

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**SECTION B, ELEMENT 5**

**DRAFT  
HOUSING ELEMENT**

~~December 17, 2019~~  
**January 6, 2021**

# Housing Element

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1 **5.1 INTRODUCTION**  
2

3 The County’s Comprehensive Plan (*Plan*) Vision 2036 states:  
4

5 *“Adequate, safe, affordable, and stable housing helps our community thrive.*  
6

7 *There are diverse housing types and we use innovative strategies to meet*  
8 *the various housing needs of our community.”*  
9

10 This Vision identifies housing as a foundational human need, necessary to create the vibrant and diverse  
11 community we envision. In addressing the challenge of housing the County’s people, it is essential to do  
12 so in a manner that protects the natural environment, suits the character of the islands, respects private  
13 property rights, and addresses unique island obstacles. The islands face specific challenges, such as a  
14 shortage of consistent skilled labor, high material costs, and the imperative of preserving rural character.  
15

16 Meeting current and future housing needs is an issue with substantial social, economic, and  
17 environmental implications. Extensive housing development in rural areas could be detrimental to natural  
18 resources and the environment, and could alter the San Juan Islands’ sense of place. Sprawling, low-  
19 density development would jeopardize San Juan County’s rural character. The choices we make today  
20 have the potential to have a lasting long-term impact on the community.  
21

22 Two overarching challenges San Juan County faces are availability and affordability of housing. By 2036  
23 there are projected to be 9,521 households and 18,059 housing units in the county. While there appear  
24 to be more than enough units to house everyone who lives here, there are not enough units actually  
25 available for purchase by low and moderate income people or rentals for long-term or seasonal workers.  
26 Available units are often not affordable to those who rely on wage incomes in San Juan County. The  
27 County, its Housing Advisory Committee and housing non-profits can increase opportunities for affordable  
28 housing and set the stage for affordable housing efforts by non-profits and private developers to be  
29 successful.  
30

31 The Housing Element is meant to guide plans for the existing and projected housing needs of all the  
32 County’s people. It identifies the expected resident population, provides an inventory and analysis of  
33 existing housing, and identifies housing needs based on both current conditions and projected growth.  
34 The goals and policies are actionable and reflect the County’s and community’s priorities. Appendix A.5,  
35 the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA), provides more detailed information on population and housing  
36 characteristics and projections.  
37

38 **5.2 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS**  
39

40 The Housing Element is both a stand-alone document meant to guide the implementation of housing-  
41 related actions in the County, and a supporting piece of the *Plan* as a whole. It is closely tied to other  
42 planning elements such as land use, economic development, and capital facilities. The data and findings  
43 that support the Housing Element, including the Housing Needs Assessment (Appendix 5), the Land  
44 Capacity Analysis (Appendix 1), and Population Projection (Appendix 1), also inform other elements of the  
45 *Plan*.  
46

1 The Housing Element not only supports the housing Vision, but also the other parts of the Vision. For  
2 example, the housing policies in this Element support the Land Use Element’s vision of conserving rural,  
3 agricultural and resource lands, protecting critical areas, and maintaining rural character. It relies on the  
4 Economic Development Element’s vision of stable jobs that “provide wages that allow islanders to live,  
5 work and thrive locally,” and is an important contributing factor to a diverse and resilient economy. The  
6 Housing Element is a key part of the Basic Human Needs vision of the islands being a place where all  
7 people are safe, day and night. The Elements of this *Plan* are closely intertwined and both support and  
8 rely on each other’s ability to accomplish their Vision statements.

9  
10

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### 5.3 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

In planning for present and future housing needs, it is essential to identify the population for whom the County is planning. The County bases its housing policies on housing needs, which depend greatly on projected population growth and demographic factors such as age and socioeconomic status. Population projections are in Appendix A.1.

#### Projected 2036 Population

As noted in Table 1 below, San Juan County’s population in 2016 was 16,314 people. By the year 2036 it is projected to increase about 19 percent to reach 19,423 people. Past population projections overestimated the County’s growth, anticipating a population of 19,150 people by 2015. Population growth is largely due to in-migration, rather than natural increase. The majority of the County’s population lives on San Juan, Orcas and Lopez islands, while the remainder live on Shaw Island and non-ferry served islands. The largest population center is Friday Harbor, San Juan Island, the County’s one incorporated town, with a population of 2,250 people. Friday Harbor is projected to increase by 902 people by 2036 to a population of 3,152. There are also population hubs in the Lopez Village and Eastsound Urban Growth Areas, and the villages, hamlets and subareas on the islands. The projected increase in population will require strategic action to accommodate growth.

**Table 1. San Juan County Population Growth by Island and Housing Units 2036.**

Island	2016 Population	% of Total County Population (2016)	2036 Population By Island	% Population By Island (2036)	Pop Growth by Island	Total # New Housing Units**	New Housing Units in UGA
San Juan Island (unincorp.)*	5,560	34.1%	6,146	31.6%	586	287	-
Friday Harbor*	2,250	13.8%	3,152	16.2%	902	442	442
San Juan Island Subtotal	7,810	47.9%	9,298	47.9%	1,488	729	442
Orcas	5,395	33.1%	6,423	33.1%	1,028	504	252
Lopez	2,466	15.1%	2,936	15.1%	470	230	115
Shaw	241	1.5%	287	1.5%	46	23	0
Total Ferry Served	15,912	97.5%	18,944	97.5%	3,032	1,486	809
Total Non-Ferry Served	402	2.5%	479	2.5%	77	38	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,314</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>19,423***</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3,109</b>	<b>1,524</b>	<b>809</b>

Source: U.S. Census, OFM annual estimate.

