

South King County Affordable Housing Preservation Strategies

Spring 2024

The South King Housing and Homelessness Partners (SKHHP) convenes housing planners from South King County cities once a month to address topics of interest across the municipalities related to affordable housing. From September 2023 through April 2024, the group developed a comprehensive list of potential goals, policies, and implementing actions that could serve as a subregional affordable housing preservation strategy. Each city may consider incorporating some or all aspects of the strategy into the periodic updates of their respective comprehensive plans.

Risk of residential displacement in the Central Puget Sound region is concentrated in South King County, according to the Puget Sound Regional Council's [Displacement Risk Mapping Tool](#). Displacement risk and the need for effective affordable housing preservation strategies is not unique to South King County, but the subregion is at greater risk of losing the abundant existing affordable housing stock than in other areas of the region. Because of this, the development of a subregional strategy to preserve affordable housing is a top priority of the SKHHP Executive Board. Given the unique needs of each SKHHP member city, developing a unified affordable housing preservation strategy is challenging. That is why this document should be seen as a guide for cities to consider applying in a way that best meets their needs. SKHHP will facilitate implementation of any policy or implementing action that all or most cities adopt and where subregional coordination is required.

This document was developed in collaboration with the following jurisdiction's planning staff: the cities of Auburn, Burien, Covington, Des Moines, Federal Way, Kent, Maple Valley, Normandy Park, Renton, SeaTac, and Tukwila.

Goal 1: Preserve existing supply of affordable housing.

Policy 1.1: Explore options to identify and monitor naturally occurring affordable housing for the purpose of long-term preservation particularly in urban centers, near transit, and/or where most redevelopment pressure is anticipated.

Policy 1.2: Develop strategies to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing at-risk of redevelopment and rehabilitate units when they don't pose a health or safety risk.

Policy 1.3: Pursue partnerships with non-profits, housing authorities, SKHHP, and other organizations to preserve existing naturally occurring affordable housing including through acquisition.

Policy 1.4: Evaluate opportunities for further protection for manufactured home parks at-risk of displacement.

Policy 1.5: Support the funding and preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing in coordination with neighboring jurisdictions and SKHHP.

Policy 1.6: Support the long-term preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing and income-restricted affordable housing with expiring affordability covenants through acquisition by acting as a facilitator between affordable housing groups interested in purchasing the property and property owners.

Goal 1 Implementing Actions:

- Continue to explore a unified notice of intent to sell ordinance for property owners of properties identified as naturally occurring affordable housing.
- Adopt regulations to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing that target neighborhoods most at-risk of displacement, preventing their conversion to higher priced properties or demolition if the property is in safe and habitable condition.
- Explore incentives to landlords such as tax relief for the preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing.
- Support SKHHP in monitoring South King County income-restricted properties for expiring affordability covenants that are not part of a multifamily property tax exemption (MFTE) program.
- Monitor residential complexes for expiring affordability covenants that contain income-restricted affordable units.
- Communicate to housing authorities and other affordable housing non-profits when affordability covenants are expiring on income-restricted properties.

Goal 2: Ensure rental housing stock is safe and habitable.

Policy 2.1: Promote the repair, revitalization, and rehabilitation of residential structures that have fallen into disrepair.

Policy 2.2: Ensure that rental housing units comply with life and fire safety standards and provide a safe place for tenants to live, including renters with disabilities.

Policy 2.3: Promote the maintenance, energy efficiency, and weatherization of existing affordable housing stock and explore opportunities to extend these services to all rental units.

Policy 2.4: Promote housing stability for the most vulnerable residents.

Goal 2 Implementing Actions:

- Continue to advance home repair programs.
- Support the development or continuation of a rental licensing/registration and inspection program. Explore options for establishing a program on a subregional level.
- Continue to fund the SKHHP Housing Capital Fund that prioritizes the preservation of affordable housing.
- Advocate for state and federal funding to support programs that maintain and enhance affordable housing properties.
- Support the unique needs of renters with disabilities.

Goal 3: Keep people in their homes and protect communities at risk of economic, physical, and cultural displacement.

Policy 3.1: Explore opportunities to implement a Community Preference policy or a first right to return policy that prioritizes members of the community in new housing developments.

Policy 3.2: Examine options for relocation assistance programs for those displaced due to redevelopment or unsafe living conditions.

Policy 3.3: Continue to evaluate City actions for potential to increase displacement risk for naturally occurring affordable housing and vulnerable communities, especially those with historical and cultural ties to the community and mitigate or avoid taking actions that significantly increase this risk.

Policy 3.4: Examine options for strengthening protections for tenants. (Optional)

Policy 3.5: Prioritize affordable housing when surplus public land or property when housing development is feasible.

Policy 3.6: Identify and plan for the unique needs of residents of mobile home parks and work to support those identified needs. (If applicable)

Policy 3.7: Preserve land for affordable housing including for homeownership.

Goal 3 Implementing Actions:

- Adopt a policy requiring developers to provide relocation assistance for any displacement from naturally occurring affordable housing or income-restricted affordable housing that occurs due to redevelopment.
- Advocate for state legislation that provides more resources for eviction assistance and legal aid for low-income residents.
- Adopt a policy that prioritizes the use of publicly owned land or property for affordable housing when housing development is feasible.
- Adopt policies that advance protections for tenants through collaborative outreach with members of the community such as requiring additional advance notice for rent increases, intent to not renew a lease, lease termination or eviction, in addition to tenant and landlord education on rights and responsibilities. (Optional)
- Build relationships with mobile home park property owners to ensure awareness about weatherization programs administered by the city and funded by the Community Development Block Grant program.
- Build relationships with a variety of partners (non-profit developers, faith-based organizations, philanthropic organizations, local businesses, and community-based organizations) to collaborate on solutions that keep people in their homes and prevent displacement.

- Set aside funds annually for land acquisition and deepen relationships with community land trusts that create opportunities for affordable homeownership for populations most disproportionately impacted by housing cost burden.
- Continue to advocate for state funding to create affordable homeownership opportunities for first-time homebuyers, longtime renters, and communities most disproportionately impacted by housing cost burden as identified in the housing needs assessment.

Glossary

Affordable housing: Affordable housing is generally defined as housing which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.¹

Naturally occurring affordable housing: Unsubsidized privately owned residences that are affordable to low- or moderate-income households.²

Income-restricted affordable housing: Housing whereby a prospective tenant's gross monthly income must be below a certain income threshold. The unit is also limited in price to be affordable to households at certain income levels.³

¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Archives: Glossary of Terms to Affordable Housing, n.d. archives.hud.gov/local/nv/goodstories/2006-04-06glos.cfm.

² Elliott, Daniel. "Preserving Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing." American Planning Association, December 2023. <https://www.planning.org/publications/document/9281176/>.

³ "2021 King County Countywide Planning Policies." King County, WA, Ratified November 30, 2023. https://cdn.kingcounty.gov/-/media/king-county/depts/executive/performance-strategy-budget/regional-planning/cpps/kc_2021_cpps_ord_19660_113021.pdf?rev=dc68c4a4ea67465c8c79de0869fcb867&hash=A3EB1B05E22148F999802F018F0827B3.

Appendix

Table 1: Aligning the Subregional Preservation Policies with King County’s Countywide Planning Policies

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