

CHAPTER 7

HOUSING ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Housing is one of the most important components in our lives and our communities. It provides shelter and a link to the neighborhood and the larger community. It is the single largest purchase made by most households. As an industry, it is a major partner in the economic life of the community both as a consumer of goods and services and as a producer of houses, jobs, and income.

The housing industry, in many ways, depends upon local government. While taxes on housing are a principal source of local government revenue, services to housing and to the inhabitants of housing comprise a major portion of local government expenditures. In the broad scope, housing is closely tied to a community's welfare. Thus, it is critical that housing issues be addressed at the local level.

The demand for housing is increasing as the quality of life in Electric City gains favorable recognition and as people living and working in more urbanized areas escape the congestion of urban life. As growth occurs within Grant County and its incorporated cities, there will be an increasing need for more housing that is affordable and desirable.

Growth within the City will most likely occur within and adjacent to existing developed areas before expanding into the urban growth area (UGA). Such development should be compatible with the unique character of the community, and should provide for the revitalization of existing service areas as well as for adequate open space. This housing element is intended to guide the location and type of housing that will be built over the next twenty years.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

Growth Management Act Requirements

This housing element must be consistent with the Growth Management Act (GMA). RCW 36.70A.070 states that it must recognize "the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods" and:

- include an inventory and analysis of the existing and projected housing needs;

- include a statement of goals, policies, objectives, and mandatory provisions for the preservation, improvement, and the development of housing, including single-family residences;
- identify sufficient land for housing, including but not limited to government-assisted housing, housing for low-income families, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, and group homes and foster care facilities; and
- make adequate provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community.

County-Wide Planning Policies

The following County-wide Planning Policies address the need for affordable housing for all economic segments of the population and the parameters for its distribution:

Policy #5: Policies that consider the need for affordable housing, such as for all economic segments of the population.

Policy 5 requires that the housing element of the Electric City Comprehensive Plan:

- Provide a range of housing alternatives, which take into account price, tenure type, and density which meet the urban area and regional housing needs.
- Provide for the development of a balanced variety of dwelling unit types and densities within the City with maximum choices of living environment, considering the needs of the public at all economic levels.
- Provide areas for the location of a variety of residential uses while minimizing the impact on surrounding areas.
- Preserve the viability of existing single-family residential areas.
- Promote housing that meets the needs of all socio-economic groups in the City.
- Develop land uses that will preserve and enhance the quality of life and desired lifestyles.

MAJOR ISSUES

Affordable Housing

Housing is becoming less affordable to more Electric City residents. The

housing affordability problem is particularly severe among the low-income and special needs populations and their families. The federal government and most lenders consider affordable owner-occupied housing as housing that can be obtained for 30 percent of monthly gross income. The definition of affordable rental units is similar, although percentages vary in part because of the tax benefits enjoyed by homeowners.

The Growth Management Act requires that housing goals and policies emphasize housing affordability. Electric City must encourage affordable housing through its zoning and development regulations; establish an orderly process for distributing fair share housing funds; work in tandem with nonprofit housing organizations; and support programs that rehabilitate and preserve existing housing.

By working to encourage the availability of affordable housing for all economic segments of the population, the community can address a fundamental human and community need. Addressing housing needs countywide requires a regional approach that involves all levels of government, including federal, state, and local, and private sector partnerships. Electric City, like all other Grant County communities has a responsibility for meeting its fair share obligations to provide affordable housing.

Housing Type and Mix

Since it was incorporated in 1950, Electric City has seen a slow but steady rise in its population. The data shows that the community experienced an increase in total population from 1970 to 2000, and an increase in non-construction related population growth from 1960 to 1980. However, total population has remained static over the past decade. It is projected that the City will continue the trend of no to slow population growth into the future.

The Electric City Urban Growth Analysis¹ completed in 1998, used an annual growth rate of 1% to project the community's population through 2018. The result was a 2018 population estimate of 1,190. However, the City's 2018 population was estimated at 1,030, so population projections should be periodically reviewed and adjusted to accommodate unexpected population impacts from construction, retirees and tourism.

Owner-occupied units have increased, from 73.3% of occupied residential units in 2000 to 74.9% of occupied residential units in 2010. The remaining units are either rented or vacant. According to the 2016 American Community survey,

¹ Electric City Urban Growth Analysis, 1998

the community has 449 households, an increase of 63 from the 386 counted in 2000.

