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# Housing Choices

*Shaping the market to create more options, in more places, for more people.*

# Public Engagement Summary

DECEMBER 2019



an initiative of  
**housing seattle now**

 **Seattle**  
Office of Planning &  
Community Development

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# BACKGROUND

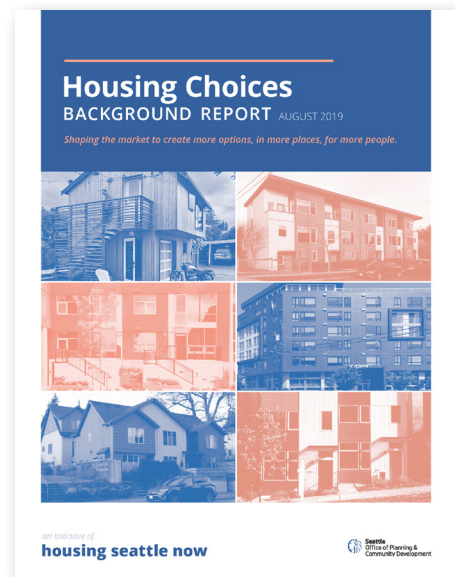
**Housing Choices is an initiative to understand the housing needs of people who live and work in Seattle and identify opportunities to shape market-rate housing development to serve these needs. This initiative is one element of Housing Seattle Now, Mayor Durkan's plan of action for addressing our housing crisis.**

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Seattle's housing challenges increasingly threaten our vision of a welcoming city where people of all backgrounds belong. As our population has grown, our housing market has not kept up with producing sufficient homes suitable for and affordable to the individuals and families who live and work here. This intensifies competition for housing, pushing prices upward. As a result, from 2011 to 2018, average rent for a one-bedroom increased 57 percent, and the average sales price of a detached house 67 percent, even after adjusting for inflation. Rising costs mean more people struggle to find or remain in safe, stable housing that meets their needs. Fewer families can pursue homeownership, a primary means of building wealth. More families must move outside Seattle and endure a long commute. And an increasingly large share of Seattle residents, especially renters and people of color, pay an inordinate percentage of their income towards housing costs, a condition known as cost burden.

To address these issues, the City is working on multiple efforts to increase opportunity and access to jobs, build more subsidized housing, shape the production of market-rate housing, address displacement, and secure new tools and resources. Housing Choices focuses specifically on shaping market-rate housing production to ensure it meets the diverse needs of our community. More information on Housing Choices, including the [background report](#), are available at [seattle.gov/opcd/housing-choices](http://seattle.gov/opcd/housing-choices).

From July through November 2019, the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) hosted an online survey and held small group conversations in order to better understand housing needs. The online survey consisted of 24 questions including demographic information and a combination of ranking, rating, and open-format questions. 2,325 people participated in the survey. OPCD also facilitated 16 small group conversations to allow more nuanced discussion of the same issues. The small group conversations were facilitated discussions lasting one or one and a half hours with groups of 4-12 people. To recruit participants, OPCD partnered with larger employers including the University of Washington, Seattle Colleges, and a consortium of health care providers called the Healthcare Industry Leadership Table. The City also worked with the Department of Neighborhood's Community Liaison program to hold three small group conversations with representatives of several historically underrepresented communities.



We sought to engage a diverse group of people through this engagement. In our online survey, respondents represented a wide range of experiences but tended to be older, wealthier, and more likely to own a home than the population of Seattle as a whole. Participants in our small group conversations, however, were more diverse: More than half were renters, most had household incomes under \$100,000, and only one-third lived in detached homes. Almost 60 percent were people of color, and about 30 percent live outside Seattle, providing valuable perspective we often miss about the needs of folks unable to afford Seattle housing. [Appendix A](#) summarizes responses to demographic questions that we asked survey respondents and participants in the small group conversations.

The online survey and small group conversations both solicited feedback on the following questions:

- » What types of new housing would you like to see?
- » Where should new housing be located?
- » What qualities or amenities should new housing include?
- » What actions should the City take to ensure we achieve this vision?

Though not asked explicitly, survey respondents and participants in the small group conversations both frequently shared perspectives on the following questions:

- » How do housing costs affect you and the region?
- » What are the positive and negative impacts of housing production?

This document summarizes the comments we heard through the survey and small group conversations. We intend to use this input to inform short- and long-term recommendation to improve the private housing market, which we expect to release in early 2020, as well as the next major update of the City's Comprehensive Plan, which will occur from 2020 through 2023.

