

MINUTES
HOUSING STRATEGY TASK FORCE
Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
Via Electronic Communications
October 15, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Chair de Vries and Vice Chair Harper

Staff: Cameron Scott, Manager, Community Planning; Current Planning; Nadine Kawata, Planner, Community Planning; Alanna McDonagh, Planner, Community Planning; Matt Blakely, Planner 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, Anna Zhuo, Facilitator, CitySpaces; Kevin Green, Facilitator, CitySpaces

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

Regrets: E. Dahli; J. Tarbotton

CALL TO ORDER

Chair de Vries called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by G. Gillespie and Seconded by S. Dutchak: “That the minutes from the September 24, 2020 and October 1, 2020 Housing Strategy Task Force meetings be adopted.”

CARRIED

CHAIR’S REMARKS

- A reminder was given that the meetings are being webcast and about Saanich’s Respectful Workplace Policy. This meeting’s focus area is Promoting and Protecting Rental Housing

MOVED by L. Mari and Seconded by K. Wiseman: “That the Task Force refer proposed action items 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 for consideration during the prioritization process and that the Task Force direct staff, facilitators, and the Council representatives to refine these actions based on the considerations outlined in the attached report.”

CARRIED

MOVED by L. Mari and Seconded by E. Gibson: “That the Task Force refer proposed action item 4 to the meeting for Focus Area #4 and direct staff, facilitators, and the Council representatives to refine this item based on the Task Force’s preliminary feedback, prior to further discussion during Focus Area 4.”

CARRIED

MOVED by J. Reilly and Seconded by G. Gillespie: “That the Task Force refer proposed action items 9 and 10 to the meeting for Focus Area #3 and direct staff, facilitators, and the Council representatives to refine these items based on the Task Force’s preliminary feedback, prior to further discussion during Focus Area 3.”

CARRIED

MOVED by L. Mari and Seconded by C. Friesen: “That the Task Force refer proposed action items 11, 12, 13, 14, and 16 to the meeting for Focus Area #4 and direct staff, facilitators, and the Council representatives to refine these items based on the Task Force’s preliminary feedback, prior to further discussion during Focus Area 4.”

CARRIED

MOVED by K. Wiseman and Seconded by J. Reilly: “That the Task Force refer proposed action item 17 to the meeting for Focus Area #5 and direct staff, facilitators, and the Council representatives to refine this item based on the Task Force’s preliminary feedback, prior to further discussion during Focus Area 5.”

CARRIED

MOVED by E. Gibson and Seconded by M. Holland: “That the Task Force direct staff, facilitators, and the Council representatives to develop options for advocacy to the Provincial and Federal Governments regarding housing, for presentation to the Task Force for further input, discussion, and decision during the meeting for Focus Area 5.”

CARRIED

MOVED by K. Wiseman and Seconded by G. Gillespie: “That the Task Force refers the proposed following new action items for consideration during the prioritization process and that the Task Force direct staff, facilitators, and the Council representatives to refine these actions based on the considerations outlined in the attached report:

- **Prioritize non-market development;**
- **Create strategies to retain naturally occurring affordable housing and existing housing types that are not typically constructed in the marketplace: single room occupancy units, co-housing, rooming houses, cooperative housing, three-bedroom condos and apartments;**
- **Address household costs beyond the direct price of housing: transit, childcare, and other essential household costs;**
- **Encourage affordable living features in residential developments that lower transportation costs, reduce utility bills, or otherwise reduce the household living costs of the residents;**
- **Analyze and measure inequality for homeownership and rental housing;**
- **Ensure equitable distribution of all housing types, forms, and tenures across Saanich (within the Urban Containment Boundary);**
- **Pursue the most extended term housing affordability possible. A target should be developed; and**
- **Create, refine, and revise policies and regulations to encourage mixed-income housing across Saanich for ownership and rentals.”**

CARRIED

POSSIBLE NEW ACTIONS AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Consider parking maximums near transit rather than parking minimums.
- Develop design guidelines that are specific to tenure.
- Modernizing the development application review process, perhaps a scorecard to have evidence-based decision making.

