

THE BELLINGHAM PLAN



HOUSING

Chapter Update Summary | November 2024





What the Community Said

These descriptions summarize the most common opinions we heard relevant to this chapter.

Every neighborhood needs to do its part to provide housing choices for everyone.

We need more affordable housing, especially in mixed-income buildings.

We need more 2-bedroom units and options for families. They should be located near jobs and amenities, even if they are small.

Providing housing closer to jobs, transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian paths is critical to tackle climate change.

Co-living and communal housing types are interesting, especially for seniors and students.

More housing types in every neighborhood are exciting, but fiveplexes, sixplexes, and stacked flats should only be allowed on busier streets.

Existing housing density allowances seem inequitable or inconsistent. Aligning density with amenity access is preferred.



Summary of Updates

We are proposing a variety of updates to our 2016 Comprehensive Plan. While the plan is divided into distinct chapters, there are updates that touch multiple chapters.

Here are the most significant updates related to housing. These themes span multiple chapters beyond this one.

- >> Reduce barriers to build housing
- >> Energy efficiency and resiliency
- >> Housing along transit corridors
- >> More middle housing like triplexes or townhomes
- >> Mixed-income housing incentives
- >> Allowing small-scale businesses in all residential areas

Get a quick overview of the most significant updates we're proposing.

If you haven't yet, take a look at the [Summary of Proposed Updates](#). It describes the most significant updates we are proposing. We recommend viewing that the summary first, and then diving in here for more details on housing.



Housing Chapter Draft Topics

Each blue box represents a topic that will later become a goal in the Housing Chapter. These will be the overarching goals for the City, with more specific policies to support them.

Proposed Topics

Quantity of Housing

Ensure Bellingham has enough housing to accommodate projected growth.

Types of Housing

Ensure Bellingham has a variety of housing types to meet community needs.

Homeownership Opportunities

Encourage homeownership opportunities.

Housing for All Incomes

Foster housing affordable to all incomes in all neighborhoods.

Service-enriched Housing

Support service-enriched housing options across Bellingham.

Safe, Healthy, and Livable Housing

Promote safe, healthy, and livable housing across Bellingham.



Walking through the Topics

Now, we'll walk through an overview of the proposed updates for each goal. Each bubble represents a concept within that goal. Each concept may become a single policy or several in the final document.

Existing Concept

This concept exists in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan already.

Some Updates

Either this concept will be emphasized more than in the current plan, or something minor is being changed about it.

**New Concept/
Major Updates**

This concept does not exist in the 2016 plan at all or will include significant changes.



This icon indicates this concept is related to state requirements or legislation.



Community Feedback

**As you learn about the concepts proposed in this chapter,
think about...**

**Is anything big
missing?**

**Are you excited or
concerned about any
of the ideas proposed
here?**



Quantity of Housing

Housing for All Incomes

Types of Housing

Service-enriched Housing

Homeownership Opportunities

Safe, Healthy, and Livable Housing



Reduction of cost, timeline, and process where possible



*HB 1220 (2022) – Reduction of barriers to housing production
SB 5290 (2023) – Streamlining permit processes*

Smart and infill development



*HB 1110 (2023)
Expansion of Infill Toolkit citywide (see Land Use chapter)*

Minimum densities

Requiring some level of housing density for (re)development in important housing growth areas (see Land Use Chapter)

Flexibility of ground level uses

Making it easier to develop housing in mixed-use areas

Reduce barriers to viable construction types



*SB 5491 (2023) – 6-story single-stair buildings
HB 2071 (2024) – 3-6 unit buildings; small unit types
Also mass timber construction*

Existing

Update

New



Quantity of Housing

Housing for All Incomes

Types of Housing

Service-enriched Housing

Homeownership Opportunities

Safe, Healthy, and Livable Housing



Affordable housing in all neighborhoods



*HB 1220 (2022)
Growth distributed by income band
Equitable distribution*

Mixed-income projects and incentives

Strengthening existing programs and continuing monitoring economic feasibility of adjustments or new programs

More affordable housing types

Modular construction, small lots, small units, co-living housing, etc

Reduction of barriers to developing affordable housing

Anti-displacement approaches



HB 1220 (2022)

Identification of areas at risk of their residents being displaced by economic pressures, strategies to address this including protection of naturally occurring affordable housing

Federal and regional collaboration & funding

The Consolidated Plan identifies specific actions and priorities regarding affordable housing.

