

Chapter 8: HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Housing is an important component of all communities. High quality, available, and affordable housing enhances quality of life and supports economic development. This chapter provides an analysis of Washburn’s existing housing. It also describes goals, objectives, policies, maps, and programs that will help Washburn meet the housing needs of its residents.

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

HOUSING SUPPLY

Number and Types of Housing Units

Table 8-A lists the number of housing units in Washburn by housing type (for example, single-family, multi-family, etc.). The U.S. Census indicates that there were 1,000 housing units in Washburn in 2000 – six more units than identified in the 1990 Census. Roughly, 78% of the housing units in Washburn are single-family detached houses – this is higher than the State average of 65.5%. However, less than 1% of the housing units in Washburn are single-family attached units (townhouses) – this is considerably lower than the State average of 3.3%. The City also has a significantly lower percentage of 2 to 4 unit multi-family housing than the State average.



Single Family Residence (SWB, Inc.)

TABLE 8-A: HOUSING SUPPLY BY TYPE – 1990 AND 2000

Units per Structure	1990 Units	1990 Percent	2000 Units	2000 Percent	State Average
Single-Family	703	70.7%	783	78.3%	66.5%
Single-Family Attached	14	1.4%	8	0.8%	3.3%
2-4 Unit Multi-Family	119	12%	105	10.5%	12.0%
5+ Unit Multi-Family	31	3.1%	71	7.1%	14.0%
Mobile Home	70	7%	33	3.3%	4.2%
Other	57	5.7%	-	-	--
Total Units	994	100%	1000	100%	100%

Source: US Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Census

Comparison of Owner-Occupied and Renter-Occupied Units

Communities need owner-occupied and renter-occupied units. In general, many communities strive to have roughly 65 to 70% of their housing units owner-occupied. Approximately 72.3% of the housing units in Washburn are owner-occupied - this is higher than the State average 68.5%. The majority of the owner occupied units in Washburn are single-family detached homes (see Table 8-B: Housing Tenure by Type – 2000).

Units per Structure	Owner Occupied Units	Percent Owner Occupied	State Average	Renter Occupied Units	Percent Renter Occupied	State Average
Single-Family	629	66.8%	60.3%	109	11.6%	5.9%
Single-Family Attached	8	0.9%	1.7%	0	0%	1.7%
2-4 Unit Multi-Family	21	2.3%	2.5%	70	7.4%	9.9%
5+ Unit Multi-Family	0	0%	0.8%	71	7.5%	13.4%
Mobile Home	22	2.3%	3.2%	11	1.2%	0.6%
Total Units	680	72.3%	68.5%	261	27.7%	31.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Vacancies

An appropriate percentage of vacancies in the housing market is necessary if those looking to purchase or rent property are going to have adequate housing choices. Vacancies also help keep the cost of housing in balance. 6.3% of Washburn's housing units were vacant in 2000 (see Table 7-C: Vacant Housing by Type – 2000). The vacancy rate of single-family units in Washburn is relatively low compared to the State average of 10.1%.

Units per Structure	Vacant Units	Percent Vacant of Total Units	State Average Percent Vacant of Total Units
Single-Family	45	4.8%	6.6%
Single-Family Attached	0	0%	0.3%
2-4 Unit Multi-Family	14	1.5%	0.9%
5+ Unit Multi-Family	0	0%	1.2%
Mobile Home	0	0%	1.0%
Total Vacant Units	59	6.3%	10.1%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Value of Housing

The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Washburn in 2000 was \$80,900 – up 49% (or \$39,700) from the median value in 1990. Most housing in Washburn is valued in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000. In comparison to low and moderate valued housing, there is a relatively small choice of high valued housing units in Washburn. The median value of owner-occupied housing in the State was \$112,200. Refer to Table 8-D for additional information.

TABLE 8-D: OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING BY VALUE - 2000

Value	Units	Percent of Specified Units	State Average of Specified Units
Less than \$50,000	519	27.9%	6.5%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	1,038	55.8%	35.4%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	177	9.5%	30.6%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	85	4.6%	15.5%
\$200,000 or More	42	2.2%	12.0%
Total Specified Units	1,861	100%	100%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Housing decisions should not be based only on the value of housing, but also on the cost of housing in relation to household income. In general, housing costs (taxes, insurance, principal, interest, etc.) should not exceed 30% of total household income. In 1999, roughly 20% of homeowners in Washburn had monthly costs that were more than 30% of their household income, whereas in 1989, that number was only 16%. This trend suggests that housing is becoming less affordable in Washburn. Refer to Table 9-E for additional information.

