



CHAPTER 4: Housing Element



Introduction

The Housing Element describes housing issues in Douglas County, and includes specific goals, policies, and actions to address these issues.



Since the Housing Element was first adopted in 1996, Douglas County has adopted an affordable housing density bonus, an accessory dwelling unit ordinance, as well as independent congregate senior housing regulations. Despite several amendments to the Code to encourage higher density residential development as well as affordable housing, the supply of affordable rental units and higher density residential development remains very low in the County. The percentage of single-family detached housing remains at the same percentage in 2010 as it was in 2005. There are less than 1,200 rental units in the County that are affordable to households with incomes less than \$35,000 per year. For households with incomes less than \$25,000 per year, there are fewer than 200 rental units in the entire County that would be affordable (with rents less than \$500 per month).

There are currently no affordable senior housing projects in Douglas County and the maximum density for multi-family residential development is now at 16 units per acre, considerably lower than typical multifamily residential zoning districts. Housing prices at Lake Tahoe remain significantly higher than the rest of Douglas County and opportunities to develop affordable housing remain very limited. The situation at Lake Tahoe is further complicated by a housing market which continues to transition toward vacation and second home ownership use. Additional detailed information on the housing market, household conditions, affordable housing, and supportive housing is available in Volume II of the Master Plan.

Housing Issues

In order to understand the various housing issues in Douglas County, it is helpful to look at the existing housing inventory, the type of households in Douglas County, as well as the housing market, future demands, and the need for affordable and supportive housing.

Housing Inventory

The housing inventory in Douglas County remains predominantly single-family detached units. As shown in Figure 4.1, the total number of housing units in Douglas County increased from 22,657 to 24,095 from 2005 to 2010. The percentage of single-family detached units remained at 73.6 percent while the percentage of multifamily units increased from 1,011 units to 1,448 units and now stands at 6 percent of the total housing units in Douglas County. Figure 4.1 depicts a significant change in the manufactured housing inventory. The number of secured and unsecured units declined from 2,583 units

in 2005 to 1,841 units in 2010, a decrease of 742 units, or 28.7 percent. As a result, manufactured housing is now 7.6 percent of the total housing units in Douglas County compared to 11.4 percent in 2005.

**Figure 4.1
Douglas County Housing Inventory**

Housing Type	2005	Percentage of Total Units	2010	Percentage of Total Units
SF-Detached	16,680	73.6%	17,744	73.6%
SF-Attached	2,383	10.5%	3,062	12.7%
Manufactured Home	2,583	11.4%	1,841	7.6%
Multifamily	1,011	4.5%	1,448	6.0%
TOTAL	22,657	100.0%	24,095	100.0%

Source: Douglas County Assessor's Office

Figure 4.2 provides housing inventory information for specific planning areas in Douglas County. Almost half of the manufactured homes in Douglas County, or 778 units, are located in the Topaz Regional Plan area. Gardnerville has 496 multifamily units, or 34.2 percent of the total multifamily units in the County. Of the 24,095 housing units in Douglas County (2010), only 1,448 units are multifamily, or 6 percent of the total units in the County. By comparison, Carson City has 4,940 multifamily units, representing 21 percent of the total housing inventory in Carson City.

**Figure 4.2
2010 Housing Inventory in Douglas County Tax District**

Region or Community Plan	Single Family Detached	Single Family Attached	Manufactured Homes*	Multi-Family	Total Dwelling Units
Carson Valley (w/o IH/JV)	5,567	7	227	2	5,803
Indian Hills/Jacks Valley	1,882	0	225	230	2,337
Gardnerville	1,534	204	343	496	2,577
Gardnerville Ranchos GID	3,378	682	1	163	4,224
Genoa	111	2	1	0	114
Minden	1,245	104	0	111	1,460
Sierra Regional Plan	743	7	10	0	760
Tahoe Regional Plan w/o Kingsbury	1,876	823	240	342	3,281
Tahoe Regional Plan/Kingsbury Only	1,002	1,233	16	104	2,355
Topaz Regional Plan	406	0	778	0	1,184
TOTAL	17,744	3,062	1,841	1,448	24,095

Source: Douglas County Assessor's Office, July 2010 Housing Count Estimates

Household Tenure

Figure 4.3 provides information on the number of owner and renter-occupied households in Douglas County. In 1990, there were 7,285 owner-occupied housing units in Douglas County or 68.9 percent of the total occupied units. In 2010, the number of owner-occupied had increased to 14,105 units, or 71.8 percent of the total households in Douglas County.

