

Legislation Text

File #: G&R17-01, **Version:** 1

Clerk 02/24/2017

A GUIDELINE AND RECOMMENDATION to inform government officials working at regional, county, and city levels on housing strategies and policies to improve the health of residents and communities while preserving housing affordability throughout King County in compliance with the 2012 King County Countywide Planning policies on housing.

The Board of Health adopts guidelines that are intended to acknowledge the connections between housing and health and inform government officials working at regional, county, and city levels on housing strategies and policies to improve the health of all residents and communities in King County. The guidelines are broadly organized into two categories: 1. Local Policy Actions intended to be actionable within the scope and rule-making authority of jurisdictions; and 2. Cross Sector Partnership Opportunities where cross-sector partnerships are crucial to create and maintain healthy housing. Within these categories, guidelines focus on six areas: overarching healthy housing policies; residential building design and maintenance; knowledge and education; community design; housing and health services; and housing affordability. The guidelines are informed by leading causes of housing-related disease, injury and death in King County. The guidelines apply to all populations of King County and should be considered and applied to an overall policy strategy that considers equity in housing opportunities and balances the need to address unhealthy housing conditions with preservation and expansion of affordable housing stock.

The following Guidelines and Recommendations are intended to inform government officials working at regional, county and city levels on housing strategies and policies to improve the health of residents and communities while preserving housing affordability throughout King County in compliance with the 2012 King County Countywide Planning Policies on housing. The Guidelines and Recommendations consider leading causes of housing-related disease, injury and death in King County - asthma, falls, and unintentional poisonings.

Section I of the Guidelines and Recommendations are intended to be actionable within the scope and rule-making authority of jurisdictions. Section II of the Guidelines and Recommendations emphasize that jurisdictions are part of a broader metropolitan area with sub-regionalized and sub-county interconnected

services and structures such as healthcare and housing affordability, where the need for cross sector partnerships are crucial to create and maintain healthy housing.

The Guidelines and Recommendations should be considered and applied through an overall policy strategy that considers equity in housing opportunities and balances the need to address unhealthy housing conditions with preservation and expansion of affordable housing stock in King County.

SECTION I - Local Policy Actions

1. Overarching Healthy Housing Policies

Board of Health Guideline: Acknowledge the connections between housing and health for all residents.

Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:

- 1.1 Adopt an ordinance or resolution, affirming the importance of housing as a determinant of health; acknowledging the tension between costs associated with improvements in housing quality and housing affordability.
- 1.2 Determine and collect standardized housing quality indicators to assess housing quality and include relevant indicators as part of the Growth Management Act housing inventory and analysis.

2. Residential Building Design and Maintenance

Board of Health Guideline: Residents in all communities in King County have access to housing that is dry, clean, pest-free, ventilated, thermally controlled, safe, contaminate-free, and maintained.

Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:

- 2.1 Implement and enforce a property maintenance code that includes healthy housing standards. Examples of health-related standards include:
 - 2.1.1 Adopt property maintenance codes requiring building materials that are discolored or deteriorated by mold to be cleaned, dried, and repaired.
 - 2.1.2 Implement smoke-free policies in multi-family housing.
 - 2.1.3 Require pest management that maintains dwellings free of infestation and conditions that harbor pests by using methods that emphasize pest prevention and minimize the usage of pesticides.
 - 2.1.4 Building material used in maintenance and renovations, shall be certified as having no or low volatile organic chemicals, and have no halogenated flame retardants.
 - 2.1.5 Require all renovation, repair and painting work that disturbs painted surfaces in pre-1978 dwellings to be performed in compliance with the requirements of the Washington Department of Commerce to reduce exposure to lead contaminated dusts.
- 2.2 Implement a rental housing inspection program that inspects rental units on a periodic basis to ensure

they are safe and habitable.

- 2.3 Implement a rating system for rental housing quality that emphasizes physical housing quality, community design indicators and affordability to be used by residents in evaluating health benefits gained.
- 2.4 Implement universal design building standards that enable seniors and persons with disabilities to live safely in a house.

3. Housing Knowledge and Education

Board of Health Guideline: Residents in all communities in King County are provided proactive and meaningful opportunities to engage in decisions about their housing.

Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:

- 3.1 Adopt a local version of the Residential Landlord-Tenant Act (RCW 59.18) that includes housing safety and quality standards.
- 3.2 Empower residents to understand their rights and responsibilities, and to learn how to be a good steward of their dwelling.
- 3.3 Assist landlords to understand their rights, responsibilities, home maintenance requirements, and potential funding mechanisms to assist in making repairs.
- 3.4 Resolve housing quality issues in a way that averts the need for code enforcement or litigation activities.

4. Community Design

Board of Health Guideline: Residents throughout King County have access to housing that is part of a broader community that supports healthy and equitable opportunities.

Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:

- 4.1 Utilize a health and equity assessment model for assessing impacts of land use and community planning on housing displacement, siting and design.
- 4.2 Utilize multicultural engagement strategies to include more residents in community planning and design processes and decision making.
- 4.3 Implement policies and programs that consider a variety of active transportation needs in the community (e.g. bicycling, walking and transit) as residents travel from their homes to school, work and other community services.
- 4.4 Implement policies, plans, codes and incentives in local jurisdictions that promote access to healthy and affordable food in close proximity to housing (e.g. urban agriculture, farmers markets, farm-to-table food distribution sites, grocery stores).

SECTION II - Cross Sector Partnership Opportunities

1. Connect Housing and Health Services

Board of Health Guideline: Residents in all communities in King County have access to health and human services in place that work to improve the housing environment in ways that improve the health of residents.

Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:

- 1.1 Activate partnerships with public health providers, other jurisdictions, housing authorities, nonprofit organizations to provide a home visiting program for residents that will offer health education and connection to services that promote improved housing conditions along with better health.
- 1.2 Improve access and communication between healthcare providers treating clients with housing-related health issues, public health and housing agencies.
- 1.3 Seek ways to create, enhance and refer residents to services in the community that will improve their housing quality, such as weatherization programs and healthy housing home visiting programs.

2. Housing Affordability

Board of Health Guideline: Residents in all communities in King County have access to a range of affordable healthy housing.

Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:

- 2.1 Seek financing opportunities such as tax exemption policies available at the state and federal level that could assist land lords improve their properties without raising rents significantly, thereby reducing displacement of residents.
- 2.2 Develop a loan fund to assist landlords who do not have the resources to improve housing stock to standard without raising rents. Such a loan fund would tie affordability to favorable loan terms.
- 2.3 Require and provide housing quality metrics as part of HUD's Assessment of Fair Housing for use in consolidated plans or by the public housing authority.