TABLE 8-E: MONTHLY OWNER COSTS AS PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME - 1999

Percent of HH Income	Units	Percent	State Average
Less than 15%	201	33.8%	36.8%
15-19%	111	18.7%	19.7%
20-24%	104	17.5%	15.5%
25-29%	62	10.4%	9.8%
30-34%	45	7.6%	5.8%
35% or More	72	12.1%	12.0%
Not Computed	-	-	0.4%
Total Specified Units	261	100%	100%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Contract Rent

Rental housing units account for nearly 28% of the occupied housing units in Washburn. Roughly, 45% of the renter-occupied units had a monthly rent of \$300 or more in 1990. In 2000, nearly 70% had a monthly rent of \$300 or more. See Table 8-F for additional information.

TABLE 8-F: RENTER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS BY GROSS RENT -2000

Monthly Rent	Units	Percent of Specified Units	State Average of Specified Units
Less than \$200	48	18.4%	4.8%
\$200 - \$299	16	6.1%	5.7%
\$300 - \$499	92	35.2%	29.5%
\$500 or More	90	34.5%	56.3%
No Cash Rent	15	5.7%	3.7%
Total Specified Units	261	100%	100%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census

In 1999, 40% of renters paid over 30% of their household income in rent (see Table 8-G). This number is higher than the State average and suggests that there is a need for more affordable rental units in Washburn.

TABLE 8-G: GROSS RENT AS PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME – 1999

Percent of HH Income	Units	Percent	State Average
Less than 15%	20	7.7%	21.1%
15-19%	41	15.7%	16.7%
20-24%	39	14.9%	14.2%
25-29%	33	12.6%	10.6%
30-34%	21	8%	6.9%
35% or More	84	32.2%	25.4%
Not Computed	23	8.8%	5.2%
Total Specified Units	261	100%	100%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Age and Maintenance of Housing Stock

Nearly half (45%) of the housing units in Washburn were built before 1939. Most existing housing is at least 50 years old (see Table 8-H). Consequently, maintenance, energy efficiency, and safety concerns are becoming more prevalent in Washburn as the housing stock continues to age.

TABLE 8-H: YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT

Year Structure Built	Units	Percent	State Average
1999 to March 2000	4	0.4	2.2%
1995 to 1998	29	2.9	7.3%
1990 to 1994	38	3.8	7.3%
1980 to 1989	117	11.7	10.8%
1970 to 1979	173	17.3	16.9%
1960 to 1969	81	8.1	11.9%
1949 to 1959	109	10.9	20.3%
1939 or Earlier	449	44.9	23.4%
Total Specified Units	1000	100%	100%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Plumbing, Kitchen, and Telephone

The U.S. Census identified that of the 941 occupied housing units in Washburn in 2000, four (0.4%) lacked complete plumbing facilities, six (0.6%) lacked complete kitchen facilities, and 21 (2.2%) lacked telephone service.

Subsidized Housing

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 10.3% of all people in Washburn (for whom poverty status is determined) are below the poverty level. This is higher than the State average of 8.7%. Consequently, there is a need to provide housing for those who cannot afford it. The Washburn Housing Authority (WHA) helps address the need for subsidized and special needs housing in Washburn. The WHA administers both Section-8 and low-rent programs to Washburn residents who qualify for assistance.

Housing for those with Disabilities

According to the 2000 US Census, 261 people (21.5%) between 21 and 64 years old had some form of disability. Of those, 66.3% were employed. Roughly, 5.5% of the population in Washburn between 16 and 64 years of age had a mobility or self-care limitation in 2000. 41.6% of people over 65 years of age who had some form of disability. Roughly, 20.5% of those people had a mobility or self-care limitation in 2000. Furthermore, as Washburn's population continues to age, the housing need for those with disabilities and special needs will also increase.

PROFILE OF HOUSEHOLDS

The housing needs of a community relate to the demographic profile of the households. Typically, households move through several life-cycle stages, including entry-level households, first time homeowners, move-up buyers, empty nesters/young seniors, and older seniors. The following describes each of these household types and the effect that they have on housing demands in Washburn.

Entry Level Households

People in the 18 to 24 year old age group typically leave their childhood home and establish their own household. They often rent a house or an apartment because they generally do not have the income and savings needed to buy a home. In addition, many people in this age group move frequently, so they are hesitant to buy a house. They are also more apt to share housing with other unrelated people of similar age.



Bay Ridge Villa (SWB, Inc.)

