

Considered at January 14, 2020 Regular Council Meeting

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Report to Council From the Office of Mayor Rob Vagramov

Date: January 5, 2019
Subject: Interim Affordable Housing Guidelines

Purpose

To set interim guidelines as an expression of Council's expectations for affordable housing in new development projects until a more comprehensive plan has been finalized.

Recommendation

THAT Staff report back with a draft policy to help Council express its expectations for affordable units in large developments as recommended in the report dated January 5, 2020 from Mayor Rob Vagramov regarding *Interim Affordable Housing Targets*.

Background

Although builders may already understand that, like cities anywhere in the lower mainland today, our City generally seeks more affordability for new housing units in development, many – including builders, their industry lobbyists, and some in the general public – have expressed the concern that our City remains vague about just how much affordable housing it expects builders to be including in their developments over a certain size, and which approaches to affordability it prioritizes.

While Council does not currently have a policy to inform builders and the public of our expectations when it comes to affordable housing, a set of targets – specifying desired total number or percentage of new residential units that are market/sub-market rental – is being developed as part of a comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment and Inclusionary Zoning Policy. This comprehensive process is likely to take most of the calendar year or more to finalize, and an interim expression of Council expectations may add needed clarity to the City's planning discussions with developers, helping us to secure much-needed affordable housing units in the short term, as well provide some insight as to how well these guidelines are performing in market.

Discussion

The intent of the above motion is to direct Staff to draft a preliminary template of guideline language that Council can then fill out and complete, through deliberation, resulting in a clearer statement of Council's affordable housing expectations.

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Draft guidelines would present Council with:

1. **The minimum size of development** to which these guidelines would apply, and whether this figure is a “hard line” or a tiered approach.
2. **Options of affordable housing elements** to consider including in an interim guideline.
Are we targeting market rental units? Affordable rental units tied to income?
Affordable ownership units? Locals-first initiatives? Rent-to-own schemes?
3. **Targeted share of affordable units:** the rough proportion of total new unit count that should qualify as more affordable, for each of the elements that Council selects. A suggestion by Staff based on best practices would be helpful for Council to fill in this “blank” with its expectation for each element selected.

Council would then select the desired element(s) to focus on (say affordable rentals tied to income, and rent-to-own, as an example), and input a desired percentage for each element (say 20% of units not exceeding 30% of Port Moody’s median income, or 20% rent-to-own component, as an example).

Note that these would be presented, not as firm requirements, but as non-binding guidelines or expectations of Council that help provide a starting point for discussions around affordable housing contributions when considering new projects. This would enable the development community to understand earlier in the approval process, and in more concrete terms, how Council is thinking about affordability needs in our community.

Other Option(s)

THAT the report dated January 5, 2020 from Mayor Rob Vagramov regarding Interim Affordable Housing Guidelines be referred to the Affordable Housing Task Force for feedback and input.

Financial Implications

Staff time for a draft policy to Council.