Figure 4.3
Household Tenure in Douglas County, 1990 to 2010

Year	Total Units	Occupied Units	Owner-Occupied Units	Percentage Of Total Occupied Units	Renter-Occupied Units	Percentage of Total Occupied Units
1990	14,121	10,571	7,285	68.9%	3,286	31.1%
2010	23,671	19,638	14,105	71.8%	5,533	28.2%

Source: 1990 and 2010 Census

Housing Market

As shown in Figure 4.4, the 2010 Sales data from the Douglas County Assessor’s Office provides information on the cost of single family units sold during 2010. Based on the median sales price, the most affordable units were located in the Gardnerville Ranchos Community Plan area followed by both Topaz and Indian Hills. Lake Tahoe recorded the the highest median sales price at \$600,000. Housing prices in Douglas County are typically much higher than in other areas of the State.

Figure 4.4
Douglas County Single-Family Sales
2010

Area	High Price	Low Price	Median Price	Average Price	% of Sales Below \$300,000
Johnson Lane	\$750,000	\$101,850	\$273,500	\$300,960	49.5%
Indian Hills	\$430,585	\$67,601	\$195,000	\$200,323	93.4%
Minden/Gardnerville	\$520,000	\$70,000	\$210,000	\$223,845	86.0%
Gardnerville Ranchos	\$475,000	\$65,691	\$163,114	\$182,706	94.1%
Ruhenstroth	\$365,000	\$172,850	\$297,000	\$275,678	50.0%
Sunrise Estates	\$750,000	100,000	\$255,000	\$366,287	50.0%
West Valley	\$900,000	\$325,000	\$437,000	\$497,960	0.0%
Tahoe	\$5,100,000	\$218,820	\$600,000	\$1,000,750	0.0%
Topaz	\$650,000	\$87,302	\$195,500	\$235,289	76.0%

Source: Douglas County Assessor’s Office Sales Database

More entry level housing is needed to accommodate first-time homebuyers and to support employees working in Douglas County. More resources for housing rehabilitation are also needed to reduce ownership costs among the elderly and low-moderate income homeowners.

Rental Units

The inventory of rental units in Douglas County does not currently reach households below 50 percent of median income, requiring a rent range below \$500.00 per month.

In 2009, there were an estimated 1,231 Douglas County renter households earning less than \$25,000 per year (Figure 4.5). The corresponding affordable rent level for those households is approximately \$500 per month. In 2009, there were only 156 units in Douglas County which offered a rent at or below \$500 per month. It should be noted that all households with an income at or below \$25,000 faced a housing cost burden. For households earning \$35,000 per year, the corresponding maximum affordable rent level is approximately \$700 per month. There were 1,180 units available in Douglas County at or below that rent level in 2009. However, almost all of the households (97.3 percent) at or below \$35,000 still faced a housing cost burden. Douglas County needs to increase the amount of rental housing available for households with an income at or below \$35,000. There are a large number of single family detached and attached homes used as rental housing, but this rental stock is usually much more expensive to rent than conventional multifamily units.

**Figure 4.5
Rental Housing Needs in Douglas County**

Household Income Level	Number of Renter Households	2011 Douglas Co. Household Inc.(1)	% of households with Housing Cost Burden	Affordable Rent Level Excluding Utilities	Rental Units Available
Less than \$35,000	1,943	50% of median income	97.3%	Less than \$700	1,180
Less than \$25,000	1,231	30% of median income	100%	Less than \$500	156

Sources: US. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, and American Community Survey, 2009. Note 1: Household income level as a percentage of the 2011 Douglas County’s median income. A household with a \$35,000 income is at the 50 percent income level.

Senior Housing

Currently, there are no affordable elderly rental housing units available in Douglas County. Affordable elderly rental units should meet or exceed fully accessible requirements and meet universal design standards. Projects should be located in the Indian Hills and Minden/Gardnerville areas. In Douglas County, the percentage of the

population that is 65 years or older increased from 15.2 percent in 2000 to 20.2 percent in 2010. This trend is expected to increase over the next decade. According to Douglas County Social Services, affordable senior housing is a high priority need for Douglas County.



**Mahogany Court
Apartments**

Location of Affordable Housing Units in Douglas County

Affordable housing units include market rate affordable units (no federal or state funding) as well as assisted affordable units (which have federal and/or state funding). Much of the market rate affordable housing (renter- and owner-occupied) is concentrated in the Towns of Minden and Gardnerville and in the Gardnerville Ranchos. At the current time, there are 404 units of affordable housing in Douglas County, including 326 units of affordable rental units and 78

units of for sale units. Figure 4.6 provides additional information on each of the affordable renter-occupied and owner-occupied housing developments in Douglas County. These figures do not include housing choice vouchers, which can be used in all areas of the County.

