

HOUSING AND HUMAN SERVICES ELEMENT

- “A child’s future success should not be determined by their zip code” -

■ Discussion

This Element states Renton’s housing and human services goals and policies, guides Renton’s approach to creating opportunities for the physical development of housing over the long term, and also directs Renton’s human services activities to increase the social and economic well-being of individuals and families.

Housing variety, location, and affordability influence a household’s ability to access jobs, schools, and services. Human services can help support households to find and maintain stable and healthy dwellings and to meet economic, health, and social needs.

Housing

This Element provides housing goals and policies intended to meet the Growth Management Act’s (GMA) housing goal: “Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.”

Human Services

This Element integrates Human Services goals and policies with Housing goals and policies, because housing and human service needs are often intertwined. Human Services are programs and strategies that:

- Support vulnerable or at risk individuals and families in times of need,
- Address the social conditions that make people vulnerable or put them at risk, and
- Foster an effective and efficient system of services.

Human Services that meet basic human needs and promote safe and healthy communities can be

represented on a continuum, from prevention of problems, including crime, to assuring basic survival, to assistance in becoming self-reliant.

While optional under GMA, addressing Human Services in the Comprehensive Plan allows Renton to guide its Human Services programs to best meet community needs in an efficient and effective manner.

Summary of Housing and Human Service Needs

The goals and policies in this Element are based on the *Renton Community Needs Assessment for Human Services and Housing, December 2013* (Community Needs Assessment). Brief discussions of housing and human service needs are provided in this Element, but the full analysis of the

Community Needs Assessment should be consulted for information required by the GMA.

Key findings of the Community Needs Assessment indicated the following housing and human service needs:

AVAILABLE QUALITY HOUSING

- More rental units for very low-income households
- Opportunities for upward mobility by promoting ownership housing for first-time homebuyers
- More safe, energy efficient, and healthy housing for low- and moderate-income households

NEIGHBORHOOD OPPORTUNITY

- Improved mobility and transportation options
- More high quality out-of-school time opportunities for youth
- Increased access to affordable, quality early childhood education

The Community Needs Assessment identifies two broad values to guide the delivery of housing and human services: equity and dignity.



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

- Support for adults who face barriers to employment
- Access to living-wage jobs and career advancement

BASIC NEEDS FOR FAMILIES

- Improved access to quality food
- Day and night shelters that offer a range of services for homeless families

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Better access to health and dental care for low-income residents
- Early childhood screenings and parenting support
- More mental health and substance abuse services

Housing Variety and Opportunity

Renton has a diverse housing stock with a wide range of unit types and prices. This includes new single-family homes of all sizes, older single-family homes and flats, townhouses, semi-attached houses, low- and mid-rise apartments and condominiums, and high-density mid-rise apartments in the Urban Center. Renton also has a strong sense of community, and many established neighborhoods organized around schools, parks, and other institutions. In addition to established neighborhoods, where infill development has been increasingly common, Renton has newly developed neighborhoods close to its southern and eastern edges, and emerging mixed-use residential neighborhoods in several of its commercial centers.

Renton continues to have a supply of vacant, underutilized, and re-developable land in its neighborhoods and mixed-use centers, offering many opportunities for growth.



Equity is when social, economic and political opportunities are not predicated on a person's age, appearance, citizenship or national origin, employment classification, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or gender expressions, language, marital status, race, religion, faith, or spirituality, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and visible or invisible disabilities.

The City is obligated to meet its 2031 Growth Targets contained in the King County Countywide Planning Policies. The City must also estimate its growth to the year 2035 to provide the required 20-year planning period under GMA (i.e., 2015-2035). Table HHS-1 shows the City's projected land use assumptions related to housing for a period 2006-2035, while Table HHS-2 provides an adjustment for growth that has already occurred between 2006 and 2012. The Table's demonstrate that the City's land supply is consistent with 2035 growth targets. The Land Use Element allocates land use designations in a methodical manner to facilitate a range of housing types that will meet the 2035 growth targets.

By providing for housing variety, Renton:

- **Recognizes that housing needs change over a person's life cycle.** Renton's housing supply should be diverse and consist of a variety of styles and price ranges to serve all residents.
- **Improves mobility.** As described under Mobility, placing housing where there is a variety of transportation modes or increasing the allowed density in serviceable areas can improve the viability of transit and provide better access to employment, recreation, and other services for all households.
- **Meets special housing needs.** As described under the Housing Affordability and Special Needs section, Renton has a population that is aging, has disabilities, is homeless, or has other special needs. A variety of housing choices allows persons and households with special needs to have access to stable and supportive housing choices.



