

## Housing Resources Bainbridge

# ADVOCACY ALERT

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### Update

After the fanfare of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) last fall and the robust community engagement which surrounded its release, work on the Winslow Subarea and Comprehensive Plan updates has continued quietly in City Council and Planning Commission. The process has been methodical, inclusive, and to be expected, time consuming. Although there are no specific policy recommendations to report, a recap and a glimpse of what's to come are worthwhile.

### Background

Like most Washington cities and towns, Bainbridge Island complies with the Growth Management Act (1990), which requires that it plan for its share of the region's projected growth by developing and regularly updating a comprehensive plan. These plans cover a range of issues, including transportation, environmental protection, economic development, and housing production.

House Bill 1220, passed in 2019, strengthened the housing requirement of the Growth Management Act. In the past, cities were required to simply plan for a certain number of units. Today that housing target is segmented by income. Under HB 1220, Bainbridge Island must create the land use policies and development regulations which would allow for 1,977 new housing units, the majority of which must be affordable. The breakdown is very exact. So, for example, the city must prepare for 272 units affordable to households earning between 50 and 80% area median income and 324 at 30 to 50%.

The update process is informed by the DEIS, which was commissioned by the city to analyze three methods for accommodating growth: 1. no change (this is not a viable option, but only a point of comparison); 2. increased density in Winslow and other neighborhood centers, to a lesser extent; and 3. distributing density to expanded neighborhood and industrial centers.

### A look ahead

Last fall, City Council deliberated on changes to development regulations that would facilitate affordable housing production and earlier this year, handed the process off to Planning Commission, whose role is to solicit public comment and make recommendations to Council. Commissioners are considering elements of the DEIS and other initiatives that would make it possible to build more affordable housing on Bainbridge, including boundary

changes to the Winslow subarea, strategic density increases, and new affordable housing policies.

HRB has tracked the process closely and is heartened by what it's seen. Planning Commission is prioritizing affordable housing and has shown that it understands the depth of the problem and the scale of change needed to address it. Once Planning Commission has completed this process, City Council will consider the recommendations, hold public hearings, deliberate, and ultimately adopt the new Comprehensive and Winslow Subarea Plans. The city has indicated they hope to complete the process by this summer.

### Action

HRB will continue to send out Advocacy Alerts and will let you know when it is most important to speak up. That said, it is always valuable and encouraging for Planning Commission to hear from affordable housing supporters in the community who are eager to see the city adopt the regulatory changes that make it possible.

You can send a note to Planning Commission expressing your support for affordable housing anytime at [pcd@bainbridgewa.gov](mailto:pcd@bainbridgewa.gov).



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