



Report to Council

From the Port Moody Affordable Housing Task Force

Date: April 12, 2020
Subject: Interim Report from the Port Moody Affordable Housing Task Force

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide information about the current activities and proposed timelines of the Port Moody Affordable Housing Task Force, which has been established for the purpose of developing priorities and policies to create and maintain affordable housing in Port Moody and to assist staff in the updating of the City's Affordable Housing Strategy (2009). We also seek council direction to direct staff to undertake preliminary recommendations.

Recommendation

THAT the report dated April 12th, 2020 from the Affordable Housing Task Force regarding Interim Report from the Port Moody Affordable Housing Task Force be received for information;

AND THAT staff be directed to:

- 1) extend an invitation to the Cooperative Housing Federation of BC in order to inform council of how community land trusts may assist with Council priorities for redevelopment of public property;**
- 2) update Port Moody's laneway housing bylaws as informed by recommendations from the task force in order to increase uptake of that program;**
- 3) establish a renovation bylaw in line with the municipalities of Port Coquitlam, New Westminster, and Burnaby; and**
- 4) update the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund Terms of Reference, including amending the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund Policy to allow distribution of funding out of the Reserve for rental relief initiatives for renters in need of financial assistance;**

AND THAT Port Moody grant at least \$5,000 from the Affordable Housing Reserve to the Tri-Cities SHARE Rent Bank as recommended in the report dated April 12, 2020 from the Affordable Housing Task Force regarding Interim Report from the Affordable Housing Task Force.

Executive Summary

Despite the strengths of our community in promoting inclusivity, which is extremely encouraging, Port Moody recently was found to be one of the least affordable communities in Canada. In order for this to change, we will need to update our affordable housing strategy and implement new policies and actions.

For this reason, Port Moody struck an Affordable Housing Task Force which has tasked with researching best practices and making recommendations to increase and incentivize affordable housing in the community.

This report has 3 sections:

The first give background on housing in Port Moody.

The second outlines the policies that are currently under investigation and the state of the research in order to provide council an overview of the committee's activities. As the task force is also investigating housing needs and numbers, preliminary numbers are also provided.

The third gives interim recommendations based on preliminary research, The first of which is inviting the Cooperative Housing Federation of BC to present to council in order to be abreast of potential partnerships, as representatives made a positive impression on the Task Force when they presented in early 2020 (background is attached). The second is updating our laneway housing policy after researching where there is most uptake in Metro Vancouver and BC, including asking industry experts. The third is to create a renoviction policy, which is now being implemented by neighbouring municipalities, including Burnaby, who is held to have the best policies around rents in the country. The final recommendation is to update our affordable housing reserve policy for more consistent contributions and to allow for rental relief use, including the Tri-Cities SHARE Rent Bank. Background on rent banks is provided.

The Affordable Housing Task Force Aims to have a final report to council by June 2020.

Background

Everyone should have the right to safe, stable and affordable housing, and this has been highlighted as a priority on multiple occasions as a priority of council. Sadly, recent reports from the Vancouver Foundation suggest more and more people are having to move away from their communities because of affordability issues

(<https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/sites/all/themes/connengage/files/VF-Connect-Engage-report.pdf>). This means that people lose touch with their friends and support systems, as well as their families. The impact and the stress of these situations has a negative impact on mental and physical health.

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(<https://www.tricitynews.com/news/port-moody-sustains-city-of-the-arts-title-in-best-communities-ranking-1.23926321>). In order for this to change, we will need to update our affordable housing strategy and implement new policies and actions. Fortunately, we have excellent and compassionate staff; however, those staff have limited time to dedicate to these issues. This is where council and the Affordable Housing Task Force can play a supporting role in establishing proprieties for our community, as exemplified from other municipalities, people with lived experience and or those who support them, and best practice guides from NGOs and governmental agencies, among other sources.

In the current housing market, according to housing advocates “higher-income households that may have considered purchasing property in the past are now resorting to renting.” (<https://www.tricitynews.com/real-estate/rent-costs-high-and-on-the-rise-in-the-tri-cities-1.23298837>). Reports also show that across Canada young people are having a harder time getting into the market than their parents (<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/checkup/boomers-once-critical-of-millennials-are-more-sympathetic-to-their-housing-plight-says-professor-1.5203404>) while at the same time Metro Vancouver is seeing a growing number of seniors experiencing homelessness or in danger of becoming homeless (<https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/agencies-serving-b-c-s-homeless-need-help-as-more-seniors-turn-to-shelters>). Currently Port Moody has a 25% renter population, but in an age of precarious work and housing, and significant effects of the COVID-19 crisis, it is important that our rental stock continue to grow. What we can do to encourage and preserve existing affordable rentals must also be a priority. Council and staff have also had considerable discussions regarding a “missing middle,” and potential actions to address that housing gap.