- Creates opportunities for households to gain upward mobility.** There is a gap in housing for households with low incomes as well as a lack of housing options for households that can afford entry-level home ownership. Creating a better balance between dwellings serving different households creates opportunities for upward mobility such as by promoting ownership housing for first-time homebuyers. Homeownership has been, over time, the more significant source of wealth accumulation for households, despite the recent Great Recession and slow recovery.
- Provides for stable housing.** Very low-income households may be sharing units affordable to higher incomes, as there are not enough rentable dwellings affordable to households with very low-incomes. Until more housing stock that promotes upward mobility is available and frees up lower-cost units, City policies can promote forms of shared housing and accessory dwelling units, which can be both a source of affordable housing and housing stability by providing income for homeowners to help them meet their mortgage obligations or to age in place.

Housing Affordability and Special Needs

Household Income

The King County Countywide Planning Policies require jurisdictions to analyze housing affordability according to income groups benchmarked against King County’s median income for all households.

Dignity refers to the experience of receiving housing and human services. To treat someone with dignity is to treat them as being of worth, in a way that is respectful of them as valued individuals.



More specifically, the policies define housing need groups based on income thresholds equal to 30%, 50%, and 80% of the County’s Area Median Income (AMI). Countywide Planning Policies direct Renton, other cities, and King County to work

collectively to meet low- and moderate-income housing needs countywide. At both a collective and individual level, Renton is to address the housing needs for households earning very low incomes (30% of AMI or less), as this is where “the greatest need exists.”

Table HHS-3 identifies the 2012 and 2013 countywide share of households, and Renton’s share of households that meet the income levels.

Table HHS-1. 2006-2031 Growth Targets: Extended to 2035

	Housing Target
2006-2031 Target	14,835
Annual increment over 25 years	593
Add 4 years to get to 2035	2,374
2035 Growth Target	17,209

Source: Prepared by BERK and The Transpo Group

Table HHS-2. 2012-2035 Growth Targets: Adjustments for Growth 2006-2012

	Housing Target
Renton: 2012-2031 Growth Target, King County Buildable Lands Report	11,706
PSRC Land Use Targets 2031-2035, 4 years addition	2,344
2012-2035 Growth Target	14,050
Growth Capacity Estimated 2012	15,351
Difference: Capacity - Target	1,301

Source: Prepared by BERK and The Transpo Group

Table HHS-3. Countywide and City of Renton Need for Affordable Housing by Percentage of Area Median Income

Percent of Area Median Household Income	Countywide Share: 2012 King County Countywide Planning Policies	Countywide Share: 2013 Community Needs Assessment	Renton Share: 2013 Community Needs Assessment
Under 30% (very low)	12%	13%	15%
30 - 50% (low)	12%	11%	14%
50 - 80% (moderate)	16%	16%	19%
80% and above	60%	60%	52%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Sources: King County, Countywide Planning Policies 2012; Community Needs Assessment based on 2007-2011 ACS and ESRI; BERK, 2013.

Based on this information:

- Renton has somewhat greater proportions of its households in the very low, low, and moderate income housing need categories.
- Renton's share of middle and upper income residents is lower than King County.

Cost-Burdened Households

Many households in Renton are earning less than 50% of the area median income and spending more than 30% of their income on housing, and therefore are considered "cost-burdened." Due to the high percentage of income spent on housing, these households may have difficulties meeting other household necessities including food, medicine, clothing, and transportation needs.

A vast majority of households (82.5%) earning under \$35,000 (generally low- and very low-income households) are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. A greater proportion of renting households earning under \$35,000 per year are cost-burdened than owner-occupied households. See the Community Needs Assessment for additional detail.

Special Needs Households

Persons who may require housing with particular design or support services include, but are not limited to, the homeless, large households, those living with a disability, and older adults including those who live independently and those requiring some sort of living assistance. Many special-needs households also require affordable housing choices.

