

MINUTES
HOUSING STRATEGY TASK FORCE
Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
Via Electronic Communications
September 24, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Chair de Vries and Vice Chair Harper

Staff: Cameron Scott, Manager, Community Planning; Nadine Kawata, Planner, Community Planning; Matt Blakely, Senior Planning Technician – Research and Analysis (Community Planning); and Tara Da Silva, Senior Committee Clerk

Facilitators: Lani Brunn, Lead Facilitator, CitySpaces; Julia Bahen, Facilitator, CitySpaces

Members: E. Dahli; S. Dutchak; C. Forester; C. Friesen; E. Gibson; G. Gillespie; M. Holland; R. Kelley; L. Mari; D. Posavad; J. Reilly; L. Spalteholz; J. Tarbotton; K. Wiseman; V. Wynn-Williams

CALL TO ORDER

Chair de Vries called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair and Vice-Chairs introduced themselves and stated what perspectives and experiences each was bringing to the task force.

ROUNDTABLE INTRODUCTIONS

- Each task force member introduced themselves, providing both personal and professional background.
- The facilitator then asked that each member take a moment to reflect upon unrepresented/under-represented voices in the room. The group answered the following: First Nations, Urban Indigenous, ethnic minorities, university students, temporary foreign workers, appraisers, bankers who fund the building industry, financial institutions, people with accessibility challenges, and rural municipal residents
- The facilitator presented a diagram around privilege, demonstrating that the concept is not clear cut, and asked members to think about what voices they can help amplify

HOUSING STRATEGY OVERVIEW AND SAANICH HOUSING CONTEXT

C. Scott, Manager, Community Planning, presented to the Task Force:

- The terms of reference for the Housing Strategy were approved by Council on June 22, 2020.
- The housing strategy is a guiding document that contains a 10-year plan and targets with prioritized three-year actions, five focus areas, a framework for action, current and future needs and demands, considers innovative solutions and contains mechanisms for monitoring and reporting.
- The housing strategy focus areas are increasing affordable housing, promoting and protecting rental housing, supporting housing and diversity and supply, reducing barriers to housing, strengthening partnerships and building awareness.
- From September to November, the Task Force will meet and form recommendations. During December and January, the Planning Department will present the Task Force's recommendations to Council along with the public survey recommendations.
- The Planning Department will present the compiled housing strategy to Council between February and April 2021.

- The task force, composed of stakeholders with a diverse range of housing expertise and viewpoints, will help build the housing strategy by working collaboratively within a small, interactive format to design housing solutions and innovative ideas.
- The deliverables are recommended strategies and prioritized actions under the five focus areas, for consideration by Council.
- The strategy is guided by many plans and policies, including the CRD Regional Growth Strategy, the Official Community Plan (OCP), the Saanich Climate Plan, and the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy.
- There are current and parallel housing initiatives that will be undertaken concurrently (as resources permit) during the housing strategy development.
- Staff have identified possible housing actions for each of the five focus areas and potential actions based on research, community input and the Housing Needs Report. These tools are for task force discussions.

TASK FORCE OVERVIEW

J. Bahen, Facilitator, presented to members:

- An action plan is evidence-based and tied back to the need already identified.
- Concerning implementation, an action plan contains actions that are realistic, measurable and within the purview of a local government.
- We are not starting out with a level playing field; there are marginalized communities. An equity lens needs to be applied.

