

SMALL APARTMENT INFILL POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to assist in the evaluation of rezoning applications using the Small Apartment Zone (RA-1A). Specifically, the policy outlines objectives for this type of infill, and identifies considerations for elements such as location, accessibility, tenure, parking, amenity space, building design, and site layout.

OBJECTIVES

1. Expand housing choice to meet a broader range of community need.
2. Support housing innovation, affordability, and accessibility.
3. Provide guidance for a housing form that is part of “missing middle” infill options.
4. Provide a multi-unit residential housing form that is a suitable option for a single residential lot without need for lot assembly in locations where increased density is supportable.
5. Provide guidance for a parking ratio for small apartment infill.
6. Ensure that small apartment infill buildings with micro units are designed to be livable.

POLICIES

1. Locational Considerations

- 1.1 Encourage small apartment infill developments in areas that are well served by frequent transit and pedestrian/cycling infrastructure and are within walking distance to shops, services, and employment areas such that living with low rates of car ownership is practical.
- 1.2 Discourage small apartment infill on larger parcels and on potential lot assemblies where policy supports taller buildings, higher density, and more efficient building forms and where these denser forms of housing can practically be achieved.
- 1.3 Support small apartment infill in “edge” locations where they can serve as a transition between larger multi-unit residential building forms and adjacent areas that are designated for lower-density residential uses.
- 1.4 Support small apartment infill in high-growth areas on parcels that have been orphaned by surrounding re-development projects and where higher density development is supported by policy.
- 1.5 Generally, support rezoning applications for small apartment infill subject to policies 1.1 to 1.4 in the following locations within the Urban Containment Boundary:

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- Areas designated within plans (e.g., Local Area Plans, Village plans, Centre plans, Corridor plans, and Action plans) that support three-storey attached housing and multi-unit residential buildings;
- On Major Roads within Centres and Villages; and
- On Major Roads that are frequent transit routes.

2. Affordability

- 2.1 Support construction approaches that enable buildings to remain classified as Part 9 buildings under the BC Building Code that can result in reduced operating costs and lower construction costs/timelines.
- 2.2 Smaller/micro units offered at more affordable costs should be designed with livability and the health/well-being of tenants in mind.

3. Accessibility

- 3.1 All ground floor units should be wheelchair accessible from the street.

4. Unit Size

- 4.1 A mix of unit sizes is encouraged.

5. Preference to Rental Housing

- 5.1 Prefer secure rental projects over strata-titled projects as a means to address the need for expanding the primary rental market with secure rental housing, as identified in the Saanich Housing Needs Report.
- 5.2 Strongly encourage housing agreements that support rental tenure with terms of 60 years or the life of the building in order to provide a long-term secure supply of rental units.
- 5.3 Support other forms of affordable and supportive tenures such as co-op and co-housing.

6. Parking and Transportation Demand Management

- 6.1 Support small apartment infill in areas with low vehicle ownership rates and where lower vehicle parking ratios can be supported due to a broad range of transportation options.

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- 6.2 Require a transportation demand management plan to support decreased parking ratios. Consideration should be given to access to frequent transit, car sharing, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and bicycle parking.
- 6.3 Parking ratios as low as 0.5:1 may be supported when justified by a transportation demand management plan and where access to frequent transit and car share, bike storage facilities, and proximity to services and employment areas are clearly demonstrated. With reduced parking requirements, landscaping and outdoor amenity spaces must be expanded.
- 6.4 Direct pedestrian and cycling connections shall be provided from the street and directly through the site to bicycle parking and storage areas.
- 6.5 Indoor bicycle storage should be easily and directly accessed from the exterior of the building. Amenities such as e-charging capabilities, bike repair area, work bench, and accommodation for larger cargo bikes are strongly encouraged in bike storage areas.
- 6.6 All vehicle parking shall be located in the rear yard and/or under building.

7. Amenity Space

- 7.1 The provision of an outdoor common amenity space for use by residents to gather and enjoy for social use is required and must be located in the rear yard, separate from all parking areas. The amenity space must include at least one tall shade tree with more trees encouraged where larger amenity areas are possible. Landscaping and outdoor furniture is encouraged.
- 7.2 Private amenity space of 6 m² per unit minimum is encouraged but shall not be provided at the expense of a rear yard common amenity area.
- 7.3 Common outdoor amenity space in the rear yard should be provided for the use of all residents.
- 7.4 The safety, comfort, and quality of amenity space should be enhanced by the provision of landscaping, shade trees, seating, and lighting.
- 7.5 Reduced parking requirements should result in an increase in the amount and quality of amenity space.

8. Building Design and Site Layout

- 8.1 Small apartment infill projects should be designed to be compatible with surrounding neighbourhoods and intended future land uses through features such as building setbacks, height, massing, orientation, and site landscaping. In instances where the adjacency is a single-detached home, the goal is not to mimic this condition, but to provide a sensitive and interesting contrast.

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- 8.2 Buildings shall be oriented to the street. Front ground floor units should be visible and accessible from the sidewalk. For corner lot buildings, both fronting elevations should be oriented to the street and offer unit entry to ground-floor units from the street.
- 8.3 Consider setback variances that support tree retention, enhanced greenspace, and the provision of quality and usable outdoor amenity areas.
- 8.4 A deeper front yard setback may be requested based on the street context and adjacencies.
- 8.5 Landscaping should be provided to buffer adjacent properties, screen parking areas, provide amenity value, enhance the street frontage, and minimize impermeable surfaces.

9. Livability and Micro Units

- 9.1 Access to maximum natural light and natural ventilation through an adequate number of operable windows shall be provided.
- 9.2 Higher ceiling heights (e.g., 2.90 m or more) are encouraged to maximize livability.
- 9.3 Full kitchens shall be provided with adequate space for food preparation, containing apartment-size stove/oven and fridge/freezer (hot plates and bar fridges are not supportable).
- 9.4 Laundry facilities shall be provided within the building, preferably in suite.
- 9.5 Storage for residents must be provided, either in suite or in a common area. Storage areas for tenants should be at least 1.5 m³ or 1 m by 1 m by 1.5 m for each unit.
- 9.6 Bathrooms shall be self-contained within the unit and contain a sink, toilet, bath/shower.
- 9.7 For units where the principal living area also serves as the sleeping area, built-in, fold-down furniture that allows residents to manipulate the space for both day use and night use is strongly encouraged.