Homeless: This special needs population has an acute housing need, yet there are significant data gaps and gross undercounts. In the 2011-12 school year, the Renton School District identified 341 students who met the legislative definition of homeless. The one-night unsheltered homeless counts in Renton show unsheltered homelessness in the City ranging from 71-84 persons over the last four years. However, not all areas are searched and many homeless persons do not want to be seen. Beyond the number estimated above, there are

likely individuals and families that are improvising with camping, sleeping in their cars, rotating around weekly "motels," and spending nights in someone's spare room or couch, with no fixed residence.

Large Households: Large households often require dwelling units with more bedrooms than units available on average. Renton has a slightly greater proportion of households with 3 to 7 people than in King County. About 40% of Renton residents live in households with more than 2 people, compared to 36% for the County overall.

Elderly Population: Households with older adults may require assistance to update their homes to accommodate physical constraints (e.g., ramps, remodeling, and repairs) or may require emotional, social, health or other assistance for daily life. In 2010, Renton's senior population (ages 65 years and over) was about 10.1% of the population.

Disabled Population: Renton has an estimated 8,398 adults living with a disability, representing approximately 8% of the population 18 to 64 years old and 41% of the population over 64 years old. Persons with medical or physical disabilities, or for those with substance abuse concerns, may need support services or a supportive living environment.



Glenwood Townhomes, Credit: City of Renton



Goal

HHS-A: Adopt best available housing practices and implement innovative techniques to advance the provision of affordable, fair, healthy, and safe housing for renters, homeowners, and the homeless. Adopt a strategic housing plan tailored to achieve this goal.

Policies

Policy HHS-1: Provide resource assistance to potential new homeowners, homeowners facing foreclosure, and others in danger of losing their housing.

Policy HHS-2: Collaborate with financial institutions, organizations, and individuals who provide affordable housing to acquire and rehabilitate foreclosed units to be used as long-term affordable or subsidized housing.

Policy HHS-3: Work with other jurisdictions and organizations, including the Renton Housing Authority and non-profit housing developers, to address the need for housing to be affordable to very low-income households. This housing should focus on accessibility, mobility, and proximity to social services.

Policy HHS-4: Promote homeownership opportunities for households of all incomes.

Policy HHS-5: Work collaboratively with local, regional, state, and federal public and private sector entities to enhance resources and secure financial and other types of support for housing programs.

Goal

HHS-B: Ensure a variety of housing types are available within the City that meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations.

Policies

Policy HHS-6: Implement inclusionary zoning provisions and other techniques that result in a range of housing types, at different densities, and prices in new developments that address the housing needs of all people at all stages of life, including vulnerable populations.

Policy HHS-7: Foster and locate new housing in proximity to Employment Centers and streets that have public transportation systems in place, that complements existing housing and furthers the City’s goal to achieve a housing stock that is affordable for the following minimum percentages of the City’s households, as determined by an Area Median Income (AMI) range:

Total Households	AMI
12 %	Below 30% (very low-income)
12 %	30 to 50% (low-income)
16 %	50 to 80% (moderate-income)

Housing Preservation

Age of housing is a factor in the quality of housing and how much housing costs to maintain. Older homes typically have less efficient furnaces, insulation, windows, and appliances, which lead to higher operating costs compared to newer housing construction. Under normal circumstances, a new residential unit can be expected to have an effective useful life of 40-50 years before it becomes functionally obsolete. The useful lifespan can be expanded indefinitely with continued maintenance and reinvestment.

About 19% of housing in Renton was built before 1959, making it over 50 years old. The vast majority of this older housing is comprised of single family homes. In addition, a significant portion of housing built in the 1940’s, some of which is still owned by the Renton Housing Authority, was built quickly under extraordinary circumstances for the war defense industry. This housing was intended as temporary housing for war defense workers, who were expected to return to their original communities after the war. Much of this housing is still in use today, and likely is approaching functional obsolescence.

Preserving existing housing where it provides quality living environments protects neighborhood character and is the largest source of affordable housing in the community. Other activities to preserve housing can include promoting the

preservation or rehabilitation of affordable housing that would otherwise convert to market rate housing (e.g., subsidized housing, manufactured home parks, etc.) or home repair programs for low-income households.



Downtown Housing, Credit: ICF Jones & Stokes

Goal

HHS-C: Increase the stability of neighborhoods by fostering long-term homeownership, property maintenance, and investments in existing housing.

Policies

Policy HHS-8: Utilize the City’s authority to rehabilitate housing to prevent neighborhood blight or eliminate unsound structures.