\*1.7 percent annual population growth rate attributed to the Town of Friday Harbor from personal correspondence with the Town of Friday Harbor’s Land Use Administrator, Mike Bertrand, on March 9, 2017.

\*\* Population growth ÷ average household size (2.04)

\*\*\*19,423 ÷ 2.04 = 9,525 total households County-wide projected for year 2036

#### Seasonal Population

San Juan County’s population size varies throughout the year. There are a significant number of seasonal residents and visitors in addition to year-round residents. The *2018 San Juan Island Visitors Study (Study)*, based on ferry ridership patterns during the year, found that the daily population balloons during the peak

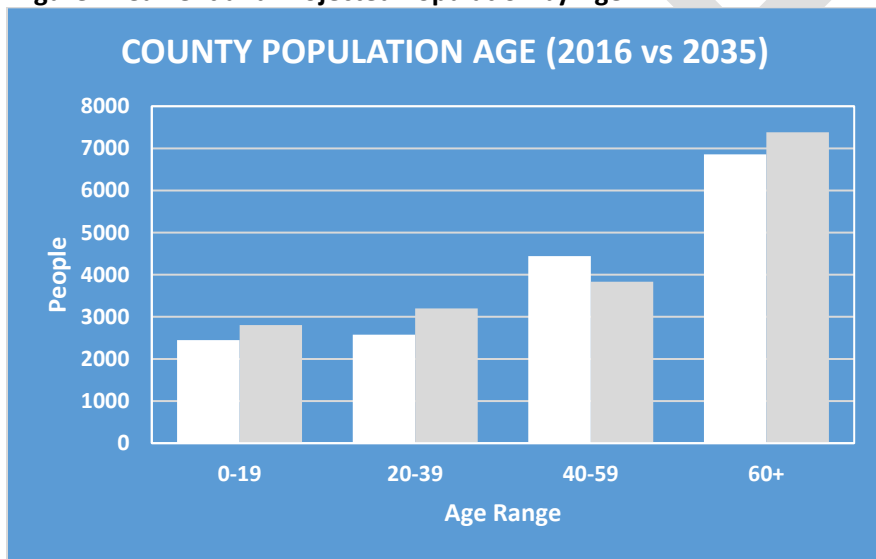
1 season of June through September. During the 2017 peak season, there was an estimated daily average  
 2 of 24,810 people in the County, while the population during the off-season was estimated at 16,314  
 3 people. The Study projects the peak season population to be between 27,810 and 29,810 people by 2036.  
 4 This *Plan* considers not only the growth of the Islands' year-round resident population, but also the growth  
 5 of the seasonal and visitor population.

6  
 7 **Age**  
 8

9 Understanding the population's age distribution can help the County  
 10 anticipate future housing needs. Figure 1 shows the estimated  
 11 distribution of median age between 2016 and 2035. The median age  
 12 of the County's population increased from 47 years old in 2000 to 54  
 13 in 2015. This means that half of the population in the County is 54 years or older. By comparison, the  
 14 State median age is 37. An increase in median age indicates an aging population. The skewed older age  
 15 of the population in San Juan County affects the types of housing needed, as well as the population's  
 16 income sources. San Juan County's population has a high proportion of people over 60 years of age. The  
 17 median age is increasing over time, indicating that the overall population is aging.

**State median age: 37 years**  
**SJC median age: 54 years**

18  
 19 **Figure 1. Current and Projected Population by Age.**



**White: 2016 population**  
**Grey: 2035 population**

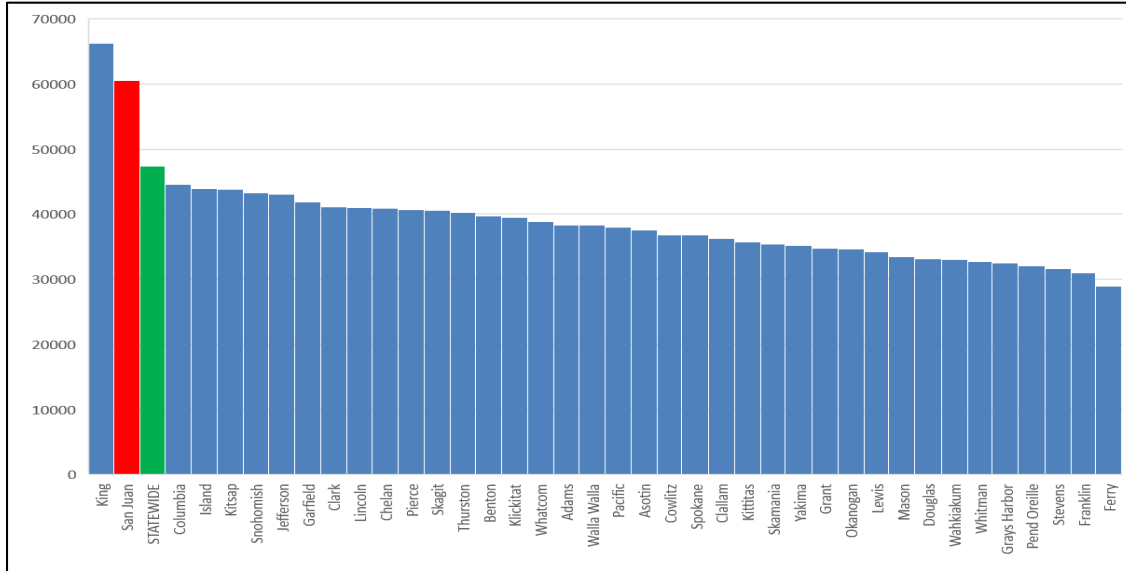
20  
 21 Source: WA OFM GMA 2012 Intermediate Projections  
 22

