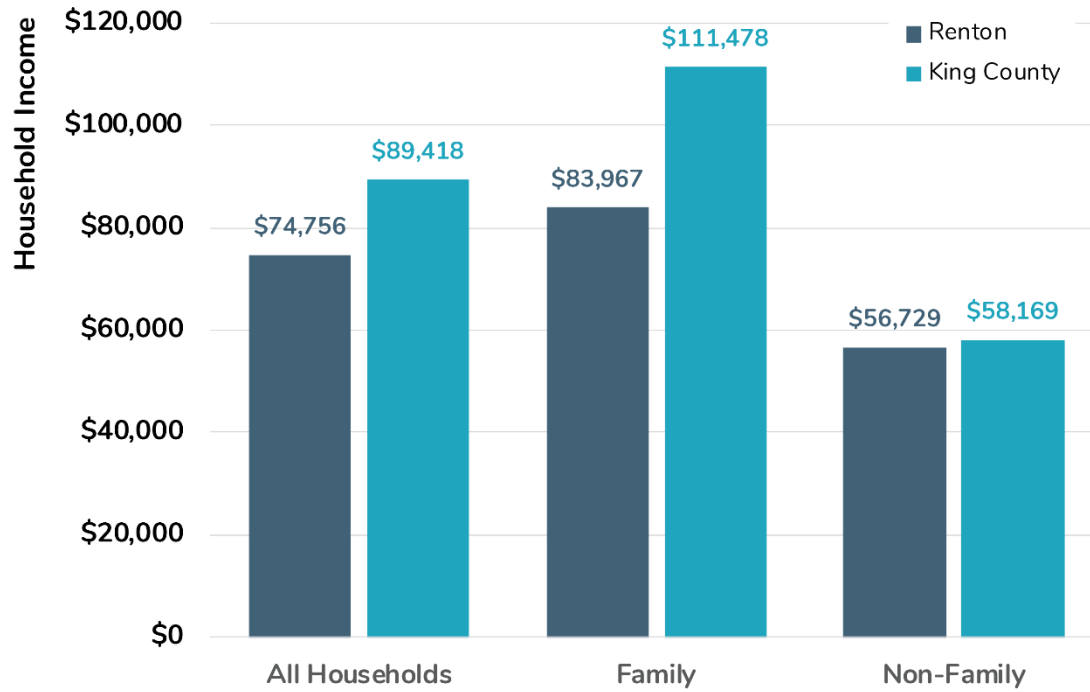
Sources: ACS 2014-2018 5-year estimates; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 59. Renton Population by Age Range, ACS 2018 5-year Estimates.



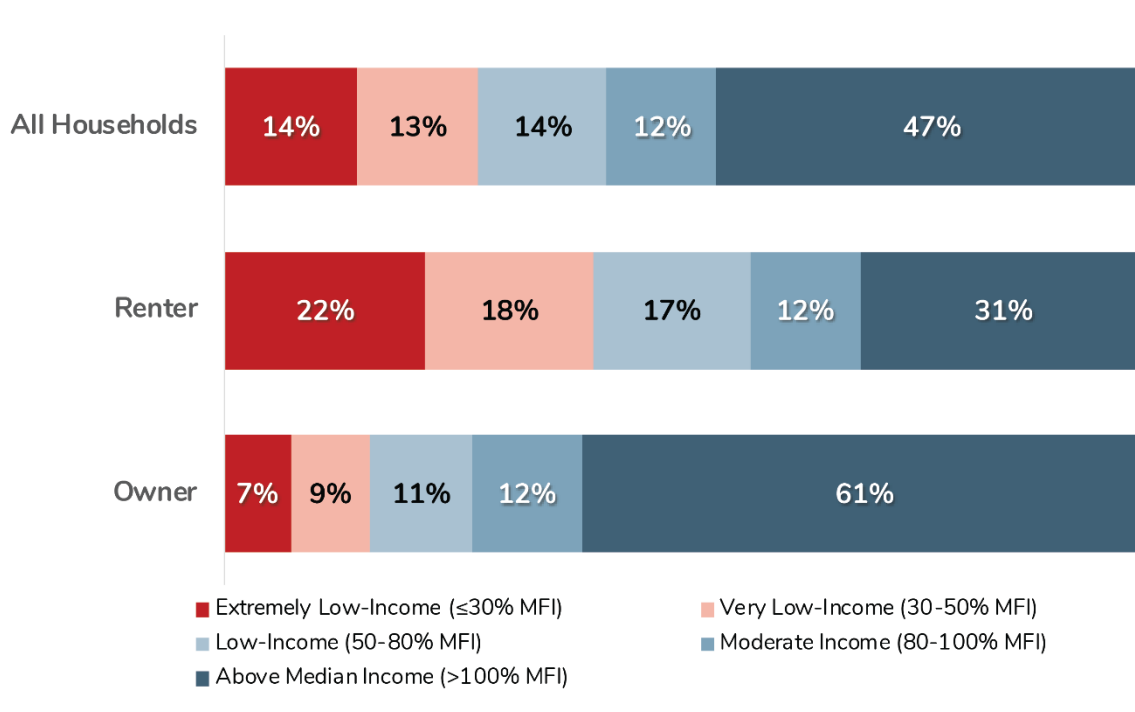
Sources: ACS 2014-2018 5-year estimates; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 60. Median Household Income in Renton and King County, ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates.



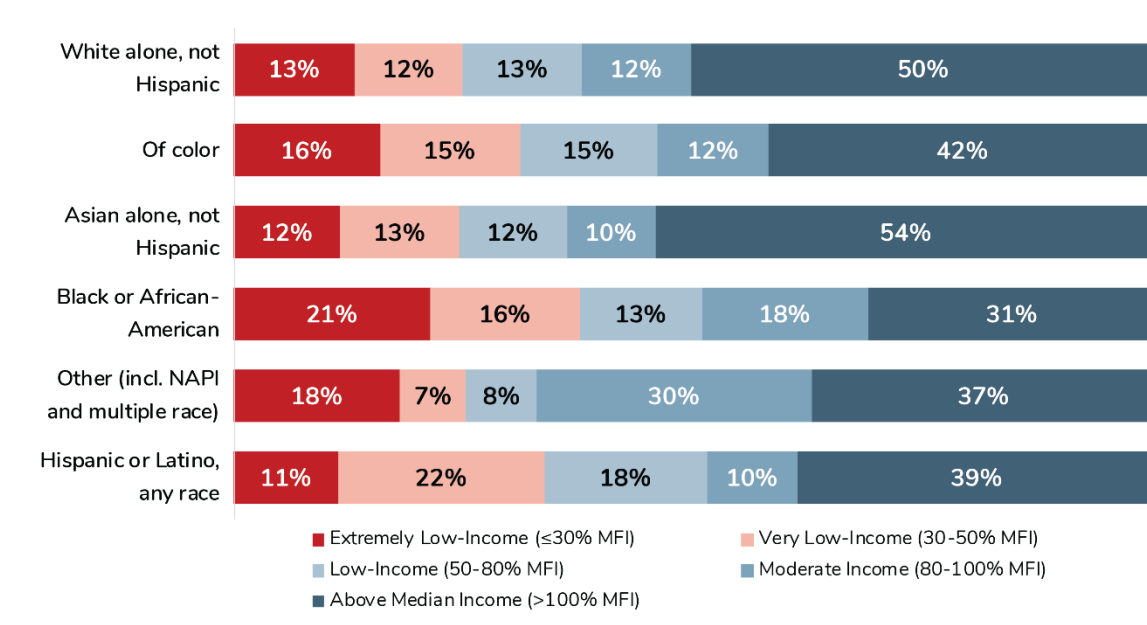
Sources: ACS 2018 5-year estimates; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 61. Proportion of Households by Tenure and Income, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



