

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS CHAPTER:

- A focus on neighborhood sustainability with an eye towards preservation and development of community-building amenities.
- Recognition that the residential neighborhoods in Tukwila each have historically different development patterns and physical characteristics and in recognition of the uniqueness, a move away from the one-size fits all approach to development.
- Opportunities for new housing products that meet the needs and market realities of Tukwila's residential population for the next twenty years.

PURPOSE

This component of the Comprehensive Plan contains the goals and policies for land use and development of Tukwila's residential neighborhoods. It serves as the basis for zoning and plays a key role in setting City policy, development standards, design guidelines; and investing of public capital into neighborhood improvement projects.

These goals and policies guide land use patterns, physical development priorities to preserve and enhance the sense of community in Tukwila's residential neighborhoods. They support the objectives and strategies outlined in the 2012 [Strategic Plan](#); they are informed by the [Community Conversations](#) and outreach efforts of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update process and, they build upon the image of neighborhood quality described initially by the Tukwila Tomorrow Committee in 1994.

This element focuses on land use and development of residential neighborhoods. Additional aspects of residential neighborhoods are found in other elements of the

Comprehensive Plan, including: Community Image and Identity, Utilities, Transportation, and Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS).

SIDEBAR: Sustainable Neighborhoods

Sustainability is often defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This encompasses environmental, social, and economic factors such as air and water quality, access to living wage jobs, and a social network among neighbors. A sustainable neighborhood provides housing, resources, and amenities that benefit residents and creates a sense of community for generations to come.

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS AND LAND USE

Tukwila’s residential neighborhoods are geographic areas, some with distinct boundaries such as waterways and freeways, and others with less obvious boundaries based [on time of annexation](#). Tukwila’s residential neighborhoods are a mix of smaller-lot, built-out residential areas predominately built before WWII, large multi-family apartment complexes built in the 1960’s, 70’s, and 80’s, and newer areas characterized by more recent, larger houses. New development in the single-family residential neighborhoods occurs primarily as infill, through re-platting existing residential lots. This often results in lot orientation or home sizes that are different from existing development. However, just less than fifty percent of Tukwila residents live in the single-family neighborhoods. The majority of residents reside in apartment or condominium buildings and any significant increase in households will be through the development of multi-family units.

From the Comprehensive Plan’s adoption in 1994 to the present, Tukwila residents have described the city as having a distinct character focused on community and livability. In the 1990’s, this characterization seemed based in its physical attributes, such as smaller homes built on smaller lots, homes oriented close to the street, narrow street widths, and parks and trails. While the physical development has changed in the last twenty years to meet the City’s growth and evolving needs of residents, residents still tend to see the character of Tukwila’s neighborhoods in terms of having a sense of belonging to the community, easy access to community leaders, and ample trees and parks. Residents take

pride in the City's diversity and its global community while recognizing that this diversity needs to be supported and that the voices of all residents, both long-term and recently arrived, need to be heard.

The design of public and private development can enhance or inhibit this sense of community which is a key to maintaining and strengthening neighborhoods as Tukwila grows. Without it, Tukwila's residential neighborhoods will lose many of their most valued characteristics and the public investment will not achieve its goals. Standards to which public facilities such as schools, parks, and streets are designed should support the neighborhoods' physical appearance and safety. As infill continues throughout Tukwila, development regulations may require revision to ensure that they strengthen the character of Tukwila's neighborhoods, support interaction among neighbors, increase housing options, and produce new housing that enhances the existing neighborhoods.

Although many choose to make Tukwila their long-term home, Tukwila's residents have become increasingly mobile over the past two decades. Short-term residency, often called transiency, is not unique to Tukwila; however it may be felt more strongly given the relatively small size of the City's residential population. Previously, the transiency of Tukwila's residential population was attributed primarily to short-term rentals. However, the transiency of Tukwila's residents is due to several factors. Cost of housing, employment and employment access, housing size and quality, access to services, and concern for personal safety may all contribute to lack of residential stability in Tukwila. Residential transiency may also limit Tukwila's sense of community, and contribute to poor school performance.

SIDEBAR: Annexations

Many of the differences in neighborhood character in Tukwila can be attributed to the City's annexation history. Development characteristics such as density, presence or absence of sidewalks, and zoning reflect the conditions that were in place at the time of each neighborhood's annexation. As the City quadrupled in size through these annexations, primarily in the 1980's and 1990's, it inherited some areas that were deficient with respect to infrastructure and amenities compared to the original Tukwila town site.

