

**MINUTES**  
**HOUSING AFFORDABLE STANDING COMMITTEE**

Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2  
770 Vernon Avenue

December 2, 2024, at 10:30am

Present: Councillor Judy Brownoff, , Mayor Dean Murdock (Chair), Phil Lancaster, Councillor Zac de Vries, Councillor Mena Westhaver.

Regrets: Scott Dutchak and Cam Pringle

Staff: Carley Friesen, Acting Manager of Housing, Harley Machielse, Director of Engineering, Jon Poole, Development Planning Process Manager, Cameron Scott, Manager of Community Planning

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**MINUTES**

**MOVED by Councillor Z. de Vries and Seconded by Councillor J. Brownoff: “That the Minutes of the Housing Affordability Standing Committee meeting held May 27, 2024, be adopted as circulated.”**

**CARRIED**

**CHAIRS REMARKS**

Mayor Murdock read the Territorial Acknowledgement and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Carley Friesen, Acting Manager of Housing, gave a verbal update on Affordable Housing.

The following was noted:

- There is currently not a bylaw requirement for all new market projects to be affordable units. However, the District does expect there to be a contribution of units on new builds, also known as inclusionary units, to be a percentage as affordable through the Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) policy.
- The second way is a cash contribution to the Saanich Affordable Housing Reserve Fund. In the case of a cash contribution, 30% of the total CAC that's paid goes into Saanich Affordable Housing Reserve Fund. It is most common for a development to pay cash to the CAC.
- These funds that are paid into the CAC, are available and directed specifically for non-profit providers for affordable housing. These non-profit providers have a very high level of oversight of the needs for Saanich residents. For profit providers are not eligible for contributions from the Saanich Affordable Housing Reserve Fund however it is acceptable for developments to secure units as affordable units and non-profit providers manages those units.
- Under the Housing Accelerator Fund our housing target asks us for about 28% of the total 4610 units to be non-market or affordable and during our Year 1 Progress Report, Saanich has almost 30% completions in that category.
- Two big pieces of work to increase affordable housing is the rapid deployment program which will take advantage of pre-zoning. We have received one application already and are currently in talks with four or five projects right now. Also, the Saanich Affordable Housing Reserve Fund

where Council has refreshed the fund putting a new policy in place to guide decision making on that fund. We have received three applications to date.

The following was noted during the discussion and in response to questions from the committee:

- We currently have 2 million in the fund right now.
- A lot of these affordable units are rent geared to income which is when you show your income, and they charge you less than 30% of your income. F
- Advocacy by Council at UBCM to get the province to change the legislation to provide for different tools for local governments for inclusionary housing zoning and policies. Being able to deliver affordability has been a challenge and an ongoing conversation especially in relation to the CAC policy. This has also involved extensive consultation with housing providers, both market and non-market. Unfortunately for below market projects, it doesn't work unless you have a large scale development as you need critical mass to make it efficient (over 350 units) for negotiation. It's the not for profit organizations that provide the best value with additional benefits which we provide back to affordable housing.
- Staff have addressed and focused on the residents that are in core housing needs and who need it the most, which is 11% of residents and 15% of renter households. When we look at nonmarket housing providers, it's the rent geared to income that applies for non-market housing. It is difficult to find nonmarket providers to manage a small piece of development.
- We have reduced development cost charge (DCC) commitments as an incentive. The District is ready to test every policy to continue to advance although in this market it will require significant government subsidy and this provincial government has made record investments in affordable housing.
- We want to focus on a wide range of housing to meet all needs with initiatives for non-market providers. Saanich Affordable Housing Reserve Fund provides capital funding and predevelopment funds with the rest for capital funds. We also offer permissive tax, DCC waivers, and reduced development timelines with rapid deployment.
- It helps to have a mixture of market and including the fact that there are challenges and pressures of natural affordability housing with low rental supply. Staff are cautious of the housing needs report and housing needs for rental is increasing and this leads to increasing prices. Staff will continue to be tighter with the language around affordability and non-market as it creates confusion for the public.

**MOVED by Councillor Z. de Vries and Seconded by Councillor M. Westhaver : "That the Housing Affordability Standing Committee receive for information."**

**The Motion was then Put and CARRIED**

## **QUADRA MCKENZIE DRAFT PLAN**

Cameron Scott, Manager of Community Planning, presented a PowerPoint on the Quadra McKenzie Draft Plan.

The following was noted:

- This is a plan to guide growth and change over the next 20 years primarily focused on land use and transportation including 40% of the Official Community Plan primary growth areas in

corridors, centers and villages to make a 15 minute city vision. This includes plans Council has adopted that staff have built in and incorporated.