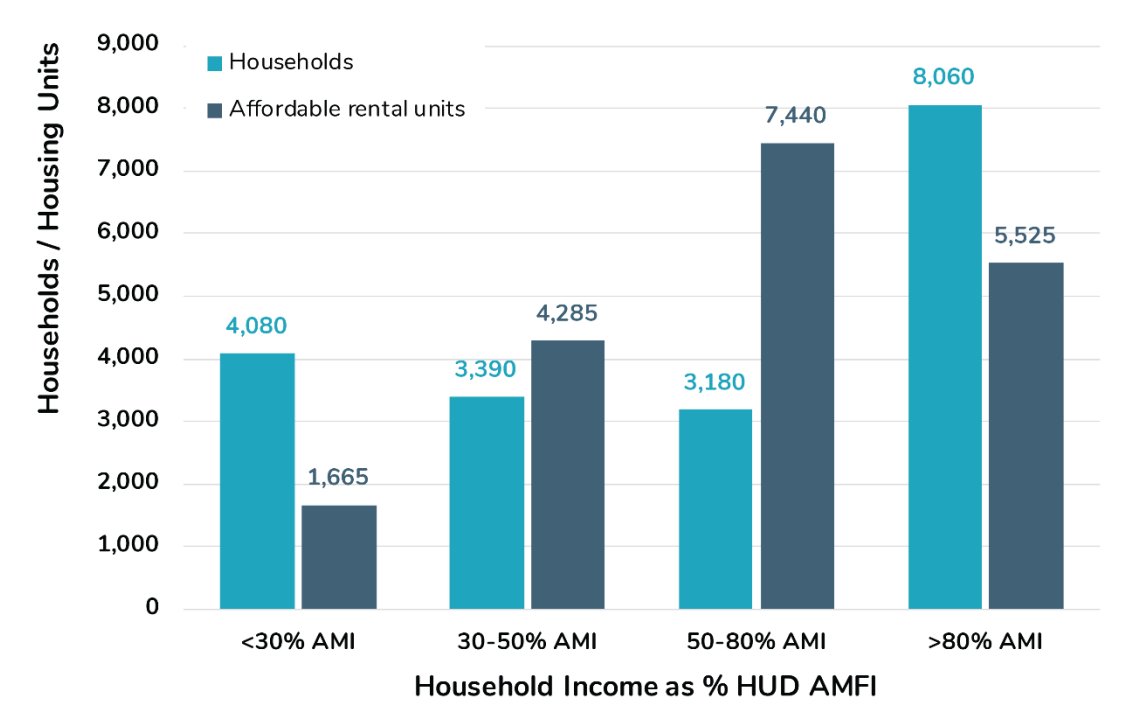
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 62. Proportion of Households by Race and Income, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



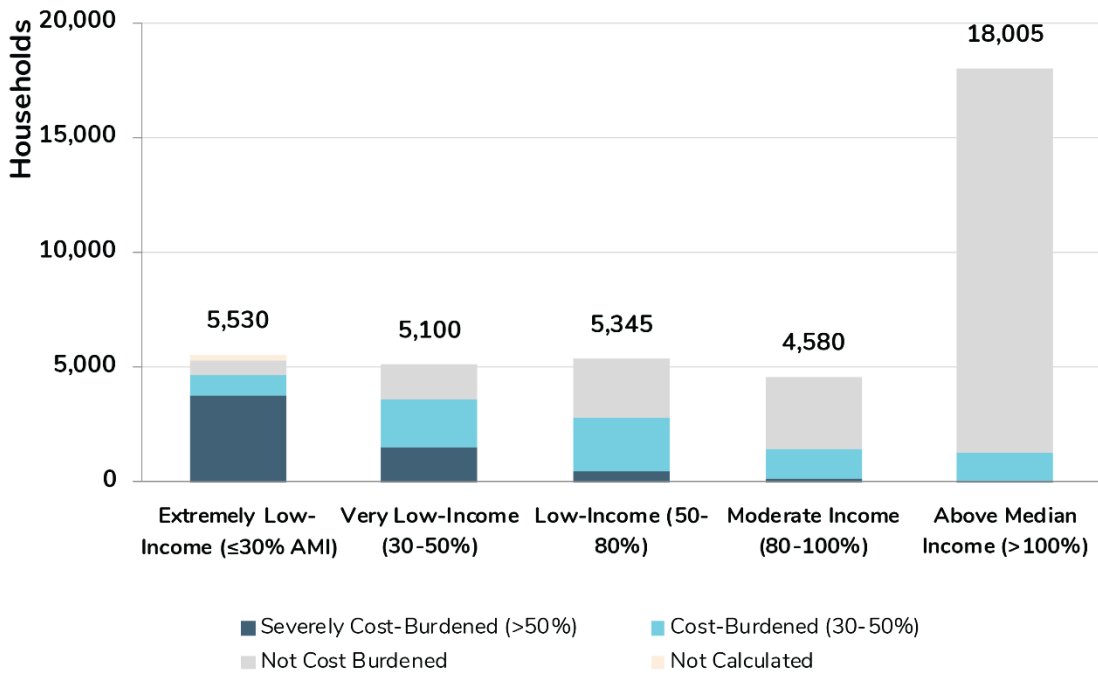
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 63. Households and Units Available by Income Threshold, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



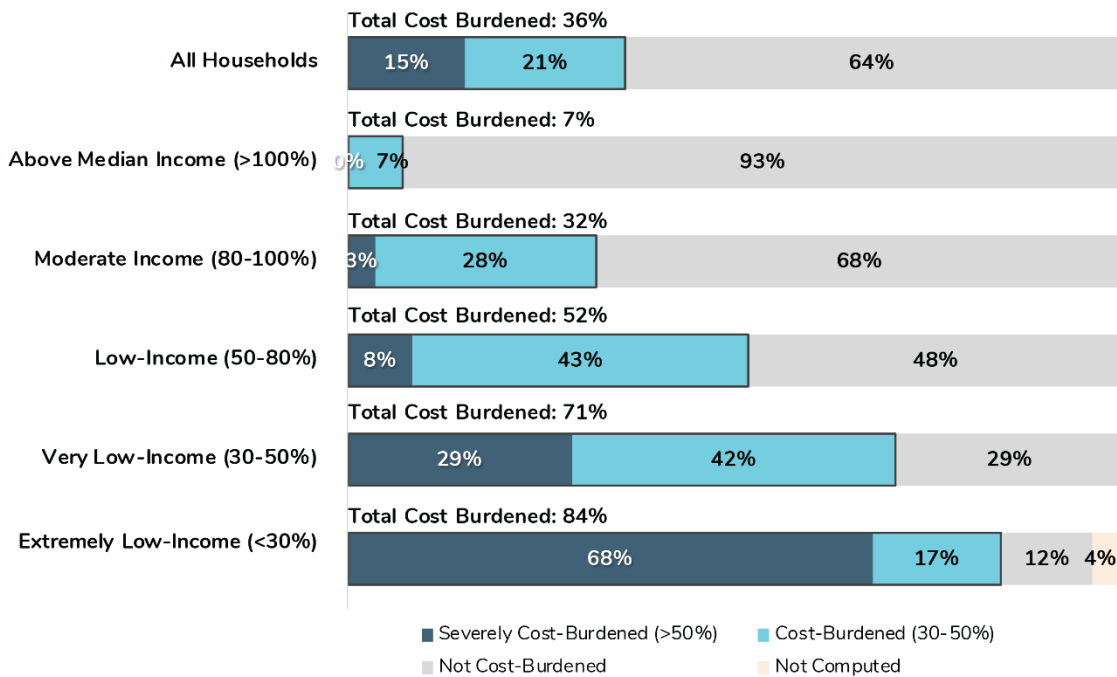
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 64. Cost Burden by Income Range, Number of Households, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



