

3.11 Housing

The City of Cle Elum Comprehensive Plan: Housing Element (2007) identifies goals and objectives to guide future housing development and meet the present and future needs of the community. The three basic objectives of the Housing Element are to provide adequate capacity for residential growth to meet regional population growth targets; encourage the development of a wide variety of housing alternatives to meet the needs of a diverse population; and to foster opportunities to provide affordable housing. This section summarizes the relationship of the City Heights proposal to the City's Comprehensive Plan: Housing Element (2007), and to the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan: Housing Element (2008).

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires cities and counties planning under GMA to inventory and analyze existing and projected housing needs, and to identify sufficient land area to accommodate growth in a variety of housing types. The City of Cle Elum and Kittitas County used U.S. Census data from the year 2000 as the source of information for the inventory of existing housing, and compared housing characteristics in that year to data available from the 1990 U.S. Census. In the year 2000, there were 956 occupied housing units within the City limits – up 12.85 percent from the 1990 census. The census also documented an increase in renter-occupied homes in the City in the year 2000: 33 percent compared to 25 percent in 1990, and a higher number of undetermined or vacant homes in the year 2000: 161 homes compared to 114 in 1990. Much of the City's housing stock is located adjacent to the downtown commercial core, or parallel to it along the grid pattern of streets that branches off from First Street.

Kittitas County had approximately 16,475 housing units at the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, of which 13,382 were occupied. Vacant units (approximately 3,093 in 2000) include seasonal, recreational, and farm worker housing. Of the occupied units in 2000, 7,805 were owner-occupied and 5,577 were occupied by renters. This represents an owner occupancy rate of 58 percent in the County.

New housing construction between 1990 and 2000 totaled 69 new units in Cle Elum – an average of seven per year over the 10-year period. In contrast, 77 new housing units were constructed within the City limits in the one-year period between 2006 and 2007.

Diverse and changing demographics in Cle Elum influence the type of housing desired by and affordable to the City's residents. At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, the median value of all owner-occupied homes in Cle Elum was \$103,000 (lower than the 2000 median value of homes in Kittitas County or the State of Washington as a whole). The median household income in Cle Elum that same year was \$28,144, compared to \$32,546 in Kittitas County. By the year 2007, the median value of homes constructed in Cle Elum was \$268,000 – a 260 percent increase during this 7-year period; however, the median household income had only increased to \$32,278 (12.8 percent). By comparison, the average sale price of homes in Lower Kittitas County was \$264,502 in 2008.

Many factors that contribute to the cost of housing are beyond the control of the City of Cle Elum. Housing costs are influenced by land costs, regulatory compliance requirements, the cost of permits and fees, construction costs, and financing costs. The City's Comprehensive Plan: Housing Element advocates that the City should take an active, engaged and aggressive position to affect the cost of housing in ways it has the ability to do so, such as by allowing smaller lot sizes, higher densities, and a variety of dwelling unit types to accomplish an acceptable ratio of land to housing value; providing land use regulations for mixed-use development; streamlining development regulations and permit processes; and (where practicable) providing or permitting reduced urban infrastructure such as narrower streets, consolidated

sidewalks, and co-located stormwater management facilities. All new housing must meet market demand as well as the City's goals, policies and objectives to retain the small town character, charm and appeal of Cle Elum.

In order to accommodate projected population growth during the current 20-year planning period (2005–2025), the Cle Elum Comprehensive Plan: Housing Element forecasts a need for 3,540 additional dwelling units by the year 2025.¹ With input from public vision sessions, the City identified an area for higher density single-family residential and infill development at the east end of town (east of Short Avenue), and a specialty multi-family residential project in the Bullfrog Flats area. However, these two areas alone would not accommodate the entire forecasted need for 3,540 additional dwelling units. In 2004, 330 acres of the property now known as City Heights² was designated by the City and County as a Cle Elum Urban Growth Area (UGA). Urban Growth Areas are lands targeted for annexation and development at urban densities to accommodate the housing needs of population growth forecast by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM). See additional discussion in Draft EIS Sections 3.7 and 3.10.