**"We need more options for families in this city between 1-bedroom apartments and million-dollar single family homes. Whole residential neighborhoods and public parks are out of reach to families that can't spend over a million dollars on a house. Relegalize duplexes and townhouses everywhere!"**

*— survey respondent*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- » Most people felt housing is a **critical and personal issue**. High housing costs cause substantial hardship for people throughout the region.
- » Most people agreed that **we need a lot more housing**, but many are **skeptical and uncertain** about how much new housing will address the problem and who will primarily benefit from it.
- » Most people supported a **broad range of housing options** but were particularly interested in increasing the supply of **small ownership units** with access to some outdoor green space, such as detached homes on small lots, townhouses, duplexes, and triplexes.
- » Many people wanted more housing types throughout Seattle to **help people stay in their neighborhood** as their needs change.
- » People agreed that new housing should be **located primarily near transit and secondarily near parks and open space**. In response to the question “What qualities are most important to you in housing?” 42 percent of all respondents and 62 percent of people under 35 said “being close to transit or bus route” was the most important quality. In the survey, “being close to parks and open space” ranked higher than “having private open space.”
- » Many people thought housing should be located either near existing **shops and services** or where new development could help bring shops and services to a small neighborhood node.
- » The most frequently mentioned qualities people seek in new housing included **outdoor green space, places to hang out with or meet other people, parking, good soundproofing, and places designed for children**.
- » “Having **more small detached homes, townhouses, duplexes, or triplexes** in more places” was the highest-ranked strategy in the survey, with 77 percent of respondents supportive or very supportive.
- » Most people supported **making it easier and faster to build housing**. Many people felt existing permitting processes were confusing or slow.
- » Most people supported incentives for units and buildings built for **families, seniors, and people with disabilities**. Many people also suggested that we encourage ADUs, duplex/triplex with ground-floor units, and condominiums since these housing types tend to serve seniors and people with disabilities.
- » Most people supported **technical or financial support for homeowners** who want to create new housing on their property while continuing to live there. Ideas included low-cost loans, reduced permit fees, standard plans, and access to advisors.
- » **Congregate housing** remains a controversial issue, with strong opinions for and against this type of development.
- » There was significant support for raising the income threshold for **tenant relocation assistance**.
- » Other strategies frequently mentioned include **rent control**; incentives to **preserve existing lower-cost market-rate housing**; support for **land trusts, co-ops, and co-housing**; and more education around **landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities**.

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# DETAILED SUMMARY OF INPUT

The following summary organizes comments by the following topics:

*How do housing costs affect you and the region?*

*What are the positive and negative impacts of housing production?*

*What types of housing would you like to see more of?*

*What qualities or amenities should new housing have?*

*Where should new housing be located?*

*What actions should the City take to ensure we achieve this vision?*

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## How do housing costs affect you and the region?

*Most people felt housing is a critical and personal issue. High housing costs cause substantial hardship for people throughout the region.*

» Many people shared how housing costs **affect them personally**. In particular, they talked about:

- Hard choices between paying for rent and paying for food, medicine, or other necessities
- The insecurity and instability of potential rent increases or evictions
- The cost and difficulty of having a long commute
- The challenges of having to move away from friends and family
- The challenges of having to move kids to a different school district
- The cost and difficulty of moving to new housing, including finding money for deposits, getting deposits back, competing with other prospective renters, and getting time off to move
- The challenge of trying to stay in their neighborhood as their lives change (e.g., birth of a child, children leaving the house, parents moving in, divorces)
- Being forced to live in cramped, loud, unsafe, or unhealthy circumstances
- The challenges of getting landlords to fix things
- The challenges of trying to stay in school while also earning enough money to afford rent

**"Many students have to negotiate on the amount of food they eat since they can't negotiate on the amount of rent they pay."**

— *Seattle Colleges participant*

- » Many people expressed that high housing costs are a **major issue for the region**. These comments centered not only on the financial burden on low- and middle-income households, but also on:

- increasing homelessness
- increasing segregation as low-income people must increasingly live further from job centers
- fracturing of social networks as people are forced to leave their neighborhoods and move away from friends and family
- increasing displacement and gentrification
- the effects of longer commutes on traffic and increased production of climate change gases
- the difficulty of hiring or keeping employees for positions due to high cost of living

**[Due to the high cost of housing,]  
I now have a lot of family and  
friends all over the region. I just  
don't visit them anymore."**

— Seattle Colleges participant

- » Beyond concern about housing costs generally, many people were especially concerned about large rent increases when **property management changes**, especially when small landlords sold their property to a larger company.

- » Due to the lack of control and the intensity of the problem, some people **lack trust** in the people and companies involved in housing. These comments focused on developers, landlords, governments, people moving to Seattle, and the companies that recruit them.

**"I feel very fortunate that I have  
an affordable place to live, but I  
feel like my landlord could take  
that away from me at any time."**

— survey respondent

## What are the positive and negative impacts of housing production?

*Most people agreed that we need a lot more housing, but many are skeptical and uncertain about how much new housing will address the problem and who will primarily benefit from it.*

Most people agree that we must create a substantial number of new homes to accommodate our growing population. However, many people expressed concern that new market-rate housing is too expensive, primarily serves wealthier people (especially tech workers), or might not change housing prices significantly. A respondent's viewpoints on the value of new housing often influenced how he or she responded to all other questions. While public engagement certainly demonstrated the breadth of perspectives on this topic, it also suggested that many people feel the City needs to be clear about complexity of the issue and both the possibilities and limitations of shaping market-rate housing to address the housing crisis.



The following chart summarizes the types of comments we tended to hear from people with more positive and more negative viewpoints on this topic and, when considered together, suggests what these viewpoints might mean.