Existing

Update

New



Quantity of Housing

Housing for All Incomes

Types of Housing

Service-enriched Housing

Homeownership Opportunities

Safe, Healthy, and Livable Housing



Variety of types within all areas of the city



HB 1110 (2023) – Allowing small lot, ADUs, cottages, multiplexes, common courtyards, and townhomes everywhere except Lake Whatcom Watershed

Communal/Co-living housing types



*HB 1998 (2024)
Also those designed for students*

Encouraging 2+ BR Units

*Ensuring a future supply of larger units;
See the [Housing Preference Survey data](#)*

Reduction of barriers to variety of housing types

Special Needs housing, especially for seniors, families with children, and disabled

Existing

Update

New



Quantity of Housing

Housing for All Incomes

Types of Housing

Service-enriched Housing

Homeownership Opportunities

Safe, Healthy, and Livable Housing



*HB 1220 (2022)
Permanent Supportive Housing & others*



Ensuring service-enriched housing investments are well coordinated and scaled with availability of appropriate services

Clearer definition of interim and permanent housing types

Housing with on-site services

Ensuring services scale with housing to meet needs

Shelter, interim, and permanent supportive housing options

Equitable distribution of projects

Regional collaboration

Reduction of barriers to siting housing with on-site services

Note: Stand-alone services have been shifted to new Community Wellbeing chapter

Existing

Update

New



Quantity of Housing

Housing for All Incomes

Types of Housing

Service-enriched Housing

Homeownership Opportunities

Safe, Healthy, and Livable Housing



Encourage these types in more places – HB 1110 (2023) and allow lot splitting for them



This allows owners to pay less overall because they are sharing some of the property, whether that be land (condos), public space (co-ops/co-housing), or both of the above (co-living housing)

This limits how much the owner owns, such as in a land trust (where a non-profit owns the land, but the resident owns the building)

*Support for rental communities transitioning to ownership models
Education and support for programs assisting homeowners to keep their homes*

*Expanding tenant opportunity to purchase – SB 5198 (2023)
Supporting displaced manufactured home park residents - HB 1771 (2023)*



Small-scale housing (small lot, cottage, townhome, etc)

Supporting shared equity options

Support for statewide condo-ization reform

Supporting limited equity options

Anti-displacement approaches

Protection of manufactured home parks

Existing

Update

New



Quantity of Housing

Housing for All Incomes

Types of Housing

Service-enriched Housing

Homeownership Opportunities

Safe, Healthy, and Livable Housing



Fair housing support

Ensuring safe and livable housing standards

Researching impact of livability code elements

Clustering of housing to provide access to natural resources

This relates to rental registration and its inspection process

Both existing code and other considerations (usable space, open space, daylight access etc)

Existing

Update

New

Note: Access to community amenities is covered in the Land Use chapter.



Structural Changes

Are you familiar with the 2016 Comprehensive Plan and looking for a topic that was in that Housing Chapter?

It may be located in another part of the plan. The next few slides will show how the proposed updates relate to the 2016 Housing Chapter.





2016 Housing Chapter Topics

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan Housing Chapter is organized around these 5 topics. Each one is written as a goal in the plan.

Note: The current topics have been rearranged here to better align with the proposed 2025 Plan topic order.

Quantity and Type of
Housing

Housing for All
Incomes

Sense of Place

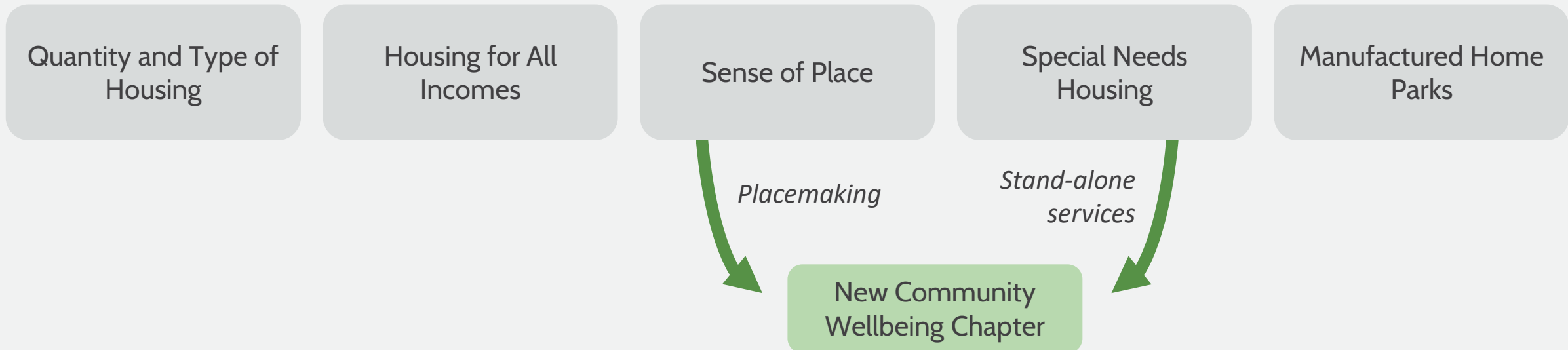
Special Needs
Housing

Manufactured Home
Parks



Shifts out of Housing Chapter

Some concepts have been moved to other chapters in the proposed updates.





Shifts within Housing Chapter

Other concepts have been shifted or split between each of the proposed topics.

2016 Plan Topics

