

# Summary of Findings

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There are a number of important implications that can be drawn from the two rounds of interviews, the research on other national models, and the discussions with the Snohomish County Tomorrow Steering Committee, Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), and the PAC Housing Sub-Committee. These “findings” are described below.

## What the Study Found

- A. The need for additional affordable housing throughout Snohomish County has been well documented. In 2005, Snohomish County Tomorrow estimated that 55,000 lower-income households lived in unaffordable housing in 2000, and that this number would increase to 83,000 by 2025. By 2007, however, the figure had already reached 80,000 households.
- B. The adopted Countywide Planning Policies call upon Snohomish County local governments to strengthen their collaborations to ensure adequate supplies of affordable housing for all economic segments of the population. SCT’s recent Housing Evaluation Report noted that few cases of this kind of collaboration have occurred in Snohomish County.
- C. There appears to be a wide range of knowledge and understanding about affordable housing needs, issues, and terminology among government officials and community leaders. A number of those interviewed suggested that increasing the depth of knowledge about affordable housing among elected and appointed officials, and the public would be very useful.
- D. Several interviewees described a perceived strong correlation between high-crime locations in their community and affordable housing sites, particularly in properties owned and managed privately rather than by non-profit agencies or public housing authorities.
- E. Some representatives of jurisdictions believe there is a geographic imbalance in the supply of affordable housing. They believe that their cities are providing a disproportionate share of affordable housing (both private and public) compared to other jurisdictions.
- F. Some members of the business community understand the need to maintain a balanced mix of housing choices for Snohomish County’s work force. However, affordable housing does not appear to be a high priority concern for the Snohomish County business community at this time.
- G. Some elected and appointed officials in Snohomish County have interest in creating a new inter-jurisdictional program focused on creating and preserving affordable housing. However, that interest is not uniform across all jurisdictions or even within jurisdictions.

- H. All those interviewed for this study believe that local governments play an important role in helping to create affordable housing in their communities. Some see government's role as providing a zoning and regulatory framework that encourages development of affordable housing by private and non-profit developers. Others see local government's role as providing education for their residents about the affordable housing needs in their communities and setting goals for meeting those needs.
- I. Among those interviewed, support exists for certain "Essential Program Outcomes" described in the previous chapter. However, there appears to be a broader level of support for the creation of new home-ownership opportunities for households earning up to 100 percent of the county's median income, than there is for the creation of rental housing targeting those earning 50 percent of the county's median income or less.
- J. Among those interviewed, support exists for the draft "Program Design Features", described in the preceding chapter. These elements provide useful parameters for a program recommendation.
- K. Those supportive of creating an inter-jurisdictional affordable housing program cited several potential functions they believe would be valuable. They suggest that a new program could:
  - 1) Provide a vehicle for cities and the County to focus attention on affordable housing issues;
  - 2) Enable participating jurisdictions to share information about successful policies and programs that help create affordable housing;
  - 3) Provide the staff expertise in affordable housing planning, design and implementation that most small and mid-sized jurisdictions do not have;
  - 4) Educate local elected officials, government staff, and the public about affordable housing issues; and
  - 5) Help to identify and secure additional federal, state, local and private resources for affordable housing development.
- L. Only a handful of successful inter-jurisdictional affordable housing programs exist in the U.S. Some focus on creating new local capital resources for housing development, while others focus on a combination of regulations, incentives, and other planning activities to promote, encourage, or require affordable housing development. A few engage in both planning activities and the creation of new capital resources.
- M. Given current economic conditions, this is not seen by most interviewees as a time when a new local capital funding source can be shifted or created to support development of affordable housing. Instead, those who support the creation of an inter-jurisdictional program believe that a new collaborative program should be focused on a variety of technical assistance, educational, and planning activities. A new program may be eligible for new or existing state and federal funding sources, but considerable

competition for these dollars suggests that there is no easy answer regarding the potential source of funds for new staff, capital improvements, or other expenditures.

- N. Research into other models around the country suggests that the creation of a new program requires at least one champion to play a leadership role. That leadership could take the form of promoting the new program and recruiting others to participate, or providing funding or in-kind services. To date, no jurisdiction or individual has expressed an interest in stepping forward to champion a new initiative.
- O. If an inter-jurisdictional structure is created, both the research on other national models and the reactions from those interviewed suggest that for-profit and non-profit housing developers should be involved in the new program in some fashion.
- P. Other national models have created dedicated staff capacity to support a meaningful multi-jurisdictional collaboration focused on affordable housing. This has required funding resources to support the appropriate level of staffing and some administrative services, if those services are not provided in-kind by an existing organization.
- Q. Research on other national affordable housing models suggests that new governance structures have been developed to focus on the implementation and management of the program, but existing organizations have been utilized to provide administrative support.