SAANICH HOUSING NEEDS REPORT AND HOUSING STRATEGY ENGAGEMENT

S. Ravlic, Urban Matters, presented and highlighted to members:

- The purpose of the Housing Needs Report (HNR) is to inform a number of planning and policy initiatives, such as OCPs, Non-market/affordable housing policies, economic development, zoning bylaws, development approvals and regional growth.
- HNRs have two major required components: data collection and data reporting
- HNRs must be delivered every five years, with the first prepared by 2021.
- The task force will be using the results to understand the housing need of specific groups, notably seniors and families, housing supply and demand, affordability pressures by developing affordability “gaps”, and possible future needs, including quantity and form.
- Key findings from this report (from 2006 to 2016) include:
 - Population increase of 5.1%
 - Age distribution remained relatively stable
 - Owner versus renter illustrates how tenure changes across the groups with the small proportion of “owned” households maintained by the youngest and oldest age groups.
 - Median before-tax private household income grew by approximately 10%, and median total household income was the lowest in Female Lone Parent and Non-Census-Family households
 - The majority of households contain two people (37%), while the least contain five or more people (7%)
 - Owner held households have decreased by 3%, and rental held households have increased by 3%.
 - Dwellings by structure type in Saanich as of 2016:
 - Single-detached house – 47% (89% owner & 11% renter)
 - Apartment or flat in duplex – 22% (59% owner & 41% renter)
 - Apartment (less than 5 storeys) – 19% (41% owner & 59% renter)
 - Rowhouse – 8% (61% owner & 39% renter)
 - Semi-detached house – 3% (67% owner & 33% renter)
 - Apartment (5+ storeys) – 1% (52% owner & 48% renter)
 - Saanich is divided into East and West of the Patricia Bay Highway, with East Saanich having the higher average home sale prices for single-family dwellings.

- The primary rental market consists of purpose-built rental buildings with multiple units.
- The secondary rental market consists of rented homes, secondary suites, individually rented condominium units, and other dwellings not built as exclusively rental properties.
- Costs of rentals increased across all sizes of rentals from 2005 to 2019:
 - Bachelor from \$550 to \$995 (or 81%)
 - One bedroom from \$650 to \$1037 (or 60%)
 - Two bedrooms from \$825 to \$1456 (or 76%)
 - Three+ bedrooms from \$1100 to \$2000 (or 82%)
- There are currently 493 households on the non-market housing waitlist.
- A household meets the housing standards when these conditions are met: adequate housing does not require any major repairs, affordable housing that costs equal to or less than 30% of before-tax household income, and suitable housing with enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the residents.
- A household is in core housing need when it does not meet one of these criteria and could not afford alternative suitable and adequate housing.
- Extreme core housing households spend more than 50% of their total before-tax household income on housing.
- 3% of owner held households, and 16% of rental households are in core housing needs. 3% of owner had households and 11% of rental households are in extreme core housing needs in Saanich.
- The discovered challenges through regional engagement were housing affordability, homelessness, renter options, Indigenous housing, supportive housing, youth housing and student housing. The opportunities consisted of multi-sector collaboration, local government leadership, culturally supportive housing and public engagement.
- Through the stakeholder engagement, the challenges presented were: housing supply not keeping up, lengthy development process, lack of rental incentives, family housing regulations. The opportunities were available land, higher density housing, protected rental housing and support workforce housing.
- Due to COVID-19 the public survey was not able to cater to a sizable and diverse population.
- The small survey sample still provides valuable information and consists of 360 surveys, 83% of which are Saanich residents. Acknowledgement that the general population is not heard.
- The key themes heard from the survey are that Saanich requires more affordable housing, more housing choice and diversity and an update to policies and bylaws to improve affordability and housing diversity.
- The overall summary of the Phase 1 Engagement:
 - Top challenges:
 - Extreme costs of land and house/development
 - Rise in individuals experiencing homelessness
 - Shortage of housing supply
 - Lack of housing diversity
 - Barriers towards affordable housing (i.e. NIMBY)
 - The poverty of single person/income households
 - Absence of protection for tenants against renovations
 - Lack of supports for tenants and housing providers
 - Lack of services for youth and seniors
 - An imbalance between risk and reward for purpose-built rental builders
 - Top opportunities:
 - Update tools, policies, and bylaws to effect change
 - Permit garden suites, secondary suites and tiny homes on residential lots
 - Fast-track application processes and simplify procedures
 - Partner with developers and housing providers
 - Offer financial incentives to housing providers