The entry-level household population in Washburn will fluctuate annually. Many Washburn residents who graduate from high school move to other communities to pursue job opportunities or enroll in institutes of higher education. In the long term, unless current conditions and trends change, Washburn will not see an increase in the 18 to 24 year old age group. Nevertheless, there will always be a strong need to provide affordable, entry level housing choices for people of all ages.

First Time Homeowners

First time homeowners are typically in their 20s and 30s. They are usually “move up” renters, meaning they are moving from an apartment to a home. They are often married, with young children, yet increasingly, first time homeowners are single. They are prone to moving within several years of buying their first home for several reasons including: increased salaries allow them to move up to more expensive housing, the addition of children to the household may require larger housing, and job opportunities may require that they move to another community.

Like the 18 to 24 year old age group, Washburn will likely not see a significant increase in the population of typical first time homeowners unless current conditions and trends change. However, the Comprehensive Plan sets expectations for population growth, and the City recognizes that it will need to maintain and attract people in their 20s and 30s if they are going to grow the population and economy of Washburn. Consequently, the City must plan for future growth in the first time homeowner's market.

Move Up Buyers

Move up buyers are typically in their 30s and 40s. They move up from the smaller, less expensive house that they had purchased earlier. From an economic growth perspective, this is an important group of people. Typically, move up buyers have children in school and they have established jobs. They are less apt to move to another community and start over. Also, professionals who are moving to a community to advance their career are generally looking to move up to a more expensive house than what they had in their previous community. Washburn must ensure that it has adequate choices for those who are looking for move up housing that will satisfy their needs until they are in their late 50s and beyond.



Move-Up Residence (SWB, Inc.)

Empty Nesters and Young Seniors

Empty nesters and young seniors are generally in their 50s and 60s. Often, their children have moved out of their house and left them with a larger house than needed or desired. Empty nesters and young seniors often want to live in a smaller house, such as a townhouse, that has less maintenance. As the baby boom generation moves into this age group, this population will likely increase in Washburn. Unfortunately, Washburn has very few townhouses and condominiums that empty nesters and young seniors typically seek. Washburn will need to work to increase housing choices for empty nesters and young seniors. If there are not adequate housing choices for this age group, young seniors may be apt to leave the City after they retire.



Townhome/Twinhome (SWB, Inc.)

Older Seniors

Those in their 80s and older are often looking for low maintenance or assisted living housing. As the population ages, Washburn must continually ensure that it has adequate housing to meet the needs of seniors. Washburn will continue to be a senior-friendly community that values the contributions of seniors to the community.



Lakeview Terrace (SWB, Inc.)

OTHER HOUSING CONSIDERATIONS

Housing in Relation to the Region

It may be ideal for people to live and work in the same community, but for various reasons, many people choose to live in one community and work in another. Washburn is in close proximity to the City of Ashland, which serves as the regional hub for the area. Ashland has medical facilities,

institutes of higher education, and regional commercial uses that Washburn does not have or cannot support. Yet, some who work in Ashland (or other surrounding communities like Bayfield) may find that Washburn is a more suitable community for them to live in. Consequently, Washburn's housing needs should also be considered within the regional context. For example, the growth of Ashland's Memorial Medical Center may spur the need for additional higher-priced housing. While Ashland may be able to provide that housing need, some medical center employees may prefer to live in Washburn, if the right housing choices are available.

Washburn's population has remained relatively stagnant in recent years, but the population of the surrounding towns has increased. Growth in the surrounding towns likely relates to a desire of some people to live in a rural setting (as opposed to an urban setting) and to a perception of some people that it costs less to live in the surrounding towns than it costs to live in the City of Washburn. The City of Washburn may want to explore housing options that address the needs of those who would like to live in the City of Washburn, but feel that their only feasible option is to live in the surrounding towns. For example, the City could promote a limited amount of conservation subdivision design that could reduce the costs of housing as well as help preserve natural areas and rural character.

Seasonal Housing

Washburn and the surrounding area have many amenities that attract people from far away. Consequently, some people may have their primary home in a place like Minneapolis, but they may have a second home in Washburn or the surrounding area. Conversely, some people may have their primary home in Washburn, but live in the southern United States for part of the year. Seasonal housing can have positive and negative consequences in a community. Washburn will monitor the effects of seasonal housing in the city and address concerns accordingly.

Home Occupations and Residences above Businesses

Washburn has a growing number of artists, writers, and others who can potentially live and work in their homes. Likewise, several commercial buildings in Washburn provide housing above businesses. Mixed residential and commercial uses can help make housing more affordable and can help enhance the economy of the city. However, the City needs to ensure that the commercial uses do not adversely affect surrounding residential uses.