## Viewpoints on the value of new housing

	What we heard from people with...		Together, these viewpoints suggest:
	... a more positive outlook on the value of new housing:	...a more skeptical outlook on the value of new housing:	
<b>Root causes of housing crisis</b>	Not enough houses for everyone	Influx of new people, especially wealthy tech workers	The region is growing. Increasing competition for housing increases housing prices. In a tight market, housing prices will increasingly be set by wealthier households.
<b>Primary perceived outcome</b>	Substantial new housing is needed to address demand and house everyone.	New housing results in the demolition of existing lower-cost housing.	Though critical to reduce competition, new housing can also result in the demolition of existing buildings with lower-cost housing.
<b>Who benefits?</b>	By addressing rising demand, new housing will slow or stop increasing housing costs, benefiting everyone.	New housing tends to cost more than existing housing, so it will mostly benefit wealthier people.	New housing is generally more expensive and thus often directly serves wealthier households. But without new housing, wealthier households otherwise compete for and drive up price of existing homes.
<b>Regional perspective</b>	Without more homes in Seattle, people will be forced to find housing further away, contributing to sprawl and requiring long commutes.	If Seattle is expensive, people can still move to some place cheaper.	Many households will choose to live elsewhere in the region, but without substantial new housing in Seattle the entire region becomes more expensive and people will be forced into longer commutes.
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>New housing is a vital part of addressing affordability.</b>	<b>We should focus on strategies that provide rent- and income-restricted units.</b>	<b>New market-rate housing is necessary but not sufficient to address our housing crisis and should be one part of a broader strategy.</b>

**"Making market-rate housing easier to build is very important, but it will not be sufficient to keep housing affordable to low-income people/families"**

— survey respondent

## What types of new housing would you like to see?

*Most people supported a broad range of housing options but were particularly interested in increasing the supply of small ownership units with access to a small amount of outdoor green space such as detached homes on a small lot, townhouses, duplexes, and triplexes.*

- » The survey asked participants to rank several housing options they might like to rent or own if they were more abundant. Below is a **summary of the rankings** for the eight types suggested. The score column represents the average ranking for each option, where a first-place ranking equals five points, second-place four points, and so on.

## What types of housing options would you like to rent or own if there were more in Seattle?

	% ranked as					score
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	
Detached homes on a small lot	50%	11%	9%	7%	6%	2.36
Townhouses	11%	32%	19%	12%	8%	1.83
Duplexes or triplexes	6%	15%	28%	22%	12%	1.52
Condominiums and co-ops	9%	12%	15%	23%	22%	1.34
Two- and three-bedroom apartments	8%	10%	11%	16%	20%	1.09
Accessory dwelling units	7%	13%	10%	9%	14%	0.99
Studio and one-bedroom apartments	4%	3%	4%	6%	12%	0.43
Co-housing or congregate housing	4%	4%	4%	4%	6%	0.40

- » Half of survey respondents ranked detached homes on a small lot as their top option. Townhouses and duplex/triplex were the second- and third-most popular answers, respectively. In the small group conversations, detached homes on a small lot were also very popular — but when presented with their cost, participants often said they might instead prefer a more affordable option, like a townhouse or condominium. Among younger participants, expectations appear to be shifting: 70 percent of people under 35 ranked townhouses in their top three choices, while only 55 percent ranked detached homes on a small lot similarly.
- » Many people specifically said they want housing with some **outdoor space**. People referred alternately to townhouses with some shared open space, courtyard apartments, additional detached

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— survey respondent



homes in yards, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), cottage housing, and even manufactured home or “tiny home” communities. Condominiums and co-ops were sometimes included in this list if well designed with shared indoor and outdoor spaces. ADUs garnered support because they add housing with open space within the existing context of detached homes.

- » People emphasized the importance of options that allow **gradual transitions as needs change**: from small apartment to larger apartment, renting to homeownership, into larger ownership units as families grow, or even downsizing for older adults.

- » Many people talked about the need for many housing types throughout Seattle to **help people stay in their neighborhood as their needs change**. Many people expressed frustration and sadness about having to leave their community due to wanting their own space, having kids, getting a divorce, needing to accommodate family members, children moving out, or downsizing.

- » Opinions varied on whether the City should encourage more **ownership or rental units**. Comments supporting ownership were more common among people aspiring someday to own their home. Many people, however, especially younger and low-income people, felt that ownership would always be out of their financial reach, and so felt more rental options are necessary. Some people saw the lack of lower-cost ownership options as a major obstacle to building wealth and staying in a neighborhood over time.

- » Many people called for **larger rental units**, and to a lesser extent for smaller rental units. In response to the question “What type of housing options would you like to rent or own if there were more in Seattle?” 70 percent of survey respondents ranked two- and three-bedroom apartments in their top five, while only 26 percent ranked studio and one-bedroom apartments in their top five. Small group participants also initially favored larger units, though after considering their cost often suggested that they might prefer smaller, more affordable units. Support for larger units often reflected the difficulty of finding rental units suitable for families with children and concern that this scarcity could push families out of Seattle. Support for smaller units revealed interest in having own’s own space and the importance of alternatives for people unable to afford large units. Some participants with children observed that larger family-size units wouldn’t help them personally due to their cost.

