

DATE OF MEETING September 22, 2021

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**SUBJECT ACCESSIBLE AND ADAPTABLE HOUSING POLICY**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report:**

To inform the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness of Staff's intent to begin work on an Accessible and Adaptable Housing Policy.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2018, Nanaimo City Council endorsed the Nanaimo Affordable Housing Strategy (AHS). The AHS sets the priorities for the City of Nanaimo to address affordability across the housing continuum over the next ten years. Introducing an adaptable housing policy that requires a minimum percentage of residential units as part of rezoning applications to be either accessible or adaptable was identified as a medium-term (3-5 year) priority of the AHS.

Adaptable and accessible housing refers to housing that accommodates all residents regardless of their abilities. Housing that is accessible is designed to meet the needs of people with all abilities; housing that is adaptable is designed to be easily renovated to meet tenant or owner's changing accessibility needs.

The City of Nanaimo currently has accessible parking requirements and awards Schedule D density bonus points to developments where "at least 10% of the residential dwelling units meet all the accessibility requirements within the British Columbia Building Code 2012 (BCBC)". The City does not otherwise have any adaptable or accessibility requirements with respect to residential housing.

The AHS includes the following actions related to an adaptable housing policy:

- Following consultation with the development community and non-profit housing sector, propose minimum adaptable unit requirements for all new multiple-unit dwellings.
- Evaluate the viability of offering incentives for developers to supply a higher percentage of adaptable units.
- Consider higher adaptable unit requirements for senior-oriented developments.
- Develop an associated bylaw to implement the adaptable housing policy.
- Promote financial assistance programs (e.g., Home Adaptations for Independence (HAFI) grant) for households to make modifications to their home for accessibility.

In 2019, the City of Nanaimo endorsed the Nanaimo Age Friendly Plan 2019 - 2023. Supporting the development of more attainable (affordable) and accessible housing for seniors in Nanaimo, that are close to amenities, is included as an objective within the Age Friendly Plan. The Age Friendly Plan also recommends reviewing “how the City of Nanaimo considers accessibility to ensure it meets the needs of an aging population”.

The Regional District of Nanaimo’s Housing Needs Report (2020) also encourages expanding accessible and adaptable housing guidelines in the region.

## **DISCUSSION**

Staff have begun work on creating an adaptable and accessible housing policy for the City of Nanaimo. The goal of the policy project is to consider options to increase the amount of adaptable and accessible multiple-family (apartment, condominium, townhouse) units developed in the City of Nanaimo. The project will seek to better understand the following:

1. The supply and demand for accessible and adaptable housing in Nanaimo.
2. The barriers for including adaptable and accessible housing units within new developments.
3. The impacts of implementing minimum adaptable unit requirements for all new multiple-unit dwellings.
4. The need for additional accessible and adaptable housing standards beyond those required by the BC Building Code.

The project may inform the REIMAGINE review process and make policy and bylaw recommendations that may include suggested zoning, OCP and/or design guideline revisions.

The project will include:

- a review of best practices from other municipalities;
- an inventory of accessible and adaptable units in Nanaimo;
- an economic impact study of housing policies that require a set percentage of accessible and/or adaptable units; and
- stakeholder consultation.

There will be engagement opportunities for identified stakeholders to provide feedback, including but not limited to: developers, real estate professionals, seniors and seniors’ advocacy groups, non-profit housing providers, diverse ability advocacy, peer and support groups, neighbourhood associations and Island Health. The project is expected to conclude with a final report to Council in spring 2022. Prior to bringing the report to Council, Staff will present the report to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness for endorsement.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Staff anticipate presenting a draft adaptable and accessible housing policy to the Committee early this winter for feedback. |

### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- Staff have begun work on creating an adaptable and accessible housing policy for the City of Nanaimo.
- Introducing an adaptable housing policy was identified a medium-term priority of the Affordable Housing Strategy
- The goal of the policy project is to consider options to increase the amount of adaptable and accessible multiple-family (apartment, condominium, townhouse) units developed in the City of Nanaimo.

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