**Figure 4.6
Renter and Owner-Occupied Affordable Housing Units in Douglas County**

Development	Number of Units	Location
<i>Renter-Occupied Units</i>		
Aspen Grove*	39	Lake Tahoe
Crestmore Village Apts. – Phase I**	40	Gardnerville
Crestmore Village Apts. – Phase II		
Kingbury Manor	36	Minden
Lake Vista I**	24	Lake Tahoe
Lake Vista II**	40	Lake Tahoe
Mahogany Court	21	Minden
Meadow Brook	30	Lake Tahoe
Rancho Vista	36	Gardnerville
Summit Crest**	28	Indian Hills
<i>Subtotal</i>	326	
<i>Owner-Occupied Units</i>		
Arbor Gardens**	78	Gardnerville
<i>Subtotal</i>	78	
TOTAL	404	

* Aspen Grove is a TRPA Mitigation Project.

** Developments with Affordable Housing Agreements.

Supportive Housing

There are very few supportive housing units in Douglas County, including emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing units. Special needs housing often requires resources to maintain the supportive element. Given the limited availability of support services and funding for support services at all levels of government, priority needs should be established for Douglas County. According to the 2000 Census, there were 2,666 households in Douglas County with someone having a mobility or self-care limitation. Of those households, 691 had a household income at or below 50 percent of the Douglas County's median income and 53.2 percent (368 households) were elderly. Tenure of households at or below 50 percent of median income was 60 percent owners (412 households) and 40 percent renters (279 households). Low-income elderly and disabled households utilize housing choice vouchers to access affordable housing as well. Douglas County does not have any designated housing units for low-income elderly or disabled households.

It should be noted that individuals with permanent disabilities, including persons with developmental disabilities or mental illness, often depend completely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) due to inability to work on a full-time basis, if at all. For 2011, the federal SSI payments for individuals was \$674 per month or \$1,011 for a couple. The State of Nevada does provide a supplement for persons who receive SSI, but only to persons who are aged or blind. The State does not pay a supplement to non-elderly disabled single persons unless they live in an institution. If a person was aged or blind, the 2011 total monthly SSI payment in Nevada would range from \$710 to \$783.

One in eight persons at 65 and older suffer from dementia/Alzheimer and 50 percent of those 85 and over. With an older population, Douglas County will see the number of residents with dementia/Alzheimer increase. In 2009, approximately 29,000 people in Nevada suffered from dementia/Alzheimer.

Persons with Developmental Disabilities

Persons with developmental disabilities face many of the same challenges as the elderly and the disabled. Persons with developmental disabilities require affordable and accessible housing options according to the Nevada Council on Developmental Disabilities. Currently, housing choice vouchers provide the primary access to affordable housing. Most persons with developmental disabilities who live independently are renters.

Persons with Mental Illness

The Center for Mental Health Services estimates that 5.5 percent of the population in Nevada will suffer from a severe mental illness and as much as 23.7 percent will have some form of diagnosable disorder during their life. A more recent study estimated that 4.03 percent of Nevada's population (July 2003) had a prevalence for serious mental illness (SMI) among adults and Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED) among children.

The 2004 Center for Mental Health Services report ranked Nevada as the worst among 15 western states for mental illness prevalence. It is important to note that 73 percent of total clients served in 2006 were diagnosed as SMI/SED. Based upon the aforementioned estimates, just over 2,000 Douglas residents could suffer from severe mental illness.

Approximately 11.1 percent of all Nevadans lived below the poverty level in 2005. This contrasts sharply with the consumers of Nevada's public mental health services. As a rule, the people who come for mental health services are from lower income brackets with approximately 87 percent of MHDS' consumers earning below \$16,000 per year.

Homeless Population

Most of the homeless population in Douglas County are sheltered and are not living on the street. The most recent Continuum of Care Point-In-Time Survey (January 2011) showed that there were only 2 homeless persons on the street and one encampment. Local providers served seven individuals in 2011. Nineteen homeless interviews were conducted. Most of the interviewees were homeless for the first time and all indicated that they became homeless in Douglas County. Inability to pay rent was the reason most often cited for homelessness. Over a third of the population was disabled.

The Douglas County School District reported that there were a total of 195 homeless school children. Approximately 95 percent of school aged children are enrolled in school. As a result, there are an estimated 205 homeless school age children (age 5-18). Nearly all of the children were sheltered and living with friends or relatives in the area.

