

3.0 Housing

This Housing Element addresses Goal 4¹ of the Growth Management Act and is intended to guide the community's needs and desires for housing. The Housing Element supports other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, including transportation, land use, economic development, capital facilities, and natural resources elements.

Growth Management Act Requirements

The Growth Management Act requires that all Comprehensive Plans include a housing element, to outline goals and strategies that effectively address housing needs and shortages, ensuring housing access to residents of all backgrounds and economic status.² Baseline requirements for the Housing Element include:

- Planning sufficient land capacity for all economic backgrounds and income levels, including emergency and supportive housing, and outlines policies and regulations that address racially disparate impacts and exclusionary housing practices.
- Incorporating an adequate mix of housing stock and types, including moderate density housing within Urban Growth Areas (UGAs), especially duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes. This will be accomplished by documenting an inventory of current and forecasted housing needs, including units for moderate, low, very low, and extremely low-income households, as well as for emergency and supportive housing units.
- Documenting and outlining housing needs for residents of all economic backgrounds, including provisioning programs and action items needed to be taken to achieve these goals.
- Highlighting and identifying inequities in existing housing policies and regulations, and providing guidance on ways to mitigate and eliminate these impacts, and establishing anti-displacement policies.
 - As communities should give consideration to the preservation of historical and cultural communities, policies to combat anti-displacement that should also be considered include: “equitable development initiatives, inclusionary zoning, community planning requirements, tenant protections, land disposition policies, and consideration of land that may be used for affordable housing.”

New Statutory Planning Requirements

- In 2021, GMA planning requirements were updated with the passage of House Bill 1220 (HB 1220), which requires local governments to plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all income levels.

¹ RCW 36.70A.020 Outlines all Planning Goals for counties and cities required to adhere to GMA planning requirements, of which there are 15 in total.

² RCW 36.70A.020

- In 2023 Washington State Legislature passed HB 1337, which requires local governments to include accessory dwellings units (ADUs) as a planning and development mechanism, as a means to address a greater number of missing middle housing units.
- HB 1110 was also passed and adopted into Washington state law in 2023, requiring many areas traditionally designated as single-family detached zoning to allow for multiunit development, in an aim to increase density, stimulate the development of housing near transit, and increase the availability of affordable housing. Planning requirements outlined in HB 1110 are differentiated by three tiers, including: 1) Cities with a population of at least 75,000, 2) Cities with a population of at least 25,000 but less than 75,000, and 3) Cities with a population under 25,000 that are contiguous with an urban growth area (UGA) that includes the largest city in a county with a population over 275,000. Based on its population and location within Clark County, Washougal falls within the third tier, and is required to fulfill less development requirements as identified for tiers 1 and 2³.



Figure 4. Austin Heritage Planned Unit Development

³ Middle Housing in Washington: Fact Sheet for Implementing E2SHB 1110; Washington State Department of Commerce; <https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/yjo6h53f2jhj1xopbc6lxzo28dsh2h9k>.

Conditions and Trends

In June of 2024, CAI completed a comprehensive assessment of Washougal's housing market, which informs the Conditions and Trends section of this housing element, and is listed in its entirety in the **appendix**. The housing analysis presents an overview of existing and future housing conditions and needs, summarizes population and demographic households characteristics, and illustrates attributes of Washougal's workforce.

Washougal's demographic trends highlight the community's need for a range of housing types to accommodate its population, such as housing for larger households (with four or more members), families with children, seniors or those living with a disability, and smaller one- and two-person households.

Washougal's employment and commuting trends suggest that the city has a higher concentration of housing units than jobs when compared to the region. A large portion (81%) of Washougal's workers live outside of the city, suggesting that many of the city's workers either may not be able to afford suitable housing inside the community or the available housing may not meet their needs or preferences.

As sustained residential development and continued appreciation of home values have revealed a surplus of large and expensive housing types, combined with a deficit of smaller and more affordable housing options, the declining affordability of Washougal's housing market comes into clearer focus. Rising regional prices have corresponded with increased housing costs in Washougal, resulting in more Washougal households to be cost burdened by housing costs. The contextual data that assesses Washougal's housing market and economy helped inform the shaping of goals and policies presented in this Housing Element, leveraging tangible figures to present a current snapshot of the City's housing market, and a forward-looking strategic approach to determining needs and shortages of all demographics and housing types.

