

Density Bonus Program for Affordable Housing

Overview

The Density Bonus program is one of King County's incentive programs to encourage developers to build affordable ownership and rental housing. Density Bonuses are also provided for other public benefits: open space, trails and parks; historic preservation; and energy conservation. (See King County Code 21A.34 or [King County DDES](#) web page for more information)

The concept is that for every affordable unit that a developer promises to build he or she can build a calculated number of market rate units greater than would be allowed otherwise. For example, a developer proposes to build rental housing on a site with zoning that allows a maximum of 30 rental units. However, if the developer promises that 10 of those units will be affordable to households at or below 50% of median income then instead of a maximum of 30 units the developer can build 35 units.

There are limits on both the zones where density incentives can be earned as well as a limit on the number of density bonuses allowed. If you have any questions, please contact [Allan Johnson](#) by e-mail or by phone at (206) 205-6482.

Program Specifications and Eligibility

Program eligibility is determined by the table provided at following link. [HUD 2005 Income Guidelines for King County](#).

Property Specifications

Permitted Zones: R-4 through R-48 and NB, CB, RB, and O when part of mixed use development. The site must also be served by a public sewer.

Parking: If 100% of the units are affordable, then one off-street parking space per unit is required. Otherwise, for benefit units parking will be provided at 50% of the levels required for market rate/bonus units as cited in [K.C.C. 21A.18](#) (pdf format available at this link).

Recreation Space: Provision of on-site recreation space for projects with 100% affordable housing is at 50% of the levels required in [K.C.C. 21A.14](#) (pdf format available at this link). All other Density Bonus proposals shall provide recreation space for the market rate/bonus units at levels consistent with K.C.C. 21A.14 and for the benefit units at 50% of levels required for market rate/bonus units.

Size Of Bonus

Rental Housing: The amount of the bonus depends upon whether the benefit units serve seniors or non-seniors and whether it is senior assisted housing or not. The size ranges from 1 to 1.5 bonus units per benefit unit. (See K.C.C. 21A.34.040(F.1.a,b, and c))

Ownership Housing: The amount of the bonus depends upon how long a resale restriction, if any, is put on the property.

The size of the bonus ranges from .75 to 1.5 bonus units per benefit unit. However, projects in which 100% of the units are affordable are allowed a density of 200% of the base density of the underlying zone. (See K.C.C. 21A.34.040(F.1.d-g.)).

Covenants/Resale Restrictions

Rental Housing: A recorded covenant specifies the income level served, rent levels, and reporting requirements. Senior assisted benefit units do not require a covenant.

Ownership Housing: Requirements depend on size of bonus:

- .75 bonus unit per benefit unit has no restriction on resale. Final approval conditions shall specify requirements for reporting to King County on both buyer eligibility and housing prices.
- 1 bonus unit per benefit unit: 15 year restriction binding prices and eligibility on resale to qualified buyers on the benefit units. Final approval conditions shall specify requirements for reporting to King County on both buyer eligibility and housing prices.
- 1.5 bonus unit per benefit unit: 30 year resale restriction binding prices and eligibility to qualified 80% of median income buyers on the benefit units. A recorded covenant on the site that specifies the income level and other aspects of buyer eligibility, price levels, and reporting requirements.
- 200% of base density (only projects with 100% affordable units qualify for this size density): 15 year resale restriction on all the units. Final approval conditions shall specify requirements for reporting to King County on both buyer eligibility and housing prices.

All benefit units must be rented or sold to eligible households. There shall be no provisions for releases from the sale or rental of benefit units to eligible households. Benefit units may be resold to non-eligible households only when the resale restriction, if any, expires.

Review and Approval Process

Review Process: Density Bonus proposals are reviewed concurrently with a proposed subdivision, conditional use permit, or commercial building permit. The Density Bonus proposal requires a public hearing.

Final Approval Conditions: Final approval conditions shall specify the requirement that the benefit units are priced and/or rented at affordable levels as well as requiring that those units be rented and/or sold to the eligible income group. The conditions will also specify the requirements for reporting to King County on both buyer eligibility, housing prices, as well as any applicable requirement to record a covenant or to enforce resale restrictions.

View a table showing what constitutes an [affordable housing payment](#) for this program. For more information contact [Allan Johnson](#) by e-mail or by phone at 206-205-6482.