The slow growth rate and changing demographics call for City housing policies that support choice and flexibility in housing types, density, and location. This in turn will allow the real estate and development communities to be responsive to the changing needs of the housing continuum. The City's special needs policies should encourage financial and regulatory flexibility that allow creative housing options (e.g. accessory unit construction, single room occupancy, clustering, manufactured housing) and siting of institutions. Furthermore, City policies must support codes, ordinances, and site plans that encourage development of special needs housing, and public/private investment in these projects.

Housing Density

Electric City is planning for phased growth. Phased growth means that development will occur in stages, with the first phase occurring within the existing corporate limits and developed area with access to public utilities followed by land in the annexed area south of the causeway and finally within the Urban Growth Area that has reasonable access to public water and/or sewer. As part of phased development, housing density in the annexed area would be reflected through policies that support infill development, higher density zoning, and smaller lot sizes.

Housing Finance

Nonprofit and private finance sectors, as well as the local government, play an important role in housing finance. A healthy and complete housing finance system joins all three sectors in a manner that most appropriately reflects public purpose, capital requirements, costs, interest rates and other influences on the financial markets. City policies encourage partnerships among all three of these sectors. When beneficial to do so, Electric City should consider "lead agency" status in order to leverage state and federal housing funds.

At the local level, the City could strengthen its alliance with the City of Grand Coulee and Town of Coulee Dam, Grant County, the Grant County Housing Authority and the Grant County Community Action Agency, the latter two of which are nonprofit housing providers. At the state level, the City could strengthen ties with the Housing Finance Unit (HFU) of the Department of Commerce. The HFU administers funds for several state and federal housing programs. Also, on the state level, is the Washington Housing Finance

Commission, which administers funds for a number of housing programs, aimed at low-income households, special need populations and first-time home buyers.

Manufactured/Factory-Built Housing

Manufactured homes, defined as single-family residences transportable in one or more sections that are eight feet or more in width and thirty-two feet or more in length, built on a permanent chassis, designed to be used as a permanent dwelling and constructed before June 15, 1976, are no longer permitted to be moved into the City. The community has determined that manufactured homes, in contrast, are more durable, safer and less mobile in nature, and constructed after June 15, 1976 and in accordance with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements for manufactured housing are preferable over older mobile homes. In addition, other factory-built homes, such as modular or pre-fabricated are permitted the same as stick-built dwellings.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Housing Tenure

The number and types of households in a community can partially indicate the housing needs of that community. A household includes all people living in one housing unit, whether or not they are related. A single person renting an apartment is a household, as is a family living in a single-family house.

Out of the total 524 housing units in the City in 2010, 85.30% were owner- and renter-occupied, and 14.70% of the units were vacant.

Housing Type

There are three basic types of housing in the City: single-family (stick-built), multi-family (apartments, duplexes), and mobile or manufactured homes. The housing stock within the City consists predominantly of single-family homes, both site-built, mobile and manufactured homes.

In 2010, there were 524 housing units² in the City. Of the 443 occupied units, 78.30% of these units were single-family detached units (no attached units counted). Another 68 or 15.30% of occupied housing units were mobile or manufactured homes. Of the combined total 524 single-family, mobile and

² - 2010 American Community Survey Data estimates.

manufactured home units, 355 or 74.90% were owner-occupied.

Between 2010 and 2016, the total number of housing units was estimated to have declined to by 40 units to 449. The American Community Survey's estimates for 2016 found that 375 or 83.52% of these units were single-family detached units, with another 11 or 2.45% single-family attached units. 46 or 10.24% housing units were mobile or manufactured homes. Of the combined total 432 single-family, mobile and manufactured home units, 265 or 61.34% were owner-occupied. Of the 103 rental housing units, 86 or 83.50% were single-family homes. 17 multifamily rental units were identified in the Survey.

Population and Available Vacant Housing

The data on housing units presented in the preceding section along with the projection of slow population growth generally shows that the availability of single-family units has improved with fewer owner-occupied dwellings and an increased number of rental units.

