

DATE OF MEETING June 12, 2023

AUTHORED BY CHRIS SHOLBERG, COMMUNITY/HERITAGE PLANNER  
LISA BRINKMAN, MANAGER COMMUNITY PLANNING

SUBJECT **ADAPTABLE HOUSING REGULATION AND POLICY**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To present proposed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw to create more adaptable housing in Nanaimo, and to seek direction regarding community consultation.

### **Recommendation**

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend Council direct Staff to proceed with community consultation for the proposed amendments to the “City Nanaimo Zoning Bylaw 2011 No. 4500” to create more adaptable housing in Nanaimo, as outlined in the 2023-JUN-12 Staff report titled “Adaptable Housing Regulation and Policy.”

## **BACKGROUND**

Universal design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability. Adaptable housing refers to housing with the potential to accommodate all community members regardless of their physical abilities. Adaptable units can benefit anyone whose mobility is limited due to age, disability, or illness, making it easier for them to function more independently in their own home and age in place over time.

The Canadian Survey on Disability (2017) reports that 22% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and over has one or more disabilities, and for those aged 75 years and over 47% have one or more disabilities. Also, nearly 25 percent of British Columbia’s population, aged 15 years and older, identified as having a disability (2017). Findings from recent housing needs research for Nanaimo indicates that seniors who own their homes are finding it challenging to age-in-place because there are limited housing options that would allow them to downsize.

Nanaimo’s aging population is growing (Table 1), and as a result there is an increased need to accommodate adequate housing for seniors, as well as for people with disabilities. Of the 1,075 multi-units issued building permits in 2022, it is estimated that 20 adaptable units were constructed (not including seniors housing).

**Table 1: Population by Age Group - Census Data – City of Nanaimo**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>2016 Population</b>	<b>2021 Population</b>
<b>0-14</b>	13,040	14,135
<b>15-64</b>	57,300	61,200
<b>65+</b>	20,170	24,520

Both *City Plan - Nanaimo ReImagined* (2022) and the *Nanaimo Affordable Housing Strategy* (2018) contain policy to encourage more adaptable housing in Nanaimo. At its regular meeting on 2022-OCT-24, Council endorsed several projects to promote affordable housing in Nanaimo including to:

Develop an Accessible and Adaptable Housing policy to increase the amount of adaptable and accessible residential units that:

- Explores requiring a minimum number of adaptable units for all new developments, including flexibility and options for different types of housing.
- Considers higher adaptable unit requirements for seniors' oriented developments.
- Encourages the use of universal design features.

At the 2023-MAR-27 GPC meeting regarding the Integrated Action Plan, Committee members supported keeping this project as a priority action. In addition, the *Health and Housing Action Plan* (2020) sets as a priority to “ensure housing suitability for people with diverse physical and cognitive abilities.”

Ways that adaptable housing is supported in Nanaimo includes:

- The “Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266” contains regulations that require a specific design standard and minimum number of accessible parking spaces for multi-family, commercial, and industrial developments, as well as for seniors care and personal care facilities.
- Schedule D of the Zoning Bylaw contains density bonus provisions for certain residential developments where 10% of the residential dwelling units meet the adaptable unit requirements in the B.C. Building Code.
- New design guidelines, to ensure new multi-unit, commercial and industrial developments are accessible, will be included in the development permit design guideline review project.
- Funding is available through the BC Housing ‘rebate program’ to allow for accessible home adaptations.

## **DISCUSSION**

An adaptable unit housing study was completed to analyze the financial feasibility and implications of creating regulations and/or policy requiring a set percentage of adaptable units in new multi-family developments (see Attachment A – Adaptable Unit Housing Study – Executive Summary).

Key findings of this analysis were that the costs for constructing a basic adaptable unit is not significantly more than a typical unit. However, meeting the accessibility needs of a specific individual can be expensive and gauging that need for market housing can be difficult. It is recommended that a basic adaptable unit design standard, in accordance with the BC Building Code, be required that easily allows for a future conversion and individualized upgrades to meet the specific accessibility needs of a tenant, resident, or owner.