Population & Housing

Washougal's population grew rapidly between 1990 and 2023, nearly quadrupling from more than 4,760 residents in 1990 to more than 18,000 in 2023. In accordance with GMA Act growth targets adopted by Clark County, Washougal's population is expected to increase by nearly 6,900 residents between 2023 and 2045 (*Table 1*). Similarly, Washougal's housing inventory more than tripled between 1990 and 2023, increasing at an average annual rate of 3.7%, just below the annual rate of population increase of 4.1%.

Table 1. Total Population & Housing Units, Washougal, 1990-2023

Total Population	1990	2000	2023
Washougal	4,764	8,595	18,026
Total Housing Units	1990	2000	2023
Washougal	2,010	3,463	6,655

Sources: Washington Office of Financial Management; Clark County 2025 Population, Housing, and Employment Allocation, 2023; Detailed Housing Characteristics, Washington, 1990 Census of Housing. Bureau of the Census, United States Department of Commerce; Community Attributes, Inc., 2025.

Figure 5 shows the progression of housing units in Washougal between 2000 and 2023, including the change in the total number of housing units, and the evolving breakdown of single-family, multifamily, and other housing types (which includes mobile homes and special housing units). In 2023, there were a total of 6,655 housing units in Washougal, of which nearly 80% (5,284) are single-family dwellings, and 16% are multifamily units. Nearly 3,200 housing units were developed in Washougal between 2000 and 2023.

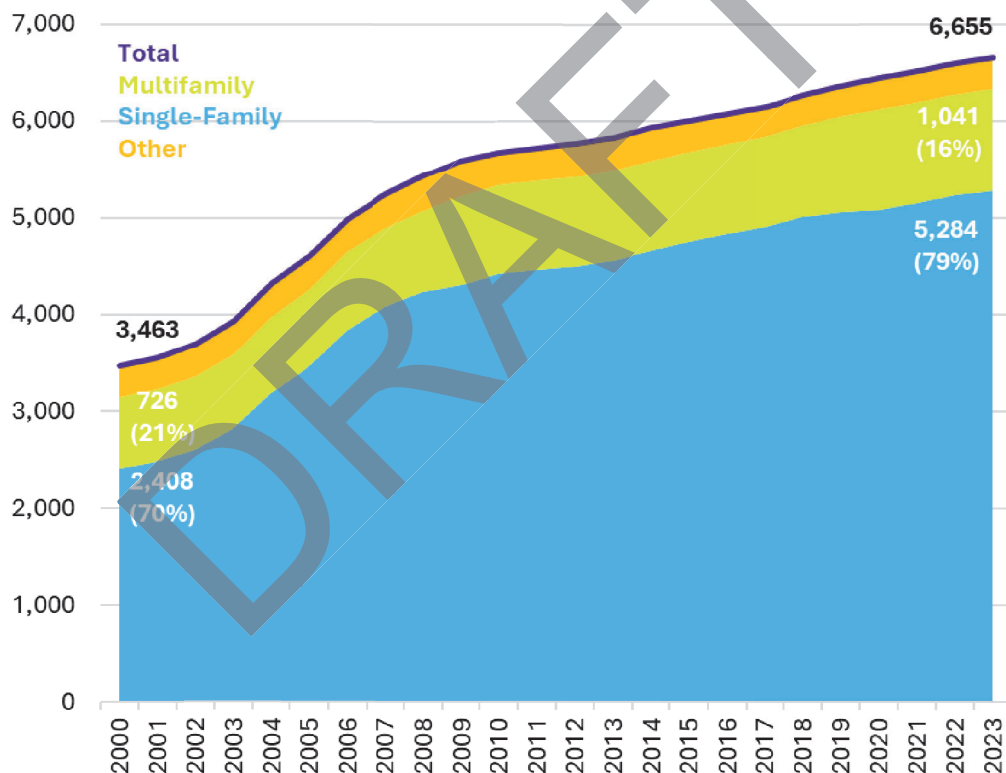


Figure 5. Housing Units by Number of Units in Structure, Washougal, 2000-2023

Household Income

Between 2012 and 2022, Washougal's median household income increased by a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.7%, a slightly accelerated rate than that of Clark County's median household income, which grew by 4.4% annually over the period (*Table 2*).

