



**ISLAND COUNTY  
PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**ISLAND COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**

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**~ FINDINGS OF FACT AND LEGISLATIVE INTENT ~**

**TO: Board of Island County Commissioners**  
**FROM: Island County Planning Commission**  
**DATE: August 27, 2018**  
**REGARDING: Review and Update of the Housing Element of the Island County Comprehensive Plan**

**SUMMARY**

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that cities and counties adopt comprehensive plans consisting of a minimum of nine “elements” that each cover a different topic of land use. These elements include maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles, and standards. Housing is one of the nine elements that the GMA requires to be included in a comprehensive plan (RCW 36.70A.070). The Housing Element is intended to ensure the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods by providing for:

- an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs that identifies the number of housing units necessary to manage projected growth;
- goals, policies, objectives, and mandatory provisions to preserve, improve, and develop housing;
- the identification of sufficient land for housing, including, but not limited to, government-assisted housing, housing for low-income families, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, group homes and foster care facilities; and
- adequate provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community.

During the 2016 periodic review process, Island County conducted a minor update of the Housing Element (Chapter 4 of the Island County Comprehensive Plan). In 2017 Island County began a larger update, based on a more in-depth study of the County’s existing housing

conditions and a more comprehensive look at the County's policy approach to housing. In developing proposed amendments, it was the County's objective to: not only revise the County's housing policies; but to also better understand the current and future housing needs; to identify barriers to housing production and affordability; and to create a strategy to address the variety of housing issues through a comprehensive and consistent approach.

The Housing update approach focused on three important areas:

- understanding dynamics in the housing market;
- engaging the community on housing issues; and
- delivering policy and implementation guidance to meet the county's diverse needs.

The Housing Element update has utilized technical data and analysis to better understand the county's housing conditions, identify key issues, and provide context for crafting appropriate policies and action to address those issues. Engagement with residents and other key stakeholders allowed the County to receive information about housing needs and opportunities, which in conjunction with the technical analysis, helped the development of informed policy changes and implementation actions.

Ultimately, the Housing Element serves as a guiding document and resource for the County to utilize in the development of regulatory updates, programmatic updates, public outreach, and new housing related County initiatives. It unifies the many County departments behind a common approach and philosophy to housing by establishing goals and policies and identifying actions that the County can take to meet the housing needs of our community.

For the purposes of this Element, goal, policy, and implementation action are defined as follows:

**Goal:** general guidelines that explain an ideal future end, condition, or state related to the public health, safety, or general welfare of Island County, toward which planning and implementation measures are directed. Goals are long-term in nature and represent a county-wide vision.

**Policy:** a course or principle of action providing direction to the County as to how to carry out and achieve the goals outlined in the Housing Element

**Implementation Action:** defined strategy or steps to attain identified goals and policies in the Housing Element. Unlike goals and policies, implementation actions are specific, measurable, and have a defined completion date. They outline the "who, what, when, where, and how" of reaching the goals and policies.

## **FINDINGS**

1. Island County conducts planning activities in accordance with RCW 36.70, the Planning Enabling Act.
2. Island County is required to plan under RCW 36.70A, the Growth Management Act (GMA).
3. State law requires periodic updates of GMA comprehensive plans.

4. RCW 36.70A.070 requires counties and cities to develop a housing element ensuring vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods, and requires that the housing element contain:
  - a. An inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs that identifies the number of housing units necessary to manage projected growth;
  - b. A statement of the goals, policies, and objectives for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing, including single-family residences;
  - c. Identification of sufficient land for housing, including, but not limited to, government-assisted housing, housing for low-income families, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, group homes and foster care facilities; and
  - d. adequate provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community.
5. On December 13<sup>th</sup> 2016 Island County adopted amendments to the Island County Comprehensive Plan in accordance with the GMA 2016 Periodic Update.
6. On February 28<sup>th</sup> 2017, via Resolution C-21-17, the Board of Island County Commissioners approved the Housing Element Update to be placed on the Annual Docket for 2017.
7. On November 7<sup>th</sup> 2017, via Resolution C-110-17, the Board of Island County Commissioners approved the Housing Element Update to be continued on to the 2018 Annual Docket.
8. The 2017-18 update of the Housing Element has focused on understanding dynamics in the housing market, engaging the community on housing issues, and delivering policy and implementation guidance to meet the county's diverse needs.
9. To achieve the goals of the update, the project approach has involved significant public outreach to include stakeholder interviews, a community survey, a baseline review of existing programs and efforts, a housing needs analysis, identification of barriers and resources and finally the drafting of goals and policies.
10. On March 22, 2018 the draft goals and policies were sent to the Department of Commerce for 60 day review, and on May 17, 2018 Planning and Community Development received comments stating that the Department of Commerce was, "...impressed that Island County has devoted time to delve more deeply into each element of the Comprehensive Plan. For example, the County's work on the Housing Element to include more detailed planning, and encourage the continuance of work."
11. On April 25, 2018, Planning and Community Development issued a Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) for a full review and update of the Housing Element of Island County's Comprehensive Plan, determining that this non-project proposal does not have a probable significant adverse impact on the environment.
12. On March 29, 2018 the draft goals and policies were posted to Planning & Community Development's website and between the months of April and May a series of outreach events and presentations were then conducted on the draft, to generate further public review and refinement.

13. In consideration of all public discussions and information gathered regarding this Housing Element update, the Planning Commission finds that it is in the best interest of the community to:
- a. Encourage preservation of existing housing stock capacity, subsidized and affordable housing units, and the character of existing communities;
  - b. Promote the development of different housing types, to meet the needs of all demographic segments of the population, housing tenure choices, and income levels, and to provide for these housing types in appropriate locations where infrastructure, public transit, and community services are readily accessible, planned in the near future, or included as part of a new fully-contained community established under RCW 36.70A.350;
  - c. Promote fair access to housing and shelter for all persons;
  - d. Promote policies that facilitate the reduction in the share of cost burdened households by increasing the supply of subsidized affordable housing; and
  - e. Collaborate with other jurisdictions and housing organizations to address county-wide housing issues.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Island County Planning Commission has held a public hearing to review the proposed amendments to the Island County Comprehensive Plan and hereby recommends that the Board of Island County Commissioners adopt the updated Housing Element and Reasonable Measures Addendum enclosed hereto as Exhibit "A".

Respectfully submitted through the Island County Planning Department to the Board of Island County Commissioners, pursuant to RCW 36.70.430, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2018 by,

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Darin Hand  
Chair, Island County Planning Commission

Enclosures:

- A – Updated Housing Element and Reasonable Measures Addendum
- B – Housing Element Goals & Policies in Tracked Changes