Policy HHS-9: Encourage expansion of programs that result in home repair, weatherization, and other energy-efficient improvements to owner-occupied and rental housing, and promote additional funding for these programs at the state and federal level.

Policy HHS-10: Promote housing development in proximity to the City’s Employment Centers and other areas of the City that have jobs and work opportunities, or the potential for future job growth.

Policy HHS-11: Provide technical assistance and access to resources for housing adaptations and remodels to allow people to age or remain in place as their circumstances change.

Sustainability, Health and Wellness

Livable neighborhoods include those that promote physical activity with access to amenities (sidewalks, trails, parks, and services) and protection of environmental quality such as clustered designs and low-impact development to protect critical areas and water quality.

Livable homes include those that are developed and maintained to meet quality building and housing codes, including energy conservation and good ventilation to reduce exposure to indoor air pollutants due to paint, flooring, and furniture.

Funding & Partnerships

Human Services

The City’s role is to fund, advocate, facilitate, plan, and inform by continually engaging service providers and community organizations in dialogue regarding the functioning of the present service systems, the emerging needs of the community and the building of a complete system of services.

The Human Services Division distributes general funds and Community Development Block Grants. The staff and Advisory Committee members advocate for community members who cannot do so for themselves; needs are assessed and anticipated, and appropriate policy and program responses are developed. City staff facilitates in convening and engaging others in community problem solving to develop and improve services.

Housing

Renton primarily creates opportunities for market rate and assisted housing through its Comprehensive Land Use Plan and zoning. The City has worked in partnership with the Renton Housing Authority (RHA) to consider the long-term vision and revitalization of RHA properties, such as Sunset Terrace and other locations in the Sunset Area. The City also participates in the King County Joint Recommendations Committee (JRC) which allocates funding for affordable housing. The City does not have a dedicated funding source for housing, but

could continue to advance partnerships with other cities located within South King County.

■ **Goal**

HHS-D: Partner with the community to help provide services and resources so that all residents have food, clothing, and shelter, and have the opportunity to live a healthy, active, safe, and sustainable lifestyle. To achieve this goal, adopt a strategic human services plan that furthers the ability of residents to develop to their fullest potential.

■ **Policies**

Policy HHS-12: Work with other jurisdictions and social service organizations to develop a regional approach to end homelessness and, on a local level, with community partners to expand services available to the chronically homeless, temporarily homeless, and other vulnerable populations in Renton.

Policy HHS-13: Increase awareness of healthy food options by building collaborative partnerships with community organizations and sharing resources to promote food access and provide education about nutrition and healthy food preparation.



The Salvation Army Services Center, Credit: City of Renton

Accessible and Effective Human Services

The *Renton Community Needs Assessment for Human Services and Housing, December 2013* identified a number of key human service concerns in the Renton community, including Economic Opportunity, Basic Needs for Families, and Health and Wellness. The Assessment also identified the need for Available Quality Housing and Mobility, which are addressed elsewhere in this element.

Economic Opportunity

Most human service and housing programs aim to increase the social and economic well-being of individuals and families. Families with sufficient resources are largely able to attain services and housing to meet their needs. In general, improving economic opportunity in a community for those who face barriers to employment, career advancement, and other forms of economic opportunity can improve, prevent, or reduce needs for social service and housing supports. In some cases, families with otherwise adequate purchasing power will have needs that outstrip their resources. The Community Needs Assessment identified the need to provide or promote:

- Support for adults who face barriers to employment
- Access to living-wage jobs and career advancement

Basic Needs for Families

There are families in Renton experiencing significant economic hardship who are unable to meet their most basic needs, including adequate shelter and having enough to eat. While this is a small percentage of all families, the needs are very urgent. While immediate services are needed for those who are in crisis, preventative support such as increased economic opportunity and education on managing household expenses is also needed.