In accordance with the BC Building Code, a basic adaptable unit standard includes wider doorways, maneuvering room at dwelling unit entries and corridors, access to a main floor

bathroom, reinforcement of bathroom walls for future installation of grab bars, and accessible door handles, switches, and outlets. An adaptable unit is designed and built so that accessibility features (to meet a specific need) can be added more easily and inexpensively after construction.

Below is a high-level overview of what is required by other BC municipalities with regard to the percentage of basic adaptable units required in a multi-unit development:

Municipality	Required % of basic adaptable units in a multi-unit development as required in the Zoning Bylaw
District of North Vancouver	100%
City of Port Moody	50%
City of Chilliwack	50%
City of New Westminster	40%
City of Port Coquitlam	30%

The recommendation in the housing study (Attachment A), is that the City of Nanaimo require that 50% of new multi-family units meet the BC Building Code’s guidelines for adaptability.

**Zoning Bylaw Amendment Recommendations for Adaptable Housing in Nanaimo**

- a) In a multi-unit development of 10 or more units, require that 50% of the residential units must meet the basic adaptable unit standard in accordance with the BC Building Code.
- b) Require that 100% of the housing units in a “Seniors Congregate Housing” development must meet the basic adaptable unit standard in accordance with the BC Building Code.
- c) A density bonus in the Zoning Bylaw is an increase to the allowable floor area ratio on a parcel when certain amenities are achieved in accordance with Schedule D. Schedule D of the Zoning Bylaw already includes density bonus incentives when at least 10% of the residential units within a building meet the basic adaptable unit standard. Staff is recommending that the required minimum number of adaptable units be increased from 10% to greater than the base amount of 50% (proposed in ‘a’ above) in order to achieve the density bonus on parcels in which multi-use development is already a permitted use. Staff propose that the density bonus adaptable unit target be established through the consultation process.

Staff are seeking direction to proceed with public consultation on the recommendations proposed above. The consultation process would include the City’s Design Advisory Panel (DAP), Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI), the development community, and the general public. Based on the input received during the consultation process, Staff will revise the recommendations accordingly and return to Council for final review. Amendments to the Zoning Bylaw would require bylaw readings and a public hearing. |

## **OPTIONS**

1. That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend Council direct Staff to proceed with community consultation for the proposed amendments to the “City Nanaimo Zoning Bylaw 2011 No. 4500” to create more adaptable housing in Nanaimo, as outlined in the 2023-JUN-12 Staff report titled “Adaptable Housing Regulation and Policy.”
  - The advantages of this option: Will allow Staff to proceed with community consultation for the proposed recommendations to increase adaptable housing in Nanaimo. This is consistent with policies supporting community engagement as well as adaptable housing directions in *City Plan*, the *Affordable Housing Strategy*, and the *Health and Housing Action Plan*.
  - The disadvantages of this option: Staff time and resources will be required for the consultation process.
  - Financial Implications: The resources required for the proposed consultation is within the approved 2023 budget.
  
2. That Council provide alternate direction.

## **SUMMARY POINTS**

- *City Plan*, the *Affordable Housing Strategy*, and the *Health and Housing Action Plan* recognize that more adaptable housing units are needed in Nanaimo.
- Based on the housing study recommendations, amendments to the Zoning Bylaw are proposed for Council consideration to increase the number of adaptable units in Nanaimo.
- Staff are seeking direction to proceed with public consultation on the recommendations for adaptable housing in Nanaimo.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

ATTACHMENT A: Adaptable Unit Housing Study - Executive Summary

ATTACHMENT B: Summary of Adaptable Unit Policy and Regulations from other Municipalities

### **Submitted by:**

Lisa Brinkman  
Manager, Community Planning

### **Concurrence by:**

Lisa Bhopalsingh  
Director, Community Development

Jeremy Holm  
Director, Development Approvals

Dale Lindsay  
General Manager, Development Services /  
Deputy CAO