Value and Cost of Housing

For most areas, housing costs are the primary driver of an area's cost-of-living. The median value of owner-occupied housing, based on data from the 2010 American Community Survey was \$153,200. According to the 2016 American Community survey, the median value of owner-occupied housing had increased to \$175,700. This represents an increase of 12.81% since 2010.

Rent levels also have shifted dramatically over the last six years. In 2010 most (47.24%) rents were less than \$500 per month, with no rents reported at \$1000 or more per month. By 2016, the range had "crept" upward and was spread across a larger range. The most frequent rent range in 2016 was \$500 to \$999 per month with 75.73% of rents in this range and another 20.39% with rents above \$1000 per month. The median rent in 2010 of \$531 per month was estimated at \$762 per month in 2016, a 30.31% increase.

The price of housing compared to household income determines the ability of residents to secure adequate housing. Median income is defined as the mid-point of all of the reported incomes; that is, half the households had higher incomes and half had lower incomes than the mid-point. In 2010, the median household income in Electric City was \$42,031. By 2016, the median household income had increased to \$51,286, an increase of 18.05%, but about \$11,562 lower than the statewide median household income of \$62,848. In 2016, the American Community Survey estimates that 8.10% of Electric City's residents

live in poverty, well below the 12.70% statewide average. HUD defines housing cost burden as the extent to which gross housing costs, including utility costs, exceed 30 percent of gross income, based on data published by the U.S. Census Bureau. This is the threshold at which the cost of housing typically becomes a burden for most families. At this point, the money available for other necessary expenses such as food and medical care is reduced. Such households are often termed “Households in Need of Assistance.”

Condition of Housing Stock

Most of the existing housing stock was built 30 to 60 years ago (See Table 7-1). The majority of the older houses – built between 1940 and 1955 – are modest in size and were not built well originally. Therefore, if they are not well maintained, they could be in need of substantial repair work. These homes are an asset that needs to be maintained and there is only a minimal amount of funds available from various state and federal programs to repair homes of lower income families. In addition, there are a number of mobile homes in the City. These older mobile homes are now obsolete, yet they continue to provide an important source of affordable housing in the community.

Nearly all of the housing units in Electric City are served by a public or private sanitary sewer system. Nearly 100% receive water from a public or private water system

Figure 7-5
Value of Owner-Occupied Housing - 1990

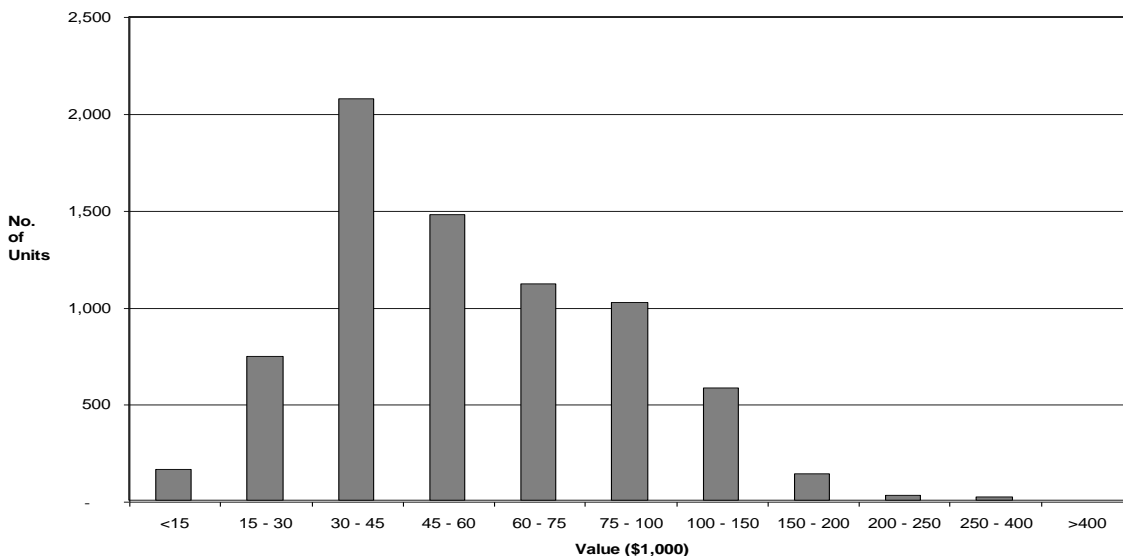


Table 7-1
Age of Housing

Age (Years)	No. of Units	% of Total
Built 2014 or later	0	0.00%
Built 2010 to 2013	8	1.78%
Built 2000 to 2009	26	5.79%
Built 1990 to 1999	37	8.24%
Built 1980 to 1989	67	14.92%
Built 1970 to 1979	134	29.84%
Built 1960 to 1969	61	13.59%
Built 1950 to 1959	34	7.57%
Built 1940 to 1949	25	5.57%
Built 1939 and earlier	57	12.69%
Total	449	100.00%