23 **Income**  
 24

25 Income affects the affordability of housing. Many households acquire their income from sources outside  
 26 the County, driving up home values and outpricing those who rely on wages earned on the islands. In  
 27 2015, San Juan County had the second highest per capita income in the State of Washington, at \$60,489  
 28 in 2015, compared to the State average of \$47,381 (Figure 2). However, the average annual wage income  
 29 in the County was well below the State average, at \$33,890 (Figure 3). Reflecting an elderly and likely high  
 30 percentage of retired residents, the majority of income in the County is from property income, as opposed  
 31 to income earned through wages. Transfer payments are also an important source of personal income  
 32 for County residents.  
 33

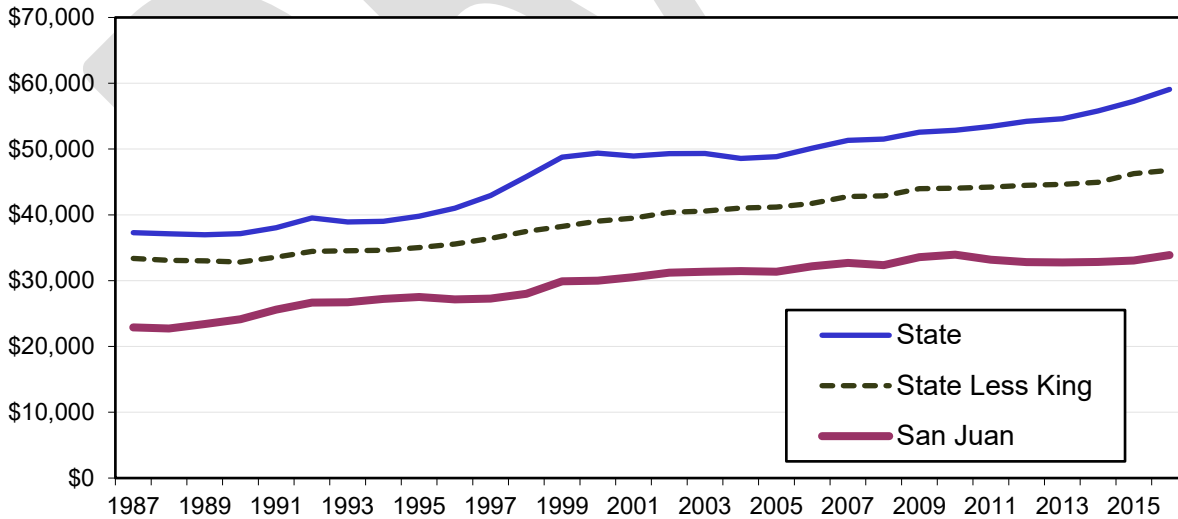
1 With a low average annual wage income, many people in San Juan County live at and around the Federal  
 2 Poverty Level (FPL), despite the County's high per capita income. In 2016, 11 percent of households in  
 3 the County were living below the FPL, and an additional 22 percent were just above the FPL but could not  
 4 afford a basic household budget. Meeting basic needs such as housing, food, childcare, transportation  
 5 and healthcare, is highly challenging for about one third of the County.  
 6

7 **Figure 2. Washington State Real<sup>1</sup> Per Capita Personal Income by County, 2015.**



8  
 9 Source: Calculations by the Washington Regional Economic Analysis Project (WA-REAP) with data provided by the U.S. Department of  
 10 Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis  
 11

12 **Figure 3. Average Annual Wage, Adjusted for Inflation, 1987 - 2015.**



13  
 14 Source: Washington State Dept. of Employment Security San Juan County Data Tables  
 15

16 Average Annual Wage in San Juan County has consistently been well below the state average.

<sup>1</sup> Real per capita personal income determined using the Chain-Weight Implicit Price Deflator for Personal Consumption (2009=1.00).