Table 2. Median Household Income, Washougal and Clark County, 2012 & 2022

Median Household Income	2012	2022
Washougal	\$61,320	\$97,300
Clark County	\$58,760	\$90,120

Sources: 2012 & 2022 5-Year Estimates, American Community Survey; Community Attributes, Inc., 2025.

Household Characteristics

In 2020, 52% of all households in Washougal earn greater than 100% of the area median income (AMI), while 21% earn less than 50% of AMI. Of all renters, 59% earn less than 80% AMI, while 60% of all owner households in Washougal earn greater than 100% AMI. **Figure 6** shows the proportion of all renter and owner households in Washougal by AMI cohort.



Figure 6. Percentages of Households by AMI and Tenure, Washougal, 2020

In 2022, 75% of all housing units are owner-occupied in Washougal, compared to 68% in Clark County. This represents a slight increase over the 2012 ratio, when 70% of all housing units in Washougal were owner-occupied. **Figure 7** shows the breakdown of renter- vs. owner-occupied units in both Clark County and Washougal.

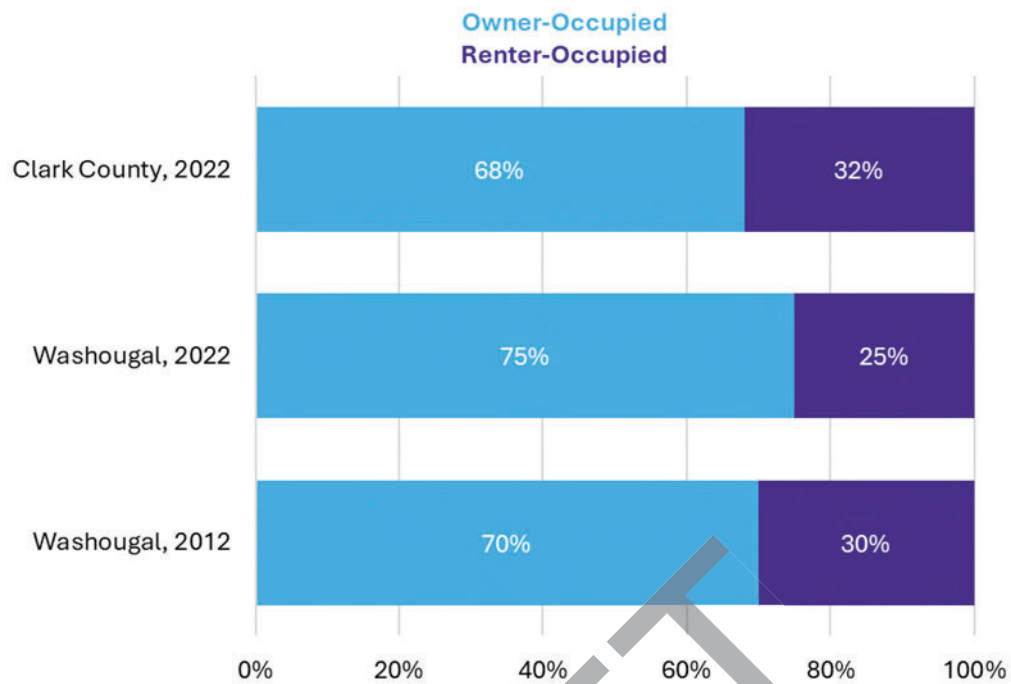


Figure 7. [Housing Tenure, Clark County and Washougal, 2012 & 2022]

Table 3 shows the cost-burden status of all householders by race in Washougal in 2020. A household is considered cost-burdened when they spend greater than 30% of their gross income on rent. In Washougal in 2020, Hispanic and other racial or ethnic groups are the most heavily cost-burdened, as more than one-third (37% and 39% for Hispanic and Other demographics, respectively) are cost-burdened. No Black or American Indian and Alaskan Native households are cost-burdened in Washougal, while Asian householders represent the lowest non-zero cost-burden level at 3% in 2020. Of all households, 10% are severely cost-burdened, where householders spend greater than 50% of their gross income on rent.