Source: 2016 American Community Survey

The 2016 American Community Survey estimated that only two residential units lacked complete plumbing facilities and complete kitchen facilities.

Housing Rehabilitation

In many cases, rehabilitation of existing houses is the most cost-effective way to increase and preserve the number of affordable housing units. However, repairing roofs, walls, and foundations are some of the most costly home repairs. Although expensive, correcting these deficiencies provides a multitude of benefits. For example, insurance companies may be more inclined to issue homeowners' policies for homes in good repair than to those in need of substantial repair. Fire insurance premiums may be higher in substandard housing. Deteriorated housing can also result in high heating bills, which presents an added economic hardship to the occupant.

Rehabilitation and weatherization programs are important means to maintain the city's older housing stock. A number of federal, state and local rehabilitation programs are available for which low- and moderate-income residents are eligible.

Special Housing Needs

While this housing sector is not a large one, it is one that has been historically difficult to provide for. Meeting this housing need often relies on federal grant funding and benevolence of charitable or social organizations. Following is a discussion of several of the special housing needs of Electric City.

Elderly and Frail Elderly

Electric City continues to be a retirement destination location. A rise in the proportion of senior households will have an impact on the future housing needs in the City. Between 2010 and 2016, the number of persons 65+ grew by a 18.25%. The elderly is considered a special needs group because of the high correlation between age and disability. Also, many seniors live on a fixed income that makes high housing costs prohibitive. If they own their home, they may not be able to afford the cost of increasing property tax, insurance, or maintenance. Also, a fixed income may not permit them to rent a new apartment in a new facility that would provide them with a full range of care services.

“Frail elderly” are elderly that have one or more Limitations to Activities to Daily Living (LADLs) or Instrumental Activities to Daily Living (IADLs). That is, they may need assistance to perform routine activities of daily living.

An ADL (difficulty eating, bathing, toileting, etc. by oneself) is more limiting than an IADL (difficulty using the telephone, getting outside, shopping, doing light housework, etc. by oneself). It is fair to assume that elderly persons need supportive housing assistance if they are both frail and low income since supportive housing assistance offers both services to compensate for frailty and financial assistance to offset low income. Local estimates of the number of frail elderly and their supportive housing needs are not available.

Physically Disabled

Future housing policy decisions must meet the needs of physically challenged persons. The greatest need is among the elderly. These people may need special housing with ramps instead of stairs, elevators for units with two or more stories and modified facilities.

The federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) poses a challenge to providing affordable housing options. The 1990 law requires changes to building and zoning codes to improve access for disabled persons. The codes apply to both new construction and to major rehabilitation. While data from other states shows that it costs less than \$1,000 to provide accommodation in new multi-family housing, it is expensive and not always possible to modify an existing unit. Older units, particularly older multi-family structures, are very expensive to retrofit for disabled occupants because space is rarely available to modify elevator shafts, add ramps, and widen doorways. Much of the existing multi-family housing (traditionally the more affordable housing) cannot be economically modified to meet the needs of disabled residents.

Homeless Persons

HUD defines “homeless” as those persons or families which (1) lack a residence, or (2) whose nighttime residence is a public or private emergency shelter; an institution that provides temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

This definition does not include persons forced to live with friends or relatives in unsafe or inappropriate housing. This definition also excludes recently homeless persons who are in transitional housing programs but have not yet attained housing self-sufficiency.

There are no official estimates of homeless persons in Electric City.

Low Income Housing

There are no low-income housing projects in Electric City.

Mentally Disabled

There are no facilities in Electric City that provide mental health services. Such services are provided in Grant County through the North Central Washington Regional Support Network (RSN), which provides services in Adams, Grant and Okanogan County.