## 5.4 HOUSING PROJECTIONS AND INVENTORY

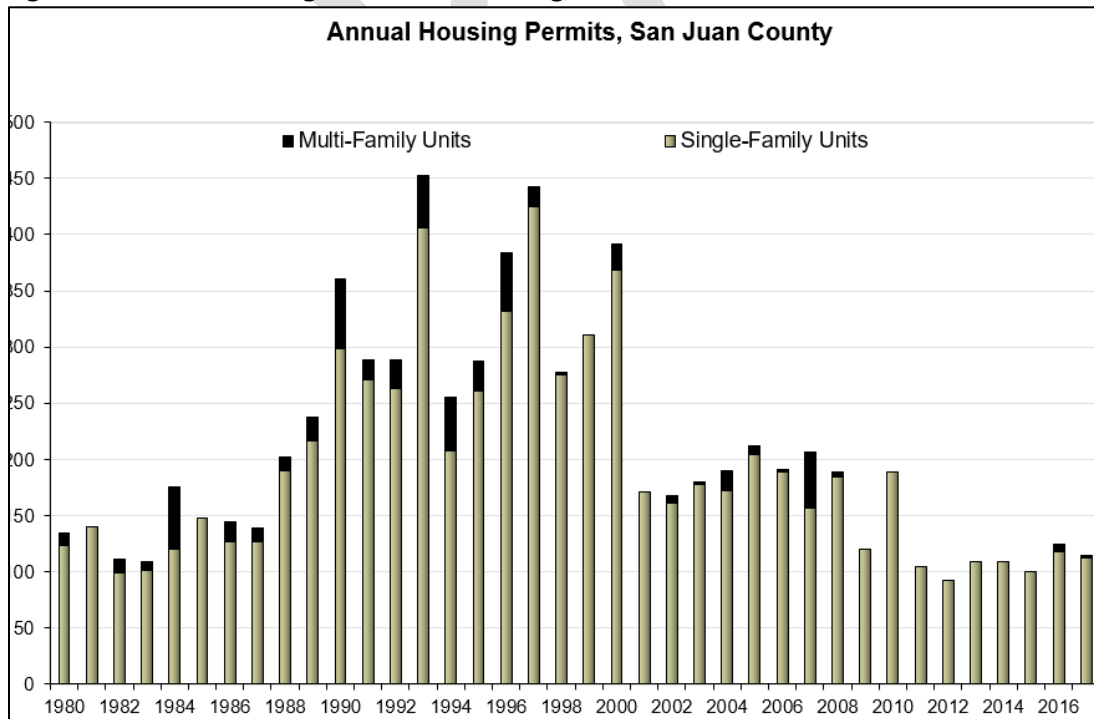
### 2036 Housing Projections

By assessing the housing inventory in the San Juan Islands for factors such as housing stock, cost, occupancy status, and housing condition, the County can identify more specifically where there is need. This provides a starting point when working to meet the Vision and fulfill future needs. Housing stock refers to the number of housing units in the County. In 2016, there were 13,859 housing units—an increase of 3,867 units from 2000. Based on the 2036 population projection there will need to be an additional 1,524 units by 2036 in order to adequately accommodate an expected total of 9,521 households (Table 1). Here, “households” refers to all the people who occupy a housing unit as their primary residence. By 2036 there are expected to be 4,180 new housing units for a total of 18,059 units, based on past building permit data. Many of these units will likely be considered vacant, the majority of which will be used for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. The HNA provides housing projections at the island level.

### Housing Type

The HNA indicates that San Juan County has a lack of diversity of housing types with sparse numbers of multi-family units, which are often more affordable than stand-alone single family residences. This limits rental availability and is linked to housing affordability for those unable to afford to purchase a home. Figure 4, below, shows that few permits for multi-family housing units have been issued, particularly since 2009. No multi-family building permits were issued between 2009 and 2015. In 2016, 83 percent of housing units in the County were single-unit and stand-alone, 6.7 percent of housing consisted of two or more units, and 10.3 percent were mobile homes or special units.

**Figure 4. Annual Building Permits for Housing, 1980 - 2017.**



Source: WA Employment Security Department



1 **Housing Condition**  
2

3 Overall, the housing units in the County are newer and in good condition. Many of the County’s housing  
4 units (45 percent) were built after 1990. Only 19 percent of units were built before 1970. Census level  
5 data on the condition of living quarters is limited, but according to the American Community Survey, the  
6 number of occupied housing units lacking complete plumbing facilities increased in the County from 1.7  
7 percent in 2010 to 3.2 percent in 2015. The rest of the State remained flat at 0.5 percent over this period.  
8 Additionally, occupied housing units lacking complete kitchen facilities doubled from 0.9 percent in 2010  
9 to 2 percent in 2015 while the rest of the State has remained static.  
10

11 According to the local family resource centers, there has been an increase in the number of families living  
12 in substandard housing with poor conditions such as trailers or recreational vehicles. They find it is  
13 common for people to live some or all of the year in tents. Also, the largest percentage of respondents  
14 to the County’s 2017 Point in Time Homeless Count were those living in substandard structures.

15 **Occupancy Status**  
16

17 Table 2, below, regarding occupancy status provides insight on how many vacant and owner or renter  
18 occupied units there were between 2000 and 2010 and in 2015. In 2015 the County had 40 percent owner  
19 occupied housing, 16 percent renter occupied, and 43 percent vacant. Vacant housing includes units used  
20 for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. The San Juan Islands’ status as a vacation destination affects  
21 the occupancy demographics of housing units in the County, as many of the vacant homes have out-of-  
22 county owners and are used only seasonally and/or as vacation rentals. According to the 2015 American  
23 Community Survey, homes for seasonal, recreational or occasional use make up 81 percent of vacant  
24 homes in the County. San Juan County’s housing challenge is not necessarily due to a sheer lack of housing  
25 units, but rather, a lack of units available for year-round residents to purchase or rent affordably.  
26  
27

**Table 2. San Juan County Housing by Occupancy.**

	2000 Census	2010 Census	Change from 2000 - 2010	2015 ACS
<b>Total housing units</b>	9,752	13,313	<b>+3561</b>	13,619
Owner occupied	4,754	5,360	<b>+606</b>	5,507
Renter occupied	1,712	2,253	<b>+541</b>	2,201
Vacant housing units	3,286	5,700	<b>+2414</b>	5,911
<b>Percentage of Total</b>				
Owner occupied	48.75%	40.26%	<b>-8.49%</b>	40.44%
Renter occupied	17.56%	16.92%	<b>-0.63%</b>	16.16%
Vacant housing units	33.70%	42.82%	<b>+9.12%</b>	43.40%
<b>Vacant Housing Unit by Type</b>				
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	2,776	4,748	<b>+1972</b>	4,808
For sale only	82	187	<b>+105</b>	222
For rent	129	311	<b>+182</b>	214
Rented or sold, not occupied	63	57	<b>-6</b>	111
For migrant workers	0	5	<b>+5</b>	0
Other vacant	236	392	<b>+156</b>	556