In 2017, Port Moody voted to establish an affordable housing task force; “A Council-led task force could undertake a review of existing policy recommendations from Metro Vancouver’s reports and other progressive policies already implemented in other municipalities (ie: New Westminster’s Family Friendly Housing Policy) and fast-track recommendations back to Council. Given anticipated development applications coming forward, having strong and progressive housing policy in place assists both staff and Council in their decision-making processes.” (Attachment 1) For various reasons the task force was not able to fulfill its mandate at that time.

Background on TOD policies (under review)

In a presentation by the Port Moody Foundation on Community Connections (2018), Port Moody residents heard that we are losing affordable homes along transit lines. We must establish ambitious targets for new transit oriented developments that make it clear to the development community that this a non-negotiable component of all new developments, as well as establishing what policies we can to retain affordable housing near transit. As outlined in the 2008 report on Eco-density by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives “density does not necessarily equate to affordability. That said, there is merit in denser living arrangements to the extent that they [can] enhance livability, ensure greater energy efficiency, greater utilization of transit, walking and biking as alternative modes to cars, and more robust public and private goods and services in the local neighbourhood. If affordable housing can become a new core principle of EcoDensity, it raises the possibility of meeting the twin objectives of sustainability and equity [both important principles to Port Moody]. But if housing affordability is neglected, or left to passive policies, then increased density will force more low- and middle-income households out to the suburbs, undermining EcoDensity’s environmental impact.” (https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC_Office_Pubs/bc_2008/affordable_ecodensity.pdf)

Since 2019, a number of potential policies regarding affordable housing have been proposed and supported and/or recommended to the affordable housing task force for further study. In

October 2019, the Affordable Housing Task Force was re-established to investigate a comprehensive suite of policies which may enhance our ability to provide and maintain affordable housing, as well as assisting the development community to understand our priorities such that negotiations are clear and streamlined.

Discussion

The affordable housing task force is currently compiling housing needs numbers which will complement the work that staff is doing to find projects numbers as well. The AHFT is currently investigating the following policies (where these policies are current enacted, but not policy details, has been [outline by Metro Vancouver, 2018](#)) and our research is approximate 80% complete. The AHTF is also working on providing housing needs and demographic numbers for the City in order to inform decision making; preliminary statistics can be found in Pomo Housing Book 1&2 (Attachments 4 and 5).

The policies and advocacy motions that are currently under development/ have been approved/ in- consideration in Port Moody are included in Table 1.

Table 1

Have/ In development/ Investigating	Policy	Notes
☑	Affordable Housing Reserve Fund	Though Port Moody has an Affordable housing reserve Fund, the AHTF is looking into updating with best practices from other jurisdictions. As recommended below.
☑	Density Bonusing/CAC Policies	Updated in 2018 (DCCs updated in 2020)
☑	Tenant Relocation Policy	Other local governments have more stringent guidelines and bylaws – recommendations are in process
☑	Secondary Suite Bylaw	Staff recently updated this (February 2020)
☑	Small Lot Subdivision Bylaw	Port Moody is seeing a number of these.
+	Working with BC Housing to find areas to partner on affordable housing	Under way (Early 2019)
+	Establishing a protocol for warming shelters if needed for extreme temperatures	Underway (February 2020)
+	Fast-Track Development Policy for affordable housing	Underway (May 2019)
+	Inclusionary Housing Policy	AHTF will be reporting back on best practices and recommendations. Staff are also investigating this. Neighbouring municipalities have taken this approach and not seen decrease in projects.
+	Rental Only Zoning/Tenure Policy	This is under investigation in a number of municipalities and we are in communication to share their findings. Port Moody has investigated this on existing properties but decided against implementation at the time.