- Implementing the seven housing strategy focus areas which include increasing affordable and supportive housing, promote and protect rental housing, support housing diversity and increase supply, reduce barriers to housing development, strengthen partnerships, enhance community engagement and understand housing demand while addressing land speculation.
- We are currently in phase three which is the draft plan refinement. The four project goals relate to land use, transportation and mobility, housing diversity, affordability and supply and public realm and open space.
- Key plan directions contain implementation of rapid transit on the McKenzie corridor, connecting the University of Victoria to urban Saanich, introduce corridor hubs to expand walkable 15-minute neighbourhoods, expand housing in locations near high frequency transit, use density incentives to obtain desired community outcomes, provide greater housing diversity near parks, celebrate the Lochside Trail as a community asset, enhance Quadra Street as a complete street and revitalize the Saanich Operations Centre with a greater mix of uses.
- Land use designations are made up of centres, villages, corridor hubs, corridor, neighborhood apartments and urban townhomes. This proposes up to 18 storeys in the core areas. We are trying to deliver different types of family friendly housing and commercial amenities to meet future housing needs. Desire location for future public space, cycling and transportation connections.
- The goal of the density framework is to incentivize specific outcomes in new developments. We have flexible framework that can respond to site characteristics of project goals. Key incentive areas are housing, environment, public realm, use, private amenity space and heritage. The density framework is in test mode right now to see if it will work or no. Working with consultants to see what works. All options on the table for density framework.
- The principles are to incentivize items to achieve something beyond standard development expectations as well as the need to have incentives that are clear to measures and assess. Not to mention the need to provide a pathway to economically viable development and to integrate with other regulations and standards like design guidelines. Incentives are housing affordability and diversity, urban forest and environment and lastly, public realm.
- A key direction in the OCP is to prioritize modes within transportation network based on the Mobility Priority Pyramid by creating exceptional environment for walking and cycling and taking transit to the next level. Looking at new growth to implement transit priority by segment by segment basis. Multi-modal transportation refers to linking together different forms of transportation, such as walking, cycling, transit, and vehicle travel, to move around the community safely and conveniently.
- Plans for parks, open spaces and community facilities is to build on the urban forest strategy and biodiversity conservation strategy with new locations for public spaces identified. Enhancing the Lochside Trail as a community focal point and expanding the role of institutional sites.

The following was noted during the discussion and in response to questions from the committee:

- Looking for opportunities to align with detailed direction and policy for decision making involving capital budget. Amending regulations and exploring things like pre-zoning.
- We have heard many concerns from residents specifically around the Beckwith hub and the transportation plan. The bigger picture is planning for 20-30 years out and with exceptional transit service. We need a high level of density to support and positive amenities. It gives credibility on how we phase and look at opportunity phasing.

- In terms of next steps, there is an opportunity to come back to council. Staff will be looking for guidance from council with the considerable amount of analyzed feedback and a signal that we have heard all feedback from the public.
- There is a lot going into this plan, perhaps too much, specifically future corridor planning processes and how much we include. There could be some decoupling of density and transportation. The mode shift is based off the transportation plan through targets and how other cities have gone about their transportation with a mode shift of 50%. Involved bold changes to make that shift which will include servicing requirements.
- The subject matter is the enormity of geographic area however the scope of plan is narrower. This is a major plan looking at a primarily residential area and the change in use.
- With the volume of feedback staff will seek Council direction at a potential January or February council meeting.

**MOVED by Councillor Z. de Vries and Seconded by Councillor M. Westhaver: “That the Housing Affordability Standing Committee receive for information.”**

**The Motion was then Put and CARRIED**

### **PERMIT AND MODERNIZATION PROGRAM UPDATE (PAM)**

Harley Machielse, Director of Engineering, presented a PowerPoint on the Permit and Modernization Program Update.

The following was noted:

- The organization identified competing priorities and challenges with interdepartmental coordination and governance for application reviews. This project allowed staff to collaboratively work on files and manually bring back comments and apply them to the vision. The repeated issues being poor quality applications and a lack of transparency resulting in long service delivery time which was staff's main goal to defeat.
- Asking the question why and how to overcome a process that is historical. Change management is the biggest barrier while not losing quality customer service.
- The new digital application process went live in November. Building permits accepting digital applications with currently about 90% adoption. Increased functionality of MySaanich to schedule inspections and meetings with other functions coming as well. Development permit tracker to see where application is at and to see staff's workload as well as an automating process within it. Leveraged Tempest workflow capabilities decreasing timelines and new online inspection booking module.
- Still to come is a preapplication process and we are in the process of including a terms of reference which include why these changes have happened and documents to work from. The credit card bylaw just got implemented. We are still receiving paper applications but almost fully secured to go paperless. Removing sets of plans for Council. How we build into the application process that a report can be generating which take a lot of staff time. How are we approving the dashboard to see how we are progressing overtime.
- We have been engaging with the City of Victoria on their processes as well as other municipalities and discussing progress. There has been regular engagement with the development industry. This process involves a lot of problem solving by staff. Lots of appreciation by the committee on all the hard work this took.

The following was noted during the discussion and in response to questions from the committee:

- A PAM 2.0 in scope to further strategize and improve processes. We continue to look for improvement which involves good leadership and energized teamwork to make a difference. There is a lot of work to get base processes streamlined and leverage tech after we have done that. More strategic conversation on what 2.0 will involve. There are some possibilities with advanced technology in the future but we are succeeding with the leverage tech that is available right now.
- The committee was overall very impressed with this project and appreciative of staff's work and time to implement this.

**MOVED by Councillor Z. de Vries and Seconded by Councillor M. Westhaver: "That the Housing Affordability Standing Committee receive this update for information."**

**The Motion was then Put and CARRIED**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

P. Lancaster left at 11:25am.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting date will be determined at a later date.

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Mayor Dean Murdock, Chair

I hereby certify these minutes are accurate.

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Sydney Murphy, Committee Clerk