28 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

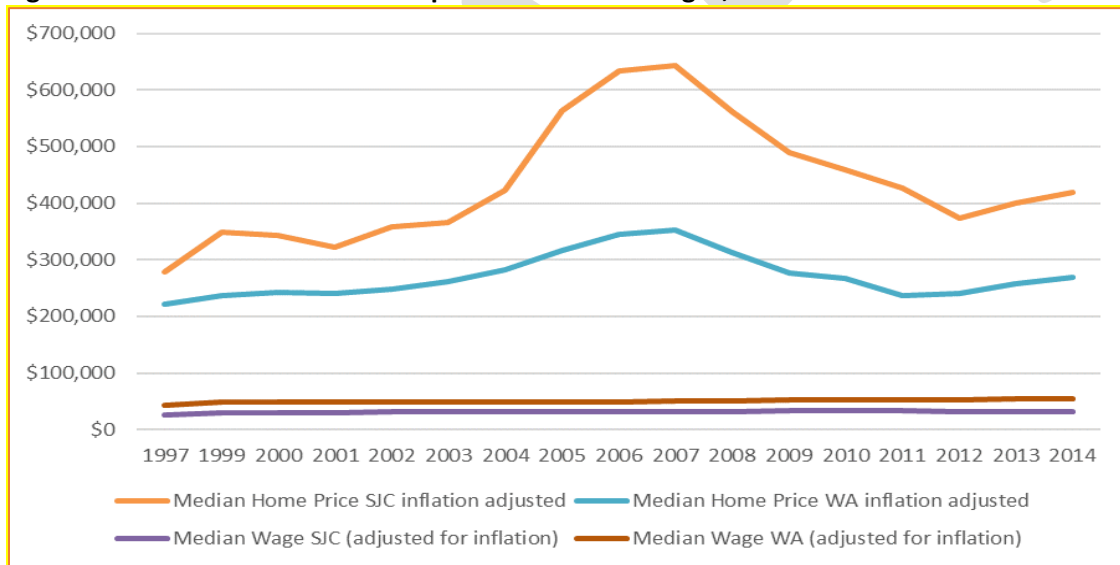
1 **Housing cost**

2  
3 Home prices in San Juan County have risen every year since 2012 and appear to be uncorrelated to median  
4 wages. This implies that economic forces outside of the local County economy drive housing demand in  
5 the County.  
6

7 The median home resale value in San Juan County is high compared to the rest of Washington State. Here,  
8 the median home value is \$465,500, nearly 30 percent higher than the state median. Only 22 percent of  
9 owner-occupied houses in San Juan County are valued between \$100,000 and \$300,000, compared to 50  
10 percent in the rest of Washington State. High home values makes entering and participating in the  
11 housing market particularly difficult for first time homebuyers, who may not have sufficient capital to  
12 make a large down payment even if they can afford monthly mortgage costs. High home values, low supply  
13 and high demand make the cost of rentals high as well.  
14

15 In San Juan County, people make less in wages and pay far more for housing in comparison the rest of the  
16 State. In San Juan County, high home prices and low average earned income makes purchasing a home  
17 difficult and unavailable to a significant portion of the population. Figure 5, below, compares median  
18 home price and median wage in San Juan County in contrast to the Washington State medians.  
19

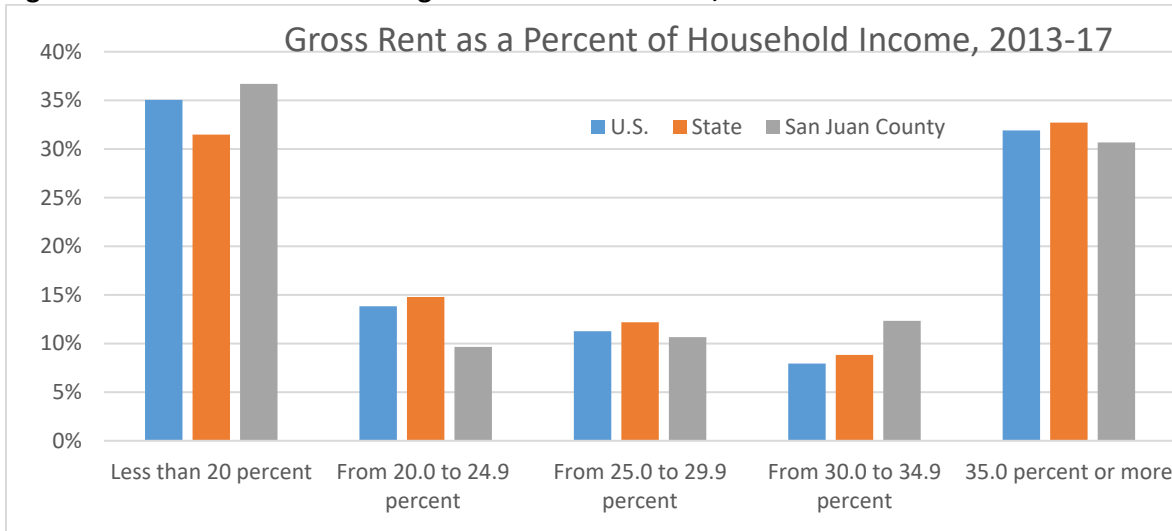
20 **Figure 5. Median Home Prices Compared to Median Wages, 1997 - 2014.**



