

# WHY IS RENT SO HIGH IN BELLINGHAM?

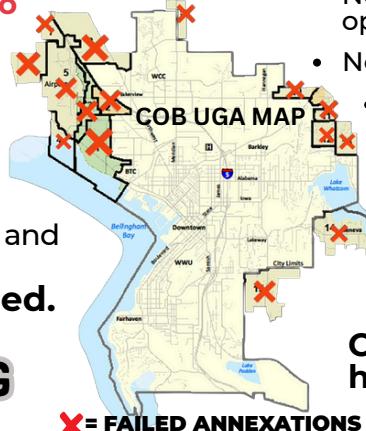
It's not as complicated as you think. It's several predictable factors stacked together.



# HIGH RENT AND LACK OF OPTIONS IS NOT AN ACCIDENT

## REGULATORY LAND SCARCITY 1

- The physical size of the city is nearly the same as **20 years ago**
- Promised annexations and land availability **did not occur**
- Population growth has been **35%** since 2005



When land supply is fixed and demand grows:  
Rent rises — guaranteed.

## 2 RESTRICT HOUSING PRODUCTION

- Limits on where apartments can be built & who gets to build them
- Height, parking, and unit-count restrictions
- Long, costly permitting timelines

Less housing reaches the market even as demand grows. Rents rise.

## 3 PRICES NEED WAGES TO MATCH

- Housing costs rose faster than local wages
- Job growth did not scale with prices
- Service-heavy economy can't support rising rents

RENT BURDENS INCREASE, WORKERS GET PUSHED OUT

## OPEN SPACE – W/O A TARGET 4

- Land is continually removed from housing use
- No defined public goal for "how much open space is enough"
- No offsetting expansion of housing land

• City of Bellingham has **SHRUNK** its size by **1200 acres** in the newest comprehensive plan but continues to buy land for "open space"

PERMANENT SCARCITY →  
HIGHER LAND PRICES →  
HIGHER RENTS → **REPEAT**

Continued (un)affordability for housing becomes the new normal.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

### REALITY: HOUSING COSTS ARE NOT GOING DOWN

Scan the code on front to learn more and be prepared! (or go to)

**WWW.RENTINGHAM.COM**

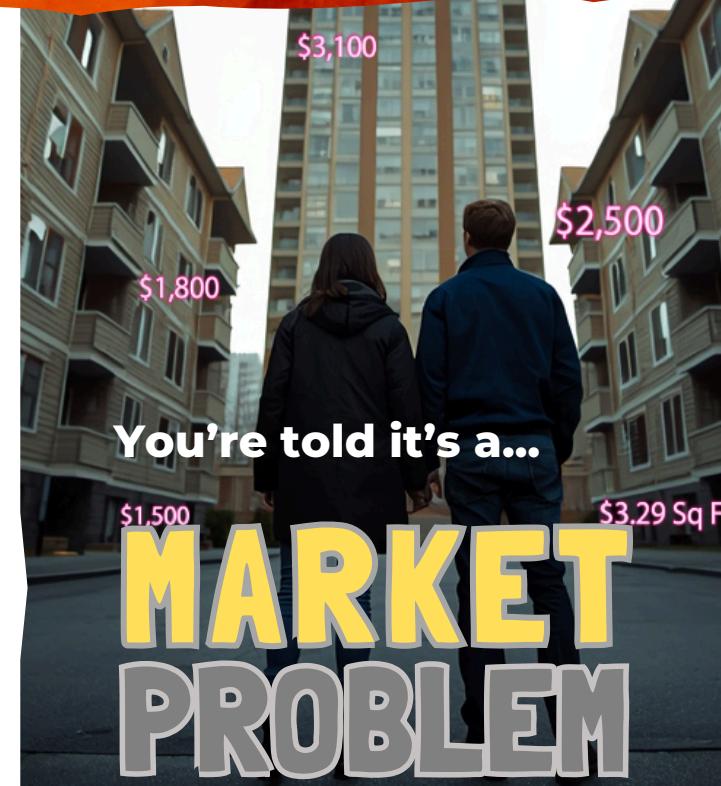
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### WHY RENT IN BELLINGHAM IS HIGH?

- The city didn't grow outward
- Housing production was restricted
- Wages didn't keep pace



**There is no real fix. It's only going to get worse for renters!**

Scan for more information on what is in store for renters going forward!

**WWW.RENTINGHAM.COM**

**REALISTIC RENTAL OPTIONS**

**KEEP NEIGHBORHOODS SAFE**

**PRESERVE HOME OWNERSHIP**

# A LOWER STANDARD, SOLD AS PROGRESS

Renters are being asked to accept fewer options, less space, and worse outcomes — without the land, jobs, or wages needed to make it affordable.

Housing should support different stages of life — not lock people into one.

## 1 RENTERS PAY THE HIGEST PRICE PER SQ FT

Apartments are often the most expensive housing type per square foot for renters.

Renters typically get:

- Less space for higher monthly cost
- Shared walls, floors, and open space
- Limited storage and parking is not guaranteed

Renters pay more for less flexibility — with no equity or exit.

## "NO PARKING" RESTRICTS MOVEMENT — IT DOES NOT REDUCE COST 2

Density could not scale without eliminating parking requirements.

What this means for renters:

- Reliance on already-crowded public streets
- Reduced flexibility for work, caregiving, and emergencies
- Fewer options for visitors, family, and daily life.

Parking removal doesn't eliminate cost. It shifts inconvenience, risk, and more restrictions onto renters.

REALISTIC RENTAL OPTIONS

## 3 RENTERS HAVE NO VOICE

Renters have limited control over:

- Parking rules
- Property changes or maintenance priorities
- Rent increases and lease terms

Decisions are made **FOR** renters — not **WITH** them. Renters have the least amount of influence.



### FIND YOUR VOICE!

Scan for info on what programs are available to help you as a renter stay informed and know your all your options!

## HOUSING COSTS ROSE — JOBS AND INCOME DIDN'T 4

In Bellingham housing costs increased at a much higher rate, while wage supporting job growth didn't happen.

Much of the economy depends on:

- Service work and seasonal jobs
- Of the top 6 biggest employers in Whatcom county, 5 are public.

*Employers can't hire people if housing is so expensive that they cannot pay them.*

Affordable employee housing is essential but that style isn't scaling with rising rents—public employers can't take slack in the numbers needed to fill openings.

KEEP NEIGHBORHOODS SAFE



# THE BROKEN HOUSING LADDER

HOUSING SHOULD CHANGE AS YOUR LIFE CHANGES

There are stages in a person's life:

- Times when smaller spaces work with fewer belongings: apartment living makes sense.
- There are times when needs become more space and privacy, storage and outdoor areas, more room for partners, kids, or caregiving.

A healthy housing system provides lots of options for these different steps:

Apartment → small rental home  
Rental home → ownership option  
Ownership → long-term stability

## BELLINGHAM'S LADDER IS BROKEN

In Bellingham apartments dominate new housing. Family-sized rentals are rare, unaffordable and top \$3,000 mo.

The reality: Young renters age out of apartments as their needs are expand. Families can't find affordable rental homes, and schools lose students.

That's a housing system designed for one life stage only.

## THE REAL LOSS IS CHOICE

Not everyone wants to buy - and that's fine, but people should be able to:

- Change housing as life changes
- Move from renting to owning if they choose
- Stay in their community long-term

When those steps disappear, so does the future of residents.

PRESERVE HOME OWNERSHIP