Table 3. Cost Burden Status by Householder Race, Washougal, 2020

Householder Race	Not Cost-Burdened	Cost-Burdened	Severely Cost-Burdened
Total	77%	13%	10%
AIAN*	86%	0%	14%
Asian	97%	3%	0%
Black	100%	0%	0%
Hispanic	59%	37%	6%
White	77%	12%	11%
Other	61%	39%	0%

Sources: HUD CHAS, 2016-2020; Community Attributes, Inc., 2025.

*AIAN – American Indian and Alaskan Native

Housing growth far outpaced job growth in Washougal between 2002 and 2021, increasing by 2,827 units over this period, compared to an increase of 641 jobs during this time. Housing unit

production was greater than zero in Washougal every year between 2002 and 2021, while the number of jobs decreased in eight individual years during that same period. However, job growth outpaced housing unit development between 2010 and 2021. In 2021, Washougal's jobs-to-housing unit ratio was 0.48, while Clark County's was 0.78. Employment and housing targets adopted by Clark County, used to calculate the projected jobs-to-housing units ratio in both jurisdictions through the year 2045, forecast that Washougal will add 2,961 net new jobs, and will achieve an estimated jobs-to-housing unit ratio of 0.65, while Clark County's jobs to housing units is forecasted to be 0.85 in 2045 (*Table 4*).

Table 4. Jobs-to-Housing Units Ratio, Washougal and Clark County, 2010, 2021, & 2045

Area Median Income	2010	2021	2045 (Forecast)
Washougal	0.41	0.48	0.65
Clark County	0.72	0.78	0.85

Sources: OnTheMap, 2010 & 2021, United States Census Bureau; Washington Office of Financial Management; 2025 Population, Housing and Employment Allocation, Clark County; Community Attributes, Inc., 2025.

Housing Affordability

Between 2012 and 2022, average asking rents in Washougal increased from \$986 to nearly \$1,400, or a CAGR of 3.5%, and an overall increase of nearly 30%. In 2022, the median gross rent in Washougal was just below that of Clark County, whose rents increased by a CAGR of 5.6% over the period. Between 2012 and 2022, the typical home value in Washougal nearly tripled, increasing by approximately \$406,000 in total value, or a CAGR of 11.2%. Typical home values in Clark County increased by an average annual rate of 10.5% over the period (*Table 5*).

Between 2012 and 2022, median incomes in Washougal and Clark County increased by an annual average rate of 4.7% and 4.4%, respectively. These rates of increase are similar to the observed CAGR of median rental rates in both geographies over this period, however the annual increase in median income lagged the increase in typical home values over this time. Typical home values in Washougal appreciated at a rate more than three times greater than the observed CAGR for median rental rates between 2012 and 2022. In Clark County, the CAGR for typical home values was nearly double that of the average annual rate of increase observed in median rental rates.

As the typical home value increased at a rate well greater than CAGR's for both median rent and incomes, a typical home gradually became less and less affordable for Washougal and Clark County residents. In 2012, residents of both Washougal and Clark County who were earning the median income in those respective geographies, had annual incomes that were 28.4% and 30.3% of the total price of a typical home value. In 2022, those ratios decreased to 15.6% and 17.1%, respectively, showing how purchasing power for residents has diminished over time within both regions.

Table 5. Typical Home and Rental Values, Washougal & Clark County, 2012 & 2022

Typical Home Value	2012	2022	CAGR
Washougal	\$216,000	\$622,000	11.2%
Clark County	\$194,000	\$527,000	10.5%
Median Rental Rate	2012	2022	CAGR
Washougal	\$986	\$1,397	3.5%
Clark County	\$919	\$1,584	5.6%

Sources: Redfin, 2024; Community Attributes, Inc., 2025.

Projected Housing Needs

Looking forward, **Figure 8** outlines the current existing housing stock by income level, and these totals shown relative to adopted housing targets for Washougal by 2045. The share of housing units is estimated to increase for extremely low-income households (those making less than 30% AMI), increasing from 3% to 9%, and for households earning between 31% and 50% AMI. The share of housing units available for all other income cohorts is expected to decrease by between 1% and 3%. **Figure 9** shows the target number of housing units by income level that Washougal will need to develop by 2023, relative to 2023 totals.