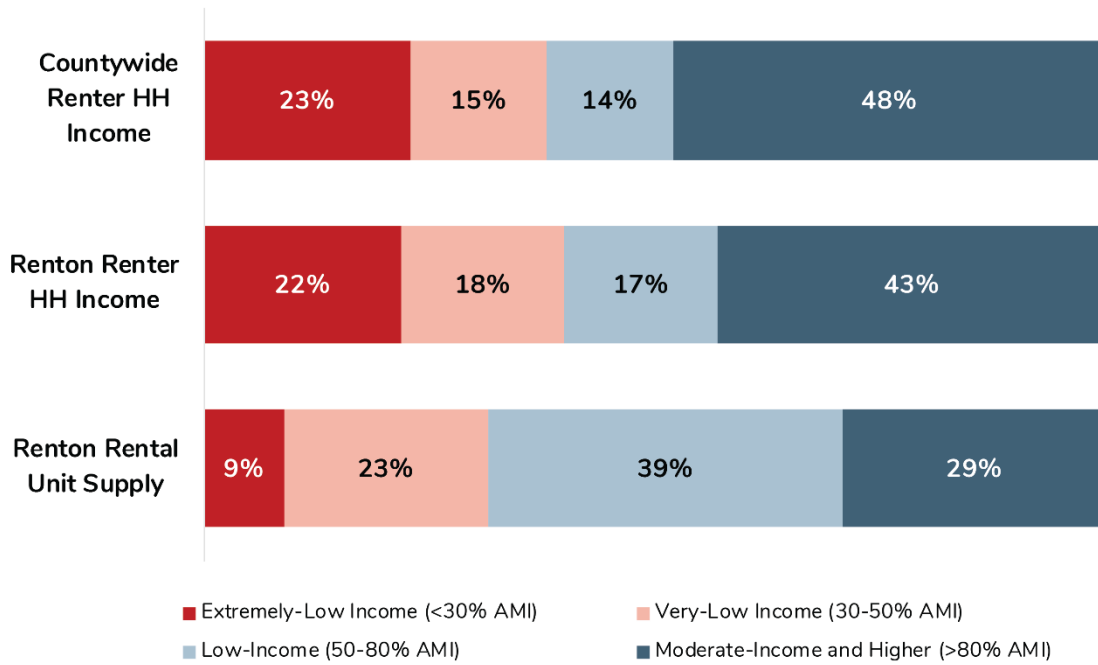
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 65. Cost Burden by Income Range, Percent of Households, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



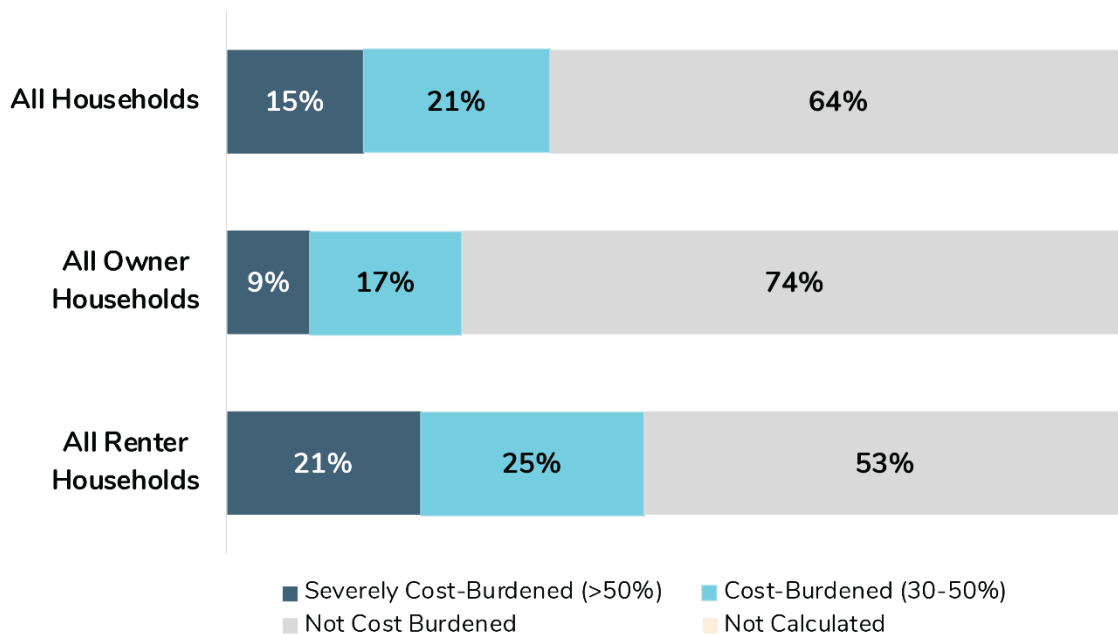
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 66. Renton and Countywide Rental Unit Supply by Income, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



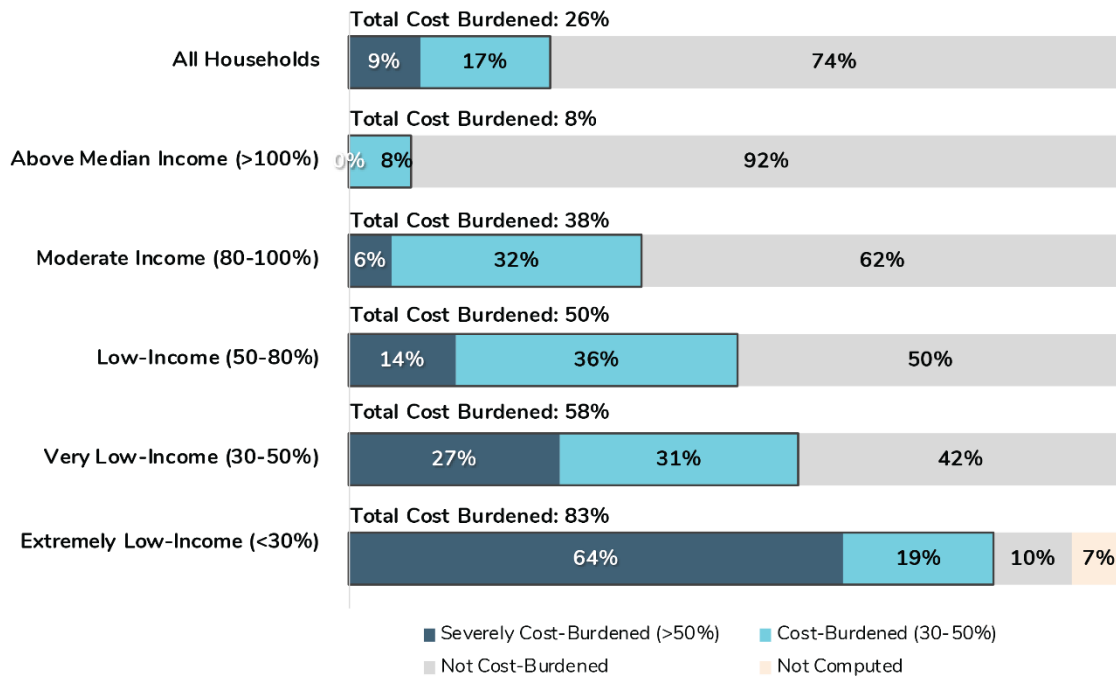
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 67. Cost Burden for Renton Households by Housing Tenure, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