ISSUES

In developing the policies to meet the goals for this element, the following issues were identified for Tukwila:

Neighborhood Access

Ideally, the built, natural, and social environments in neighborhoods combine to provide opportunities for residents to interact, experience nature, enjoy leisure and physical activities, and to easily access food and other retail opportunities. However, many of Tukwila's neighborhoods lack sidewalks and paths and other amenities such as retail and services within walking distance. This limits residents' ability to enjoy their community, and to get around without a motor vehicle.

Tukwila's current regulations only require the construction of sidewalks for short plats/single-family development projects of 5 or more contiguous lots. Sometimes, this has the inadvertent effect of discouraging maximum lot creation due to the increased cost of infrastructure (i.e., developers may create 4 lots when they have enough land for 5).

Additionally, the Tukwila Community Center is not accessible without a motor vehicle to most Tukwila neighborhoods. There is no transit service to the area and it is not within walking or biking distance to most neighborhoods. There are very few other organized recreational activities available to residents of Tukwila who lack access to a motor vehicle.

Neighborhood Development – Single Family Infill Compatibility

Newer Tukwila homes tend to be larger, and less compatible with existing housing stock. The average home size is growing, reflecting a nationwide trend. There is limited available land for residential development in the city, and as such most new development occurs as infill in existing residential neighborhoods. To accommodate the desire for larger homes, some vegetated areas are being removed for new development. Encouraging new development to meet housing targets and residents' needs while maintaining the character and quality of neighborhoods can be challenging. A variety of regulatory tools provide possible avenues to encourage compatible design without unduly limiting development.

Neighborhood-Supportive Commercial Areas

Commercially-zoned areas within and adjacent to residential neighborhoods provide the opportunity for residential support services to locate within walking and bicycling distance to where people live. There are limited neighborhood-supportive commercial areas in Tukwila. Larger commercial areas, including Southcenter and businesses along Tukwila International Boulevard, are located beyond walking or convenient bicycle distance for many residents. A variety of development regulations and incentives can help to promote neighborhood-supportive commercial development that is in character with residential development and can provide transitions from residential neighborhoods to larger commercial and mixed-use areas.

Compatible Land Use

Many residents choose to live in Tukwila for its convenient location and access to services and amenities. This is underscored by the City's central location in the Puget Sound region, as the approximate midpoint between Seattle and Tacoma, proximity to major interstate highways, and proximity to SeaTac International Airport. The challenge is to preserve this access while buffering the neighborhoods from traffic and commercial encroachment to enhance desirable community qualities.

GOALS AND POLICIES

These residential neighborhood land use goals are Tukwila's approach to sustaining and improving residential neighborhoods and supporting continued development that allows flexibility and predictability to meet the community's need and desires.

Goal 7.1 Residential Land Use Pattern

A land use pattern that encourages a strong sense of community by grouping compatible and mutually supportive uses and separating incompatible uses.

Policies

7.1.1 Maintain a comprehensive land use map that supports the preservation and enhancement of single-family and stable multi-family neighborhoods; eliminates incompatible land uses; and clearly establishes applicable development requirements through recognizable boundaries.

Implementation Strategies

- Update the Comprehensive Plan map
- Implement the Strategic Plan
- Continue to apply Development Regulations

Goal 7.2 Neighborhood Quality

Tukwila’s residential neighborhoods have physical features that preserve and strengthen neighborhood character, enhance neighborhood quality, and foster a strong sense of community.

Goal 7.3

Stable residential neighborhoods that support opportunities for improved educational attainment, employment, engagement, economic security, and personal safety.

Policies

7.3.1 Maximize neighborhood quality through City actions that help define the City and neighborhoods as specific “places.”

- 7.3.2 Improve the public infrastructure in all neighborhoods to an equivalent level of quality, with an emphasis on sidewalks.
- 7.3.3 Include human service needs as one of several factors for evaluating capital and programmatic needs.
- 7.3.4 Use new development to foster a sense of community and replace lost vegetation and open spaces with improvements of at least equal value to the community.
- 7.3.5 Provide adequate support for Code Enforcement efforts to improve and maintain neighborhood quality and livability.
- 7.3.6 Strict code enforcement of policies for neighborhood quality.