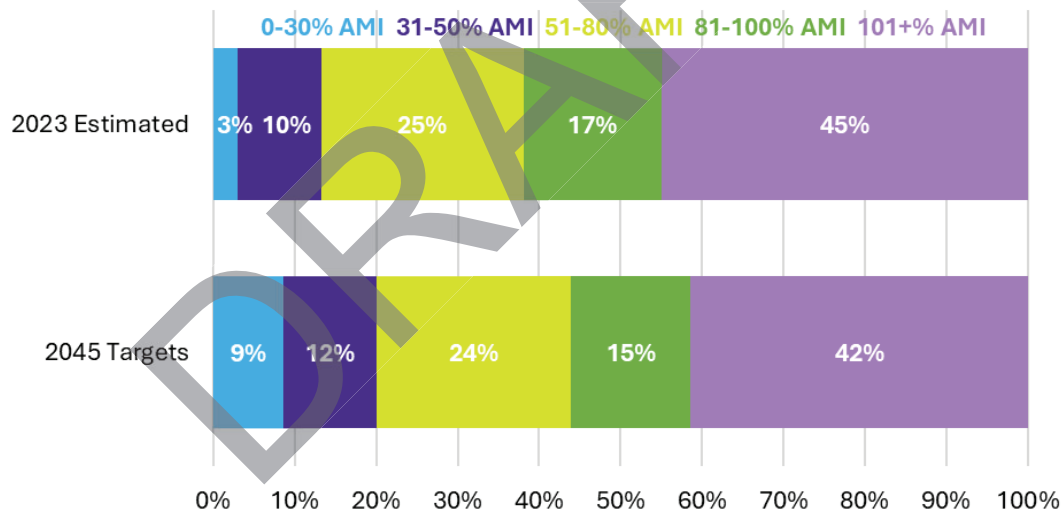


Figure 8. Washougal Current and Projected Housing Stock by Income Level, 2023 & 2045

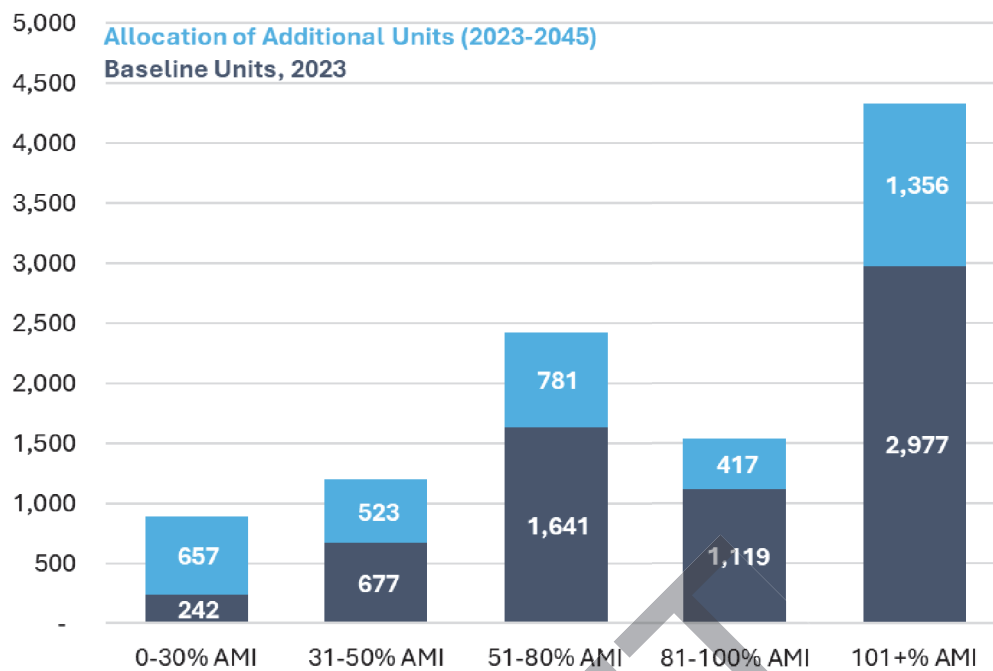


Figure 9. Washougal Housing Needs by Income Level – Clark County Adopted Projection