Other Special Needs Housing

There are likely residents in Electric City that need housing assistance but do not fall under the larger categories. They could include people who have been recently released from correctional institutions, people recovering from chemical dependency, and victims of domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Shelters:

There are no domestic violence shelters in Electric City. According to the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, there is currently one licensed shelter for victims of domestic violence in Grant County.

Alcohol & Drug Rehabilitation: The Grant County Prevention and Recovery Center in Moses Lake provides services for Electric City residents.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Population Projections

The population projections contained in the Chapter 3 – Electric City Profile, the housing data contained in this Chapter, as well as the land use projections contained in Chapter 5 – Land Use and its sub-elements form the basis for the projections of housing need. The City of Electric City has experienced some of the same population fluctuation as the general Grand Coulee Dam Area. During periods of construction projects related to Grand Coulee Dam there has historically been a population increase from 200 to 500 additional people in the area. However, no major projects are expected during the life of this plan so such construction related spikes in the area's population are not anticipated.

Future Housing Needs

Examination of Electric City's present population and housing stock provides direction in determining the area's future housing needs. By projecting population for the next twenty years and dividing by the average household size, an estimate of the needed dwelling units (DU) can be determined.

Urban Growth Area

The City annexed the majority of its UGA in 2009. While much of the land is under public ownership, the available private land was intended to support a development with up to 150 homes. With this area still available for development, the City has more than enough land within the corporate limits to accommodate the most optimistic population projection for at least the next twenty years.

Affordable Housing

The ability to afford decent housing is essential to the well-being of the individual and the family. The supply of affordable housing may be a precondition to future employment opportunities, since many workers may be priced out of the local housing market.

Electric City is able to provide adequate land to meet housing needs through the year 2038. Land, however, is not the only consideration. The challenge lies in adequately providing for the low- and moderate-income

households. Affordable housing means that someone can afford a place to live, support a family, and be able to pay his or her bills. For these households, location of social, health, transportation, and housing services and proximity to jobs, shopping, and businesses, become much more integral to determining housing affordability.

Contrary to popular belief, affordable housing units are not necessarily located in large government-subsidized complexes. Quite often, affordable housing simply consists of a dwelling unit that is valued at a rate that is affordable to the average citizen. However, as housing prices continue to rise it is becoming more difficult for average individuals and families to purchase a home.

Purchasing a New Home

In 2016³, in order to purchase a home at the median purchase price of \$175,700 with a 20 percent down payment, the mortgage payment including tax and insurance would be an estimated \$843 per month. This assumes 6% interest and a 30-year fixed rate. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a person should not contribute more than 30 percent of his or her monthly income toward the purchase of a home.

Given this payment schedule and assuming the down payment money was available, one would have needed to earn \$36,000 per year to remain below the threshold of 30 percent. In 2016, the City's median household income was \$51,286. Therefore, only 30% of the median income is required to purchase a house of median value. Therefore, housing in Electric City was considered "affordable" in 2016.

Land and construction costs for new housing have continued to escalate over the past five years. If the trend continues there will be even less affordable new housing built in the City. It will become more difficult for new housing to meet the affordability needs of the middle class as well as lower income households. A number of housing designs that are sensitive to cost should be considered when building the City's future housing stock.

Affordable Housing Programs

A number of state and federal initiatives are aimed at fulfilling basic housing needs and expanding home ownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income citizens. A few of the programs are discussed below.

³ - American Fact Finder 2016 estimate.

Washington State Housing Finance Commission

The Washington State Housing Finance Commission (WSHFC) is a secondary lending institution that works to open the doors of opportunity for low- to moderate-income residents of the state by creating successful housing finance programs. The Commission's single-family programs assist first-time homebuyers by offering low interest mortgage loans through participating lenders. Eligible borrowers cannot make more than 80 percent of the county's median income, adjusted for family size. The program also includes a down payment assistance subsidy.

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program is a federally sponsored incentive program administered by the WSHFC. It provides a dollar-for-dollar reduction in federal tax-liability to developers of multi-family apartments who agree to reserve a percentage of units for low-income renters and to restrict rents within a prescribed level. Developers can sell tax credits to investors who purchase a partnership interest in the property. This process allows the developer to raise funds required to finance the project.