Implementation Strategies

- Emphasize public health and safety concerns in development design
- Mandate through the zoning code and design manuals, high quality public facility and private development design for neighborhood quality
- Continue to work with school districts serving Tukwila students to ensure school facilities provide quality public spaces
- Continue developing and implementing projects from the Walk and Roll Plan and Safe Routes to School, with a renewed emphasis on community involvement and engagement
- Require sidewalks adjacent to all new development or participation in a no-protest LID with all new residential development in specified areas in support of implementation of the Walk and Roll Plan
- Pursue a program to form neighborhood Local Improvement Districts and other innovative funding sources for construction of sidewalks
- Develop a right-of-way manual to provide clear direction to developers on required improvements as infill development occurs

- When possible, create flexible development standards to provide creative solutions to infill challenges for short plats or smaller developments when development meets or exceeds the goals established by the code and neighborhood groups but may not exactly conform to the written standards
- Apply the tree code to require site design that minimizes the removal of significant trees and maintains appropriate tree canopy standards
- Work with the Parks and Recreation Department to add stairs connecting Southgate open space to Tukwila International Boulevard

SIDEBAR: Walk and Roll: City of Tukwila’s Non-Motorized Plan

The [Walk and Roll Plan](#), created in 2009, helps to carry out the goals of the Comprehensive Plan with a focus on non-motorized transportation. It uses a “complete street” perspective, expanding the idea of transportation from simply keeping cars and trucks moving to the idea that Tukwila’s streets ought to be for everyone. The plan includes an analysis of existing conditions of residential neighborhood connectivity, including the availability of sidewalks and trails. According to a 2006 sidewalk inventory, only 29% of the City’s public streets have sidewalks. This data informed the Residential Neighborhoods goals and policies.

- Commit City resources to encourage and facilitate neighborhood development groups and work parties for neighborhoods interested in investing time into improvement projects such as clean-up events, public space improvements, or strengthening social capital through neighborhood meetings and social gatherings
- Consider a small grant program for neighborhood-based and led improvement projects
- Explore zoning code updates to address sharing economy uses in residential areas, including but not limited to short-term vacation rentals
- Implement the Strategic Plan, specifically Goal 1 C – Focus City planning and investments on creating a connected, dynamic urban environment

- Develop neighborhood signage in multiple languages to foster a sense of community in residential areas, where appropriate
- Explore development and implementation of a foreclosure registry program

Goal 7.4 Neighborhood Sustainability

Continuing enhancement and revitalization of residential neighborhoods to encourage long-term residency and environmental sustainability

Policies

- 7.4.1 Utilize both City and non-City funding to directly promote revitalization of residential neighborhoods.
- 7.4.2 Decrease greenhouse gas emissions through land use strategies that promote a mix of housing, employment, and services at densities sufficient to promote walking, bicycling, transit and other alternatives to auto travel.

SIDEBAR: Reduced Fee Residential Remodel Permit

In 2014 the City Council created a flat fee permit for residential remodel projects under \$20,000. The flat fee permit helps to lessen the financial impact for homeowners undertaking a home improvement project while still ensuring code compliance and required inspections.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Continued emphasis on existing land use patterns to protect and preserve residential uses
- Investment in public works and infrastructure improvements
- Infrastructure fund support for residential area buffering improvements

- Subdivision and re-platting of large residential lots
- Infrastructure fund incentives for residential rehabilitation and new construction
- Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
- Residential Street Program in the CIP
- Development of a variety of new housing, including single-family homes
- Encourage redevelopment through an informed business and real estate community
- Invest in public facilities and improvements to encourage neighborhood identity and private property improvements
- Where feasible, encourage multifamily housing to include space to garden
- Require sidewalk and landscape planter for both sides of residential streets and on 2-lane street improvements, where appropriate
- Develop and implement a neighborhood traffic calming program
- Require sidewalk and landscape planters in front of all multi-family developments, where appropriate
- Revise development regulations to create an incentive rather than disincentive to share access roads that will serve proposed plats and future adjacent platting



Goal 7.5 Neighborhood Development

Tukwila’s residential neighborhoods have a high-quality, pedestrian character with a variety of housing options for residents in all stages of life.