Middle Housing Analysis

Figure 10 shows Washougal’s housing inventory by type, and the change over time from 2012 to 2022. Much of the housing stock that qualifies as middle housing, which is a range of housing types that the Washington Department of Commerce defines as being “intended to be comparable with single-family neighborhoods, including “duplexes, to six-plexes, townhomes, courtyard apartments and cottage housing”⁴, remained virtually constant relative to all housing types over the ten-year period. While the proportion of triplexes and quadplexes relative to the citywide housing inventory increased between 2012 and 2022, the ratio of multifamily structures with five or more units diminished. In 2022, more than three-quarters (75%) of Washougal’s housing stock are detached single-family housing units.

⁴ Planning for Middle Housing, Washington State Department of Commerce; <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/growth-management/housing-planning/middle-housing/>.

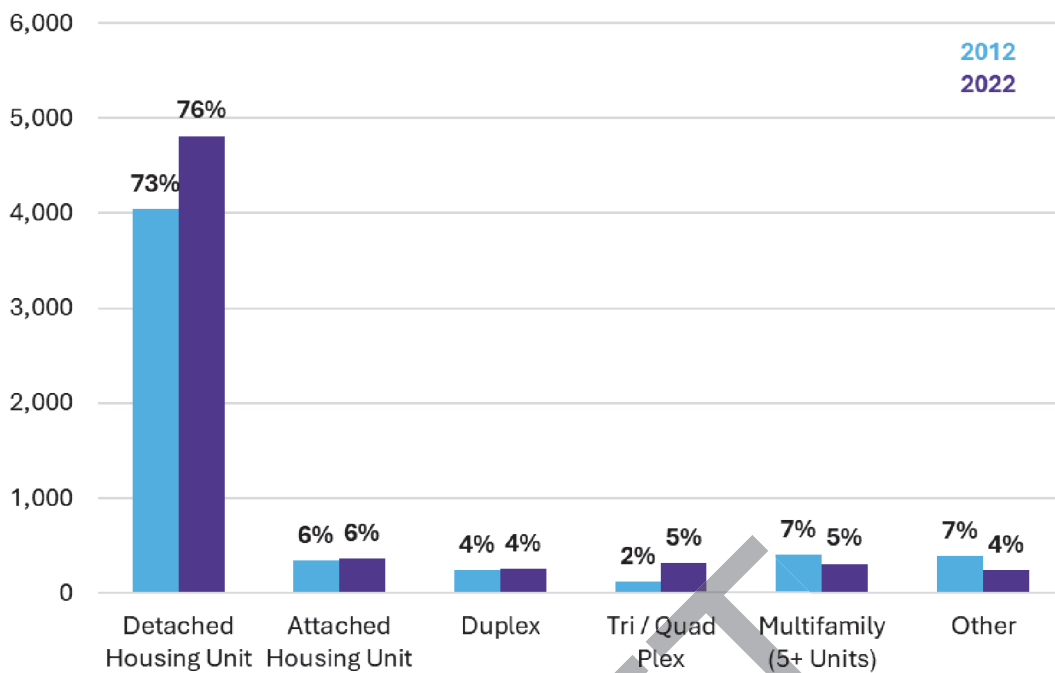


Figure 10. Housing Inventory by Development Type, Washougal, 2012 & 2022

Goals and Policies

GOAL 1: To allow and encourage a range of housing types and affordability levels to meet state requirements and the needs of the Washougal community.

Policy 1-A: The City will zone a sufficient supply of land for residential use which is supported by public services to facilitate phased development over the 20-year plan timeframe.

Policy 1-B: The City will regulate residential development in existing neighborhoods to allow a variety of housing types without adversely affecting the character of surrounding development. The development code will provide for easy partition of land, providing for non-traditional lot shapes, such as flag lots.

Policy 1-C: The City will adjust housing policy – including requirements and incentives, as well as development regulations – based on feedback from the Department of Commerce in order to maintain compliance with State statute.

