

ADVOCACY ALERT

Update

Last night, Tuesday, October 25, 2022, City Council voted 5-2 to pass Ordinance 2022-02 which will allow Bethany Lutheran Church to build a maximum of 23 affordable homes on its 8-acre property.

Today, exactly one year ago—October 26, 2021—Council first met to discuss this project. Three days earlier, HRB sent its very first Advocacy Alert.

It's been quite a year. And you have been incredible—reading these alerts and city resources to understand an ever-changing and complex ordinance and writing repeatedly to Council and Planning Commission to convey the wide-spread community support for this project and affordable housing more generally.

Background

In 2019, Washington passed RCW 36.70A.545 which mandates an increased density bonus for religious organizations seeking to build affordable housing on their properties. The law requires that all units be designated for households earning at or below 80% area median income. However, the state left it up to local municipalities to determine the extent of that density bonus.

Bethany Lutheran Church has dreamed of building affordable homes on its land for decades. This mandate and the resulting density bonus will help make that dream a reality.

The final ordinance permits affordable housing on religiously owned land as follows:

- There will be two tiers of bonus density for residential zones: a higher bonus for residential projects within the Winslow Subarea or within one quarter mile and a lower one for projects in outlying residential zones.
- The new code works as a 5-year pilot project during which time it will be limited to Bethany Lutheran Church. Beginning January 1, 2028, it will apply to all requests for bonus density for affordable housing on land owned or controlled by a religious organization.
- Units are capped at 1,400 sf.
- ADUs are prohibited.
- The ordinance will allow a maximum of 23 units on the Bethany Lutheran Church property.

Why this matters to HRB

HRB is not currently involved in the planning or design of the church's project. However, as an advocate for policies that make developing affordable housing on Bainbridge possible and realistic, we were vocal supporters of the church and encouraged our supporters to do the same. Drawing on decades of experience developing and managing affordable homes, we understood that the density bonus needed to be sufficient to offset the cost of

development and to set the church up for an economically viable project. The final ordinance meets these standards.

HRB is enlarging its community land trust with 31 homes at Wintergreen, 13 at Wyatt & Madison, and 18-20 at a multifamily residence we are planning for Ericksen Avenue. These additions are considerable but not sufficient. We have no illusions about single-handedly meeting the island's housing needs and recognize that the situation demands that other nonprofits, the city, and commercial developers commit to the work with money, land, and innovative and responsive policies.

Twenty-three units at Bethany Lutheran will make a meaningful difference in our affordable housing shortage. We deeply appreciate the fortitude, courage, and generosity demonstrated by the church.

Action

Rejoice! Send [City Council](#) an email to thank them for their work in creating an effective program that will serve the affordable housing needs of Bainbridge Island.



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