Mayor Harrell Seeks to Increase Needed Affordable Housing by Advancing Improved Fort Lawton Redevelopment Plan

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Press Release

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The City of Seattle is moving forward to update a 2019 plan to expand the number of housing units, offset infrastructure costs, and preserve 22 acres of open space in Seattle's Magnolia neighborhood.

Seattle – Today, Mayor Bruce Harrell announced that the City of Seattle is advancing efforts to develop an improved redevelopment plan for increased affordable housing at Fort Lawton, a former military installation currently owned by the U.S Army and available at a significantly discounted land cost for dedicated use as affordable housing or parks. The proposed plan will include rental units, workforce housing, and homeownership opportunities, as well as permanent supportive housing for veterans and seniors who have experienced homelessness. The City will be working with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Army as it seeks to move forward on this proposed revision.

Building on an earlier redevelopment plan that was approved by City Council in 2019 and then delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, an improved plan would build as many as 500 units of affordable housing, optimizing the number of affordable homes to address Seattle's housing crisis, while significantly lowering per-unit costs. These additional units offset some of the considerable

infrastructure costs required for the project while maintaining 22 acres for open space, parkland, and wildlife conservation adjacent to Seattle's majestic Discovery Park.

"The scale of our affordability and homelessness crises requires us to make the wisest possible use of our limited housing dollars in order to achieve the largest possible impact," said **Mayor Bruce Harrell**. "In a city of 84 square miles, the Fort Lawton Redevelopment Plan is a unique opportunity to transform 34 into a new community that will last for generations – we must make the most of it. This is our ***One Seattle*** vision in action – a city with affordable homes and communities where every Seattle neighbor can access the good jobs, schools, and supports needed to grow and succeed."

Catholic Housing Services and Habitat for Humanity Seattle-King and Kittitas Counties are the developers for the plan, and United Indians of All Tribes will be the service provider for the permanent supportive housing at Fort Lawton. The plan would use previously approved zoning capacity to bring affordable housing to the Magnolia area, providing access to housing, education, retail, and employment opportunities not typically available in this neighborhood to lower income families and individuals.

Mayor Harrell began working with City departments and outside consultants after taking office in 2022 to analyze infrastructure needs and costs for the 2019 Fort Lawton Redevelopment Plan. The property requires major infrastructure construction, demolition of unsafe buildings, and upgrades to roads, power, water, and sewers – challenges that have been a leading cause of planning and project delays over the years. The additional analysis conducted by the City since 2022 revealed opportunities to reduce per-unit infrastructure costs not only by increasing the number of units but by altering the approach to street and other infrastructure improvements.

Approval is required by City Council for the new plan, as well as from the federal government for the land transfer to the City. A new Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement process will be conducted, with opportunity for public comment, followed by the Office of Housing submitting the amended redevelopment plan to City Council and to HUD. The City expects to begin infrastructure design and construction in the second half of 2025, after

completion of the processes outlined above and a request for proposals for infrastructure work in the second quarter of 2025.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

U.S. Senator Patty Murray

“Ensuring that everyone in Washington state can keep a roof over their head has been, and continues to be, one of my top priorities. We have a real housing crisis on our hands, and I am laser focused on boosting our affordable housing supply across the state. The Fort Lawton project is a promising one and could make the world of a difference to hundreds of Seattle families. I look forward to reviewing the city’s plan and continuing to work with HUD as they review this application.”

U.S. Representative Pramila Jayapal (WA-07)

“Our community is facing a major housing shortage amid devastating housing price hikes – in fact, it’s estimated that King County will need 17,000 new homes built annually to meet demand. I applaud this federal and local partnership that is working to bring much needed homes to our community. We must use all resources possible to ensure that every person has a roof over their head.”

U.S. Representative Adam Smith (WA-09)

“It’s crucial that we increase the supply of housing to tackle the housing affordability crisis in the Puget Sound Region. The newly proposed plan by the City of Seattle would create affordable housing, permanent supportive housing, and homeownership opportunities for hundreds of individuals and families and preserve green spaces for community members to enjoy. Building more housing is essential to solving the homelessness and housing crisis across the country, and I am a strong supporter of those efforts in our state.”

WA Representative Frank Chopp (District 43, Position 2)

"Similar to the successful housing developed at the former Naval Air Station at Sand Point in northeast Seattle, the redevelopment of a portion of Fort Lawton presents an important opportunity to create affordable non-profit housing that will help address the housing crisis in Seattle. Working with housing partners, the city, and community, I support the effort to expand housing options at Fort Lawton, including homeownership opportunities utilizing the state's new Covenant Homeownership Account program to provide down payment and closing cost assistance to people historically barred from homeownership because of past racist real estate covenants. The redevelopment of Fort Lawton is a potential win/win opportunity to tackle one of the city's most pressing issues and simultaneously protect open space."

Seattle Councilmember Cathy Moore (District 5)

"As the incoming Chair of the Housing and Human Services Committee, I applaud Mayor Harrell's proactive approach to increasing desperately needed affordable housing as well as permanent supportive housing in our city. I look forward to Council's review of the amended redevelopment plan and working with all stakeholders to bring this project to fruition."

Seattle Councilmember Dan Strauss (District 6)

"This plan to redevelop Fort Lawton will help ensure that families like the one I grew up in can afford to live in the Seattle of today and the Seattle of tomorrow. Every iteration of this project has increased the amount of open space, wildlife habitat, and housing opportunities for everyday Seattleites. This is a generational investment that will pay dividends for decades to come."

Brett D'Antonio, Chief Executive Officer, Habitat for Humanity Seattle-King and Kittitas Counties

"Habitat for Humanity Seattle King County remains fully committed to providing affordable homeownership opportunities at the Fort Lawton development site. We

look forward to continuing our partnership with the Seattle Office of Housing to bring this project to fruition."

Patience Malaba, Executive Director, Housing Development Consortium

“We are thrilled to see progress on the Fort Lawton redevelopment, after nearly two decades of planning. The Mayor's plan to add more affordable homes on the site helps make the project more cost-effective, as well as better addressing our community's critical need for affordable housing. This development fulfills long-standing promises by adding hundreds of new affordable homes next to Discovery Park. The housing will support those across the income spectrum, from low-income homebuyers to individuals exiting homelessness.

But the Fort Lawton redevelopment is about more than just buildings - it's an opportunity to ensure all neighborhoods of Seattle are truly inclusive communities where people of all backgrounds can thrive. Together we can journey towards a future where no family is left without a safe, affordable place to call home.”

Micheal Tulee, Chief Executive Director, United Indians of All Tribes Foundation

“United Indians of All Tribes Foundation is excited to launch this long-awaited housing need!”

Kenneth Pittman, Associate Director of Operations, Catholic Community Services of Western WA

“We are grateful for the city's continued exploration to provide affordable housing opportunities and look forward to working with the city, state, and federal partners to address this important need."

A.P. Diaz, Director of Seattle Parks and Recreation

“Equitable access to nature is critical to our society’s health and well-being, both physically and mentally. The Fort Lawton affordable housing and nature project

supports a vibrant community by increasing access to affordable housing and parks for families while maintaining 22 acres of open space, ecosystem regeneration and the sustainability of our tree canopy next to Seattle's spectacular Discovery Park."

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