

ADVOCACY ALERT

Affordable housing has become a priority for the city, and the upcoming city council meeting agendas reflect that commitment. Our hope is that this email and future ones will make it easier for you to keep up with city council business, understand proposed policies, and advocate for those that support the creation of affordable housing. You can do so by watching council meetings, offering public comment, and writing letters of support to [council members](#). Meetings are recorded and can be watched later. Click [here](#) to find agendas, minutes, and recordings.

The agenda for the **Tuesday, October 26 council meeting** includes discussion of a density bonus for affordable housing built on land owned by a religious organization. We have provided a brief summary and our perspective below.

Increased density bonus for affordable housing located on property owned by a religious organization.

Adopted by the state in 2019, this statute (RCW 35.63.280) mandates an increased density bonus for religious organizations seeking to build affordable housing on their properties. It is up to the local municipality to determine the extent of that density bonus. All the units must be designated for households earning 80% area median income (\$75,300 for a family of four in Kitsap County), and the sale price or rent amount may not exceed 30% of household income. Read the full code [here](#).

Bethany Lutheran Church has long envisioned using a portion of its property for affordable housing and in January 2017, created a task force to explore its options. In May 2021, Bethany formally requested such a density bonus. This request is the subject of the October 26 council meeting.

The church's property is approximately 8 acres, south of High School Road between Sportsman Club and Finch Roads. It is within walking distance of more than 10 schools, 1.5 miles from downtown Winslow, and is the site of a Kitsap Transit stop and Park-and-Ride lot. About 6 acres are undeveloped and could be used for housing.

Why HRB supports this measure:

The need for affordable housing on Bainbridge is too great for any one entity to address alone. HRB has been a part of the housing discussion at Bethany for many years and has great confidence in the church to develop quality, attractive, and sustainable homes. We would like to see this property developed to maximum effect. Current zoning would mean an insignificant increase in the number of affordable homes on the island.

HRB advocates for denser development in discrete areas, such as in downtown Winslow and the island centers and on church-owned parcels. Given the cost of construction, limited land availability, and the relatively small budget of nonprofits such as Bethany, density is almost always required to develop affordably and to do so without incurring a loss. Moreover, such development, especially when sited near amenities, has a smaller environmental impact, resulting in fewer new roads, lower emissions, and a reduction in sprawl, perhaps the greatest threat to conservation.



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