

ADVOCACY ALERT

We sent out the email below earlier this afternoon encouraging you to write to Planning Commission in support of the effort by Bethany Lutheran Church to build affordable housing. The Planning Commission email provided was incorrect. Please use the following:

pcd@bainbridgewa.gov

Thank you.

Action

Planning Commission meets this **Thursday, February 10** to discuss a request by Bethany Lutheran Church for a density bonus under RCW 35.70A.545. (See below for more on the state law, the church request, and HRB's position on the issue.)

This is an extraordinary opportunity: a state mandate, available land, and a nonprofit developer motivated by community need. Please write to [Planning Commission](#) before Thursday evening to show your support of the Bethany Lutheran project. Tell them why affordable housing matters to you, your friends, neighbors, and family.

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

Adopted by the state in 2019, RCW 35.70A.545 mandates an increased density bonus for religious organizations seeking to build affordable housing on their properties. All the units must be designated for households earning 80% area median income or below (\$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](#).

The local municipality determines the extent of that density bonus; however, it must be greater than the existing density bonus for affordable housing. On Bainbridge that bonus is 50% (BIMC 18.21.030).

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 Lutheran formally requested such a density bonus. Last fall, City Council voted to move the request to Planning Commission to draft an ordinance using the church as a pilot project. Planning Commission began its deliberations last month.

The church's property is approximately 8 acres. 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. The church has proposed 20-plus units after a careful assessment of septic capacity and with a sincere desire to create a livable community that will be well-sited on the church's campus and welcomed by the congregation.

Why HRB supports this measure:

There are currently 90 households on the HRB waitlist for rental housing.

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 Lutheran for many years and has great confidence in the church to deliver a project that helps meet the profound need for affordable housing on the island, advances the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, and respects the spirit of our community.

HRB would like to see this property developed to maximum effect. Current zoning, even with the density bonus allowed under the existing municipal code, would mean an insignificant increase in the number of affordable homes on the island. Given the cost of construction, limited land availability, and the typically small budget of nonprofits such as Bethany Lutheran, density is almost always required to develop affordably and to do so without incurring a loss.

Please show your support for affordable housing at Bethany Lutheran Church by writing to Planning Commission before this Thursday's meeting.



Housing Resources Bainbridge | 730 Ericksen Ave Ste 100, PO Box 11391, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

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