

Alameda County SHIFT Design RFP FAQ

September 23, 2025

1. Will you consider proposals and designs for housing affordable to households below the 60-80% AMI level you are targeting?

Yes, while we expect the financing available and total development cost per unit that we are targeting to be most suitable for 60-80% AMI projects, we will consider any proposal that can deliver deeper affordability while maintaining the cost limitations we are looking for.

2. Do you have a square footage minimum or maximum for proposals you receive?

No, there is no square footage minimum or maximum for proposals that we will consider.

3. Can developers and project managers also apply for this RFP?

The current RFP is only for the collection of designs and selection of a program design consultant. Non-architectural firms are encouraged to apply if they meet the minimum qualifications and can provide the materials required in the RFP, but this RFP will not award development funds or construction project roles. For those interested in being a SHIFT project developer, we will have a separate request for qualifications next year.

4. Would we be excluded from applying if our residential designs are limited to 4 unit buildings?

No, we are hoping to receive proposals for residential designs anywhere from 4-10 units in size.

5. Can we come into the program with a site in our portfolio already or will it have to be a new site?

When the SHIFT pilot launches, we will be happy to work with developers who already have sites ready, as well as those without them. For the purposes of this RFP we are interested in designs for the example sites provided as proof of concept for a variety of similar locations.

6. Do you have a framework for the workflow that will be created for SHIFT?

Not currently

7. Could we create a workflow using the state streamlining legislation as part of our proposal?

While this is not required, any work that illustrates organizational capacity and proves the feasibility of project designs submitted will be considered.

8. Are you open to using innovative building materials?

Innovative material use is encouraged if it helps achieve the goals of the RFP.

9. How certain of our cost estimates are applicants required to be and how will you be vetting these estimates?

Cost estimates will be evaluated by the SHIFT RFP review panel and are expected to be broadly accurate to the best ability of the submitting firm. HCD Staff are aware that these costs are estimates and may be subject to change.

10. To what extent do you want us to use certain construction methodologies such as offsite construction?

Offsite construction is not required but may be used to minimize development costs. The SHIFT program does not require a particular construction methodology.

11. Is the intention of the RFP to collect designs that require the use of specific methods of construction or more generic ones that are more adaptable?

All approaches will be considered, with maximum points available to firms that can illustrate a method of construction that minimizes costs. However the goal for the initial design is to ensure an adaptable design that multiple developers could construct.

12. Can we submit a co-application with a partner organization?

Yes, partnerships are encouraged but not required.

13. Will these projects be subject to prevailing wage requirements?

HCD Staff does not currently anticipate prevailing wage being a requirement for SHIFT projects.

14. Will the RFP approval process be based partly on cost?

Yes, cost minimization is a significant factor for design selection, as a central goal of the SHIFT program is to achieve a low per-unit development cost.

15. If there was a design/development/construction team that submitted a proposal, would the developers be precluded from participating in the development phase of the project?

No, it is expected and encouraged that firms participating in the current RFP will take part in the construction of SHIFT pilot projects.

16. If more than one site is available, would it be possible to submit designs for more than one site?

Yes, applicants are required to submit designs for each of the three example sites included in the RFP. Additional designs are not required but may be considered.

17. When will you be engaging with local jurisdictions on their project approval process?

HCD staff is already working with local staff to ensure the smooth launch of SHIFT.

18. How long will it take to get from the design phase to the pilot phase?

The Pilot phase is anticipated to launch mid to late 2026.

19. What benefit will submitters whose proposals are not selected receive and who will have ownership of these designs?

Proposals not selected will be eligible for future pre-approval as resources allow, included in the collection of SHIFT specific designs for future SHIFT project developers, and publicized as part of the SHIFT process. Designs submitted through the process will be publicly available but will be owned by the submitting firm.

20. How have you built projects in the past?

No SHIFT Project has been built to date.

21. Will you entertain more than one design proposal from the same applicant?

Yes, submitters are required to submit for the example sites, but additional designs may be considered.

22. Are you open to proposals for homeownership?

Not currently.

23. Are you looking for proposals that take advantage of state streamlining legislation?

Yes, in order to score maximum points, proposals should take full advantage of state and local law which enables higher unit counts and lower costs.

24. Will the proposals have to be accessible for people with disabilities?

Units should comply with the Fair Housing Act and any other applicable law regarding accessibility and adaptability. Navigation of such laws and their applicability to SHIFT projects will part of the overall application scoring,

25. Will the cost of rent have to include utility costs?

No, but applicants are encouraged to note long-term costs or utility savings that can be realized.

26. Could we include an opportunities and constraints analysis in our proposal?

Yes, additional analysis is acceptable to illustrate firm capacity to serve in the Program Designer role.

27. Are there any prescriptive layouts for the site designs?

No, any layout that minimizes cost, maximizes density, and achieves desired affordability levels will be eligible for selection

28. Are you considering plans that would add additional infill units to an underutilized site?

None of the example sites included in this RFP have units currently present. As such, designs should focus on new construction. Infill units may be considered for SHIFT funding upon program launch, provided they can deliver on program goals.

29. Are proposals required to address parking requirements specific to the local jurisdiction?

Yes, proposals should address the parking requirements in place at the example sites. To ensure full points, designers should consider possible means to use State and local law to minimize or eliminate parking requirements.

30. Who owns the designs after they are submitted?

Designs will become part of a publicly accessible collection but will still be owned by the submitting firm.

31. Will we consider entitled projects?

Once the pilot phase launches, entitled projects may be considered if they can deliver on the program goals of SHIFT.

32. Should applicants assume the Public Facility site will be rezoned to allow residential use?

Yes, you should assume this site will be zoned R-1

33. Are you prioritizing any type of construction or will you consider any combination of Condos, Single-Family homes, ADUs, and Tiny Homes?

All construction types that can maximize density and minimize costs while maintaining affordability for rental by target income groups will be considered. This does not currently include condos or tiny homes.

34. How will SHIFT work with different jurisdictions with different requirements?

SHIFT is initially planned for launch in Unincorporated Alameda County and Oakland, but the program is anticipated to expand to each city in the County. HCD staff will work with City staff to ensure plans receive pre-approval and local zoning is conducive to construction.

35. Are we required to use SB 9 specifically?

No, SB 9 is not required to be used, but may be helpful. Applicants are encouraged to take advantage of any applicable state law which would allow greater density, lower cost, and the required affordability restrictions. SB 4, SB 9, and other approaches are encouraged.

36. Can we submit designs for additional sites not included in the RFP?

Yes, while RFP submittal only requires designs suitable to the three example sites included, applicants could submit other sites to illustrate different typologies.

37. Should designs fit a particular unit size or mix?

No, there is no required mix. HCD Staff's research indicates that 2-bedroom units are the most desirable and economically feasible, but if another size or a mix of sizes achieves the goals of the RFP, that is acceptable.