General Policies

- 7.5.1 Encourage resident identification with the neighborhood through physical improvements and programs including neighborhood gathering spots, landmark designation and improvement, and streetscape improvements.
- 7.5.2 Ensure that residential development, when applicable, reflects high design quality in harmony with identified, valued features of the natural environment and historic development.

Single-Family Residential Development Policies

- 7.5.3 Support single-family residential in-fill housing that is in harmony with the existing neighborhood as a means of achieving adequate, affordable, and/or diverse housing.
- 7.5.4 Encourage single-family residence design to foster a sense of safety and security.
- 7.5.5 Develop neighborhood-specific single-family regulations that encourage compatibility with the existing scale of residential structures in the neighborhood, provide an appropriate relationship of lot area, building scale, and building siting, and maintain a sense of community (e.g. mature trees, pedestrian scale, sensitive transition between public and private spaces).
- 7.5.6 Support a residential rehabilitation program that provides assistance, inducements, and incentives for residents to upgrade and maintain safe, attractive homes and yards.
- 7.5.7 Allow home occupations as accessory uses if they have a level of activity and usage compatible with single-family structures and residential neighborhood goals.

SIDEBAR: Trends in Home Construction

Tukwila has followed a nationwide trend of larger single-family homes. Since 1980, the average square footage of newly constructed homes has steadily increased. While home sizes decreased during the recession, the upward trend has picked up during the economic

recovery. Average home size is expected to increase as infill development occurs and as older homes are redeveloped.

Implementation Strategies



- Revise development regulations at the neighborhood level to reflect the historic patterns of neighborhoods and to develop regulations that best fit the unique development characteristics of neighborhoods
- Develop a process for residents to participate in developing regulations for individual neighborhoods
- Explore code revisions to maintain standard minimum lot size of 6,500 square feet but allow smaller lot areas subject to design standards that mitigate the potential negative impacts of smaller lots
- Review accessory dwelling unit standards to be considered standalone units or units in attached garages in specific circumstances
- Allow rehabilitation or replacement of existing manufactured and mobile homes
- Use site design to provide transition between public and private places
- Establish building setbacks to facilitate neighborhood communication, and friendly transition areas between street, sidewalks, and dwellings to maintain compatibility
- Encourage off-street parking and garage and carport standards that reduce auto dominance, such as requirements for less visually prominent garages and/or front yard setbacks for garages
- Develop and implement a City assistance program to address maintenance needs, regulatory revisions and provide technical experience and financial assistance
- Provide funding and technical assistance for neighborhood tree planting and pruning

- Improvements and additions shall meet current codes; minimize the necessity to bring entire building up to code
- Explore code revisions to allow home occupations in detached garages
- Continue Code Enforcement efforts to ensure new development meets City standards

Multi-Family Residential Development Policies

- 7.5.8 Support a multi-family residential rehabilitation program that provides assistance and inducements to owners to upgrade and maintain safe, clean and attractive facilities.
- 7.5.9 Support zoning densities that encourage redevelopment of existing multi-family properties.
- 7.5.10 Ensure that all multi-family residential developments contribute to a strong sense of community through site planning focused on neighborhood design integration; building design architecturally linked with the surrounding neighborhood and style; streetscapes that encourage pedestrian use and safe transition to private spaces, with trees reducing the effects of large paved areas; with recreational spaces and facilities on site; creative project design that provides a diversity of housing types within adopted design criteria, standards, and guidelines; and operational and management policies that ensure safe, stable living environments.

Implementation Strategies

- Survey specific assistance needs
- Establish a City-sponsored assistance program to address maintenance needs, regulatory revisions, and provide technical experience and financial assistance as appropriate
- Improvements and additions shall meet current codes; minimize the necessity of bringing entire building up to code

- Develop right-size parking standards to encourage larger units and fewer paved areas provided the standards meet demonstrated needs
- Support and enhance Code Enforcement efforts to ensure new development meets City standards
- Multi-family design criteria, standards and guidelines
- Amend the zoning code to encourage community gardens and other forms of urban agriculture as part of required recreation space
- Provide recreational space through on-site locations in new multi-family developments
- Explore amending the zoning code to allow densities that promote redevelopment of aging multi-family properties

Goal 7.6 Neighborhood-Supportive Commercial Areas

Neighborhood-supportive commercial areas, including Residential Commercial Centers, that bring small commercial concentrations into and adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods to improve existing residential areas while providing products and services to nearby residents.