PUBLIC INPUT

Respondents to the community survey conducted as part of this planning process identified the importance well-maintained housing. The following list summarizes key survey results. Refer to Appendix A for more detailed survey results.

- 70.1% of respondents agreed that the City of Washburn should adopt and enforce a property maintenance ordinance requiring owners to maintain their properties to predetermined standards.
- 83% of Washburn residents felt that at least some additions to the stock of moderately priced homes are needed, and a majority felt that no more mobile homes or high-priced homes are needed.
- 54% rated the overall appearance of housing in the city as average, 27% rated the appearance as good or very good, and 19% said it was poor.
- Moderate increases in the supply of single- family homes, rental units, and elderly/assisted living housing was favored by nearly half of all respondents.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following goal is a broad statement that reflects the City's vision for housing. It represents the end that the City is striving to attain. The following objectives are specific, measurable, intermediate ends that are achievable and mark progress towards the goal. The following policies are key actions intended to accomplish the stated objectives.

Goal: Washburn provides diverse and attractive housing to meet the needs of residents.

Objective 8.1: Encourage the preservation and enhancement of the existing housing stock to provide for the needs of current residents and to accommodate anticipated future population growth.

Policy 8.1.a: Work with public and private agencies and programs to help rehabilitate owner-occupied and rental units.

Policy 8.1.b: Identify housing needs and amend the Zoning Ordinance to address those needs.

Policy 8.1.c: Explore developing and making available a handbook to guide homeowners in rehabilitation of their property.

Policy 8.1.d: Promote green building/sustainable design concepts (including energy efficient construction) for new housing and housing renovations.

Policy 8.1.e: Identify blighted properties that are vacant or for sale; consider acquiring them and improving them, or seek private rehabilitation support.

Policy 8.1.f: Initiate and/or promote neighborhood cleanup programs. Conduct clean up/pick up days for appliances, furniture, and general neighborhood cleanup.

Policy 8.1.g: Establish a community assistance program to encourage property maintenance.

Policy 8.1.h: Review, amend, and enforce property maintenance ordinances.

Objective 1.2: Encourage the development or redevelopment of housing for all income levels, special needs, and stages of life.

Policy 8.2.a: Develop incentives to encourage development of low and moderate-income housing, as well as housing for those with special needs.

Policy 8.2.b: Encourage infill housing in areas currently served by public utilities.

Policy 8.2.c: Encourage the creation of mixed-use developments that include housing, employment, shopping, and recreation opportunities in a compact, pedestrian setting.

Policy 8.2.d: Use and/or promote programs to assist with the development of multi-family rental housing.

Policy 8.2.e: Use and promote programs that provide incentives to support the financing and marketing of a first-time homebuyer program.

Policy 8.2.f: Develop housing linkage programs to construct or make financial contributions towards the development of affordable rental and ownership housing. These programs can include tools such as density bonuses, reduced setbacks, and reduced parking requirements.

Policy 8.2.g: Support public and private programs that help address housing needs in Washburn.

Policy 8.2.h: Encourage the development of transitional housing to meet the community's housing needs.

Policy 8.2.i: Encourage multi-family, rental housing development for all income levels and for those with special needs.

Policy 8.2.j: Ensure that housing addresses the standards set in the American's with Disabilities Act.

Policy 8.2.k: Explore the idea of creating an architectural review board to guide builders toward compatible architectural design.

HOUSING PLAN

This section expands on the key concepts and actions described in the inventory and analysis section and the goals, objectives, and policies section of this chapter. In general, the City can help guide housing in Washburn by regulating existing and proposed housing and by promoting and offering programs that help people acquire and maintain housing. General steps that the City can take to address housing issues include the following actions.

- Guide and zone property to address housing needs;
- Develop and enforce subdivision regulations and housing standards that result in well-maintained, yet affordable housing;
- Promote assistance programs; and
- Promote private/public partnerships to assist first time homebuyers and those with special needs.

A more detailed description of the Housing Plan follows. Refer to Figure 8-1: Housing Plan for a map that illustrates key areas for housing development and redevelopment.

MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING HOUSING

Roughly 45% of the housing in Washburn was built before 1939. Maintenance, energy efficiency, and safety concerns are becoming more prevalent in Washburn as the housing stock continues to age. Consequently, the City will prepare a housing study that evaluates the existing condition of the City's older housing stock. The study will recommend strategies to address priority needs, rehabilitate or remove existing problem housing, fund maintenance efforts, and develop more effective maintenance codes and enforcement.