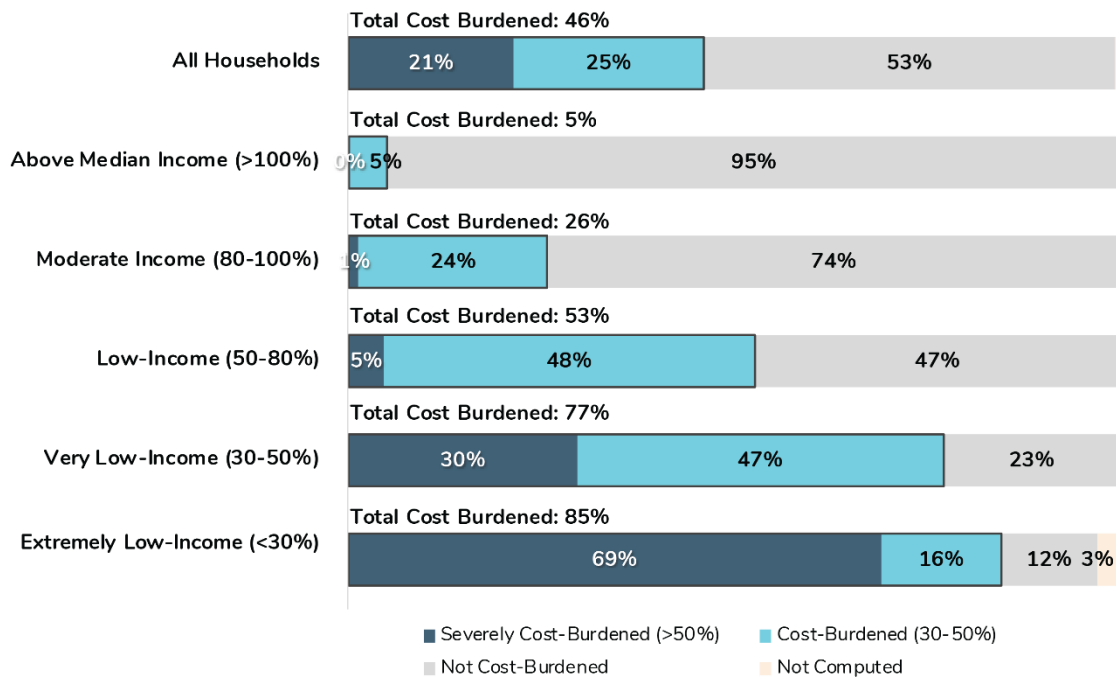
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 68. Cost Burden for Homeowners by Income Range, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



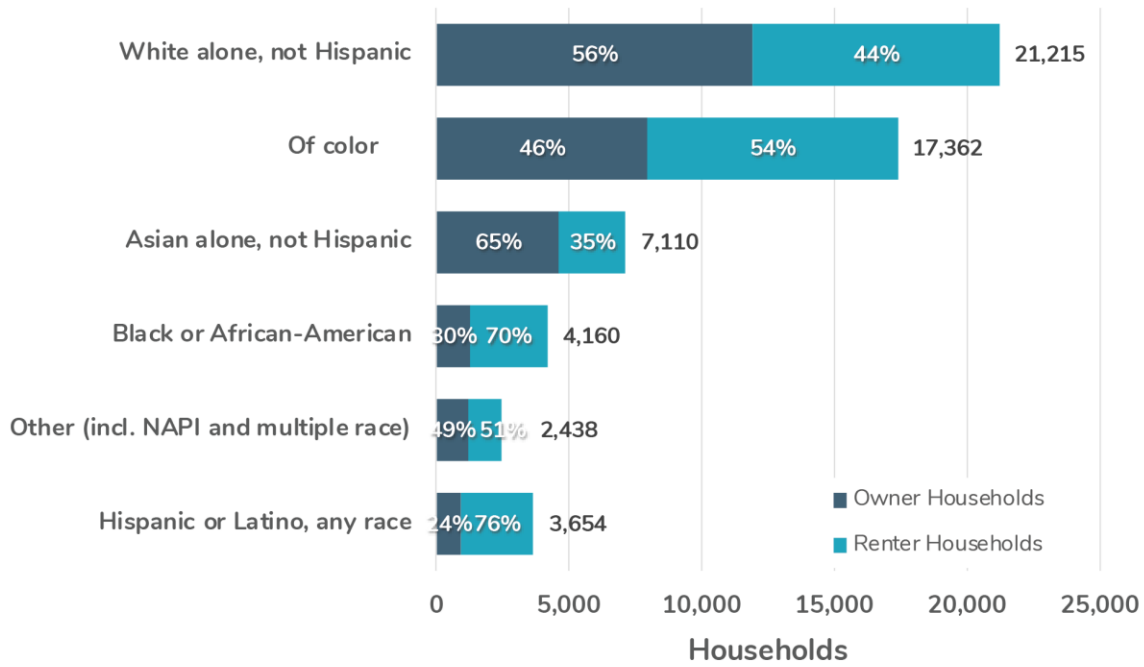
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 69. Cost Burden for Renters by Income Range, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



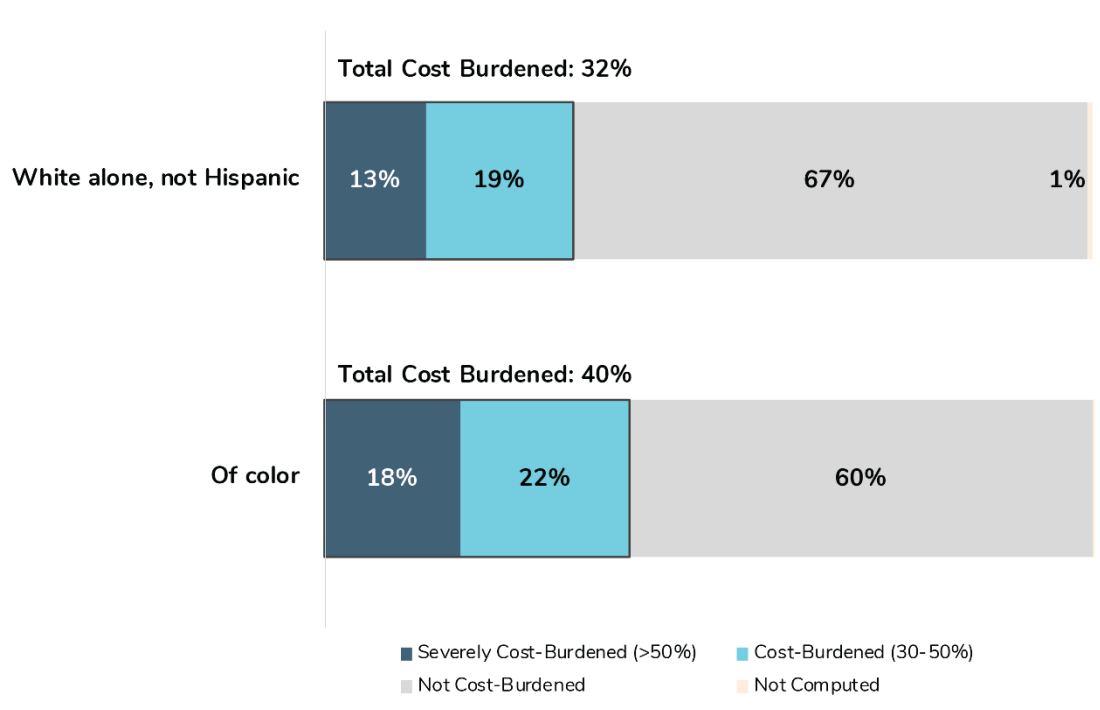
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 70. Renton Households by Race and Tenure, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



