

Affordable Housing Policies

Citizens in the Education Hill Neighborhood have expressed concern about rising home costs and the likelihood that many households, such as those with one wage earner, seniors, day care workers, and technicians will not be able to afford to live in the neighborhood. Over time, the neighborhood has included a wide variety of household incomes and family sizes. Neighborhood residents desire providing options so a diversity of people can continue to live in the neighborhood and contribute positively to the community. More proactive steps are needed to address the needs for affordable housing while ensuring that affordable homes are designed to be similar in appearance to existing and new market rate homes in the neighborhood.

The Education Hill Citizen Advisory Committee encourages the development of affordable options in a variety of ways. The Education Hill neighborhood is one of the oldest residential areas in Redmond: As such, it is mostly built out, with diminishing opportunities for large-scale new developments. Policies that are inclusionary, e.g., that require a percentage of new units to be affordable, are one means to encourage affordability. However, with less available land for development, the number of potential affordable units to be developed in this way may be limited. Therefore, the Committee also strongly encourages the development of affordable housing through the use of Accessory Dwelling Units, additional flexibility for multi-plex units, particularly duplexes, and a new concept, “Backyard Homes.” The Backyard Home will enable property owners to build an additional dwelling unit on their property if they have a suitable amount of land that is available for development on their lot, possibly behind their existing house. The additional land required for the Backyard Home is slightly less than would be required to create an additional standard sized home. Also, the Backyard Home would be limited in size to 1,000 square feet and would be maintained as affordable to persons earning 120% of the King County Median Income by providing resale controls.

Redmond’s goals for affordable housing reflect the Washington State Growth Management Act mandate to encourage affordable housing for all economic segments of the population. As home prices continue to increase at a more rapid rate than the increase in household incomes, there are very few opportunities for households that earn the King County median income or less to buy a home in Redmond. Further, as land develops for upper income households, less land is available to meet the needs of other income groups. By providing incentives, bonuses, resale controls and public funding for creating and preserving affordable housing, the Education Hill neighborhood will help support the City’s goals for housing that is affordable to all of its residents.

N-EH-24 Require a minimum of 10% of the units in all new housing developments of 10 units or greater in the Education Hill neighborhood to be affordable. Minimize development costs associated with this requirement by providing incentives and bonuses. Maintain the long-term affordability of the dwelling unit through resale controls.

N-EH-25 Strongly encourage the development of Accessory Dwelling Units through information and promotion of the concept to residents and a more user-friendly review and approval process by the City.

N-EH-26 Allow the subdivision of existing lots to encourage the development of smaller, affordable homes in Single-Family Urban areas. These “Backyard Homes” will be permitted on lots that are 200% of the average lot size of the underlying zone and limited to 1,000 square feet in size. The affordable nature of the home will be ensured by establishing the initial and subsequent sales price at 120% of the King County Median Income.