+	Laneway Housing Bylaw	As recommended below
	Pre-zoning for rental	This is under investigation in a number of municipalities and we are in communication to share their findings.
	Property Tax Exemption Program (for non-profits)	Under investigation
	Fee Waiver Policy	Under Investigation
	Parking Relaxation Policy	Under investigation – recommendations will be inline with pre-existing policies from other cities regarding affordable housing and rentals. Some municipalities have different ratio formulas depending on the area of the city.
	Family Friendly Policy	Under investigation
	Renoviction Policy	As recommended below
	Minimum Standards of Rental Maintenance	This was strongly recommended by Burnaby's Affordable Housing Task force. AHTF members are in contact with Burnaby to receive their research on best practices when available.
	Demolition Policy	We have recommendations but policies do not mandate replacement and could be strengthened in line with neighbouring municipalities
	Rental Replacement Policy	We have recommendations but policies do not mandate replacement.
	Land Trust Model	As recommended below
	TOD Guidelines	Port Moody has TOD areas which may be optimal for inclusion of affordable housing – other communities have developed policies and the AHTF is looking into recommending some.
	OCP Policies supporting AH	The OCP mentions affordable housing but falls short of targets or strong policies. Inclusionary zoning or TOD policies may clarify this in the OCP.
Advocacy	Asking for poverty reduction grants for local government	Passed UBCM 2020
Advocacy	Changing the provincial Rental Tenancy Act and Strata Act to not discriminate against pets in rental and strata units	To LMLGA 2020

We estimate the final report, including housing numbers and recommendations, to be presented to council in early June.

Interim recommendations include

- 1) Inviting a representative from the Cooperative Housing Federation of BC to a council meeting to inform council about their work and present the opportunity for community land trust in meeting councils strategic objectives (attachment 2 provides background).
- 2) Updating the City's laneway housing bylaw and processes as recommended in table 2.
- 3) Development of a policy addressing the issue of renovictions of rental residents
- 4) Update the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund Policy to include a certain percentage required for small developments and to allow allocation for funds to rental relief funding (such as the Tri-Cities SHARE Rent Bank)

Presentation from the Cooperative Housing Federation of BC

Council is currently reviewing the best ways to use public lands for affordable housing; in this vein, working with the CHFBC may present options for funding and strategic partnerships.

Laneway/ Carriage Housing

The Issue/ Background

Laneway/ Carriage houses are examples of sensitive infill or gentle density options. Though many communities are implementing policies for their development, there is great variation in Metro Vancouver as to uptake and use of the program. Affordable Housing Task Force members reached out to Metro Vancouver and a developer of pre-fabricated laneway/ carriage homes to find out where is having the most success or if there are “best practices.” Though an extensive review has not been completed Metro Vancouver staff have indicated some components of policy that help with uptake, some of which is consistent with recommendations from the aforementioned industry professional, who recommended cities of North Vancouver and Vancouver as examples. Recommendations are compiled in table 2.

Table 2

Policy Component	Where is it done	Industry parallel advice	Current Port Moody Policy	Recommendation
Streamlining	City of North Vancouver/ Vancouver	In Vancouver it's a relatively simple process. That's because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [applicants] don't have to get special approval from the city council • [applicants] don't have to do a development permit that's separate from the building permit • [applicants] don't have to solicit feedback from neighbors. 	None	Create streaming as per industry parallel advice

		<p>The last point is perhaps the most important. In North America we have a long history of granting neighbors truly extraordinary veto powers when it comes to adding new housing. Going forward, if we want to treat younger generations and renters more fairly, we need to stop trying to litigate housing on a lot-by-lot basis.</p> <p>In CNV, applicants have a concurrent development permit and building permit process.</p>		
providing municipal incentives (e.g. reduced servicing costs, permitting fees)	Vancouver		None	Someone will have to pay for infrastructure; therefore, Port Moody should look more at streamlining the process or preapproval compared to reducing servicing.
Providing a set of pre-approved plans / design guidelines where possible (this can be paired with an expedited permitting process)	Vancouver, Victoria, Nelson		None	<i>Develop 3 pre-approved designs for laneway/ carriage homes (see attachment 3 from Nelson for example)</i>
Developing 'how-to' guides and other resources (e.g. webinar, city-led	Port Moody has one Victoria is a bit easier to Navigate North Vancouver is as well			It may be a worthwhile exercise to look at how-to guides, perhaps from a Tri-Cities point of view to cut costs.