The City will work with energy providers and energy conservation programs to help housing become more energy efficient. Reduced energy consumption can help make housing more affordable and it can help protect the natural environment. The City will also promote well-planned rehabilitation projects that enhance or restore the historic character of existing housing. Refer to "Caring for Historic Houses and Buildings in Washburn" by the Washburn Historic Preservation Commission (2006) for specific rehabilitation recommendations.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

Infill Opportunities

Housing infill is a cost effective way of providing new housing, since much of the existing infrastructure (streets and utilities) already exist in infill areas. Washburn has a significant amount of land available for infill development. To help encourage infill housing, the City and neighborhood property owners will commit to maintaining and/or improving the quality of the surrounding neighborhoods. The City will make available the publication “Caring for Historic Houses and Buildings in Washburn” by the Washburn Historic Preservation Commission (2006) and the City will develop guidelines or standards for housing that enhances the character of the existing neighborhood.

In addition to vacant residential lots, there are many large residential lots scattered throughout the City that could conceivably be subdivided for future housing development. There are also opportunities to provide living units above existing businesses in the commercial districts. Problems commonly encountered in developing living units above a business (including building code issues, parking and handicapped accessibility) can generally be resolved.

Waterfront Mixed-Use

The Comprehensive Plan guides an area of land near the waterfront for mixed-use. This area provides Washburn with a unique opportunity to provide an attractive area where people can live, work, and play. New buildings in this area could have a residential appearance consistent with the vernacular architecture of Washburn. In general, uses along the street level could include galleries, studios, offices, and boutiques. Upper levels could accommodate residential uses. Refer to Chapter 4: Waterfront and Coastal Resources, for a detailed description of the planned waterfront mixed-use area.

Topside Sustainable Residential Development

The City of Washburn owns approximately 9.5 acres of undeveloped land near the intersection of North 5th Avenue West and Woodland Drive. The City is exploring the possibility of developing a sustainable, affordable housing project on this site. Conceptually, the development would cluster housing to preserve open space, use green building techniques, incorporate alternative energy sources, and provide a mixture of single-family and multi-family units. This project would help fill a housing need in Washburn, but it would also help display sustainable development techniques.

Rural Residential Subdivisions that Minimize Encroachment on Nature

The Comprehensive Plan encourages new housing in areas served by public sewer and water. However, the Plan recognizes that all property owners, even those without access to public sewer and water, have the right to develop their property in a manner consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Furthermore, the Plan recognizes that rural residential development can help broaden housing options in the city. But as an eco-municipality that strives to reduce encroachment on nature, Washburn will promote conservation subdivisions, clustering, and other techniques that will allow new residential development, but encourage the preservation of significant natural areas.

HOUSING MIX

The Housing Plan promotes an appropriate mix of housing types intended to serve the diverse needs of the community. It promotes life-cycle housing that allows a young resident to start out in Washburn

by renting an apartment, then move to a starter house, then to a move-up house, and finally to senior housing or assisted living. The goal is to provide adequate housing at all stages of a person's life.

The Plan also recognizes that Washburn's demographic characteristics are changing. More people are choosing to remain single, people are living longer, and there are more single parent families. Although these demographic changes may occur gradually, the City must be sensitive to the fact that housing needs are beginning to change and that the City will need to provide the appropriate mix of housing to meet those needs. To that end, the City will conduct an analysis of the rental needs of the community.

The Plan encourages sensitive integration of low, moderate, and high-income housing into new development and redevelopment. For example, the Waterfront Mixed-Use Area and the Topside Sustainable Residential Area will incorporate a mixture of housing that meets the City's diverse needs.

HOUSING THAT RESPECTS ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND NATURAL RESOURCES

A strong link exists between housing and economic development. The Housing Plan promotes housing choices that reflect existing and planned economic conditions. For example, it promotes the Waterfront Mixed-Use Area as an area where artists, writers, and others can live, work, and play within a compact, pedestrian-oriented setting. The Plan also promotes sustainable development techniques that include green architecture, reduced street widths, reduced lot size, and clustering. Implementing these sustainable techniques can help reduce development costs and make housing more affordable.

The Plan promotes a sensitive mixture of housing that allows people of all ages and incomes to interact. For example, seniors can help care for youth while a single parent is working and youth can help seniors with housing maintenance. The Plan also promotes the integration of trails, parks, neighborhood greens, limited commercial nodes, and traditional neighborhood design principles that strengthen the social fabric of the neighborhood.

The Plan respects Washburn's natural features. It promotes housing development and redevelopment in areas already served by public sewer and water, thereby preserving existing open space. It allows rural residential development, but it encourages development to respect natural features.

Refer to Figure 8-1: Generalized Housing Plan for a graphical representation of the key concepts of the Housing Plan.

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