

Supporting Housing Affordability in Saanich



The high cost of housing is an issue across the District and the Capital Region. High property values, not enough supply, rising construction costs, labour shortages, and high interest rates have all impacted housing affordability.

With the high cost of new construction, it is very difficult to get affordability from private sector development. Currently, we need to look to non-market housing providers to provide affordability in new construction. Non-profits build and operate rental housing at a range of below-market rates. These homes are usually supported by funding from the provincial and/or federal government.

Saanich has taken action to support non-market housing projects across the District and make them easier and faster to build.

Rapid Deployment of Non-Market Housing Program

The Rapid Deployment Program makes it easier to build non-market housing by allowing non-profit housing providers to build to the upper limits in the Official Community Plan without needing a rezoning. This significantly speeds up the approval process, allowing projects to reduce their risk and get built faster.

Providing Saanich-Owned Land

While Saanich does not own a lot of surplus land, the District is exploring partnerships with non-profits for new affordable housing projects. For example, Saanich partnered with the Capital Region Housing Corporation, BC Housing, and the Federal government to redevelop the site of the Nellie McClung Library branch to include a new library and 210 units of non-market housing. Providing land can significantly reduce both upfront and carrying costs of new housing projects, resulting in more affordability.

Saanich Affordable Housing Reserve Fund

Saanich has a Reserve Fund dedicated to supporting the development of non-market housing. The Fund receives monies from community amenity contributions from private development. These funds can be leveraged to apply for major funding from organizations like BC Housing and CMHC.

Fast-Tracking Approvals

Saanich's Non-Market Housing Policy ensures applications from non-profit and co-operative housing providers are prioritized throughout the entire development review process. These priority projects go to the "top of the pile" from initial application right through to occupancy permit.

Reductions in Costs and Fees

Saanich provides non-profit housing providers with reduced development fees to help keep rental costs as low as possible. These include waivers for Community Amenity Contributions, reduced Development Cost Charges, and permissive tax exemptions.

Did you know?

Since January 2024, half of the new homes approved through Development Permits were non-market housing units.

How do these actions create affordable housing?

These strategies at the local government level can reduce uncertainty/risk, speed up approval times, and provide financial support for new construction projects. While non-market housing costs the same to build as for-profit housing, it becomes more and more affordable over time and is an important part of our housing supply.