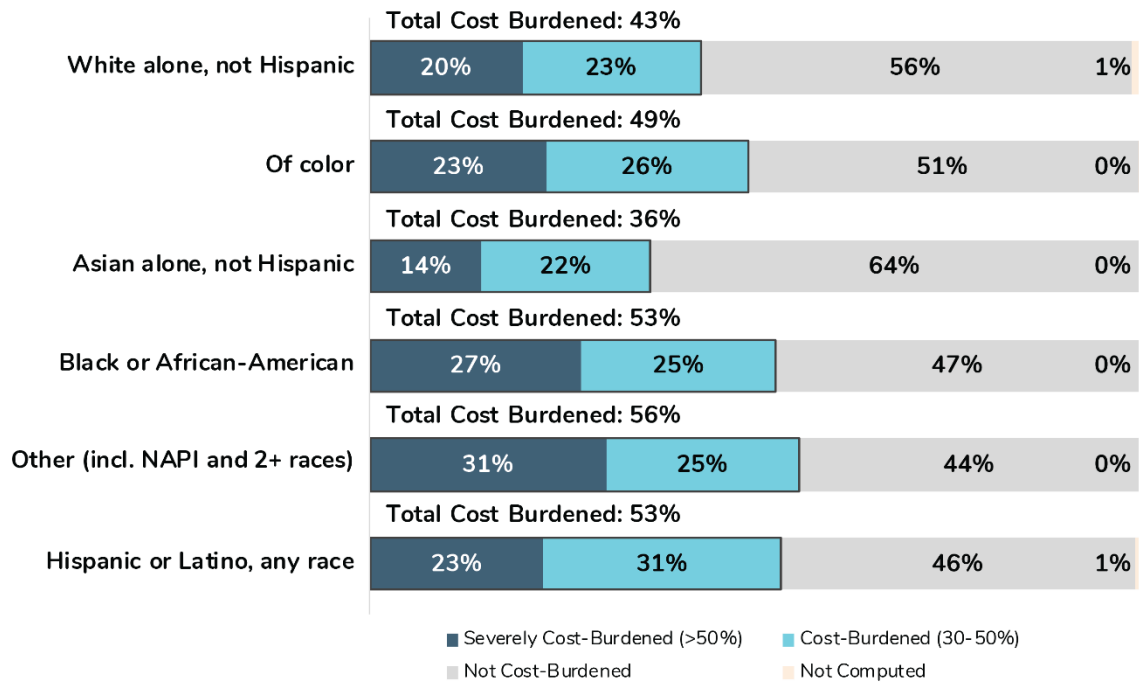
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 71. Cost Burden for Renton Households by Race, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



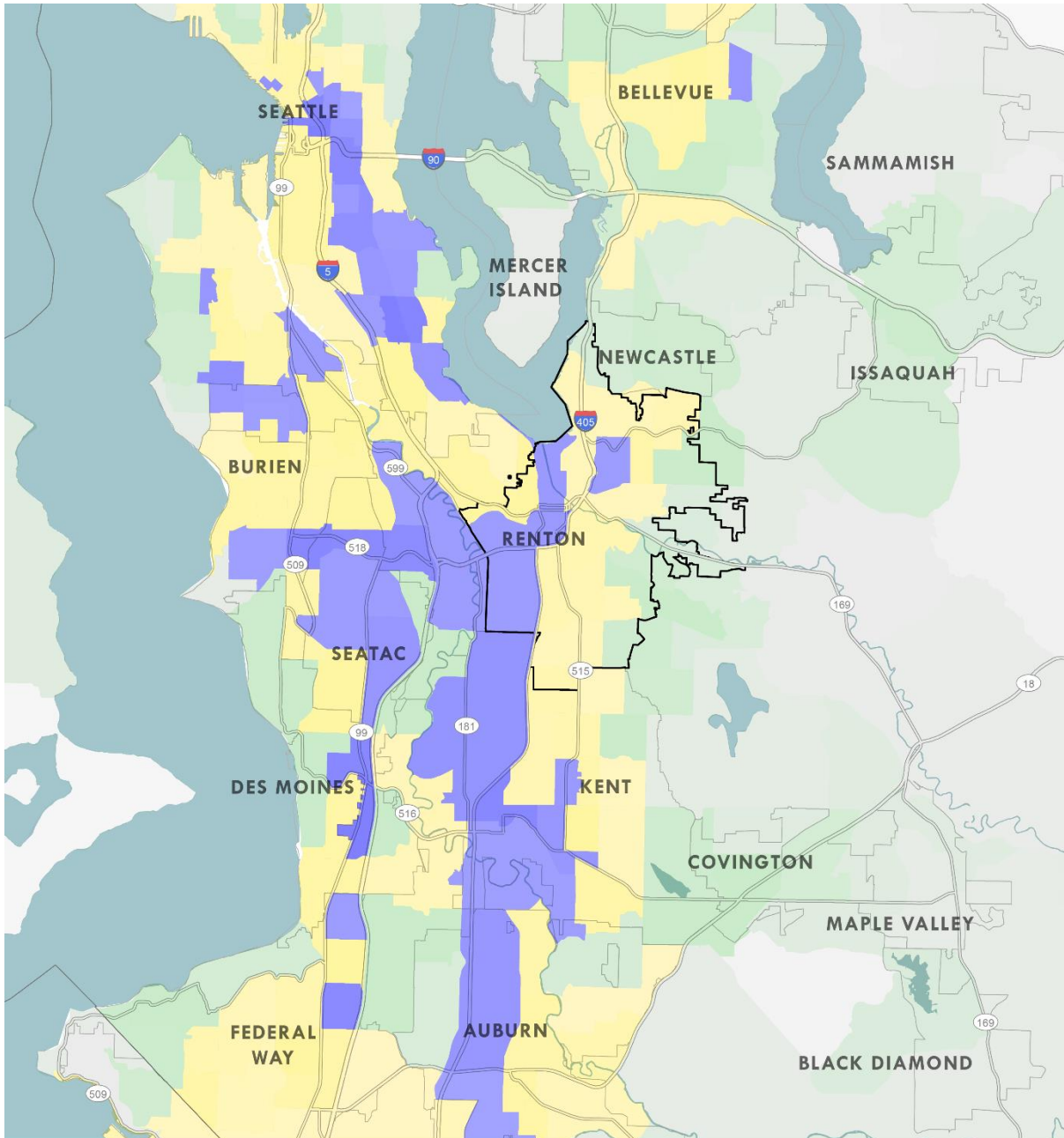
Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 72. Detailed Cost Burden for Renton Renters by Race, 2017 5-Year Estimates.



Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 2017 5-year estimates); BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 73. Displacement Risk by Census Tract, Renton and Surrounding Area.