- Develop new regulator tools, including inclusionary zoning and pre-zoning
- Foster new development near centres and villages
- Facilitate meaningful conversations and build relationships
- Provide appropriate family housing, including three bedrooms and multi-generational homes
- Develop student housing
- Key areas of local need:
 - Affordable housing
 - The cost of renting an owning in Saanich has risen significantly.
 - Lone-parent families and non-census families (e.g. individuals living alone) are facing the greatest housing challenges.
 - A single-detached house is out of reach for most households.
 - Rental housing
 - The number of rental households is growing; however, the growth of rental stock is slow.
 - The rental vacancy rate is 0.9% (a healthy rate is 3-5%)
 - Housing for individuals living with a disability
 - The incidence of core housing need is higher among households with someone with a disability.
 - For individuals with disabilities who are unable to work, the provincial housing supplement is \$375
 - As of 2020, there are 108 people with disabilities on BC Housing's waitlist seeking non-market housing in Saanich, in addition to 27 households requiring wheelchair accessible units.
 - Housing for seniors
 - The need for more supportive housing for seniors was identified as a significant area of need by stakeholders.
 - As of 2020, 172 seniors were on BC Housing's waitlist seeking non-market seniors housing in Saanich.
 - Housing for families
 - The cost of a single-detached home is out of reach for couples with children making the median household income, and far out of reach for lone-parent families.
 - There is a limited supply of larger units in the rental market.
 - Homelessness
 - There has been an increase in individuals experiencing homelessness.
- The Affordable Housing Strategy Engagement consisted of stakeholder interviews with VanCity Credit Union, Catalyst Community Development Society, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA), Landlord BC, Co-operative Housing Federation of BC, Greater Victoria Acting Together, and Saanich Neighbourhood Place.
- The housing types/forms identified as most needed were: emergency shelter spaces (particularly for families), affordable housing for families, housing geared to income, "missing middle" housing, secure tenure for renters and a larger diversity of tenure-ship models (co-op housing), non-profit housing, affordable purpose-built rental, and universal design.
- Changes that could make it easier to construct new market and non-market housing:
 - Be sure that municipal policies are not contingent on public funding programs
 - Create density incentives that favour the non-profit sector
 - Reduce municipal fees or waive fees for non-profit housing providers
 - Improve the development approvals process
 - Affordable housing grant programs.
 - Explore opportunities for below land leases or develop a land bank
 - Develop a community land trust
 - Accessing and using land to its highest benefit

- Pre-zoning and zoning for rental housing
- Inclusionary zoning
- Demolition and conversion policies
- Encourage more gentle density.
- Review policies for barriers to affordable housing
- To balance retention of existing rental and redevelopment/renovation:
 - Shift smaller privately owned rentals to non-profits
 - Inclusionary policies
 - Alignment of the renovation of existing units with sustainability funding
 - Policy regarding the retention of private rental stock
 - Educate tenants regarding their rights
 - Encourage more co-housing options.
 - Flex housing
- To determine affordable housing priorities:
 - Focus on the needs outlined in the Housing Needs Report
 - Align with the District's economic development goals
 - Coordinate with the Regional District growth strategy and other departments goals
 - Prioritize connection to services and transportation
 - Look at population and income trends and the current affordability gap.
 - Prioritize non-profit housing
 - Ensure efficient, need-based housing unit construction
 - To raise awareness of housing challenges, an undertaking of multi-pronged communications and engagement strategy that is long-term, easily understandable, highlights data, educates.
- Equity considerations are:
 - Include individuals with lived experience with lived expertise
 - Apply an equity lens to the whole strategy and prioritize housing for marginalized groups
 - Include Indigenous families and individuals
 - Ask, "which voices do we need to hear?"

REVIEW COMMITTEE PROTOCOLS

T. Da Silva, Senior Committee Clerk, Legislative Services, presented to members:

- Legislative Services will be holding an orientation for the task force on Tuesday, October 6, 2020. This orientation will give detailed information around expectations, agendas and minutes, meeting procedures, motions, voting, the Council Procedure Bylaw, Saanich's Respectful Workplace Policy and Access and Privacy at the District of Saanich.

LOGISTICS AND INTRODUCTION TO ONLINE TOOLS

L. Brunn, Facilitator, CitySpaces, presented to members:

- Due to the delay in the task force's initial start, there is a consideration of having an additional meeting on November 12, 2020.
- A demonstration of the Mural site took place.

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 pm.

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE SECRETARY