Financing Options for Local Governments

In addition to federal and state programs, there is a number of housing finance mechanisms of which the City could take advantage to promote the construction of affordable housing. The Department of Commerce's Housing Resource Guide is an excellent index of these programs. Among the local government options are:

General Obligation Bonds for Housing: The City could issue general obligation bonds for public purposes, which include the provision of housing for households at or below 80 percent of the area's median income. Bonds can be issued with or without voter approval. Voter-approved bonds are "unlimited" general obligation bonds, and bonds issued without voter approval are "limited" or "councilmanic" bonds.

Voter-approved bonds must be approved by 60 percent of those voting in the bond election and they must represent 40 percent of the voter turnout in the last general election in the jurisdiction. Councilmanic bonds can be issued only if the total debt of the jurisdiction does not exceed 75 percent of the jurisdiction's total assessed property value. No combination of voter-approved and councilmanic debt can exceed 2.5 percent of the total assessed value of all taxable property in the jurisdiction. Bond funds are limited to providing the capital costs of projects.

Special Purpose Property Tax Levy: The City can increase regular property taxes for special purposes, including low-income housing, for a specific time period subject to voter approval. No minimum voter turnout is required and the measure can pass with a simple majority vote. Levies can provide housing at an overall lower cost than bonds because there are no issuance costs or repayment of principal and interest. Levy funds can also be used for a broader set of purposes than can bonds, including operating and administrative costs. These funds are one of the most flexible local resources for housing. Programs can be designed to address local needs. Levy funds qualify as matching funds for all state and federal housing programs.

Manufactured Housing

Manufactured housing is a major source of affordable housing in Electric City. Manufactured housing units are distinguished from “mobile homes” because they are more durable and less mobile in nature. Once manufactured housing units are sited, they are rarely moved. Additionally, manufactured housing meets HUD standards, which make it possible to get a loan to purchase a new manufactured home with little or no down payment. The buyer can also purchase the land to site the manufactured home on contract, with little down payment. This is a very attractive option for those with little savings.

There are a number of ways that Electric City could encourage the development of affordable housing that do not directly involve public financing. The City’s zoning code allows manufactured home parks. The average price for a mobile home is less than the average price of a site-built home. Therefore, mobile homes serve an important affordable housing need.

Maintaining the Housing Stock

Rehabilitating older housing offers an excellent opportunity to provide safe, affordable housing for City residents. Existing structures provide character of place, and their preservation defines the community’s character. Rehabilitation of existing structures also reflects an environmentally conscious approach to neighborhoods by re-using existing resources.

Affordable housing is generally associated with an adequate supply of older housing. Existing older housing stock will continue to provide many of the more affordable units in the future. Of the 449 housing units in the City, 39.42% were built prior to 1970.

In addition to maintaining and rehabilitating the City’s older housing stock,

other likely targets for maintenance and rehabilitation efforts are homes owned by low-moderate income individuals or by those on fixed incomes such as the elderly, and rental units occupied by low income tenants. The City also has vacant units and dilapidated housing that could provide affordable, quality housing for low and very low-income populations if rehabilitated. However, in some cases, it can cost as much to acquire and rehabilitate dilapidated housing as it would cost for new construction.

Rehabilitation and weatherization programs are important means to maintain the City's older housing stock. A number of rehabilitation programs are available for which low- and moderate-income residents are eligible. The following is a sample of the state, federal, and local rehabilitation programs available to City residents:

Housing Preservation Grant Program. Funded by USDA, Rural Development (RD). Non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for grants to rehabilitate housing of very low and low-income households.

Home Investment In Affordable Housing Program. Funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Funds are disbursed by the Washington Department of Commerce. Cities and counties are eligible to apply for rehabilitation programs on behalf of low- and moderate-income homeowners and renters.

Community Development Block Grant. Funded by HUD. Funds disbursed by Department of Commerce. Cities and counties are eligible to apply for rehabilitation programs on behalf of low- and moderate-income persons.

Home Improvement Loans and Repair Loans and Grants. Funded by USDA, Rural Development (RD). Individuals are eligible homeowners with very low incomes.

Habitat for Humanity. Encourages participation of homeowner and volunteers in rehabilitating and constructing housing.

Housing Improvement Program. Funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Eligible applicants are Native American homeowners.

Weatherization Grants. Weatherization grants may be used for rehabilitation

projects that increase protection of the house from weather.