**"Our family was considering leaving Seattle due to high housing costs. It wasn't until our good friends proposed building a DADU on their property that we decided to stay. It took two years from planning, design, and construction. Now we live there with our one and half year old. Our DADU is great and it is so wonderful to live close to friends."**

— survey respondent

**"Would love to be able to have our older relatives living with us but with a separate space. A duplex/triplex would make that possible. Also to be able to stay at our home after the children are grown. Flexibility for an unknown future so that we can grow or shrink in place. Located close enough to walk to services and with transit close by to travel further than our feet can."**

— survey respondent

- » **Congregate housing** was a controversial and polarizing topic. Residents of congregate housing generally found it an important option due to its relative affordability — but also didn't want to live in it for very long. Other participants expressed wider perspectives. Some people found congregate housing invaluable for people who cannot afford alternatives or experience a particular life phase, like school, job change, or divorce. Others thought congregate housing units are inhumane, small, negatively impact adjacent buildings, or replace family-size housing. Most people agreed that, if allowed, congregate housing should be in near very good transit or colleges and universities.
- » Some people suggested that encouraging **shared housing**, where many roommates share one detached house, is a good way to make housing affordable to certain people.

## Where should new housing be located?

*Most people felt new housing should be located throughout Seattle and near transit, parks, open space, and shops.*

- » The survey asked participants to rank a list of ten housing qualities and suggest others. Below is a **summary of the rankings** for the ten options given. The score column represents the average ranking for each option where a first-place ranking equals five points, second-place four points, and so on.

## What is most important to you in housing?

	% ranked as					score
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	
Being close to transit or bus route	42%	20%	12%	7%	6%	2.34
Being close to shopping, services, and restaurants	16%	28%	21%	13%	9%	1.95
Being close to parks and open space	8%	18%	26%	19%	11%	1.60
Private outdoor space	13%	10%	11%	13%	14%	1.18
Parking for car	12%	12%	9%	9%	11%	1.09
Being close to schools or childcare	4%	4%	8%	12%	7%	0.59
Storage area	1%	3%	4%	9%	10%	0.36
Shared outdoor space at ground level	0%	1%	3%	6%	9%	0.24
Shared outdoor space on rooftop	0%	1%	2%	5%	8%	0.18
Play areas for kids	1%	2%	2%	2%	5%	0.17
Fitness area or gym	0%	1%	2%	3%	6%	0.14
Shared indoor space such as common living room or kitchen	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%	0.09

- » There was strong agreement that new housing should be located **primarily near transit and secondarily near parks and open space**. In response to the question “What qualities are most important to you in housing?” 62 percent of respondents ranked “being close to transit or bus route” first or second. Young people particularly emphasized transit, with 80 percent of respondents under 35 ranking it in their top two. Many people emphasized the value of a single-seat ride to downtown, and a smaller group mentioned the importance of east-west connections. In the same question, 26 percent ranked “being close to parks and open space” first or second which was higher than having private open space. While the transit and amenities people desire are frequently located on arterials, many stressed that they would prefer to live on smaller nearby streets due to noise, air pollution, and safety.

**"Please put more housing near shops and transit."**

— survey respondent

- » **Being near shops and services** was also important, though interpretations of this quality varied. Forty-four percent of survey respondents said “being close to shopping, services, and restaurants” first or second. However, in the small group conversations, many people thought housing should be located either near existing shops and services or where new development could bring shops and services to a small neighborhood node. Many people valued living near a grocery store and places to meet other people, like farmer’s markets, restaurants, and coffee shops. Some people thought it the most important features to have near new housing are transit, parks, and open space, because shops and services would come as the development brought more people to the area.

**"I need a combination of good transit, biking, or walking access to work; a home sized appropriate for multiple people (at least 3 bedrooms); walking distance to grocery stores, services, and schools for the kiddos; and near a good-sized park."**

— survey respondent

- » Some people felt that the City should first ensure there is **adequate room for apartments and condominiums** around key areas like light rail stations and allow only smaller-scale development elsewhere. Some people noted that zoning for apartments and condominiums allows the largest number of people to live near these amenities, and once these areas are developed with townhouses it is almost impossible to aggregate land to build something else.
- » Some people suggested that the City allow higher-density zoning around **smaller nodes of transit, shops, services, and amenities** in lower-cost neighborhoods as a way to create lower-cost housing, spread development throughout the city, and bring shops and services to more areas. Some observed that the City could strategically create these areas by investing in new transit and parks.
- » Many people commented that, from a **regional perspective**, Seattle was an ideal place for more housing. These commenters generally felt that, if not built in Seattle, new housing will instead occur in areas that require long commutes and lack services. Some people also suggested that insufficient housing in Seattle drives people to areas that were previously affordable like Renton, Kent, and Burien and making it hard for the residents there to afford housing at all.