Vacant Land Zoned for Medium and High-Density Residential Development

The limited availability of land zoned for high density residential development or mixed-use development continues to be an issue in Douglas County.

Higher density residential options have rarely been utilized in Douglas County. Residential development rarely exceeds 4-5 units per acre and single-family attached housing such as condominiums and townhomes represent only a small percentage of the total housing inventory particularly in the Carson Valley.



Based on a 2010 analysis of vacant land zoned for multi-family residential (MFR) development, there are now only 124.75 acres zoned as MFR, with almost 100 acres of this total located only in the Minden/Gardnerville Community Plan area. In the Indian Hills/Jacks Valley Community Plan, there are only 2.18 acres zoned as MFR. In addition, there are only 18.14 acres zoned as Mixed Use Commercial, all of which is located in the Minden/Gardnerville Community Plan Area.

Douglas County Development Code

The Douglas County Development Code contains provisions to encourage affordable housing. Chapter 20.440, Density Bonus and Affordable Housing Agreements, was adopted in 1996. The Chapter provides for an increase of density up to 25 percent. Since 1996, however, only three residential developments have used this provision. Arbor Gardens, located in Gardnerville is a mixed-income single family detached subdivision that contains 78 units which are restricted to families below 110 percent of median income. Crestmore Townhomes is a renter-occupied community that contains 72 units in Gardnerville.

Housing at Lake Tahoe

Housing costs have historically been much higher at Lake Tahoe than the rest of Douglas County. This is due to several factors, including the limited availability of land available for residential development, the limited number of TRPA residential allocations and the high demand for housing, including second homes, at the Lake. During 2010, for example, the median price for single family home sales was \$600,000 (Douglas County Assessor). By comparison, the median sales price for single family home sales in Minden and Gardnerville was \$210,000 according to the Douglas County Assessor's Office.

Additional workforce housing is needed to maintain the permanent population. Affordable housing projects may require a certain percentage of market rate housing units. Affordable and workforce housing regulations although well intended function as a penalty for development or redevelopment because the requirements cannot be easily implemented. Transient and temporary workforce housing is needed for seasonal workforces with high turnover rates.

As part of the Update to the Regional Plan, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) will be recommending substantive changes (Phase II) to the Code of Ordinances which will include revisions to the definitions for affordable housing and when such housing is exempt from residential allocations. At the current time, only developments which have 100 percent affordable housing and which serve households at or below 80 percent of median income are exempt from the residential allocation requirements. In order to encourage more mixed-used development including affordable housing near transit, the Regional Plan should expand the definition of affordable housing to include mixed-income developments and should also exempt moderate-income housing (defined as households with incomes up to 120 percent of median income) from the residential allocation system. If these strategies are adopted as part of the Regional Plan Update, this will require corresponding revisions to the Code of Ordinances.

A related issue concerns provisions for density bonuses in the Code of Ordinances. At the current time, TRPA allows up to a 25 percent density bonus for affordable housing. The maximum density for multi-family housing is now limited to 15 units per acre. If the

density bonus is expanded to cover mixed-income as well as moderate income housing, this may encourage the development of more affordable housing at Lake Tahoe.

The existing mitigation requirements for subdivisions under TRPA are also restricted to households with incomes at or below 80 percent of median income.

Future Housing Demand

Future housing demand estimates are based upon two different population forecasts. A lower growth forecast prepared by the Nevada State Demographer estimates a total of 1,352 new housing units for ownership and 375 rental units will be needed by 2030. A projected 377 for sale housing units will be needed to meet the demands of low and very-low income households. Just over 200 rental housing units will be needed for low and very low-income households over the next 20 years under the State Demographer's population forecast.

A population forecast which is based upon historic Douglas County growth levels from 2000 to 2010 requires a substantial increase in new housing units as compared to the Demographer's forecast. The total number of new owner units could be as high as 5,401 with 1,507 units for low and very low income owner households over the next 20 years. Under the historic population growth scenario, an estimated 1,524 rental units will be needed by 2030 with 840 units being available for low and very low income households in Douglas County.

Housing Element (H) Goals, Policies, and Actions

H Goal 1 **To increase housing opportunities in Douglas County by removing regulatory barriers.**

H Action 1.1 Amend the Douglas County Development Code to include a provision on reasonable accommodation, in conformance with the Fair Housing Act.

H Action 1.2 Amend the Douglas County Development Code to remove limits on the number of unrelated persons that can live in a dwelling unit.

H Action 1.3 Amend the Douglas County Development Code to include minimum density requirements in the multifamily residential and mixed use commercial zoning districts.

