



## Report to Council From the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik

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Date: January 5, 2021  
Subject: Adding Pet-Friendly Rentals to the Sustainability Checklist and Official Community Plan Housing Section

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### Purpose

To propose the addition of pet-friendly rentals on the City's Sustainability Checklist for evaluating new development proposals, and to encourage pet-friendly bylaws for new strata developments in the City of Port Moody.

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### Recommendation

**THAT staff be directed to add designated pet-friendly rentals to the City's Sustainability Checklist of desirable social attributes for proposed residential developments as recommended in the report dated January 5, 2021 from the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Adding Pet-Friendly Rentals to the Sustainability Checklist and Official Community Plan Housing Section;**

**AND THAT, as part of the Official Community Plan update, Council provide a list of desirable attributes such as pet friendly rentals and others for inclusion in the housing section for a longer-term approach.**

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### Background

In early 2020, Port Moody sent a resolution to change the Residential Tenancy Act and Strata act to disallow discrimination against persons with pets; however, due to the pandemic, that resolution did not make it to the floor of UBCM 2020 and has been forwarded to UBCM committees for deliberation later this year.

The resolution passed was:

*THAT the following resolution regarding Change of Strata Act and Residential Tenancy Act to not Discriminate Against Pets for LMLGA and UBCM Consideration be endorsed by the City of Port Moody and forwarded for consideration at the 2020 LMLGA and subsequent UBCM convention as recommended in the report dated January 20, 2020 from Cllr. Amy Lubik regarding Change of Strata Act and Residential Tenancy Act to not Discriminate Against Pets for LMLGA and UBCM Consideration:*

*AND WHEREAS, in 2017, an estimated 1700 pets had to be given up or terminated because their owners could not find stable shelter with them;*

*AND WHEREAS people end up in substandard or inadequate housing because they are not allowed to house their pets in preferable accommodations;*

*AND WHEREAS enabling stable housing that keeps family units intact is often the first step to breaking the cycle of poverty;*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Province of British Columbia change the Residential Tenancy Act and Strata Act such that landlords and strata organizations may not reject applicants for rental units because their family unit may include pets, on the condition that those pets would not pose serious and specific concerns in regard to physical danger, noise, smell, or an adverse allergic reaction among other building residents.*

Since the last report, much has changed, but local governments still do not have the power to disallow discrimination by stratas or landlords against pet ownership. Even so, we remain the level of government closest to our constituents and we hear the challenges they can face. It is important that we try to do what we can to make sure that all our residents and their furry family members have access to safe places to live within our community. At the same time, the City of Port Moody is currently updating the elements of its Sustainability Checklist, which includes a social component that supports mental health, connectedness, and well-being. While the city does not have jurisdiction with respect to Strata's, nor the ability to require pet friendly rentals, Council could introduce these types of voluntary requirements at the rezoning stage of a development application through the Sustainability Check List or even Official Community Plan (OCP) policy. If this is deemed to be important to Council then of course it is one consideration that Council would note when contemplating approval of a rezoning application.

The checklist includes factors that we cannot necessarily enforce but that we highly encourage for development approval; therefore, pet-friendly rentals should be officially included in the Sustainability Checklist.

For a long-term approach, it would be beneficial that as part of the OCP update that Council might provide a list of desirable attributes such as pet friendly rentals and others for inclusion in the housing.

## Discussion

Excerpt from 2020 report:

*While it is true that certain dangerous pets might, in uncommon and singular cases, pose risks to other building residents, and should be removed, general worries of pets becoming a serious risk to landlords/ stratas are unfounded. What's more, allowing pets can be advantageous. Data gathered by the BC SPCA<sup>1</sup> showed one major advantage to landlords offering pet-friendly*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://spca.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/renters-guide.pdf>

*housing is increased rental income. People with pets will pay more for housing: units that limit the type or size of pets tend to be cheaper than those without restrictions by \$100. Tenants with pets also stay longer — an average of 46 months, compared to 18 months for people without pets. This saves landlords from having to spend time and money finding new, reliable tenants.*

*Data also indicates there is no difference between tenants with and without pets in the amount of damage that these groups, on average, do to rental property.*

*Another direct benefit is increased security, as pet guardians are the eyes and ears of the neighbourhood during late-night and early-morning dog walks. A dog often stays behind to protect the home when his or her guardian isn't there...*

*Ontario has recently made changes to their tenancy acts such that landlords cannot have a “no animals” clause; however, stratas still can still have no pet clauses. BC should follow that lead and go farther. Such changes in legislation would benefit our residents in a market where it is difficult for everyone to find homes.*

During the pandemic, studies have shown that pet ownership has attenuated some of the negative impacts of the COVID-19, including stress and social isolation considerations. Social isolation and stress were rapidly growing concerns for public health even before the pandemic, which has of course exacerbated these issues, particularly in people who were already marginalized.

From: Ratschen et al., 2020<sup>2</sup>:

*Of 5,926 participants, 5,323 (89.8%) had at least one companion animal. Most perceived their animals to be a source of considerable support, but concerns were reported related to various practical aspects of providing care during lockdown. Strength of the human-animal bond did not differ significantly between species. Animal ownership compared with non-ownership was associated with smaller decreases in mental health and smaller increases in loneliness since lockdown.*

From Young et al., 2020<sup>3</sup>:

*Our research provides some preliminary but positive responses to the concerns raised by Van Bavel et al. (2020) regarding the negative impacts of social isolation and needs for intimate relationships in the time of COVID-19 – in particular, concerns regarding social isolation and intimacy. We concur that the experiences of COVID, including sudden lockdowns and broad societal upheaval, job losses and sudden impoverishment can all be seen as traumatic experiences for people. Trauma characteristically exacerbates existing negative human experiences such as pain (Nicol et al., 2016; McBeth et al., 2007), hence suggestions that pets may be able to help to ease bodily and psychic ills is important. Concerns have been expressed that people with chronic health conditions (including mental health) may have these conditions*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0239397>

<sup>3</sup> <https://sabeconomics.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/JBEP-4-S2-3.pdf>

*exacerbated during COVID-19 as they avoid health services and/or have their conditions intensify due to stress (Torjesen, 2020; Webster, 2020). However, the presence of pets may be a moderating factor that needs to be recognized and (foreshadowing a policy suggestion) signals that ensuring that people are able to adequately care for their pets merits public funding and support.*

Because Port Moody Council is dedicated to maintaining a healthy community, including mental and social health, pet-friendly residences should be highly encouraged, and inclusion of considerations for fur family members in the sustainability checklist and the OCP are steps in the right direction

### Other Option(s)

THAT the report dated January 5, 2021 from Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Inclusion of Pet-friendly Rentals in the Sustainability Checklist and OCP housing section be received for information.

### Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

### Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

There are no communications and civic engagement initiatives.

### Council Strategic Plan Objectives

Council's strategic plan objectives are met by demonstrating dedication to:

- The health and wellness needs of residents;
- Access to housing;
- Social inclusion; and
- Courage to lead and embrace new ideas.