- » Many people found **existing zoning patterns** problematic because they tend to concentrate apartments near highways, busy arterials, and industrial areas.
- » Some people felt that **growth has been unfairly concentrated** in few areas, particularly higher-cost neighborhoods like the Central Area and Ballard where new housing tends to be more expensive.
- » Some people suggested the City rezone **industrial lands** to create more residential areas in South Downtown, in Interbay, or surrounding South Park and Georgetown.
- » Some people felt that the City should focus growth in areas less prone to **displacement and gentrification** to reduce the pressure and burden on communities vulnerable to displacement.
- » Many people noted that the City must coordinate **housing and infrastructure** to ensure growth occurs near amenities and new amenities in growing areas.
- » Other **neighborhood qualities** frequently mentioned when talking about locations for new housing include areas with:
  - Low crime
  - Sidewalks and walkability
  - Quiet or low-traffic streets
  - Protected bike lanes or pathways

**"Too many townhomes/duplexes/ etc. are being built nowhere near bus lines. Those people will have no choice but to drive their car everywhere."**

— survey respondent

## What qualities or amenities should new housing have?

*The most frequently mentioned qualities that people desire in new housing included outdoor green space, places to hang out with or meet other people, parking, good soundproofing, and places designed for children.*

- » As discussed in the Housing Types section, many people noted the importance of having a small amount of public or private **outdoor green space**. Many people suggested that a combination of adjacent public and private spaces would encourage interaction with neighbors while providing a place to plant and small buffer from the public areas. Many people promoted roof decks in higher-density housing as places for large groups of people to gather, meet neighbors, or garden.
- » Many people valued **shared indoor spaces** like gyms, common areas, study areas, business centers, tv rooms, or art spaces.

**"I want to have a little bit of green space at ground level. new townhouses don't have much space and just have roof decks. small roof decks don't work for children."**

— University of Washington participant

- » Some people desired for apartment, condominium, or co-op buildings with **amenities for families**, including units with multiple bedrooms; shared indoor and outdoor open areas (playgrounds, unstructured spaces, specialized areas like art space or game room); built-in childcare facilities; and storage areas.
- » Many people value having a **parking space** in their building. Twelve percent of respondents said “parking for car” was the most important quality in housing. This was the fourth-highest selection, right behind private open space. Many people also noted that off-street parking reduces competition for parking on the street. On the other hand, some people specifically said that parking was negative attribute because it adds cost and encourages driving.
- » Some people encouraged the City to influence building design to **create more community** through shared spaces designed to encourage interaction.
- » Housing with **noise abatement or separation** also came up frequently. Commenters described noise from neighbors and outside the building and the need for housing options not located on loud streets.
- » Many people were concerned with **large, expensive detached homes** replacing smaller ones.
- » Opinions varied on the **design and aesthetic of new buildings** from criticism, to fondness, to indifference so long as the housing is affordable. People critical of new buildings often said their design changes the character of existing neighborhoods, is too repetitive, uses low-quality materials, or is too boxy. People fond of new buildings cited the variety of styles and large windows. The primary critiques of apartment and condominium buildings were their height and width and lack of ground-level outdoor open space. Many people supported encouraging more small apartment buildings rather than fewer large ones. The primary critiques of townhouses were that they appear repetitive or are all modern.
- » Other **desirable qualities** that came up frequently in conversation include:
  - green building, particularly where it reduced long-term costs
  - high-quality construction
  - buildings designed for specific communities of people such as older adults, families, young people with no families, and artists

**"For families, it is important to have a variety of spaces such as unstructured areas, playgrounds, storage, arcades."**

— University of Washington participant

**"I want to see more housing with community spaces, courtyards, green space."**

— University of Washington participant

## What actions should the City take to ensure we achieve this vision?

*People generally support ideas to speed up the permitting process, allow more housing types, encourage more family-friendly and accessible housing, and implement measures to minimize displacement — and have many other ideas as well.*

- » The survey asked participants to respond to eight strategies we've heard in past conversations and to suggest their own. Respondents generally supported all eight strategies, with more mixed responses to allowing more congregate housing. Below is **summary of the rankings** for the eight strategies.

	Very supportive	Somewhat supportive	Neutral or no opinion	Not supportive
Have more small detached homes, townhouses, duplexes, or triplexes in more places.	52%	25%	12%	10%
Simplify the rules for building small projects.	49%	26%	19%	6%
Make it easier to build accessory dwelling units.	47%	29%	14%	10%
Create programs to get more accessible housing units (housing that is designed to allow independent living for people with disabilities) as part of new construction and retrofits.	45%	33%	16%	5%
Make it faster and more predictable to build new housing.	44%	28%	19%	9%
Provide technical or financial support for homeowners that want to create new housing on their property while continuing to live there.	39%	33%	17%	11%
Create incentives, such as additional height or faster permitting, for apartments that are designed for families or older adults.	38%	32%	17%	13%
Have more small apartment units with shared kitchens and common space in more places.	17%	18%	32%	33%

- » The highest approval rating overall was for “more small detached homes, townhouses, duplexes, or triplexes in more places,” which also garnered support in the small group conversations. Supporters said this type of housing provides **lower-cost homeownership options** that let middle-income families stay in Seattle. Many people specifically called for allowing these housing types in areas where they are scarce or prohibited outright.
- » Most people supported strategies related to **making it easier and faster to build housing**. People generally valued building more quickly and found government actions to be slow, though specific comments about how to do this were few and many people acknowledged that they might feel differently if it required substantially reducing the quality of new construction.



