

DATE OF MEETING September 14, 2023

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**SUBJECT INCREASING ADAPTABLE HOUSING IN NANAIMO**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To present The Mayor's Leaders' Table proposed amendments to the City of Nanaimo's Zoning Bylaw to create more adaptable housing in Nanaimo.

## **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 have one or more disability, and for those aged 75 years and over, 47% have one or more disability. Also, nearly 25% of BC'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**

Age Group	2016 Population	2021 Population
0-14	13,040	14,135
15-64	57,300	61,200
65+	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.

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 include:

- 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 BC 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 50% of new multi-family units meet the BC Building Code's guidelines for adaptability.

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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 are 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.

The consultation process for these proposed changes includes the City's Design Advisory Panel (DAP), Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI), the development community, and the general public. See attachment C for a link to the survey and more information on the City's get-involved webpage. 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.

#### **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 consideration to increase the number of adaptable units in Nanaimo.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

ATTACHMENT A: Adaptable Unit Housing Study - Executive Summary

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

ATTACHMENT C: Link to “Increasing Housing Options for Nanaimo” website and survey |

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# ATTACHMENT A

## Excerpt from the Adaptable Unit Housing Study Executive Summary

### *Costs associated with development of Adaptable units in new buildings:*

Key findings are that aging demographics are trending toward a greater need for adaptable units. Also, that the costs for constructing a basic adaptable unit is generally not much more than a typical unit. However, meeting the accessibility needs of a specific individual can be expensive, thus it is recommended to follow a basic adaptable unit design standard (in accordance with the B.C Building Code) that easily allows for a future conversion and individualized upgrades to meet the specific accessibility needs of a tenant, resident or owner.

### *Preliminary consultation with Nanaimo real estate and development professionals:*

The Nanaimo development community acknowledges that there is a market demand for adaptability in housing units, and the BC Building Code already provides basic guidelines for adaptable units. They also advise that the costs are not significant for a basic adaptable unit, however they recommend having one provincial standard so that there are not different requirements for each jurisdiction. Developers do not want to be required to construct units that cannot be easily sold in the market, or to create an over-supply of adaptable units, which given holding costs, could have a negative impact on both revenues and profits for the development community.

### *Review of best practices in other jurisdictions:*

Below is a high-level overview of what is required in the Zoning Bylaw of other B.C municipalities with regard to the percentage of basic adaptable units required in a new multi-unit development. Other municipalities have set targets to negotiate for adaptable units at the time of a rezoning application. While some jurisdictions have created their own set of design guidelines for an adaptable unit, others have relied on the B.C. Building Code requirements.

<b>Required % of basic adaptable units in a multi-unit development as required by Zoning Bylaw</b>	
<b>The District of North Vancouver</b>	100%
<b>Port Moody</b>	50%
<b>Chilliwack</b>	50%
<b>City of New Westminster</b>	40%

### *Recommendations for adaptable units in Nanaimo:*

It is recommended that the City of Nanaimo require that 50% of new multi-family units meet the BC Building Code's guidelines for adaptability. Also, as an incentive, similar to those offered by other jurisdictions, allow for a modest density exemption of 1.85m<sup>2</sup> from the Floor Area Ratio for each adaptable unit. In addition, the City may wish to consider a grant program for tenants wishing to make specific modifications to their adaptable unit to meet the accessibility needs of an individual. Also, recommended is further consultation with the development community on the proposed requirements.

[Link: Nanaimo Family Friendly and Adaptable Housing Study \(Mulholland Parker Land Economists Ltd. Report - May 2023\)](#)

## ATTACHMENT B

City	Summary of Adaptable Unit Policy and Regulations from other Municipalities
<b>REGULATION IN ZONING BYLAW</b>	
<b>North Vancouver (City)</b>	<p>Zoning Bylaw requires 25% of all units to meet Level 2 Adaptable Design Guidelines, and 75% to meet Level 1 Adaptable Design Guidelines. Gross floor area exclusion applied as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.86 square metres (20 square feet) for each Level 2 dwelling unit;</li> <li>• 4.19 square metres (45 square feet) for each Level 3 dwelling unit.</li> </ul> <p>Adaptable Design Guidelines are applied in addition to the BC Building Code accessibility requirements. Level 1 covers basic design and features and is required of all units in apartments with common corridors. Level 2 focuses on mobility to move easily into and out of the building, common areas, and the unit itself. Level 3 increase the degree of adaptability.</p>
<b>Port Moody</b>	<p>Zoning Bylaw requires that in all zones that include multi-residential use, but excluding the Semi-Detached Residential zone, that a minimum of 50% of all new single-storey residential dwelling units must meet provincial adaptable housing standards, and in the calculation of floor area ratio, the following may be excluded as floor area: 2 sq. metres (21.5 sq. ft.) of floor area in an adaptable dwelling unit.</p>
<b>Chilliwack</b>	<p>The Zoning Bylaw requires 50% of new apartment units must meet BC Building Code for adaptability.</p>
<b>New Westminster</b>	<p>Zoning Bylaw requires that 40% of all single storey units in multi-family developments must be built as adaptable dwelling units as per BC Building Code. Exempt from total floor space calculations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.85 sq. metres (19.90 sq. feet) for every one-bedroom adaptable housing unit.</li> <li>• 2.80 sq. metres (30.14 sq. feet) for every two-plus bedroom adaptable housing unit.</li> </ul>
<b>Port Coquitlam</b>	<p>The Building and Plumbing Bylaw requires that 30% of all new apartment units meet the BC Building Code adaptable standards.</p> <p>The Zoning Bylaw allows an exemption in the calculation of floor area ratio, by excluding 2 sq. metres (21.5 sq. ft.) of floor area in an adaptable dwelling unit from the total.</p>