Policy 1-D: The development code will provide for mobile and manufactured housing in a manner that ensures that such developments contribute to the design quality, landscape standards, and safety of the community.

Policy 1-E: The development code may include provisions for home improvement programs on appropriate lots in order to broaden the current range of housing types available in Washougal.

Policy 1-F: The development code will encourage innovative housing designs for efficient, high-density housing.

Policy 1-G: The City will encourage the development of housing for seniors and low- and moderate-income households in appropriate locations.

Policy 1-H: The City will provide for higher housing densities in locations that are adequately served by infrastructure, schools, public parks, and other amenities, as appropriate.

Policy 1-I: The development code will provide for group homes and other institutional housing for special needs persons.

GOAL 2: To preserve and enhance the value and livability of Washougal's neighborhoods.

Policy 2-A: The City will encourage infill development consistent with the scale and character of the neighborhoods where the development is located.

Policy 2-B: The City will offer, encourage, and publicize home improvement programs that improve exterior and interior conditions and enhance housing values or living conditions in local neighborhoods.

Policy 2-C: The City will encourage and support individual and neighborhood beautification programs using garden clubs, schools, and other local groups.

GOAL 3: To allow and encourage housing appropriate to the needs of Washougal workers.

Policy 3-A: The City will allow and encourage adequate opportunity for housing aligned with local wages within the UGA.

Policy 3-B: The City will ensure that adequate amenities and services are provided to support a full range of housing styles, making Washougal a more attractive place to live.

Policy 3-C: The City will coordinate with employers in the Camas-Washougal Industrial Park in order to improve alignment with housing policy and worker needs.

GOAL 4: To provide housing that takes advantage of the natural features of the landscape in order to encourage views and promote energy efficiency.

Policy 4-A: The City will encourage the development of housing by using the natural slopes to the north and northwest of the downtown, and by designating view corridors.

Policy 4-B: The City will encourage the development of energy efficient housing using passive and active solar designs.

GOAL 5: To encourage innovative design concepts that increase density, energy efficiency, affordability, and good design.

Policy 5-A: The development code will provide for Planned Unit Developments that advance the goals identified above.

Policy 5-B: The development code will provide for small lot and infill development to encourage efficient use of the land as well as the development of affordable housing.

GOAL 6: To implement housing policy in collaboration with other government and private sector housing providers and users.

Policy 6-A: The City will coordinate its housing policy with Clark County, the Vancouver Housing Authority, and other housing partners consistent with State statute.

Other Strategic Considerations

This section identifies some tools and programs that the City of Washougal may wish to consider as strategic avenues to housing development. They include a mix of requirements and incentives that could each be targeted toward the production of housing units of different types and affordability levels. The formal use of any of the following interventions would require additional study by staff, engagement with the Washougal community, and ultimately, action by City Council.

Incentive Zoning

Incentive zoning could be a helpful tool for Washougal, as it gives the community latitude to prioritize certain public benefits in exchange for additional development capacity. While this tool does confer additional density, and the Washougal community has indicated a preference for a cautious approach to dense residential development, so incentive zoning may be best deployed in limited geographic areas where adequate infrastructure and other services are planned or currently exist.

Multifamily Tax Exemption

Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) has been successful in other communities in producing housing units affordable to some local workers. Washougal's existing MFTE program does not currently include affordability requirements, and while Washougal has not seen significant multifamily development in recent years, attaching an affordability requirement to the multifamily tax exemption may not disincentivize residential development when other communities throughout Washington must also plan aggressively for affordable housing production.

Inclusionary Zoning

Inclusionary zoning requires that new housing developments provide some quantity of affordable units as a portion of the total housing units built. These requirements are becoming more common in Washington and can be effective in adding low- to moderate-income housing units. Specific

affordability requirements should be tailored to avoid disproportionate impacts to project feasibility so that housing development continues in Washougal.

Financial Subsidies for Affordable Housing

Washougal residents expressed relatively low support for these tools, which can include a sales and use tax, real estate excise tax, or affordable housing levy. However, these tools are useful in generating revenue that can be leveraged to develop housing units at very low levels of affordability, which the private sector is unlikely to build even with incentive or inclusionary zoning. As such, the city should consider these tools on an ongoing basis as it seeks to comply with State statute.

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