training) to clarify requirements, support homeowners / builders				
Providing public education and consultation to reduce neighbourhood resistance to changes	North Vancouver CNV	Do not require a public input		Make public input for laneway homes non-mandatory
Exploring innovative approaches / flexibility of requirements (e.g. reduced parking requirements near transit, alternative parking arrangements (e.g. tandem parking), relaxed setback requirements, modular construction, stratification of laneway houses, reduced servicing connection fees, etc.)	<p>Vancouver – only one parking stall required per laneway house CNV- Maximum 0.5 lot coverage with the coach house.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property is zoned for One-Unit Residential (RS) Use There is unused Gross Floor Area available on the lot which can be allocated to the coach house Lot has a Front Lot Line Length of 10 metres (32.8 feet) The Coach House is designed in accordance with the Zoning Bylaw and Accessory Coach House Developmen 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking: Each property owner will be required to provide one on-site parking space for exclusive use of the DADU tenant. If the main house also has a secondary suite, one (1) parking space is required for the suite. Two (2) spaces are required for the main house. In this scenario, one property may require four (4) parking spaces on the lot to satisfy the parking requirements of the Zoning Bylaw. 	Reduced parking for laneway homes near transit and relaxation of setbacks as long as minimum distance from main home are followed and ground surface does not exceed the maximum (and is permeable)

	<p>t Permit Guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner resides on the property • Two parking spaces available on the property 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coverage - Maximum of 40%: RS1, RS2, RS5, RS6, RS7, RS9, RT Maximum of 45%: RS1-S, RS3 	
Make the process City-wide	Vancouver	Making it a citywide policy did a few things. Not only was the liftoff faster, it was also much fairer. Both the impacts and opportunities of the new policy were distributed across the entire city.	Currently only in certain zoning, but seems mainly in all single-family areas – currently looks complicated	Make laneway/ carriage homes available city wide where property allows unless restricted by fire access, environmentally sensitive areas on site, or other stipulations staff suggest.
Don't force "style matching"	Vancouver	Agreed	We do ask for style matching	Do not make style matching mandatory save in historical design areas

Development of Renovation Bylaw

Establishment of a renovation bylaw as ([background was provided in a report titled Minimum Standards of Rental Maintenance Bylaw and Anti-Renovation Bylaw dated July 9, 2019.](#)) Since the writing of that report, such a bylaw has been recommended by the [Burnaby Affordable Housing Task Force](#) (page 51), including:

This bylaw would stipulate that tenants who must vacate their homes due to renovation are provided temporary accommodation, with right to return to the same unit at the same rent (subject to RTA increases) and under the same rental agreement. This applies to all renovations that:

- are in buildings with six or more units
- require tenants to vacate the unit(s)
- require a building permit

Such a bylaw would be enforced through business licence process (City of New Westminster approach)

Update the Affordable Housing Reserve Policy

The AHRF (affordable housing reserve fund) is made up of funds derived through Community Amenity Contributions. CAC's are voluntary and negotiated and are valued at \$6/SF for new development. One third of these funds (\$2/SF) go into the AHRF. The AHRF policy outlines guidelines for allocation and distribution of these funds.

In addition to this fund, the city could require a cash in lieu, based on an established percentage of affordable housing to be built in any project. On larger projects (for example, over 100 units, or an allotted percentage), the percentage of units would be built and provided to an affordable housing partner to operate in perpetuity. On smaller developments, where it does not make sense to have one or two units donated, the city will develop a criteria to determine equal value through an analysis of the market cost plus long term operating cost and have these funds donated back to the city to be put into the AHRF.

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Further, on March 30, SHARE Family and Community Services officially announced the creation of a Rent Bank for the Tri-Cities. The community members who know about the Rent Bank, which is unofficially available for a few months before the announcement so appreciate the support they have received so far. The creation of a Rent Bank in the Tri-Cities is extremely timely, important and will definitely make a huge difference for struggling families in our community. Sadly, we are an extremely expensive place to live and unaffordability is increasing, putting more people at risk of losing their homes (<http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/homelessness/homelessness-taskforce/crisis/Pages/default.aspx>).