21 Source: Runstad Center for Real Estate Research; Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator  
22 <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/docs/regional-reports/san-juan-county-data-tables.xlsx>;  
23

24 High rent compared to income puts pressure on many households. Figure 6, below, shows what percent  
25 of household income is spent, compared to the U.S. and the State. In San Juan County, 43 percent of  
26 renters spend over 30 percent of their income on rent. For households making \$50,000 per year or less,  
27 the estimated affordable rent is \$1,035 per month, not including utilities. Section 5.4.5 of the HNA states  
28 that there are 2.7 times as many households making \$50,000 or less than there are rentals with gross rent  
29 below \$1,000 per month. There are not enough affordable rental housing units to fulfil the need.  
30  
31  
32  
33

1 **Figure 6. Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income, 2013 - 2017.**



2 Source: WA State Employment Security Department

### 3 **Vacation Rentals**

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5  
6  
7 Many island residents are concerned about the potential effects of vacation rentals (VR) and expansion  
8 of tourism on the community and the environment. The rise of online vacation rental services has created  
9 new pressures on vacation destination community housing supplies, often in unexpected ways. Figure 5-  
10 16 in the HNA shows that the number of vacation rental permits in the County has steadily increased since  
11 2000, long before the increased popularity of online booking websites. Online advertising has also  
12 increased the County's ability to enforce against unpermitted vacation rentals.

13 The average rate of growth for vacation rental permits was approximately 51 per year over the last 20  
14 years. However, since 2015, the number of new permits issued annually has increased. In the years 2015  
15 to 2019, the average number of new permits issued was 66 per year. Possible trends in VR permits, such  
16 as changes in the number of permits and in the percentage of units in the County with permits, are also  
17 addressed in the HNA. However, community concern over the potential impacts of vacation rentals may  
18 result in modifications of those trends in the future.

19  
20 The County began a certification of compliance program for vacation rentals in 2018, sending out 1,040  
21 notices to vacation rental permit holders in the first year. Of those, compliance certificates were received  
22 for 537 permits. Of those, only 372 permit holders indicated that they were actively utilizing their  
23 property as a vacation rental. In 2018 - 2019 the County received \$98,100 in code enforcement penalties  
24 from code enforcement actions on unpermitted rentals. Code enforcement is continuing for uncertified  
25 permit holders and those that operate without permits.

26  
27 In 2019-2020, the second year of the certification of compliance program, the County sent out 1,118  
28 notices to vacation rental permit holders and received certificates of compliance for 632 permits. Of those,  
29 430 permit holders indicated that their vacation rentals were active. There were 202 inactive vacation  
30 rentals, 331 non-compliant vacation rental permits. The County also found that 155 permits in its system  
31 should no longer be counted because they are either bed and breakfasts, farm stays, or they had been  
32 abandoned. The vacation rental compliance program is guiding compliance efforts, and helping the

1 County collect more accurate data about the number of vacation rental permits and active vacation rental  
2 properties.

3  
4 Community conversations identified many concerns with vacation rentals. Primary concerns include the  
5 saturation levels in certain neighborhoods and subdivisions, development of multiple vacation rentals on  
6 one parcel similar to a hotel, nuisances, potential trespassing, and the potential for vacation rentals to  
7 impact the availability of long-term rentals.

8  
9 **5.5 LAND CAPACITY ANALYSIS**

10 The Land Capacity Analysis (LCA) in *Plan* Appendix 1 is a planning tool that explores the islands’ maximum  
11 possible development capacity based on current land use regulations. Development can be contrary to  
12 the San Juan County Vision and the islands’ rural character; therefore, housing development should be  
13 focused on areas already designated for higher density. The LCA, in conjunction with population  
14 projections and the Housing Needs Assessment, can be used to locate opportunities for meeting San Juan  
15 County’s growing housing needs. The LCA helps show where higher density development is possible and  
16 what options are for housing different types. This element of the *Plan* seeks to ease tension between the  
17 desire to preserve rural character and to address the County’s growing housing needs.

18  
19 *Land Capacity information to come. Table with potential residential land capacity from LCA in San Juan*  
20 *County will be added.*

21 **5.6 KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

22 As a social, economic, health and environmental issue, housing brings forth complex, multifaceted  
23 challenges. The County has identified two overarching challenges for fulfilling housing needs: availability  
24 and affordability. There is a lack of housing units available to residents, affordable to those living on wage  
25 earned income. The Lopez Family Resource Center summed up the benefits of having stable housing.  
26 Stable housing is necessary for prosperous, healthy communities, thriving children, and economic  
27 development. It also sustains a year-round community.

28  
29 **Housing availability**

30  
31 Availability refers to the housing unit stock people have the opportunity to choose from when they are  
32 seeking a place to live. There were 7,997 households in San Juan County in 2016, which is expected to  
33 increase to 9,521 households by 2036. In San Juan County the average household size was 2.04 people in  
34 2016. In 2016, there were 13,859 housing units in the County. Of these units, 57 percent were either  
35 owner or renter occupied and 43 percent were vacant. Eighty-one percent of all vacant homes were either  
36 used for occasional, seasonal, or recreational purposes, and were only occupied part of the year by their  
37 owners or as vacation rentals.