TASK FORCE DISCUSSION:

- Currently, future residents have no voice. A database approach weighs against the environment, rather than one block, one street or one neighbourhood and gives proper weight to “voice.”
- The point of prioritizing is to ensure items have the opportunity for proper discussion because there is overlap, a lot of gray areas and multiple touchpoints. It is best to get as many quality ideas on the table as possible.
- There will be an opportunity to provide comments during the prioritization process.
- Rather than looking at the current transit system, consideration should be given to Saanich’s future transit needs.

In response to questions from the Task Force, the Manager, Community Planning stated:

- The Official Community Plan (OCP) has neighbourhoods with areas that allow for infill, and there are different tiers within that area.

MOVED by M. Holland and Seconded by S. Dutchak: “Forward the possible new actions for affordable housing items to the prioritization process to have them refined by Saanich staff, the facilitators and Council representatives.”

CARRIED

PROMOTE AND PROTECT RENTAL HOUSING

The Task Force members were separated into four break-out rooms, each containing a facilitator, to discuss the needs regarding promoting and protecting rental housing. Julia Bahen from Cityspaces presented the actions for this week’s focus area:

1. Update and expand secondary suite policy – consider other zoning and regulatory changes to increase the supply of legal accessory suites, including allowing multiple suite sites on properties or allowing suites in developments where they are not currently permitted.
2. Garden suites and secondary suites – This is a parallel initiative. As part of the endorsement of gardens suites, Council requested that staff bring back information on the potential to permit both a garden suite and a secondary suite on the same lot.
3. Tiny homes – This is a parallel initiative. Explore tiny homes as an affordable housing option for residential properties within the urban containment boundary (note: moveable tiny homes are not permitted under the BC building code).
4. Tenant assistance policy – This is a parallel initiative. The District is currently developing a tenant assistance policy to provide guidelines for developers and property owners to offer additional supports for tenants who are displaced as a result of significant renovations, redevelopment and/or rezoning.
5. Increase purpose-built rental housing – explore options to incentivize purpose-built rental housing stock to provide secure rentals for diverse populations and incomes.
6. Rental policies to protect and revitalize existing stock – investigate options, such as incentives and regulations to preserve the existing rental housing stock, ensure buildings are adequately maintained, and protect tenants from potential renovations.
7. Strata conversions – consider updating the strata conversions policy to maintain the rental supply.

8. Residential rental tenure zoning – consider the feasibility of utilizing residential tenure zoning in Saanich to safeguard rental housing
 - a. What is it?
 - i. A new tool local governments can use to protect rental units in existing and future apartment buildings
 - b. It can be applied to an area, a building or units within a building with residential use.
 - c. The owner cannot occupy residential units with this zoning.
9. Short term rental housing regulation – to provide regulation of short term rentals, including vacation rentals.

POSSIBLE NEW ACTIONS TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT RENTAL HOUSING

- Requiring a percentage of new buildings to be 2+ or 3+ bedrooms or have bonus density programs.
- Create a resource centre for property owners/landlords to encourage landowners to become landlords.
- Break up larger, existing dwellings into smaller units.
- A rental registry (one centrally located database) that the District facilitates.
- Preapproved garden suite modular units to drive down the cost of construction and permitting time.
- Incentivize landlords to rent 20% of units to people in vulnerable populations or people identified as having barriers as per the registry.
- Create/convert non-strata townhouses and row houses.
- Have purpose-built rental housing in every neighbourhood, including villages.
- There should be no age restrictions and no ban on pets to reduce barriers.
- Not allow strata units to have title covenants restricting rentals.
- Inventory of rental and affordable rental stock. Keep track of legal suites.
- Permit secondary suites in single-family houses everywhere provided they don't change the neighbourhood's form and character.
- Create incentives to landlords to rent to low-income and vulnerable tenants, consider borders and single room occupancy.
- Allow people to live in non-family like structure, boarding houses, rooming houses, and shared structures.
- Encourage affordable living features that drive down transportation or utility costs.
- Equitable distribution of all types of housing throughout Saanich.
- Consider expanding policies for purpose-built rental housing and tiny homes outside of the urban containment boundary.

MOVED by M. Holland and Seconded by G. Gillespie: “That the facilitators, Saanich staff and Council representatives collect the input from this meeting and organize and submit the summaries for the Task Force’s consideration and discussion at the next meeting.”

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm.

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE SECRETARY