- 7.6.1 Link commercial areas located within approximately one-quarter-mile of residential areas with high-quality pedestrian and bicycle access facilities.
- 7.6.2 In neighborhood commercial developments, harmoniously reflect the scale and architectural details of surrounding residential structures, and encourage non-motorized access.
- 7.6.3 Employ appropriate design elements to blend in with the character of the residential neighborhood.

- 7.6.4 Encourage new construction rather than converting existing residential structures to commercial uses.
- 7.6.5 Encourage neighborhood commercial structures to incorporate residential units at medium densities.
- 7.6.6 Create a logical and harmonious division between commercial or industrial uses and residential uses by using changes in topography and through appropriate development standards, including street design.
- 7.6.7 Ensure appropriate structural transitions between commercial and residential zones.

Implementation Strategies

- Zoning Code
- On-street parking along the street front, behind or beside buildings
- Continue to apply multi-family and commercial design guidelines, with an emphasis on buffering residential uses from commercial and industrial uses

Goal 7.7 Southcenter Boulevard

A corridor of low-rise offices, residences, with localized commercial uses at major intersections all of which act as a buffer to the low-density residential neighborhoods to the north of the Southcenter area.

- 7.7.1 Balance the competing concerns of uphill residents for maximum views and the community-wide desire for contour-hugging design and angular lines of hillside structures.
- 7.7.2 Require sloped roof lines along Southcenter Boulevard to imitate the local topography and residential character.

- 7.7.3 Provide additional pedestrian connections between residential areas to the north and Southcenter Blvd.

Implementation Strategies

- Zoning Code

Goal 7.8 Noise Abatement

Residential neighborhoods are protected from undue noise impacts, in order to ensure for all residents the continued use, enjoyment and value of their homes, public facilities and recreation, and the outdoors.

Policies

- 7.8.1 Prevent community and environmental degradation by limiting noise levels.
- 7.8.2 Discourage noise levels which are incompatible with current or planned land uses, and discourage the introduction of new land uses into areas where existing noise levels are incompatible with such land uses.
- 7.8.3 Require building contractors to limit their construction activities to those hours of the day when nearby residents will not be unreasonably disturbed.
- 7.8.4 Discourage noise levels incompatible with residential neighborhoods.
- 7.8.5 Encourage the reduction of noise from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and King County Airport, by promoting the development of new or the retrofit and modification of existing aircraft engines which are quieter, and operational procedures that help reduce aircraft noise emission levels.
- 7.8.6 Work with the Port of Seattle, King County Airport and the Federal Aviation Administration to promote the development and implementation of airport operational procedures that will decrease the adverse noise effects of airport operations on Tukwila and its residents.

- 7.8.7 Ensure that urbanization and development do not negatively impact current neighborhood noise levels, and adhere to Environmental Protection Agency and Federal Aviation Administration standards.

Implementation Strategies

- Coordinate with the Washington Department of Transportation
- Berming, landscaping, setbacks, tree planting
- Use building construction and siting methods to mitigate noise
- Develop noise standards for home occupations
- Lobby the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to develop and implement airport operational procedures to reduce noise impacts
- Coordinate with other jurisdictions surrounding airports to ensure common purpose and implementation strategies
- Work with King County International Airport/Boeing Field to establish an appropriate noise monitoring system, including better identification of noisy flight events, counseling/education of pilots about quieter flying techniques, flight patterns that avoid noise-sensitive areas and other strategies
- Continue to implement and enforce Tukwila's Noise Code
- Continue to work with Sound Transit and BNSF to reduce rail noise and ensure it meets the Federal Transit Administration standards and continue to work with the Port of Seattle to reduce airport operational noise and ensure airport operational noise meets FAA standards

Related Information

VISION 2040

<http://www.psrc.org/growth/vision2040/pub/vision2040-document/>

King County Countywide Planning Policies

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/property/permits/codes/growth/GMPC/CPs.aspx>

Tukwila Strategic Plan

<http://www.tukwilawa.gov/strategicplan.html>

Tukwila Rental Licensing & Inspections Program

<http://www.tukwilawa.gov/dcd/rentallicensing.html>

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