

# From the desk of Mayor Fred Haynes

February 20, 2020

## What's happening with our Local Area Plans and housing

### [Temporary pause on Local Area Plan updates to address Saanich-wide housing needs](#)

I wanted to give you an update on Council's recent decision to temporarily pause the multi-year program of updating our LAPs in order to address housing on a Saanich-wide basis. This pause does not include the two LAP updates that are already underway: Cordova Bay and Cadboro Bay.

Our 12 local area plans (LAPs) are the plans for the Saanich's 12 distinct local neighborhoods. Guided by the policies in our 2008 Official Community Plan, and informed by extensive community consultation, each plan identifies features that are highly valued by residents and Council. The 12 LAPs outline local policies on how to add housing, improve accessibility, safe routes to school, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, protect our local environments, build vibrant communities and thereby enhance neighborhoods across Saanich.

### [Discussions and deliberations](#)

In its 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, Council had directed staff to embark on a renewal process to update the local area plans; some of these were developed 20 years ago. This neighborhood by neighborhood process takes several years or more to complete. The Plan also included a housing strategy, but this was unfunded and un-resourced. After discussion and rethinking, the need to refocus our immediate efforts on more the urgent Saanich-wide housing need was realized.

Consequently, at its November 25 meeting, Council discussed the reallocation of our limited planning resources to a Saanich-wide initiative designed to address the crisis of affordability and insufficient diversity in housing supply. Discussion of this approach arose at the October and November meetings of the Mayors Housing Affordability and Supply Committee. The discussion on a possible pause in the LAP renewal process was captured in a committee resolution to Council. It was reported out at large by residents in attendance to the Saanich Community Association Network (SCAN) and discussed by Council at the November 25 meeting. To provide for wider community input discussion was laid over to the December 16 Committee of the Whole.

It was noted at the November 25 Council meeting that a temporary pause to address housing on a Saanich-wide basis would result in future LAPs being more grounded in Saanich-wide housing needs. Given the significance of housing in local neighbourhoods, once the renewals of the LAPs were restarted these may be completed in a shorter time but still take several years.

Acting on Saanich-wide policies rather than a local-area basis is an effective model for addressing critical municipal issues. Examples include our Saanich-wide approach on the climate emergency, protection of our biodiversity and environmental resilience, active transportation, transit routes, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, access to green space and banning plastic bags. For housing, it recognizes the Saanich-wide interconnections between housing, transportation, environment, underground infrastructures, employment centers and more.

On December 16, in order to address housing, Council made the majority decision to keep our existing LAPs and temporarily pause their renewal. It's important to note that all the protective aspects for green space, tree canopy, neighbourhoods and community consultation remain in place. It is the updating process that is paused; our current bylaws and LAP remain in effect.

The pause enables us to engage in a Saanich-wide review of our housing needs, and to prepare a strategy to address these. As noted in the staff report of November 13, given their awareness of the discussions at the Mayors Housing Affordability and Supply Committee, staff included potential alternatives should Council wish to adjust the Community Planning work plan priorities. The first alternative option presented by staff on page 8 of the staff report reads as follows.

#### [Re-allocating resources from Local Area Plan updates to policy initiatives](#)

This would enable issues that are common across neighbourhoods, such as affordable housing and infill housing, to be addressed in a more expeditious manner. However, it would slow down the rate that local area plans are updated.

This alternative option in the staff report aligns with the discussion at both November 25 and December 16 meetings to consider the benefits of a pause in multi-year renewal the LAPs. Staff indicate the housing strategy and needs assessment could be completed in 24 months.

#### [Community consultation processes remain in place](#)

The refocused approach to housing affordability and supply embraces all the broad community consultative tools that Saanich is renowned for. It is important to our residents and to Council and staff that we listen to all voices and gather as much input as possible in order for Saanich to be successful.

The consultation tools that neighborhoods and community associations expected in the LAP renewal processes will be engaged on a Saanich-wide basis as we review our Saanich-area housing needs. In reviewing current and rezoning and new development applications the traditional voice and roles of Community Associations and residents remain in place.

#### [Current environmental and neighborhood protections remain in place](#)

While the LAP renewals are on hold, all the environmental, green space, tree protections and respect for neighbourhoods in the current LAPs remain in place. Nothing has been dismantled. Meanwhile, Council has ensured the protection of our green space remains a priority. Council has moved to increase tree protection via an updated tree protection bylaw and initiated steps towards planting 2,000 trees/year to increase our tree canopy. As well, staff are bringing forward the Terms of Reference for Resilient Saanich, the Bio-Diversity Framework which includes public and private green spaces.

Council also initiated our work on fighting climate change through the development of the *Climate Plan: 100% Renewable and Resilient Saanich*, which outlines actions to improve our quality of life, protect our community, and reduce local and global risks associated with a changing climate

New Development Cost Charges (DCCs) have also been approved, ensuring we have funding streams to increase park acquisitions as well as to support improvements in neighbourhood sidewalks, cycle routes, parks and infrastructure.

We thank you for your interest and patience as this process unfolds.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F. Haynes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mayor Fred Haynes