<b>REZONING POLICY OR POLICY IN OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN (OCP)</b>	
<b>Kelowna</b>	Policy in OCP to integrate universal design features and principles to create housing options for people of all ages and abilities, including those aging in place; and principal entrances should be universally accessible.
<b>Victoria</b>	Rezoning policy negotiated at the time of some rezoning applications that at least 10% (or greater) of all dwelling units on the site be adaptable units.
<b>Coquitlam</b>	Rezoning policy to consider in exchange for adaptable units: density transfer, amenity and parking reductions, density bonus, and waiving density bonus contributions. Also, each adaptable unit is eligible for a 2 sq. metres exclusion to gross floor area.
<b>Burnaby</b>	Burnaby requires adaptable design in new multi-family residential developments that are approved through the Comprehensive Development (CD) rezoning process. For most developments, at least 20% of single-level units must meet the provincial adaptable design standards; for purpose-built seniors housing, this percentage increases to 100%. As an incentive, the Burnaby Zoning Bylaw provides a 1.85 sq. m (approximately 20 sq. ft.) floor area exemption for every adaptable housing unit.
<b>Langley (Township)</b>	OCP policy that 5% of new single family residential and ground-oriented multifamily residential (e.g. duplexes and rowhouses) must be adaptable, and 10% of new apartment units must be adaptable.
<b>North Vancouver (District)</b>	<p>Council policy applies to multi-family rezoning applications, and form and character for multifamily development permit applications proposing 4 or more new multi-family apartments units or 4 or more new ground-oriented multi-family units.</p> <p>Policy requires 100% of apartments must meet basic accessible designs and 5% must follow enhanced accessible designs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For seniors housing, 50% must include sensory and/or mobility accessible design.</li> <li>• For townhouses, 100% must meet basic accessibility requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>Prince George</b>	<p>Policy in OCP – Through incentives and other means, encourage visitable and adaptable housing in locations downtown, in neighbourhood centres and corridors, particularly near public transportation.</p> <p>Policy in OCP – Support a pilot project to promote rehabilitation of existing housing to improve accessibility or visibility.</p> <p>Policy in OCP – The City should undertake development of a Community Amenity Contribution policy, which includes the voluntary provision of a number of amenity contributions including affordable, rental and special needs housing and visitable and/or adaptable housing, in exchange for density bonus or other incentives and relaxations.</p> <p>Definition in OCP – Adaptable Housing – Housing that is designed and built so that accessibility features can be added easily and inexpensively after construction.</p>

## **ATTACHMENT C**

Link to “Increasing Housing Options for Nanaimo” website and survey:  
<https://www.getinvolvednanaimo.ca/housing-initiatives>



# Mayor's Leaders' Table Increasing Adaptable Housing In Nanaimo

2023-SEP-14

## Increasing Adaptable Housing



INCREASING HOUSING OPTIONS

### What is Adaptable Housing?

- Adaptable housing refers to housing with the potential to accommodate all community members regardless of their physical abilities.



# Increasing Adaptable Housing



INCREASING HOUSING OPTIONS

## What is an Adaptable Unit?

- In accordance with the *BC Building Code*, a basic adaptable unit allows for a future conversion and individualized upgrades to meet the specific accessibility needs of a tenant, resident, or owner.



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# Increasing Adaptable Housing

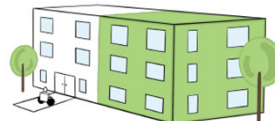


INCREASING HOUSING OPTIONS

## Proposed Changes to Enable More Adaptable Housing

### 1. Requiring more adaptable units in multi-family buildings

In a multi-unit development of **10 or more units**, require **50%** of the residential units to meet the basic adaptable unit standard in accordance with the *BC Building Code*.



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## Increasing Adaptable Housing

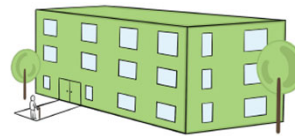


INCREASING HOUSING OPTIONS

### Proposed Changes to Enable More Adaptable Housing

#### 2. Requiring adaptable units in Seniors Housing

Require that **100% of the housing units** in a “Seniors Congregate Housing” development meet the basic adaptable unit standard in accordance with the BC Building Code.



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## Increasing Adaptable Housing

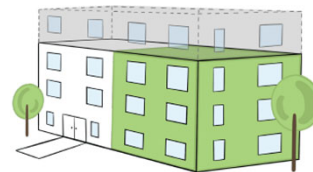


INCREASING HOUSING OPTIONS

### Proposed Changes to Enable More Adaptable Housing

#### 3. Incentivizing additional adaptable units through density bonusing

The City is proposing that the **required minimum number of adaptable units be increased from 10% to greater than the base amount of 50%** in order to achieve the density bonus on parcels in which multi-use development is already a permitted use.



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