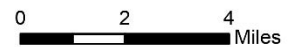


LEGEND

- City of Renton
- Other Cities
- Counties
- Highways/State Routes

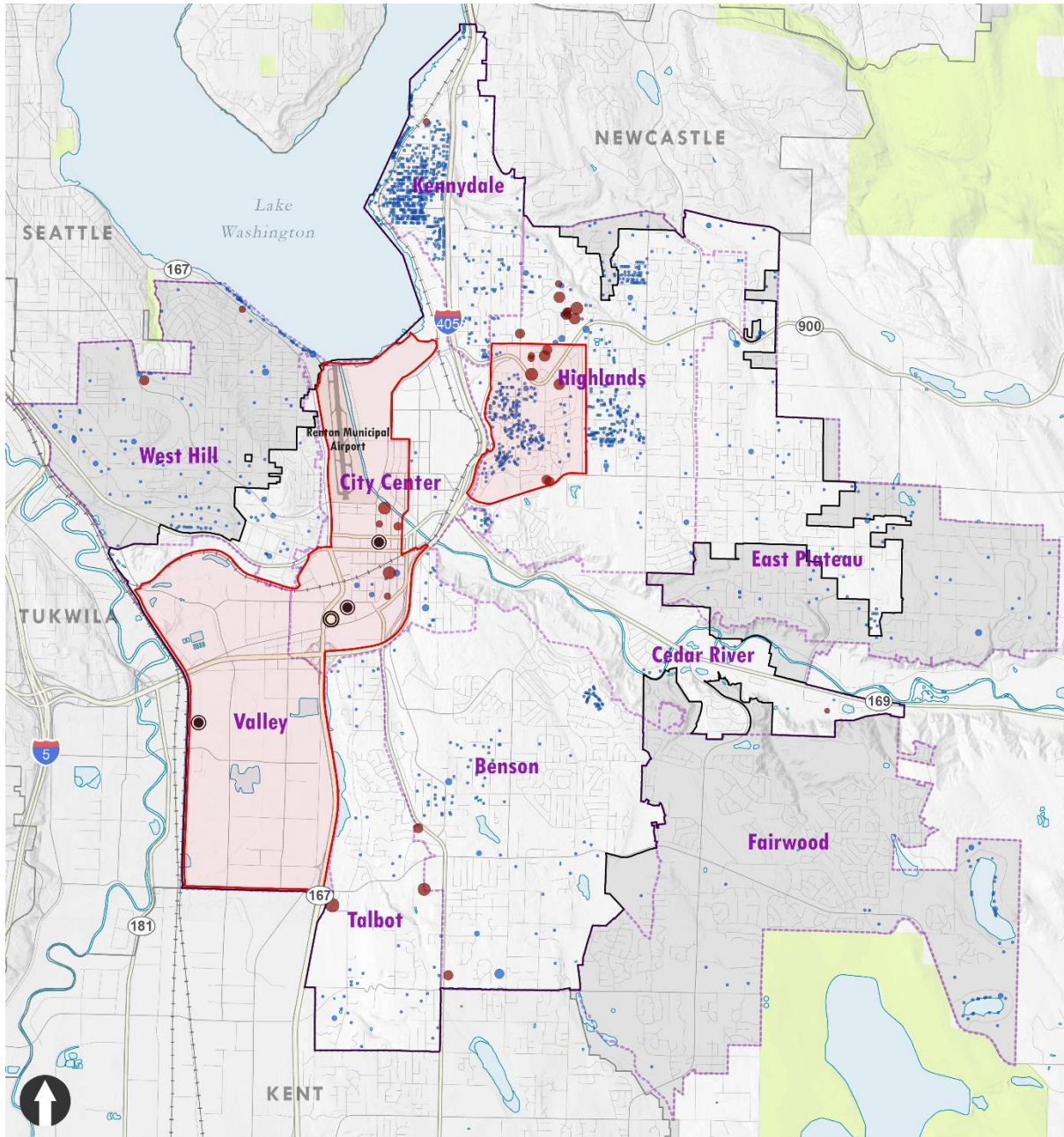
PSRC Displacement Risk Index

- Lower
- Moderate
- Higher



Sources: PSRC, 2019; King County GIS, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 74. Low Improvement Value Ratios and Higher Displacement Risk Areas, City of Renton.



LEGEND

Low Improvement/Land Value

- Units per Parcel**
- 1
 - 2
 - 3-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-20
 - 21-50
 - 51-100
 - 101-200

Unit Types

- Single-family, duplex, triplex, townhouse
- Multifamily and condo

Higher Displacement Risk (PSRC Regional Displacement Index)

- City of Renton
- Community Planning Areas
- Other cities
- Urban Growth Areas
- Major Transit Stations
- Future Transit Center
- Highways/State Routes
- Arterials
- Other streets
- Public lands
- Water



Map Date: November 2020



Sources: PSRC, 2019; King County GIS, 2020; BERK, 2020.

HOUSING CAPACITY AND TARGETS

Future needs for housing have been evaluated at the subregional level as part of a joint program between the cities of Renton, Auburn, Burien, Federal Way, Kent, and Tukwila. This research found that these communities have been underproducing the amount of housing since 2011 to meet local needs, and subregional housing production would need to increase by about 47% to meet future targets. Over the next 20 years, these communities will need to adjust local zoning, policies, regulations, and incentives to address the full spectrum of housing needs.

For Renton itself, local housing production will only require an increase of about 6% to reach current housing targets. The recent efforts in the city that have successfully promoted new multifamily development, including a significant number of projects in downtown Renton, will be important to reaching this target.

However, future planning for needed housing in Renton must also consider other factors. For one, housing policy must respond to the full spectrum of needs in the city, including the demand for family rental housing and low-income housing (especially for households with incomes at 30% AMI or below). Housing targets may also be subject to change, especially if housing yields in communities to the north and east decline or future housing targets allocate more growth to Renton.

Key Conclusions

Supplies of developable land are enough to accommodate projected needs for growth.

Exhibit 16 provides the estimated land capacity in Renton based on the 2014 King County Buildable Lands Report. Based on zoning at that time, the total estimated land capacity for the city was 15,351 housing units, split between 5,710 additional single-family units and 9,641 new units in multifamily and mixed-use projects. From 2012 to 2019, there was a net increase in housing that amounted to about 22% of this capacity, utilizing 18% of the capacity of areas zoned for multifamily and mixed-use, and 29% of the capacity of multifamily areas. This suggests that at current development levels, there is overall capacity to meet local needs for the next 20 years or more.

Comparing with other nearby cities in Exhibit 76, the utilization of existing developable land in the 2012–2019 period is similar to other cities, including Federal Way, Renton, and Burien. Other cities in the area such as SeaTac and Tukwila have had a much lower rate of utilizing their developable land supply during that same period. However, among these communities, Renton has had the greatest amount of local development and the largest remaining overall capacity for new housing.

Subregional targets for housing development will be driven by recent housing underproduction.

Exhibit 77 compares the targets provided from the south King County housing study for Renton with the subregion overall. Between Renton and the other five communities studied, an overall increase of about 63,000 housing units, or 29% of the existing housing stock, will be necessary to accommodate this subregion's share of expected population growth over the next 20 years. However, about 19,700

units, or 31% of this target, is related to levels of underproduction since 2011 that have meant that the subregion has not kept pace with expected growth.

Meeting base targets for Renton will only require small increases in housing production under current assumptions.

Although other communities have recently experienced housing underproduction, Renton has had rates of production that have largely kept up with local needs. Recent housing production rates would need to increase by about 6% to achieve the targets to meet expected subregional needs. Keeping up this pace of development, however, will require coordination of development opportunities, especially with respect to housing redevelopment in the downtown.

A considerable amount of new housing product in Renton will need to be developed for lower income households.

As Exhibits 28 and 79 show, the distribution of rents with new units will need to include some housing products at market-rate. To meet projected targets to 2040, about 44% of the total amount of new housing, or about 4,100 new units, should be targeted to households at 100% AMI or above.

However, this leaves over half of new development (about 5,200 new units, or 56% of the total) that is estimated to be needed to accommodate households making less income than the area median household income. Additionally, to meet these projections, almost 900 units, or about 10% of the projected housing needed, should be developed for extremely low-income households making less than 30% AMI. This will require consideration of long-term, targeted subsidies for affordable housing construction, as well as coordination with other organizations and agencies.