38  
39

1 **Affordability**

2  
3 Housing that is affordable allows people to pay for their housing while also meeting their other needs and  
4 maintaining a high quality of life. Affordability depends on income and housing cost: what is affordable  
5 to someone with a high income may not be affordable for someone with a low income. Generally, when  
6 a household spends 30 percent or less of its monthly income on  
7 housing, that housing is considered affordable.

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“Affordable” means a household is spending 30 percent or less of monthly income on housing.

“Cost burdened” refers to spending over 30 percent of monthly income on housing.

By the Housing Affordability Index (Table 5-12 in the Housing Needs Assessment, Appendix 5), San Juan County is considered the least affordable county in the State of Washington. The median home value in San Juan County was \$453,000 in 2017. This is 30 percent higher than that of the State of Washington. Yet, median wage income in San Juan County is 43 percent lower than that of the State. With higher than average housing costs paired with below average wages, it is unsurprising that many San Juan County households spend over 30 percent of their monthly income on housing related costs. In 2015, 39 percent of households in the County were considered “cost-burdened” because they spent more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing. There is a lack of affordable housing within nearly every income bracket; however, households with lower incomes are cost burdened at the highest rate.

**Past, Present, and Future Efforts**

Affordable housing non-profits, including community land trusts, have continued to chip away at the challenge of affordability by creating reliable housing opportunities for Islanders with lower incomes. Alone, the scale at which these non-profits presently operate will not be adequate to fulfil all housing needs by 2036. Other County and Federal assistance will be crucial.

In 2018, voters approved the San Juan County Home Fund, which will generate funds over time to develop, produce and/or preserve affordable housing. The Home Fund is generated by a Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) on the purchase and sale of real property in the County at the rate of one-half of one percent of the selling price. This REET is projected to generate \$15.2 million for affordable housing over a 12-year period.

The March 21, 2017, San Juan County Affordable Housing Workgroup Strategic Action Plan (Strategic Plan) lays out three actionable strategies for addressing the County’s affordable housing challenges:

- 1) Educate the public on the availability and affordability of housing.
- 2) Increase the affordability and availability of housing stock.
- 3) Maintain existing housing stock that is affordable.

It identifies specific housing needs with regard to long-term rentals of various price ranges, as well as worker housing, lower price range homeownership and housing with supportive services. There are several actions for each strategy. The HAC assigns a responsible organization and tracks the status of the actions in the Strategic Plan to maintain accountability.

1 **Takeaways Informing Housing Goals and Policies**

2  
3 Considering this assessment of population and housing, the housing goals and policies will put an  
4 emphasis on supporting the development of:

- 5  
6     ▪ Permanently affordable units for residents
- 7     ▪ Year-round rentals for residents as opposed to seasonal rentals;
- 8     ▪ Support for first time-home buyers;
- 9     ▪ Multi-family development in Urban Growth Areas and Activity Centers designated for higher  
10 density;
- 11     ▪ A diversity of housing opportunities;
- 12     ▪ Fewer instances of substandard housing; and
- 13     ▪ Affordable housing projects by non-profits.

1 **5.7 HOUSING GOALS AND POLICIES [DRAFT]**

2 Housing goals and policies guide San Juan County’s actions pertaining to housing. Goals are items the  
3 County hopes to accomplish, and policies are the practices or actions the County intends to carry out as a  
4 way of meeting goals. These goals and policies are informed by many sources, including existing policies,  
5 community feedback, and the data and analysis in the Housing Needs Assessment (Appendix 5).

6 **5.7.A GENERAL HOUSING INVENTORY, TYPES, CATEGORIES, AND CONDITION**

7 **Goal 1. Meet the projected 2036 housing demand for year-round and seasonal residents.**

8 Policies:

- 9 1. Take the following actions in Urban Growth Areas and Activity Centers:
  - 10
  - 11 ▪ Incentivize the construction of multi-family and mixed-use developments;
  - 12
  - 13 ▪ Reduce the cost of public services by increasing incentives for denser development; and
  - 14
  - 15 ▪ Work with the appropriate advisory committees to understand market factors that limit
  - 16 more dense development in these areas.
  - 17
- 18 2. Support the development of housing stock that meets the needs of those in the low, moderate,
- 19 middle and upper-middle income brackets.
- 20
- 21 3. Increase the availability of rentals for workers. Support development of specific standards for
- 22 locating seasonal and year-round worker housing such as dorms, bunkhouses, hostels, group
- 23 homes, home shares, farmworker housing and other communal living arrangements
- 24
- 25 4. Allow farm stays and farmworker housing accommodations on properties where commercial
- 26 agriculture is conducted.
- 27

28 **Goal 2. Address the housing needs of special populations such as veterans, the elderly, differently**  
29 **abled, mentally ill, victims of domestic violence, and those at-risk of or currently facing homelessness.**

30 Policies:

- 31 1. Assure that there are appropriate regulations and land use designations to allow housing to meet
- 32 the needs of the elderly population, such as group homes, assisted living residences and skilled
- 33 nursing facilities.
- 34
- 35 2. Support organizations that host cold weather shelters on San Juan and Orcas islands and promote
- 36 the development of a shelter on Lopez Island.
- 37
- 38 3. Implement the County’s five-year Homeless Plan and support services in order to reduce
- 39 homelessness and increase opportunities for wellbeing in San Juan County.
- 40
- 41 4. Support organizations that provide services for those who are homeless, including laundry
- 42 facilities and safe storage for belongings.
- 43