Rental Housing

Electric City needs affordable, quality rental units for very-low and low-income persons. 47.6% of the City's renters are paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent and are considered households in need of assistance. The populations that tend to be cost burdened are female-headed households, the senior citizen population, and farm worker families. These populations could benefit by the availability of low market rents. Specifically, there is a need for very low-income rental units that are suitable for the average low-income family.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory units provide one of the most economical options in the real estate market. Accessory housing units are complete living quarters constructed within an existing single-family unit or in a separate detached structure. Within an existing residence they are typically created in a converted attic, basement, garage or other space. They are always secondary in size to the existing dwelling, usually less than 900 square feet. Common names for these units include granny flats, mother-in-law apartments, and bachelor units. Accessory units combine the advantages of small size, maximized use of existing dwellings, and income for homeowners. They also provide an opportunity to increase residential density with minimal community disruption, however more recently, there is a trend for such accessory dwellings to be rented on a nightly basis. Accessory dwellings, particularly those intended for or used as a tourist accommodation, must be carefully planned however, to avoid negative impacts (primarily traffic and parking) on neighborhood character.

Since most elderly residents prefer to live independently in family units or alone, they would be well served by smaller, affordable and accessible rental and housing units. Elderly persons who live with family or friends might benefit from zoning provisions that allow for another, smaller unit to be built on single-family lots.

Housing Finance

The public, not-for-profit, and private finance sectors all play an important role in housing finance. A healthy and complete housing finance system involves the participation of all three sectors in a manner that most appropriately reflects public purpose, capital requirements, costs, interest rates and other influences on financial markets. Public sector financing of housing is traditionally identified with

housing for the lowest income groups and involves the deepest direct subsidies. The public sector is also involved in middle- and high-income subsidies to housing through tax policies. The public sector's role, however, is changing with the trend toward partnership building among nonprofit and private entities.

Private sector finance is the mainstay of housing development. Increasingly, in order to meet the needs of low- and moderate-income persons, the private finance institutions need the assistance of the public and not-for-profit sector. The private sector also has responsibilities to invest in communities through the Community Reinvestment Act. CRA goals often give impetus both to partnerships with the other sectors and to innovative financing techniques.

Nonprofit organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity, have also contributed to housing development in the County. Alliances between these groups and the public and private sectors help stretch housing resources.

Clustering

One technique available for reducing housing development costs is clustering. By clustering units together instead of dispersing them throughout a site, reduces the costs for roads, water, sewer, and building. Clustering is also used to preserve open space and resource lands, and protect sensitive and natural resources.

Planned Unit Developments

Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) offer developers flexibility in project design and site planning which can allow for a higher quality development and improved affordability. PUDs are generally characterized by flexible site requirements that focus on overall project design rather than lot by lot design, efficiency in the provision of utilities, and common open space.

Homeless

Housing policies should also address the significant need for the homeless. Experience indicates that the longer people spend on the streets, the harder it is to rejoin society. The successful reentry of the homeless into society will depend on the availability of affordable housing for them to occupy. Since there is no one type of homeless person, a variety of housing types is necessary. These may include special transitional shelters, group housing, shared/congregate facilities, seasonal housing and standard housing units of both on-site and off-site manufacture.

Development Review Process

In addition to land use policies, the development review process conducted by the City should be streamlined to minimize unnecessary time delays and procedural requirements. The timeliness of the permit process represents a cost to the homebuilder, and eventually to the homebuyer. These may include a reduction in the time needed to receive final approval from the County, and thereby adding certainty to the development review process. Minimizing discretionary, conditional and administrative processes, such as additional hearings, can save time in the development process and in turn cut costs. A streamlined review process will help reduce housing costs and may also encourage developers to use the policy and regulatory features of the Comprehensive Plan designed to encourage affordable housing.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Goals and policies follow the shared vision for the future of Electric City and Grant County for sustaining and improving our quality of life. Goals and policies are also consistent with the Planning Goals of the Growth Management Act. Goals are broad statements of a community's aspirations. Policies express a commitment to a course of action. Policies provide overall direction for implementation of a strategy. Policies provide clear guidance for decision-making subject to this Plan, and form the basis for development regulations.

The goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan related to Housing are found in Chapter 4 Policy Plan.