"I am an architect with lots of experience building housing projects in the city of Seattle. Even for someone with my level of experience, the process is long and confusing. How can someone not from the area or the industry possibly navigate the extremely complicated process without adding significant amounts of time to their schedule? The process and required documentation have gotten more cumbersome every time I take a project the process. That adds time and money to a project, that of course a developer will pass on in higher rents. I firmly believe that cost of rent is higher in Seattle because design and permitting fees are so ridiculously high."

— survey respondent

- » Most people supported incentivizing units and buildings for **families, seniors, and people with disabilities** and encouraging homes that allow living on one floor, like ADUs, duplexes/triplexes with ground-floor units, and condominiums.
- » Most people supported **technical or financial support for homeowners** that want to create new housing on their property while continuing to live there. Many people thought this would be good way to help homeowners weather rising costs and provide incremental density that fits well with existing buildings. Ideas included low-cost loans, reduced permit fees, standard plans, or access to advisors.
- » Opinions varied about having more small apartment units with **shared kitchens and common space** in more areas. Discussions focused on the costs and benefits of small units, as summarized in the Housing Types section.
- » Raising the income threshold for **tenant relocation assistance** received substantial support. Many people thought this was a good way to help people most directly impacted by displacement pressures and noted that, as housing prices have increased, people even at higher income levels struggle.
- » Many people suggested that we consider some type of **rent control or stabilization**.
- » Some people expressed interest in supporting new ownership structures that could limit future price increases such as **land trusts, co-ops, and co-housing**.
- » Some people thought the City should discourage demolition of existing buildings with **lower-cost market-rate housing**, particularly where new development would not meaningfully increase the number of units.
- » Some people thought the City should try to make it easier for people with large houses to **rent out a room**.

"More incentives or requirements to build rental units or condominium units with more bedrooms will enable more families to have more affordable housing in areas more rich with amenities."

— survey respondent

"Seattle needs more accessible housing for people with disabilities. Seattle could offer incentives for people to make their rental housing accessible."

— survey respondent

- » Some people suggested an education campaign to educate people about **landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities**, especially for ADU owners who may be new landlords.

In addition to comments directly related to shaping market-rate housing, many comments suggested other strategies:

- » Many people supported increasing the supply of **rent- and income-restricted housing**.
- » Many people called for **large technology companies** to play a larger part in addressing housing costs given their role in bringing new people to the region. These comments tended to focus on convincing them to build housing themselves or voluntarily contribute to housing, or on increasing their taxes to raise money for housing.
- » Many people were concerned that **increasing property taxes** were making it hard for homeowners to remain in their homes.
- » Many people had concerns about the increasing **burden placed on small landlords** due to new rules, rental registration and inspection, and increasing property taxes. There were numerous examples given of small landlords selling to larger companies that then substantially increased rents.

"I used to be a landlord and rented my property for hundreds below market rate. The never-ending increases in taxes compounded by the increase in property value, regular increases in water/sewer/garbage and increased oversight from the city (licensing) prompted me to finally sell the property. The duplex now has an owner and a rental unit that is \$500 more per month. Incentives for keeping rent low (perhaps a tax rebate) could be an effective tool to keep rents lower."

— survey respondent

- » Some people suggested that the City discourage the **growth of technology companies** in Seattle or to train more existing residents for technology jobs so companies can hire locally instead of recruiting from elsewhere.
- » Some people suggested that the City further limit **short-term rentals**, which commenters thought take housing off the market for long-term renters or bring noisy parties to residential areas.
- » Some people called for more strategies to **improve livability** as we grow, like more transit and parks, infrastructure improvements, tree preservation, or protections for historic structures.

"Please work to reduce the number of Airbnbs in Seattle. We live in a condo building with 10 units and 2 of them are Airbnbs. These are units that could be used for people who live here full-time and would increase the inventory of rentals."

— survey respondent

# Appendix A: Demographic Summary for Survey and Small Group Conversations

Below is a summary of the demographics and housing status of people who participated in the Housing Choices survey and small group conversations.

## Demographic summary

	% of survey respondents	% of small group participants	% of all Seattle residents
Live in Seattle	80%	70%	—
Are a landlord or in a real estate profession	18%	7%	—
Age 0-34	27%	26%	49%
Age 35-49	35%	44%	22%
Age 50 and above	38%	30%	29%
People of color	26%	58%	35%
Household income less than \$50,000	12%	33%	32%
Household income less than \$100,000	46%	83%	59%
Own their home	65%	43%	47%

## Housing type

	% of survey respondents	% of small group participants	% of all Seattle residents
Detached House	55%	35%	38%
Rental unit in apartment building	22%	34%	45%
Townhouse, duplex, or triplex	11%	16%	8%
Condo or co-op	10%	9%	10%
Accessory dwelling unit (ADU)	2%	3%	—

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# Appendix B: Survey Questions

Housing Choices is a new effort by the City of Seattle focused on creating more housing options, in more places, for more people. This effort is coordinated with the work of the Affordable Middle- Income Housing Advisory Council, which is tasked with identifying ways to create more for-rent and for-sale homes that are affordable to Seattle's middle-income wage earners. More information about the Housing Choices initiative is available on our website.