The comparable (high projection) OFM population projection for Kittitas County (15,502 persons) indicates a need for an additional 6,460 dwelling units in the unincorporated area during the 2005–2025 planning period.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS DURING CONSTRUCTION

City Heights development under any conceptual land use alternative would be all new construction with no requirement for demolition of any existing housing. The physical impacts associated with constructing a residential community on the site are described throughout Draft EIS Chapter 3 under the various elements of the environment.

There is limited to no temporary housing in Cle Elum at the time of this writing to accommodate the projected number of construction workers described in Draft EIS Section 3.10, if these workers are hired from outside the area. Due to the temporary nature of the employment, these workers typically room together in low-cost motels; bring their own recreational vehicle, camp, or commute. It would be speculative to attempt to describe construction housing requirements with any certainty.

POTENTIAL DEVELOPED-CONDITION IMPACTS

The housing unit projections of each of the City Heights conceptual land use alternatives are shown in Table 3.11-1.

¹ The calculation of the number of housing units needed by the year 2025 is based on an average annual rate of growth of 413 people per year, at a household size of 2.33 persons = 177 dwelling units per year x 20 years = 3,540 dwelling units.

² The total acreage of the City Heights site is 358 acres, of which approximately 28 acres are already within the City limits.

Table 3.11-1. City Heights conceptual land use alternatives housing unit projections.

	Single-Family Detached Homes	Attached Dwelling Units	Total Number of Housing Units
Alternative 1	690 (70%)	295 (30%)	985
Alternative 2	525 (60%)	350 (40%)	875
Alternative 3A	525 (60%)	350 (40%)	875
Alternative 3B	500 (100%)	0	500
Alternative 4: No Action	0	0	0

Based on the projected 6- to 12-year build-out of the City Heights development, the number of new housing units to be provided in Alternative 1 or 2 would constitute 25 percent to 28 percent of the projected total additional housing demand within the City of Cle Elum during the current 20-year planning period (i.e., by the year 2025).³ If Alternative 3A or 3B were selected for implementation, the number of new housing units within City Heights would provide 7.7 to 13.5 percent of the projected total additional housing needs in the unincorporated area of Kittitas County during the same period.

POSSIBLE MITIGATION MEASURES

Contractors could be encouraged to hire construction workers who reside within daily commuting distance of the project to minimize the demand for temporary housing in the area. If this is not practical, the City could request construction contractors to estimate their work force requirements and to investigate local temporary housing opportunities at the start of each phase of construction. Construction contractors could ask the workers they hire to indicate what arrangements they propose to make for temporary housing in the area while they are under contract to work on the project.

While no adverse impacts requiring mitigation were identified in this section for the developed condition of the project, the anticipated result of the City Heights development would be a mix of housing types, styles, densities and values in order to provide housing that is affordable to people of various income levels. Both the rate and character of development over the 6- to 12-year build-out of the project will be influenced by market factors unknown at this time. The City or County (depending on the alternative selected) will, however, maintain development approval authority over the project throughout the construction period.

The City of Cle Elum does not presently have an adopted definition of what constitutes “affordable housing,” as this varies based on the median income of an area. It is presumed that housing that is affordable requires expenditure of less than 30 percent of a household’s gross income for the mortgage payment, taxes, insurance, and utilities. A definition of affordable housing and the amount to be provided within City Heights will be an element of the negotiated Development Agreement between the project proponent and the City of Cle Elum.

SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

From a long-range planning perspective, with an intent to serve projected population growth, the City Heights development would result in a beneficial rather than significant unavoidable adverse impact to the housing supply within the City or County.

³ The EIS analysis of housing demand projections is based on the City’s 2007 Comprehensive Plan context, which may have been affected by the 2008 national and global economic downturn.