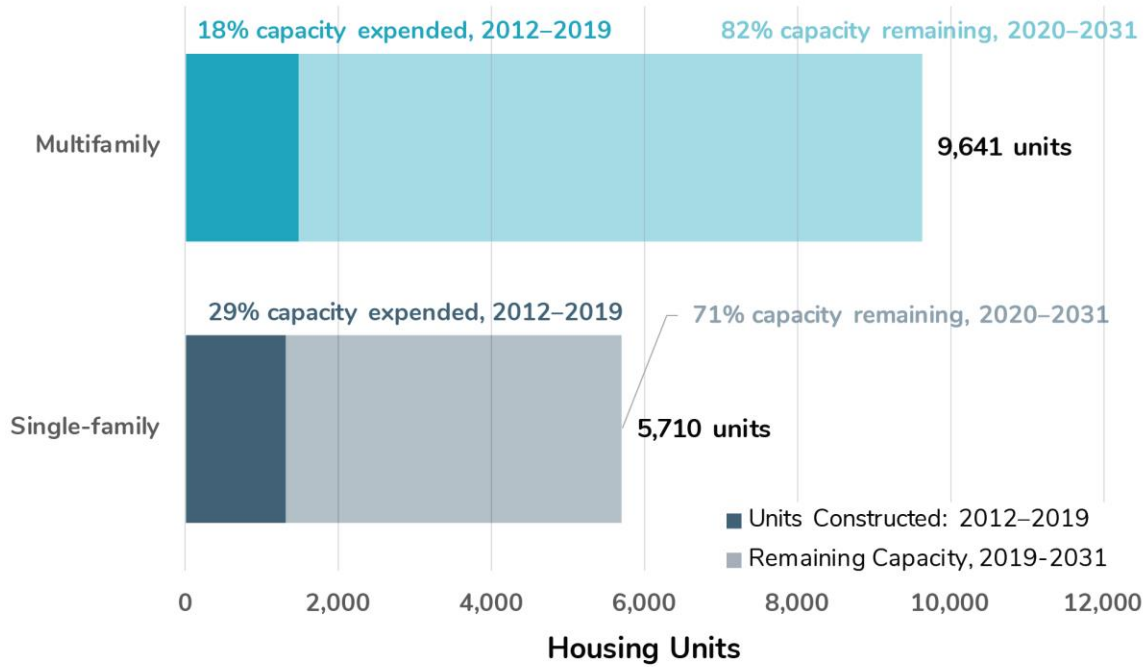
Future planning for housing development in Renton should have contingencies in case the communities face greater demands for growth.

The targets identified in the subregional study are strongly dependent on existing assumptions for regional distributions of growth. There are several scenarios where these targets may underestimate the amount of housing required:

- The new PSRC Regional Growth Strategy under the expected VISION 2050 plan includes a greater focus on developed areas, with “core cities” such as Renton expected to take a greater share of growth. Changes to the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPP) will reflect this change.
- If communities elsewhere in the region are not able to keep up pace with necessary housing production, Renton and south King County may face additional pressures for development, both with new development and redevelopment/infill in existing areas.
- Additional job growth in the city, especially with Valley Medical Center and Southport, may result in more pressures for local housing to support employees, both directly by these employers and indirectly by supporting businesses.

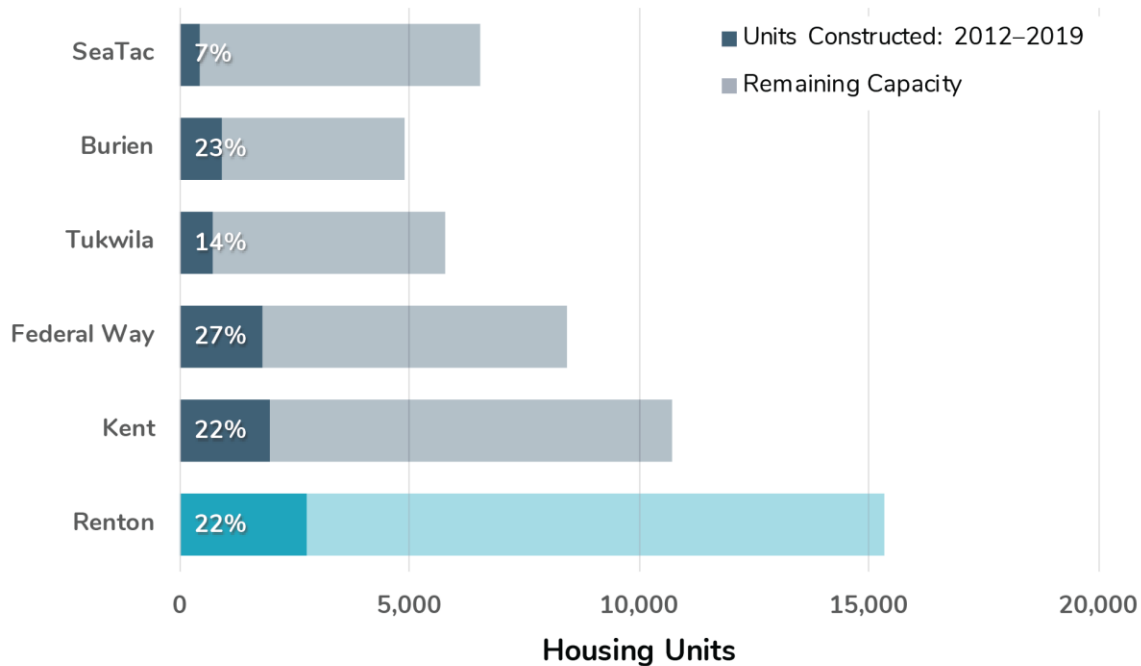
These contingencies should be considered as part of long-term planning. If Renton is required to accommodate additional future growth and increase housing production significantly beyond current levels, policies should be in place to coordinate this additional development.

Exhibit 75. 2014 Developable Land Capacity and Recent Development, City of Renton.



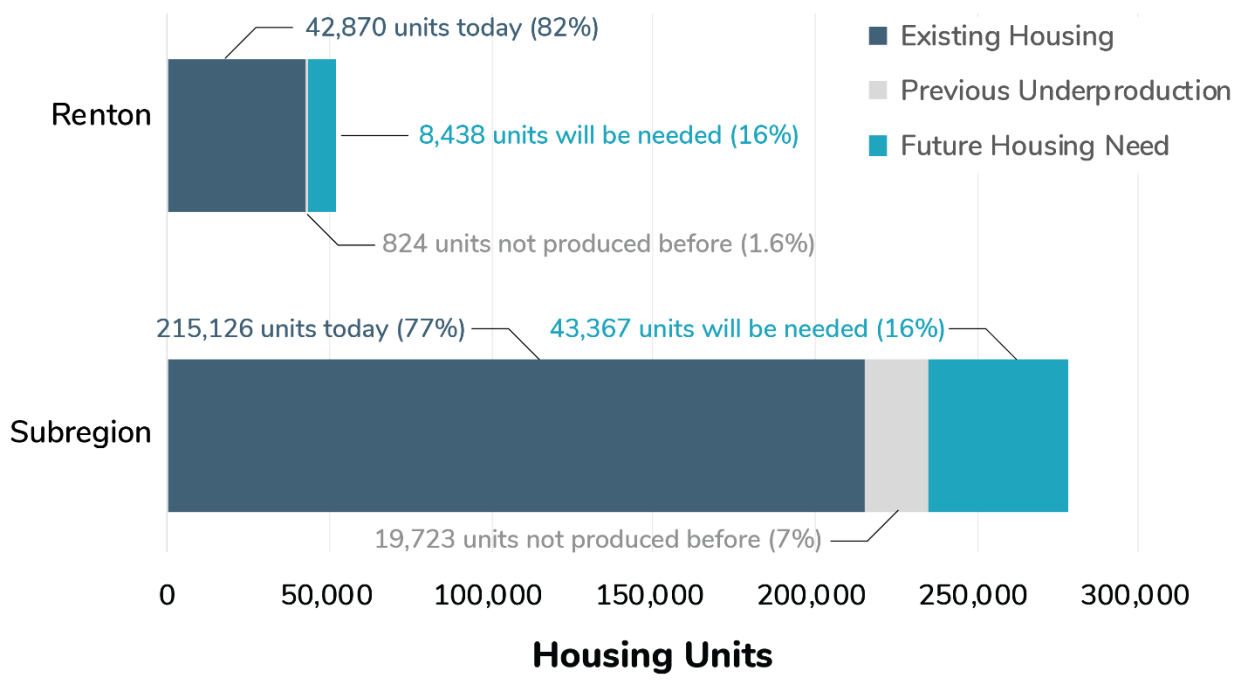
Source: King County Buildable Lands Report, 2014; WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 76. 2014 Developable Land Capacity and Recent Development, Local Area Cities.