H Action 1.4 Review the Development Code to determine whether or not impediments exist for the development of rental housing projects.

H Action 1.5 Review the Development Code to determine whether or not impediments exist for the development of moderately priced entry-level homes including single-family attached units.

H Goal 2 **To increase awareness of affordable housing needs in Douglas County**

H Action 2.1 As part of the required annual report on the Master Plan, include a status report on affordable housing in Douglas County, including developments with density bonuses.

H Goal 3 **To reduce predevelopment costs associated with affordable housing developments, including land acquisition, and other up front development costs.**

H Policy 3.1 Support developments that include affordable housing (ownership units for households earning up to 120 percent of the median household income and rental units up to 80 percent AMI) with reduced or waived development and building permits fees as well as reduced or waived water and sewer fees.

H Action 3.1 Prepare recommendations on strategies to reduce predevelopment costs for affordable housing.

H Goal 4 To increase affordable rental housing units for elderly and disabled households in the Minden/Gardnerville area and Indian Hills.

H Policy 4.1 Housing units for qualified elderly and disabled households shall be eligible for project cost reductions by exceeding Fair Housing and ADA accessibility requirements.

H Action 4.1 Determine possible locations for the development of affordable senior housing in proximity to the new Douglas County Community/Senior Center in Gardnerville and solicit interest from potential developers.

H Action 4.2 Develop an additional 40 to 80 units of affordable rental units within ten years for elderly and disabled households.

H Action 4.3 Douglas County will prepare siting criteria for new affordable rental units to insure proximity to community services.

H Goal 5 To increase availability of affordable housing units at Lake Tahoe.

H Policy 5.1 Continue to support the development of affordable housing units at Lake Tahoe due to related important social and environmental benefits and support changes to the Code of Ordinances which facilitate more affordable housing development.

H Policy 5.2 Encourage development of affordable housing which includes households earning up to 120 percent of the area's median income as determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development adjusted for household size.

H Policy 5.3 Support the development of mixed-income rental and for-sale developments with such developments exempt from the residential allocation regulations.

H Policy 5.4 Support the development of mixed-income rental developments which include at least 10 percent of the total units available for household earning up to 50 percent of AMI as determined U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

H Action 5.1 Work with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to determine alternative funding alternatives, such as a mitigation fee, that can be available for affordable workforce housing and appropriate sites for development.

- H Action 5.2 Coordinate with Lake Tahoe Basin employers to determine temporary or seasonal workforce housing needs and develop appropriate strategies.
- H Action 5.3 Work with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to insure that the 2012 Update of the Code of Ordinances facilitates the development of affordable housing, including mixed-income housing, which is exempt from the residential allocations.
- H Goal 6 To increase availability of affordable homeownership opportunities for households with incomes up to 120 percent of AMI.**
- H Policy 6.1 Support community land trusts to develop and maintain entry-level housing stock for households with incomes below 120 percent of median income.
- H Policy 6.2 Provide sufficient lands zoned MFR or MUC in Douglas County Community Plans.
- H Policy 6.3 Continue to support and retain Nevada Rural Housing Authority and USDA first time homebuyer programs in Douglas County.
- H Action 6.1 Prepare annual updates on the number of first time homebuyer loans provided in Douglas County.
- H Goal 7 To increase housing opportunities for special needs households including persons with physical and mental disabilities, the elderly, and at-risk children.**
- H Policy 7.1 The County shall cooperate with developers in the production of dwelling units accessible to persons with disabilities and shall encourage developers to consider incorporating minimal changes in the percentage of new units, which would make them more usable for persons with disabilities while not otherwise affecting their marketability.
- H Policy 7.2 Work with local housing groups to assist disabled persons with accessibility modifications. Encourage housing finance agencies such as the Western Nevada HOME Consortium, USDA, Nevada Housing Division and the Rural Nevada Housing Authority to make available housing rehabilitation funds for accessibility projects in Douglas County.

- H Action 7.1 Douglas County will prepare recommendations concerning visitability requirements for new single family detached and attached dwelling units.
- H Action 7.2 The County will develop priority needs statement for special needs housing in consultation with local agencies and providers.
- H Goal 8 To increase resources to maintain owner-occupied units in Douglas County with preference for elderly households.**
- H Policy 8.1 The County will continue to support existing local and home rehabilitation and weatherization programs in order to reduce ownership expenses and improve health and safety concerns.
- H Policy 8.2 The County will continue to pursue state and local funding programs to address rehabilitation and weatherization needs in Douglas County.