

DATE OF MEETING | December 18, 2023

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**SUBJECT | INCREASING HOUSING OPTIONS – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESULTS**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To present a summary of the community engagement results for the Increasing Housing Options project that occurred in fall 2023.

## **BACKGROUND**

At its meeting of 2023-JUN-19, Council directed Staff to proceed with community consultation for four initiatives related to housing: secondary suite regulations; infill housing in existing neighbourhoods; family-friendly housing; and, adaptable housing. Consultation for these four initiatives was conducted throughout fall 2023, under the branding of “Increasing Housing Options”, the results of which are summarized and attached to this report.

Completion of these initiatives has been impacted by recent Provincial announcements including: upcoming changes to the British Columbia Building Code (BCBC); “Bill 44 – Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act, 2023” (“Bill 44”); and “Bill 47 - Housing Statutes (Transit-Oriented Areas) Amendment Act, 2023” (“Bill 47”), the latter two of which received Royal Assent on 2023-NOV-30. The intent of Bill 44 is to allow for more “Small-Scale, Multi-Unit” (“SSMU”) housing across the province. One of most significant implications of Bill 44 will be the obligation for local governments to allow 3, 4, or 6 dwelling units, depending on context, on most lands currently zoned for single-family detached or duplex residential uses.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Community Engagement**

Engagement on the Increasing Housing Options initiatives with the community and a wide range of stakeholders was carried out between August and October 2023. A survey for public input was available online from 2023-AUG-29 to 2023-SEP-29, and 864 survey responses were submitted. A general open house was hosted at Beban Park on 2023-SEP-12, and over 80 participants were recorded as attending. Targeted stakeholder and committee meetings were held with various groups including the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI), the Design Advisory Panel, the development community, the Mayor’s Leader Table, and the Nanaimo Neighbourhood Network.

Staff note that there was a high level of public interest and engagement for this project. A summary of community engagement and survey results can be found in Attachment A, and the full results are described in a White Paper available at the link in Attachment B. Results of

community engagement will also be posted on the “Get Involved Nanaimo” website. The next sections of this report describe the four Increasing Housing Options initiatives in more detail.

### *Secondary Suite Regulations*

Revisions to the “City of Nanaimo Zoning Bylaw 2011 No. 4500” (the “Zoning Bylaw”) were presented to increase the size of secondary suites and to allow secondary suites more broadly. In particular, proposed regulations would increase the opportunities for detached suites (e.g. carriage houses) by expanding the criteria for eligibility and allowing detached suites on certain properties in addition to attached suites (e.g. basement suites). The proposed secondary suite regulations would also allow suites in appropriate forms of duplexes and townhouses.

Expanding the secondary suite regulations was generally received positively, with an average of 76% of survey respondents indicating support for the proposed secondary suite revisions. In particular, 85% of respondents indicated “definitely support” or “somewhat support” to allowing detached suites on more lots. The principal concern raised was related to parking, with comments received through the survey and through engagement that adequate parking should be provided wherever secondary suites are permitted.

Elements of the City’s proposed secondary suite regulations will need to be revisited following the November 2023 passing of Provincial Bill 44 and subsequent release of regulations and policy manual on 2023-DEC-07. For example, the proposed minimum lot size requirements for secondary suites and detached suites may need to be reduced or eliminated. Other elements of the secondary suite regulations (e.g. permitting two suites on a lot and permitting suites in duplexes/townhouses) may go beyond the Provincial SSMU regulations, but will still need to be reviewed in the context of overall changes to local zoning authority.

### *Infill in Existing Neighbourhoods*

A number of Zoning Bylaw changes were presented to support infill and intensification in existing neighbourhoods, including:

- text revisions to reduce minimum lot areas and reduce front yard setbacks in existing infill zones;
- revising the R7 (Rowhouse Residential) zone to provide an intermediate residential density zone between existing R6 low density (townhouse) and R8 medium density (apartment) zones;
- introducing a bonus density incentive for the conversion of existing older homes; and,
- rezoning existing single-family and duplex areas of the city to the R5 (Three- and Four-Unit Residential) zone, where appropriate.

The proposed infill housing regulations were generally supported through the community engagement, with an average of 71% of survey participants responding favourable to the infill topic questions. The principal concern raised was regarding the design of infill housing. Some participants questioned how greenspace could be preserved through redevelopment and whether smaller infill developments could be subject to a form & character development permit that are currently exempt (e.g. four units or less outside of the Old City). This was of particular interest to many of the neighbourhood associations for existing and established neighbourhoods.

Staff were exploring further Zoning Bylaw revisions to address concerns with building design and form before the Provincial Bill 44 was announced. It is anticipated that the SSMU regulations will have an impact on the City's proposed infill housing initiatives. Most significantly, the regulations will likely supersede revisions pertaining to the R5 zone including any strategic pre-zoning to align with City infrastructure planning or City Plan land use designations.

### *Family-Friendly Housing*

Changes to the Zoning Bylaw and the City of Nanaimo Policy for Consideration of a Parking Variance were presented to require and incentivize more family-friendly dwelling units (3+ bedroom) in certain scenarios.

Public support for the family-friendly housing options was generally positive, with an average of 72% of survey participants responding favourably. Of note, was the relatively lower support for the proposed parking variance consideration, with only 36% indicating they “definitely support” reduced parking requirements for family-friendly dwelling units. The development community was particularly concerned with the proposed family-friendly regulations, suggesting that unit composition requirements could be overly restrictive, and indicating a preference for incentives to achieve more family-friendly units.

Staff anticipate that the new housing-related Provincial bills (such as Bill 47) and regulations will impact the City's ability to require prescribed forms of housing, such as family-friendly units in multi-family buildings. This initiative will need to be reviewed in relation to the new Provincial requirements.

### *Adaptable Housing*

Changes were presented to require a certain number of BCBC adaptable units in multi-family residential and seniors congregate housing developments, in addition to providing incentives for additional adaptable units. An average of 73% of survey respondents indicated support for the adaptable housing initiatives. The Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness supported the adaptable housing initiative and provided comments around challenges for requiring fully accessible units. Some concerns were raised in the survey that requiring adaptable units could incur increased costs leading to more unaffordable housing. Revisions to the adaptable housing regulations have been put on hold pending review of the BCBC changes announced on 2023-DEC-05 that are expected to come into effect in March 2025.

### **Next Steps**

Staff had previously indicated that amendment bylaws to support the Increasing Housing Options initiatives would be prepared and introduced to Council; however, in light of the recent Provincial housing announcements, the Increasing Housing Options initiative will return to a future Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) meeting in Q1 2024 for discussion on next steps. There was significant public participation in the project and this report provides an opportunity to share the engagement results in advance of proposed amendments to implement Increasing Housing Options and to address the Provincial regulations. |

### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- Consultation was conducted throughout fall 2023 under the branding of “Increasing Housing Options”, the results of which are summarized and attached to this report.
- Staff note that there was a high level of public interest and engagement for this project.
- In light of the recent Provincial housing announcements, the Increasing Housing Options initiative will return to a future Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) meeting in Q1 2024 for discussion on next steps.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- ATTACHMENT A: Community Engagement Summary  
ATTACHMENT B: Link to Community Engagement White Paper  
ATTACHMENT C: Link to “Provincial Local Government Housing Initiatives”

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