This survey takes about 10 to 15 minutes. Thank you for using your time to inform this effort. Your input will help inform near-term actions as well as longer-term recommendations that we hope to present in early 2020.

Information provided in this survey is considered a public record and may be subject to public disclosure. For more information, see the Public Records Act, RCW Chapter 42.56. To learn more about how we manage your information, see our Privacy Statement at [seattle.gov/privacy](http://seattle.gov/privacy).

**1 Do you currently live in the city of Seattle?** (yes/no)

**2 What zip code do you live in?**

**3 What type of housing do you live in?** (choose one)

- Detached house
- Townhouse
- Duplex or triplex
- Condominium or co-op
- Rental unit in an apartment building
- Rental unit in an accessory dwelling unit (backyard cottage or unit in home with separate entrance)
- Mobile home or trailer
- Student dormitory
- Other (please specify)

**4 Is the housing unit in which you live...** (choose one)

- Rented by you or someone in this household?
- Owned by you or someone in this household?
- Other (please describe):

**5 Besides your personal experiences with housing, do any of the following apply to you:**

- I am a realtor
- I am a small landlord (small landlord renting 1 to 9 units besides the one I occupy)
- I am a medium to large landlord (renting 10 or more units)

- I am an owner of a company that develops, constructs, finances, or appraises residential real estate
- I am an architect or have a similar profession
- Other related business or profession (describe):

**6 Have you ever lived in the City of Seattle?** (yes/no)

**7 In the past five years, have you moved from Seattle?** (yes/no)

**8 When you bought or rented your current residence, did you consider living in Seattle?** (yes/no)

**9 How important were each of these factors in your choice to live outside Seattle?** (rank as not important, somewhat important, very important)

- I prefer a more suburban or rural environment
- I wanted a bigger backyard
- I wanted a bigger home
- I wanted an easier commute to my employment outside Seattle
- I wanted an easier commute for my spouse, partner, or other household member to employment outside of Seattle
- I wanted to be close to a specific K-12 school or in a particular school district
- I wanted to live in a neighborhood where neighbors know each other
- I couldn't afford to rent the right home or unit in Seattle
- I couldn't afford to buy the right home or unit in Seattle
- Other (please specify)

**10 Do you work in Seattle?** (yes/no)

**11 Do you attend school in Seattle?** (yes/no)

**12 Does someone else in your household work in Seattle?** (yes/no)

**13 How many people live in your household?**

**14 What is your age?**

- 0-17
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-49
- 50-64
- 65 and over

**15 Besides you, is there someone under 18 in your household?** (yes/no)

**16 Is there someone 65 or older in your household?** (yes/no)

**17 Are you of Hispanic, Latina/Latino, or Spanish origin?** (yes/no)

**18 What is your race?**

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Some other race (describe)

**19 What is your annual household income?**

- \$0-14,999
- \$15,000-24,999
- \$25,000-34,999
- \$35,000-49,999
- \$50,000-74,999
- \$75,000-99,999
- \$100,000-149,999
- \$150,000-199,999
- \$200,000 and above

**20 What type of housing options would you like to rent or own if there were more in Seattle?**  
(rank your top 5)

- Detached homes on a small lot
- Townhouses
- Duplexes or triplexes
- Condominiums and co-ops
- Studio and one-bedroom apartments
- Two- and three-bedroom apartments
- Co-housing or congregate housing (multiple units with shared kitchen and common space)
- Accessory dwelling units (backyard cottage or unit in existing home with separate entrance)



**21 What other types of housing options would you like to rent or own if there were more in Seattle?** (open response)

**22 What qualities are most important to you in housing?** (rank your top 5)

- Being close to transit or bus route
- Being close to parks and open space
- Being close to shopping, services, and restaurants
- Being close to schools or childcare
- Shared, outdoor space on rooftop
- Shared, outdoor space at ground level
- Private, outdoor space
- Shared, indoor space such as common living room or kitchen
- Play areas for kids
- Fitness area or gym
- Storage area
- Parking for car

**23 What other qualities are most important to you in housing?** (open response)

**24 Below is a list of strategies to improve housing choices that we have heard from people in Seattle.** (rank as not supportive, neutral or no opinion, supportive, or very supportive)