- 1 5. Reduce obstacles for the development of new housing opportunities for vulnerable populations  
2 such as safe homes for domestic violence victims, transitional housing for the recently homeless,  
3 and the host home program for at-risk youth and youth experiencing emergencies.  
4
- 5 6. Continue to implement housing assistance for eligible veterans through the Veterans Assistance  
6 Fund.  
7

8 **Goal 3. Improve housing condition and reduce the number of substandard housing units.**

9 Policies:

- 10 1. Utilize all available resources to complete weatherization upgrades and provide energy  
11 assistance.  
12
- 13 2. Promote health related improvements to older homes, such as accessibility improvements and  
14 the abatement of lead-based paint, asbestos, and other potentially harmful materials.  
15
- 16 3. Review and revise permit process for home remodels to ensure compliance with State lead  
17 regulations and reduce the risk of exposure.  
18
- 19 4. Support grant acquisitions for the development of home improvement programs to raise the  
20 quality and safety of currently substandard housing.  
21
- 22 5. Support non-profit programs that identify and reduce the number of substandard units.  
23
- 24 6. Support weatherization and home maintenance programs.  
25

26 **Goal 4. Reduce the costs of maintaining existing homes and constructing new housing units.**

27 Policies:

- 28 1. Boost the development of construction trades on the Islands by supporting the Economic  
29 Development Council to provide training and certification courses at Skagit Valley College.  
30
- 31 2. Expedite permitting of approved stock construction plans to reduce building permit costs.  
32
- 33 3. Continue the owner-builder permit program to enable County residents to construct their own  
34 homes.  
35
- 36 4. Reduce barriers to the construction of affordable housing by identifying alternative funding  
37 sources for development costs.  
38
- 39 5. Develop standards for tiny home building site plans where water and sewer services exist and  
40 adopt the Washington State Building Code for tiny homes.  
41
- 42 6. Expand tool lending libraries on the most populated islands to increase people's access to the  
43 tools they need to maintain their homes.  
44



7. Provide information on prefabricated building materials and encourage their use as a way for owner-builders to reduce construction costs.

**Goal 5. Promote climate resiliency by minimizing the environmental impacts, such as greenhouse gas emissions, of the existing and future housing stock in San Juan County.**

Policies:

1. Consider climate change risks in siting Urban Growth Area expansions and new affordable housing locations, and avoid sites projected to have increased risk of flooding, landslides, severe erosion, or water shortages.
2. Identify and support partners that work to increase the environmental sustainability of housing on the Islands by means such as reducing energy use, protecting critical areas, and mitigating climate change impacts.
3. Provide information about and support the use of green and alternative building materials.
4. Incentivize investments in energy conservation, efficiency, and renewable energy generation for new and existing housing units.
5. Support working farms and farmland succession.

**5.7.B AFFORDABILITY**

**Goal 6. Increase the number of resale-restricted affordable housing units.**

Policies:

1. Support applications to the WA State Housing Finance Commission Land Acquisition Program (LAP) for assistance in purchasing land for affordable housing development.
2. Facilitate the preservation of existing affordable housing units.
3. Promote the design, construction, and maintenance of quality affordable rental units to serve long-term residents of various family sizes and income levels.
4. When allocating county funding-for affordable housing, prioritize projects that are permanently affordable with resale-restrictions lasting at least 50 years.
5. For land use designations that include residential density bonuses, require the additional housing developed as a result of the density bonus to have resale-restrictions lasting at least 50 years.
6. When allowed, offset building permit fees for affordable housing with affordable housing funds.
7. Support USDA Rural Development Farm Labor Housing Direct Loans & Grants programs that provide construction, improvement, repair and purchase of housing for farm laborers.

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**Goal 7. Adopt regulations in the San Juan County Unified Development Code and Comprehensive *Plan* elements that facilitate access to affordable housing by increasing the number of available affordable units and widening the range of people who qualify for affordable housing.**

Policies:

- 1. Expand the existing density bonus program to provide further incentives for creating affordable housing in Urban Growth Areas and Activity Centers.
- 2. Allow bonuses for multi-family affordable housing development.
- 3. Allow nonprofits and private developers to develop small-scale rural residential clusters with long-term affordability restrictions and no more than twelve dwelling units each, within rural residential, rural farm forest, and Village, Hamlet and Residential Activity Centers.
- 4. Expand allowances for detached accessory dwelling units restricted for affordable housing or long-term rental. *Pending GMA risk analysis*

**Goal 8. Partner with organizations that support housing affordability, and leverage the County’s access to resources to utilize and provide programs that increase access to housing for middle to low-income households.**

Policies:

- 1. Collaborate with non-profits to provide housing support services such as rental, homeownership and utilities assistance programs for low to moderate income households.
- 2. Utilize state and federal housing resources and grant programs to the maximum extent possible consistent with the goals and policies of this Element for affordable housing development, rental and homeownership down payment assistance, weatherization assistance, and infrastructure development related to affordable housing.
- 3. Leverage local funding sources to attract state, federal and private dollars to support the development of housing affordability programs.
- 4. Provide, as appropriate, for the sale or lease of County-owned land for permanently affordable housing development.
- 5. Expand and implement the 2018 Home-Share Pilot Program completed on San Juan Island and make it feasible in more island communities.
- 6. Facilitate and support the development of down payment assistance programs such as the Equity Loan Program and work with banks to develop programs to roll down payments into mortgages.
- 7. Lobby for funding support for affordable housing programs in rural areas using tax credits.