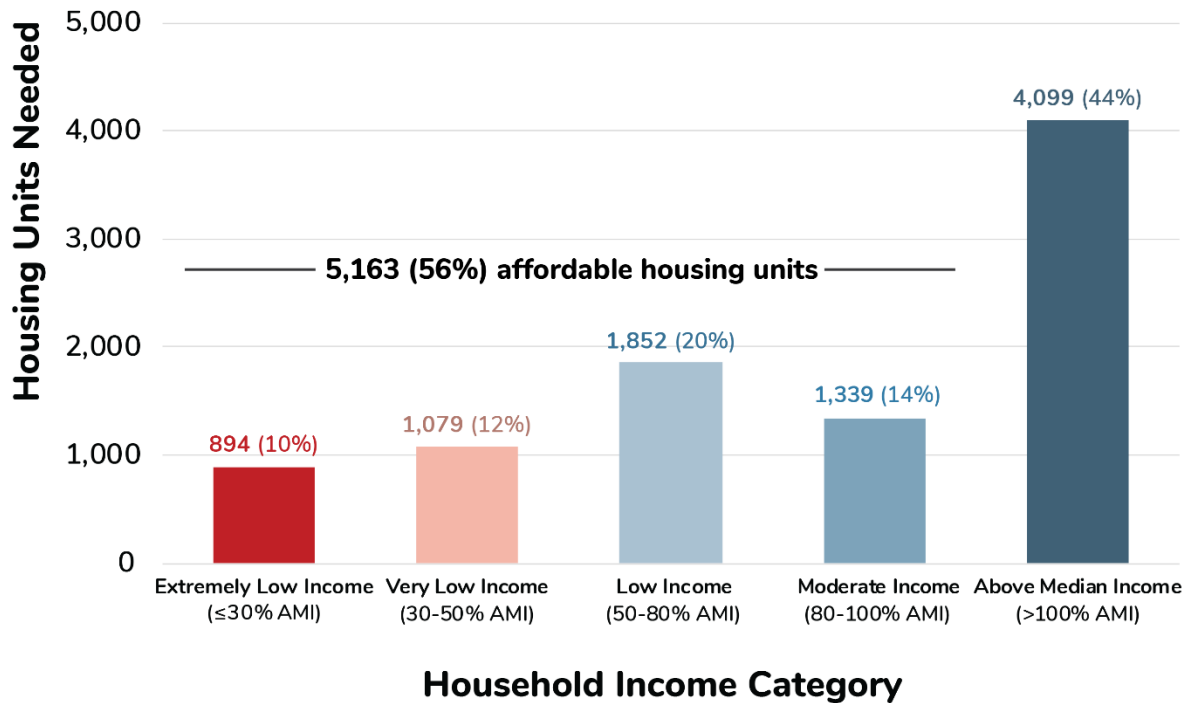
Source: King County Buildable Lands Report, 2014; WA OFM, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 77. Estimated Base Subregional and City Targets for Housing Production, 2020–2040.



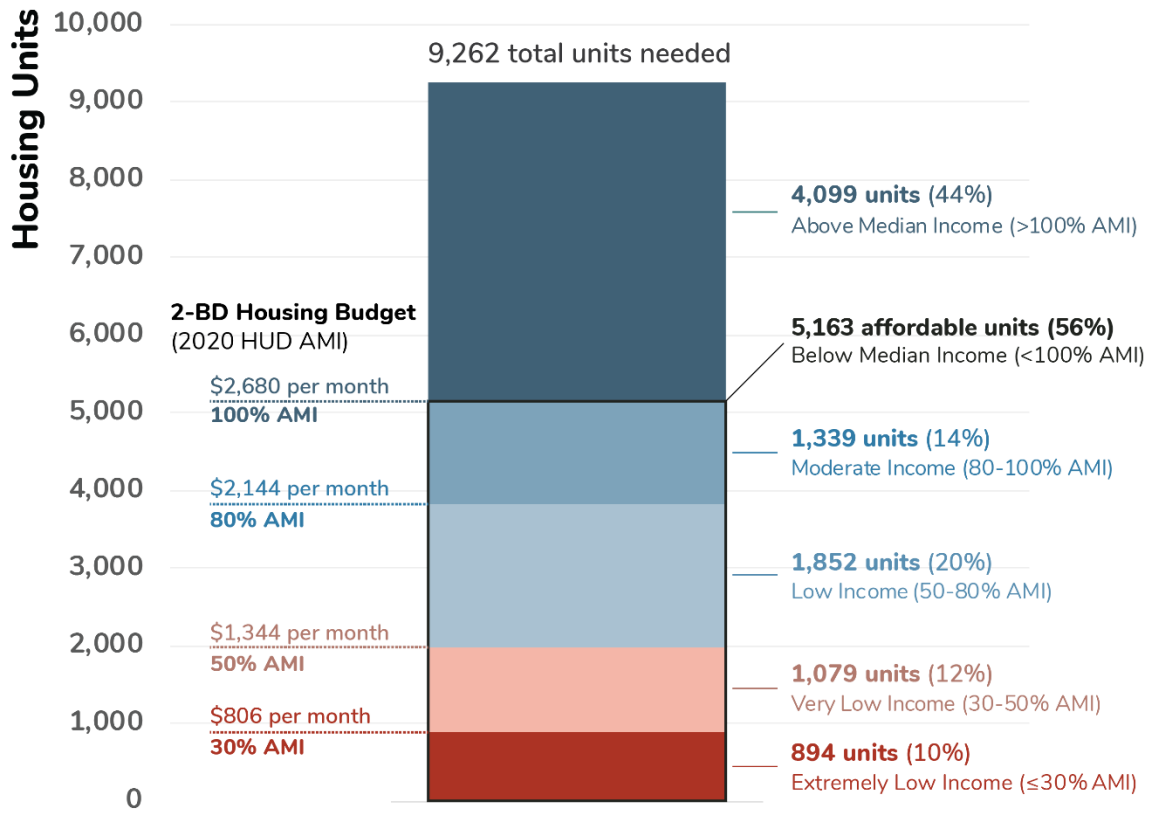
Sources: EcoNorthwest, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 78. Estimated Base Housing Growth Targets by Income Category, 2020–2040.



Sources: EcoNorthwest, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 79. Estimated Breakdown of Base Renton Housing Targets, 2020–2040.



Sources: EcoNorthwest, 2020; US HUD, 2020; BERK, 2020.