

ADVOCACY ALERT

Update

The city is updating its Comprehensive Plan and Winslow Subarea Plan. Under the 1990 Growth Management Act (GMA), cities and towns are required to adopt and update comprehensive plans to guide anticipated growth for a 20-year period and protect critical environmental areas and natural resources. Housing, specifically affordable housing, is a critical element of this update. Ninety-five percent of Washington residents live in communities subject to GMA requirements.

These documents lay out the long-range goals, policies, and actions that will make it possible for Bainbridge Island to accommodate its growth allocation: 4,524 people; 1,977 new housing units, the majority of which must be affordable; and 1,927 new jobs. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was created to analyze three methods for meeting these targets: Alternative 1) no action; Alternative 2) developing the Winslow Town Center and other neighborhood centers, to a lesser degree, at greater density; or Alternative 3) distributing density to expanded neighborhood and industrial centers and revising Winslow Subarea boundaries to more closely align with sewer service.

We are currently in an open-comment period for the DEIS, and the city wants to hear from the community. Your comments will influence its choices about how to shape and place this expected growth.

Action

City Council needs to know that our community wants affordable housing. Comments must be submitted or postmarked no later than 4:00 pm on Thursday, October 10, 2024. There is no limit to the number of comments one can submit.

The DEIS is a lengthy technical document. You do not need to be an expert on, nor even read, the DEIS to participate in the public process. Scroll down for help in drafting a public comment in support of affordable housing.

You can deliver comments a couple ways:

Online portal

Access the [portal](#) from the city's [Comprehensive Plan update webpage](#).

Email

Email Senior Planner Peter Best at pbest@bainbridgewa.gov.

Key points to include in your comment

Your comment should convey enthusiasm for affordable housing and embolden City Council to make the thoughtful and effective changes to our land use policy that make it possible for people of all incomes to live here.

- Affordable housing is a priority for me. More affordable housing will strengthen our community.
- I understand that Alternative 1 will not enable us to meet our affordable housing targets. I welcome the changes to our development regulations described in Alternatives 2 and 3 that make it possible to create this much-needed housing.
- Specifically, I support increased density in Winslow and the neighborhood centers.
- I also support improved programs and policies designed to encourage affordable housing development by nonprofit and private developers.

What makes this update different

The city adopted its comprehensive plan in 1994. In earlier updates, the city simply needed to show that it had the capacity to accommodate projected population growth. There was adequate undeveloped land in the 91% of the island that is zoned for single-family housing to build the required number of homes and thus there was no need to change the city's development regulations. In 2021 with the passage of House Bill 1220, the GMA was amended and now mandates that cities and towns plan for housing that is affordable across a range of income bands. Of the 1,977 homes for which Bainbridge must plan, 1,139 must be affordable to households earning at or below 80% area median income (HUD's definition of low income).

However, single-family homes on large lots are inherently too expensive for this demographic, requiring that the city make it possible to build higher-density homes, such as duplexes, triplexes, and multifamily residences in Winslow and the other neighborhood centers. With current zoning, we do not have the capacity in these areas to build the required number of affordable homes in these less expensive typologies. This comprehensive plan update will therefore entail changes to land use policy to allow for increased density and smaller homes in these areas, which are already zoned for higher density.

This is truly a year of action. Your voice matters. Speak up. The city is listening.

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