"SHARE announces a NEW program! The Tri-Cities SHARE Rent Bank program makes loans available to Tri-Cities residents who have short term financial issues that are putting their tenancy in jeopardy. The Rent Bank program works to provide interest free loans to market renters, to help them maintain their tenancy through help with their rent payment, or a hydro/natural gas payment or security deposit. Loans are to be repaid over 18-24 months." (<https://sharesociety.ca/tri-cities-share-rent-bank>)

Currently the Rent Bank budget has capacity for 25 loans and administrative support for the entire Tri-Cities (grants are approximately \$800 for single people and \$1600 for families). Conversations with councillors from other jurisdictions that have rent banks report that their services are highly subscribed, even when, like the Tri-Cities Rent Bank, the requirements to access services are quite high. The Tri-Cities Rent Bank is currently operating on grant funding and donations; in this unprecedented COVID crisis there will likely be an upswing in need for loans as well as administrative/ supportive services, and the current funding levels are unlikely to be enough. While there are some programs offered by the Provincial and Federal Governments, not everyone will be able to take part in those programs. Councillors in Port

Moody, Coquitlam, and Port Coquitlam are requesting support from their municipalities to keep our resident in their homes should they fall on difficult times (more details below).

Port Moody currently has a significant sum in our AHRF; though the current policy [Attachment 6] is silent on transferring funds to a rental bank, it is also silent on using the Reserve for salaries, but Council approved it as a use to fund staff salaries that are developing strategies around affordable housing. It would be prudent to amend the policy to allow funding for rental relief and allocate funding to the Tri-Cities Rent Bank in this time when so many community members may be in need.

When a family experiences short-term financial troubles and can't pay their rent, the snowballing effect can be enormous. When they are evicted this could mean trying to find a new place at a much higher rent than they were paying previously or a smaller place that isn't appropriate for their family, or far away from their original community where they and/or their families grew but that they can actually afford. It also means that we are losing people from our communities as they move farther away to find something they can afford; this can fragment families, friends, and social support structures and compounds the already escalating crisis of social isolation and loneliness. The turmoil families and individuals can face sometimes lead to homelessness and addiction issues.

As a City Council, we have seen firsthand **the need**, as there have been many people inquiring how to access help even at the mention of establishment of a rent bank, and **the support**, as many Unions and Credit Unions, and even some community foundations, have expressed interest in helping get a Tri-Cities Rent Bank off the ground and some have promised funding. SHARE Community and Family Services have been doing a wonderful job championing this initiative and councillors across the Tri-Cities are anxious to support it in any way we can. In this difficult time, solicitation of funds is difficult from traditional sources.

The success of rent banks are well founded. The key findings from a study of the Toronto Rent Bank found that having access to a Rent Bank loan to deal with arrears helped the majority of clients (approximately 2/3) to remain in their housing. In total, 71% of clients' housing situations were improved six months after the loans had been provided and participants did not have to enter the City's shelter system (<http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.615239/publication.html>; <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/NH18-23-57E.pdf>).

Further, in BC, a researcher at Thompson River University has been studying Rent Banks and has found they have a high rate of payback, though we understand some people will not be able to pay. Just as importantly, clients of the Rent Banks in BC appear to have more stable housing a year after their original loans. (https://www.kamloopsbcnow.com/watercooler/news/news/Kamloops/15/07/08/TRU_Professor_links_low_interest_loans_to_lower_homelessness_rates#fs_79806) [Attachment 7]

During this unprecedented crisis presented by COVID-19, it is imperative that people in our community have options if they cannot pay their rent for whatever reason. The program is currently small and a donation from Port Moody Affordable Housing Reserve Fund would make an immense difference to people facing unforeseen hardship.

Conclusion

The proposed first steps are entirely aligned with council's strategic plan and stated values, and the intent of the full suite of policies, which is aimed to be complete by June 2020, is to ensure Port Moody has a robust affordable housing plan that will make sure we meet the needs of our current and future residents.

Other Option(s)

THAT the report dated April 12, 2020 from The Affordable Housing Task Force regarding Interim Report from the Port Moody Affordable Housing Task Force be received for information.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications in receipt.

There may be implications for staff time costs of development of a renovation policy and laneway housing policy, as well as cost for design of 3 preapproved laneway home designs.

Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

There are no communications or civic engagement initiatives required by the recommendations in this report.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

The council has signalled its dedication to community health and wellness, and provision of affordable housing.

Attachment(s)

1. Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Study (2017)
2. Background on the Cooperative Housing Federation of BC
3. Article from the Nelson Daily Dated February 7, 2020 regarding City announces Laneway House Design Competition results
4. Pomo Housing Book 1
5. Pomo Housing Book 2
6. Affordable Housing Reserve fund Policy
7. Rent Bank Study