Priority areas of focus for human services include:

- Improved access to quality food
- Day and night shelters that offer a range of services for homeless families

Health & Wellness

Health and wellness is fundamental to quality of life. The Community Needs Assessment documented a dominant theme in human services stakeholder feedback that there are structural and personal obstacles that many individuals and families face to adequate healthcare. Areas of focus for human services include:

- Better access to health and dental care for low-income residents
- Early childhood screenings and parenting support
- More mental health and substance abuse services

Neighborhood Opportunity

Neighborhood opportunity reflects a person or family’s ability to access the services and amenities they need to lead socially and economically successful lives. In almost all cities, access to services and amenities are driven by the attainability of housing options in different neighborhoods, and as a result are geographically unequally distributed. This results in uneven access and functional barriers to services and opportunity. In addition to mobility addressed elsewhere in this Element, the following concern was highlighted in the Community Needs Assessment:

- More high quality out-of-school time opportunities for youth, including programs and activities that engage youth to learn and practice social skills that lead to life and academic success.
- Increased access to affordable, quality, early childhood education

■ **Goal**

HHS-E: Actively participate in local, regional, state, and federal programs to address human services needs in the region and in Renton.

■ **Policies**

Policy HHS-14: Building on collaborative relationships, partner with local agencies and school districts to increase affordability and availability of early-childhood education, after-school youth engagement opportunities, and preparation for college/career.

Policy HHS-15: Work with community partners to support people who face barriers to getting and staying employed, need job training, and desire career advancement.

Policy HHS-16: Promote healthcare equity and increase the availability of medical and dental care, mental health and substance abuse services, early childhood screenings, and parenting support.

Policy HHS-17: Strengthen collaborative partnerships between cities and regional, state, federal, public and private sector providers of human services.



City of Renton Community Garden, Credit: City of Renton

■ **Goal**

HHS-F: Enable individuals to meet their basic physical, economic, and social needs by promoting an effective and equitable human services delivery system that enhances their quality of life.

■ **Policies**

Policy HHS-18: Promote an individualized approach for vulnerable people by utilizing community services and transportation assistance.

Policy HHS-19: Develop incentives to encourage food outlets to locate in Renton so that healthy foods are accessible, with an emphasis on school-age children.

Mobility

Transportation and mobility is an important component of all forms of opportunity. Lack of mobility creates obstacles for individuals and families to access the services they need. Renton, like many inner suburban cities, has a need for improved mobility and transportation options. For a family with very little income, lack of mobility and transportation services can limit a household's ability to obtain basic goods and services, receive medical or dental care, commute to a job, and maintain employment. Current barriers to mobility in Renton include:

- Inequitable access to public transit, with limited options for those who do not live downtown, do not commute during peak travel times, or who need to travel within Renton (instead of between downtowns). This negatively impacts mobility for all residents, but is especially problematic for individuals and families who do not have access to a vehicle. The most vulnerable groups include low-income households who are unable to afford vehicle ownership, as well as residents who are unable to drive.
- Elderly and disabled residents with personal mobility issues also face the challenge of not being able to walk longer distances to and from a bus stop, further limiting their opportunities to use public transit.
- Many pedestrian and bike routes connecting Renton's residential areas with basic services are unsafe, which further limits transportation alternatives for households without a vehicle.



Renton Transit Center, Credit: City of Renton



King County Van Share, Credit: City of Renton

Goal

HHS-G: Make land use decisions that provide increased options for healthy living in the Renton community and, specifically, on the neighborhood level.

Policy

Policy HHS-20: Support the link between land development and physical activity by increasing options for transit use, walking, and bicycling, such as providing physical connections between residential areas and schools and/or commercial development.

■ **Goal**

HHS-H: Actively work to increase the availability of healthy, equitable and affordable housing for people in all demographic groups and at all income levels and promote a balance of housing and the amenities needed by residents at a neighborhood level, such as childcare, availability of fresh food, recreational opportunities, and medical care.

■ **Policy**

Policy HHS-21: Support the development of housing and neighborhoods that are sited, designed, constructed, and maintained to promote environmentally healthy and safe living. “Environmental health,” in this context, includes factors of the natural and built environment that affect human health, such as physical, chemical, and biological factors external to a person.

■ **Goal**

HHS-I: Improve mobility and transportation options for Renton residents to increase access to jobs and services, reduce household costs, and maintain a sustainable lifestyle.

■ **Policies**

Policy HHS-22: Plan and construct a transportation system that links residents to services, such as childcare, healthcare, as well as places of work. Transportation systems should include opportunities for various modes of transportation, including automobiles, public transit, walking, and cycling.

Policy HHS-23: Encourage construction of universally designed units, supportive housing arrangements, and transitional housing in close proximity (within one-quarter mile) to public transportation.



Sunset Terrace Redevelopment Concept, Credit: Mithun



The Bristol at Southport, Credit: City of Renton