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Press Release

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Alameda County Launches Groundbreaking SHIFT Initiative to Transform Affordable Housing Production

County Seeks Innovative Architectural Designs Through New RFP to Create Scalable, Cost-Effective Housing Solutions

HAYWARD, CA – The Alameda County Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) today announced the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Scalable Housing Investment Funding Toolkit (SHIFT) initiative, a pilot program designed to pioneer the production of affordable housing through standardized, pre-permitted designs and streamlined development processes.

The SHIFT program represents a fundamental reimagining of affordable housing development, building homes for lower income [households earning 60-80% of Area Median Income through](#) an innovative approach that combines sustainable public investment with cutting-edge design and regulatory efficiency. Over 9,000 Alameda County households at this income level currently pay more than half of their monthly income on rent, underscoring the urgent need for local housing solutions.

"We're opening the door for a new generation of affordable housing that can be built quickly, efficiently, and at scale," said Deputy Housing Director Jennifer Pearce "By pre-permitting standardized designs, reducing regulatory barriers, and supporting complements to tax-credit development, we will create quality housing below the traditional cost and overcome barriers that have historically slowed production."

Breaking New Ground in Affordable Housing

The initiative addresses Alameda County's critical need for cost-effective residential construction by prioritizing cost reductions through efficient architectural solutions, streamlined approvals, and simplified public investment. Key innovations of the SHIFT program include:

- **Pre-permitted designs** that eliminate months of approval processes
- **Scalable solutions** adaptable from 4 to 16 units per property
- **Strategic use of recent state legislation** including SB 9 and SB 4 to unlock previously restricted parcels



- **Open-source approach** making all designs publicly available to accelerate broader adoption
- **Simplified funding** through a single-source, non-competitive subsidy model

Opportunity for Architectural Innovation

This RFP seeks qualified architecture firms to develop residential design proposals optimized for small-scale developments on irregular infill lots throughout Alameda County. Proposals will be evaluated based on their adaptability to three representative sites in Oakland, Castro Valley, and Ashland, demonstrating the flexibility needed to address diverse community contexts.

"We're looking for partners who understand that true innovation in affordable housing means designing beautiful, livable spaces that can be built efficiently and repeatedly," said Programs and Policies Manager Dylan Sweeney. "This is about creating a new toolkit for the entire region."

Successful proposals must demonstrate:

- Site adaptability and scalability across diverse contexts
- Alignment with streamlined by-right approval processes
- Construction costs suitable for no more than \$600,000 per unit
- Long-term financial sustainability with minimized operating expenses

Building a Replicable Model for California

The SHIFT initiative goes beyond individual projects to establish a replicable framework for affordable housing production statewide. All pre-permitted designs developed through the program will be made publicly available, creating a valuable resource for developers, municipalities, and housing advocates throughout California.

Selected firms will work closely with Alameda County HCD and local planning departments over a 36-month period to refine designs, navigate pre-permitting processes, and support the development of up to 50 affordable units in the pilot's second phase. The partnership will also generate critical insights about program structure, subsidy requirements, and scalability that will inform future affordable housing initiatives.

Application Process and Timeline

The RFP is now available on the Alameda County HCD website [here](#). Key dates include:

- **RFP Release:** August 27, 2025
- **Informational Session:** September 9, 2025
- **Mandatory Bidders' Conferences:** September 11 and 16, 2025
- **Application Deadline:** October 27, 2025
- **Award Announcements:** November 10, 2025

Interested firms must attend at least one Mandatory Bidders' Conference to be eligible to submit proposals, on either [September 11](#) or [September 16](#). Additional technical assistance sessions will be scheduled as needed. Anyone that is interested in learning more about the program is welcome to attend the upcoming [Informational Session](#) on September 9.

About the SHIFT Approach

The Scalable Housing Investment Funding Toolkit (SHIFT) represents Alameda County's commitment to innovative, equitable housing solutions. By combining thoughtful design, regulatory reform, and strategic investment, SHIFT aims to restore the economic viability of moderate-density housing types that have been largely absent from California's residential landscape for decades.

The program specifically targets small, irregular, or undervalued parcels that are currently uneconomical for traditional development, effectively expanding the pool of developable land without generating significant market competition. This approach promises to accelerate housing production while fostering more inclusive, sustainable communities throughout Alameda County.

Contact Information

For more information about the SHIFT initiative RFP, please contact:

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Alameda County is an Equal Housing Opportunity and Accessible Housing Provider.

About Alameda County Housing and Community Development The Alameda County Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) is dedicated to building healthy communities through the development and preservation of affordable housing, neighborhood stabilization, and fair housing services. HCD administers federal, state, and local funds to support housing development, homeownership assistance, and community development activities throughout Alameda County.

Note to editors: *SHIFT Architectural Design RFP and High-resolution renderings of the three representative sites and additional program materials are available upon request.*