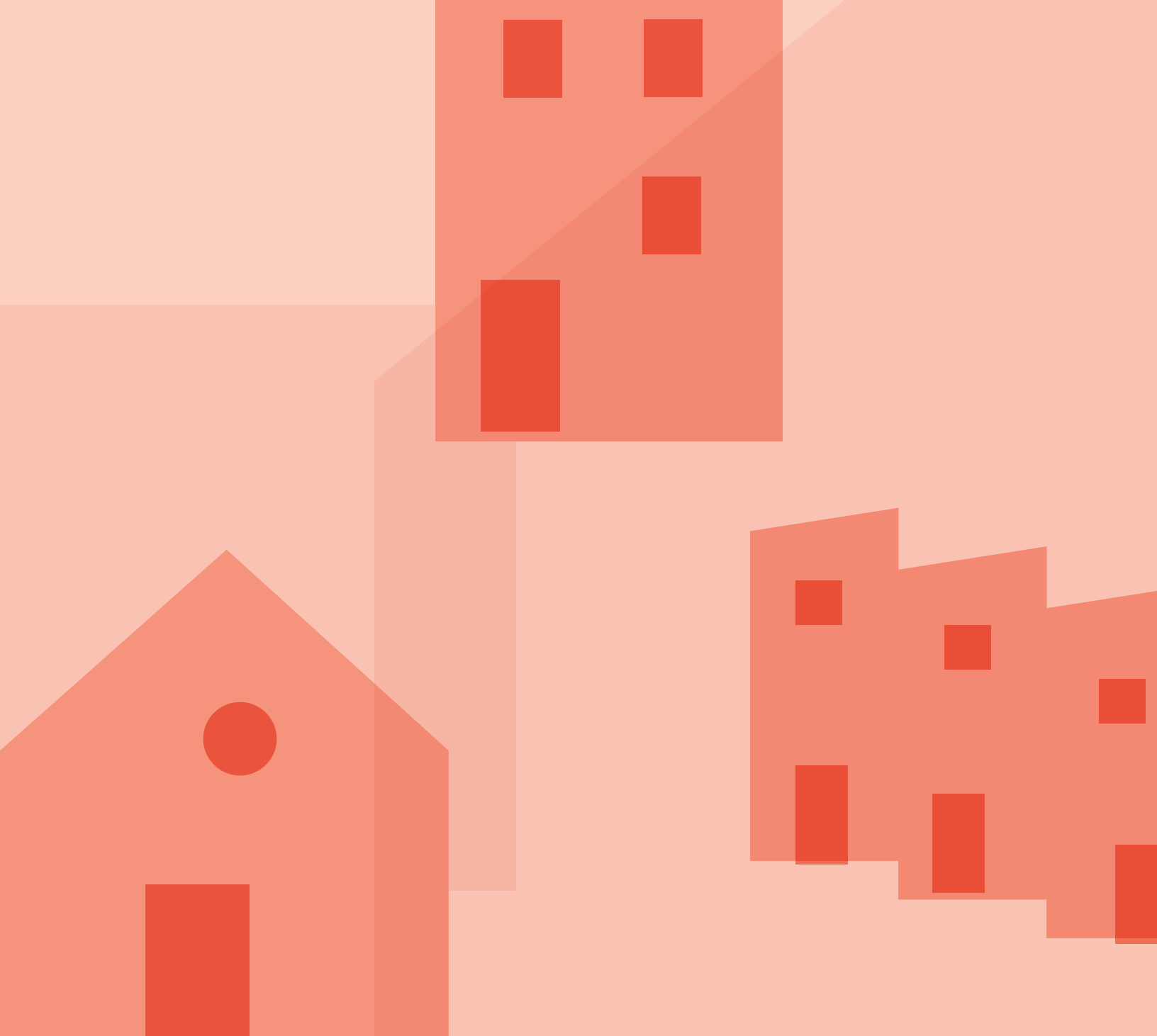
- Simplify the rules for building small projects.
- Make it easier to build accessory dwelling units.
- Make it faster and more predictable to build new housing.
- Have more small detached homes, townhouses, duplexes, or triplexes in more places.
- Have more small apartment units with shared kitchens and common space in more places.
- Create incentives, such as additional height or faster permitting, for apartments designed for families or older adults.
- Create programs to get more accessible housing units (housing that is designed to allow independent living for people with disabilities) as part of new construction and retrofits.
- Provide technical or financial support for homeowners that want to create new housing on their property while continuing to live there.

**25 If you would like to provide other feedback on this topic or would like to share a story about your own experiences related to housing, please feel free to share them below.** (open response)

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# Appendix C: Small Group Conversation Questions

- 1 What type of housing would you like to see more of in Seattle?**
  - What housing types work especially well for residents in our region?
  - Are there specific types of homes that have worked well for you in the past? Describe them.
  - Are there specific types of homes that you would like to live in? Describe them.
- 2 What amenities or features are most important to you in housing?** This could be about what the housing looks like or specific features you would like to see inside or outside the house.
- 3 Where would you like to see these types of housing located?** You might think of general areas of the city, like near downtown or in low-scale residential areas; specific neighborhoods; or the types of neighborhood assets and amenities they should be near.
- 4 Increasing prices have been pushing many people and business to leave Seattle.** If you don't live in Seattle, why did choose to live outside Seattle? If you do live in Seattle, what circumstances might cause you to leave?
- 5 What strategies and actions would you recommend?** The board lists several strategies for increasing housing options that we've heard in our past conversations with community members. Don't feel limited to talking about strategies on this board.
  - Which do you think would be particularly effective?
  - Are there strategies you have concerns about?
  - What other ideas you would like the City to consider?



[seattle.gov/opcd/housing-choices](https://seattle.gov/opcd/housing-choices)

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**Seattle**  
Office of Planning &  
Community Development

# Housing Choices

*Shaping the market to create more options, in more places, for more people.*

# Public Engagement Summary

DECEMBER 2019



an initiative of  
**housing seattle now**

 **Seattle**  
Office of Planning &  
Community Development