



Case Study: City of Burien Affordable Housing Demonstration Program

Project Overview

On November 4, 2019, the Burien City Council adopted [Ordinance 718](#) supporting the creation of an affordable housing demonstration program. The demonstration program provides incentives and flexibility for the development of affordable housing during a defined period, providing the city with an opportunity to evaluate potential barriers to the construction of affordable housing and make recommendations on changes to development regulations. The program allows housing types and densities that are not currently permitted under existing city regulations.

The new program allows up to five affordable housing demonstration development projects be developed in Burien. The Planning Commission and City Council are both involved in evaluating the projects and assessing if they are compatible in the neighborhood. No more than two of the five projects can have the same housing type, projects would need to be separated from one another by a minimum distance of 1,500 ft., and developers will be required to host at least two community meetings per project, inviting neighbors from at least a 1,000 ft. radius.

The city has developed a [submittal checklist](#) that outlines the specifics of the program and the process, as well as requirements to apply for a project under this program.

RELATED TOOLS

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- [Cluster Development](#)
- [Community Engagement Plans](#)
- [Cottage Housing](#)
- [Density Bonuses](#)
- [Design Guidelines](#)
- [Mixed-Use Development](#)
- [Multifamily Development](#)
- [Townhomes](#)

Location

Burien, WA. Projects would be allowed in mixed-use zones citywide, not in industrial and airport industrial zones.

Date Built/Enacted

The demonstration program was enacted in 2019.

Number of Units Approved to Date

As of spring 2023, three projects have been approved and are in the permitting process.

- **Habitat for Humanity Affordable Housing Project:** [Habitat for Humanity Seattle-King County \(HFHSKC\)](#) is proposing an affordable housing development at 511 and 515 South 136th St. The proposed development includes 40 affordable townhouse units (typically 3 bedroom 1 ½ bath) across 9 structures and 43 onsite parking spaces. Two units will be accessible for people with disabilities and include access ramps and parking. Each unit will have a designated outdoor area in either the front or back of the unit (or both) for use by the residents. There will also be a community center and open space. The homes will be provided in a mix of 2-level townhomes and 3-level multi-family structures that will be [clustered](#) around the community center. The site contains a Type F (fish bearing) stream, two Type III wetlands, and is sparsely covered by trees. The applicant has provided biologist reports and an arborist report, and critical areas and trees have been considered in the design of the project.

The sale of the homes will be [restricted](#) to individuals and families with incomes at an average of 50 percent of the [area median incomes](#) across the project. A [land trust](#) model will be used to ensure permanent affordability of the housing units for the community.

- **DESC Affordable Housing Project:** Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) has submitted a permit application for a new [affordable housing development in downtown Burien](#) at 801 SW 150th St. The building is designed to be six stories and will contain 95 studio units of housing with supportive services onsite including behavioral health care, crisis intervention, and employment services. The development also includes indoor and outdoor community spaces for single adults who are disabled and formerly homeless.
- **ecoTHRIVE:** ecoTHRIVE is proposing a resident owned village that includes 27 owner-occupied units affordable to households with average incomes of 50% of the area median income and features mix studios, 1- bedrooms, and 2-bedroom cottages, a community building scattered around a site that contains a children’s play area, gardens, and open space.





Source: ecoTHRIVE

Target Population

Housing types allowed include [cottages](#), [duplexes](#), [triplexes](#), [townhomes](#), congregate housing, tiny homes, and [mixed use](#) buildings. No more than 2 projects with the same housing type will be allowed.

Income levels are determined by the King County average median income (AMI). One project must be affordable for someone making 0–30% King County’s AMI. The rest must be affordable to someone making 50% of King County’s AMI or less.

Enabling Policies

[City of Burien Municipal Code 19.18](#)

Contact

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Additional Resources

[City of Burien, Affordable Housing Demonstration Program](#)

