

Social Plan

Housing Chapter Excerpt (Updated 2000)

3.6 Housing

Accessible and appropriate housing is a basic need. Addressing this need as effectively as possible is a necessary goal for a municipality which seeks to create a healthy and complete community. Throughout its history, the City of North Vancouver has focussed on housing concerns through a variety of actions. Many of the more recent City initiatives are summarized in the Social Plan Background Report.

While housing issues have continued to increase in recent years, senior government involvement in funding the capital and subsidy of non-profit housing has been virtually eliminated. City initiatives will, of necessity, be based on forming new partnerships and creating new methods of achieving affordability.

The range of City responses outlined in the objectives and strategies below are based on a continuation of the City's current roles of facilitation, support, and partnership in terms of resources, expertise, and funding. The housing strategies are based on a collaborative, open and flexible approach which is necessary to allow for adaptation to changing opportunities and needs. Increasing the number of affordable units, retaining existing affordable housing, and addressing unmet housing needs continue as primary issues for the City. This section was revised in January 2000 with Council resolutions following from the 1998-1999 Affordable Housing Task Force.

GOAL

Ensure availability of a range of housing types and tenure throughout the City which address a variety of housing needs.

Objective 1: Develop and maintain a comprehensive up-to-date knowledge of housing concerns in the City, and the resources available locally, regionally, and provincially to address housing needs.

Actions

The City will:

1. Consult regularly with BC Housing regarding provincial initiatives and funding programs which could be of benefit in developing strategies to address City housing needs.

2. Continue City participation in regionally-based housing committees.
3. Ensure that City housing policies are relevant and effective in meeting targeted housing needs through periodic review, evaluation, and update.
4. Develop and regularly update a database of City-owned lands and housing properties, and a database of rental apartment buildings.
5. Initiate regular liaison with representatives of the development industry to review the City housing objectives, policies, and strategies.
6. Participate in the BC Non-Profit Housing Association as an associate member to share current information and participate in workshops and educational programs regarding development of non-profit housing through partnerships and housing management concerns.
7. Initiate a forum to be held every two years with community organizations, social service agencies and networks, City residents, and North Shore Health Region representatives to review the state of housing in the City.

Objective 2: Ensure that Zoning bylaws and development procedures and approaches reflect City housing goals and policies.

Actions

The City will:

1. Facilitate the understanding and supplementation of housing policies, goals and objectives by City advisory bodies.
2. Develop checklists, wherever necessary, to facilitate understanding of City housing goals and objectives on the part of staff and advisory bodies, and to ensure that development review procedures and practices are consistent.

Objective 3: Define specific City roles and actions which will result in provision of rental and affordable housing which meets a variety of housing needs.

(These activities were added January 2000 as Council endorsed resolutions following from the 1998 Affordable Housing Task Force report.)

The City will:

1. Update its definition of “affordability” with reference to the “Affordability Gap” or difference between what people on low or fixed incomes receive and the maximum income ceilings established by BC Housing.
2. Request that CMHC and BC Housing change their definition of affordability from 30% of gross income to 20% of gross income.
3. Request the federal government to become a more active partner in the provision of new affordable housing.
4. Request the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to pursue federal support for new affordable housing.
5. Request the Province to continue to increase the number of units in its yearly call for affordable housing proposals.
6. Amend the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund Bylaw to state that the Fund may provide fee reductions and City development cost charges for non-profit societies building affordable housing, including those non-profit organizations involved in public-private partnerships.
7. Undertake a review in conjunction with the Capital Planning Committee on the implications of implementing a policy of increasing the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund to a \$10 Million balance within 25 years, and of amending the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund Bylaw such that no more than 50% of the Fund can be allocated at any one time, and on other models for the provision of Affordable Housing support, such review to include a full analysis of all financial priorities and amenities of the City.
8. Investigate the implications to the City’s financial priorities of increasing the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund through transfers equal to the value of increased zoning or density transfers, the value of a reduction in requirements such as the number of parking spaces, and cash-in-lieu of affordable housing goals in major projects.
9. Investigate which current City initiated design features can be altered to reduce the cost of housing.
10. Encourage affordable housing (all City departments) and "fast-tracking" the approval process of affordable housing projects.
11. Designate the Social Planner as a facilitator for affordable housing to work with non-profit societies, developers, departments of the City, and others where appropriate, to find ways for best meeting the goal of providing affordable housing, including public / private partnerships.

12. Continue to review whether the resources and tools available to enhance and promote affordable housing are helpful or if changes and or additional resources are required.
13. Review the planning and financial implications of setting a target that no fewer than 50% of all dwelling units in the City be rental housing, in the context of other North Shore municipalities, as well as the rest of the municipalities in the Greater Vancouver region.
14. Consider permitting greater density on redevelopment sites so that the number of existing rental units are not reduced while remaining consistent with the Official Community Plan.
15. Comment on the Affordable Housing Task Force recommendation of leasing the following proportion of City-owned properties zoned for multi-residential use:

60%	in Lower Lonsdale
100%	in Central Lonsdale
25%	in other areas

Where considered appropriate by Council, the City could exchange City-owned residential land for other residential land of comparable market value.

16. Comment on development of policy and procedures whereby it becomes an “equity partner” in affordable housing projects on City-owned land as one of the mechanisms for developing affordable housing projects and for maintaining ownership in a land base.”

Objective 4: Define effective policies and strategies which result in the retention and maintenance of the existing rental housing stock.

Actions

The City will:

1. Continue to control conversion of rental housing.
2. Monitor the effectiveness of the City’s Standards of Maintenance Bylaw and revise as required.
3. Monitor changes in the market rental housing stock.
4. Continue to review existing policy and procedures and how they impact on the retention, rehabilitation, and replacement of the existing affordable housing stock,

including secondary suites, with a view to maximizing the potential retention and rehabilitation of the older, more affordable market rental housing stock.

Objective 5: Encourage the inclusion of Adaptable Design in multi-unit residential developments.

Actions

The City will:

1. Review the City's Adaptable Design policy on a regular basis in conjunction with representatives from various seniors and disability groups, and architectural and development sectors.
2. Develop incentives which result in the feasibility of adaptable design in priority areas.
3. Liaise regularly with the appropriate provincial ministry and with other municipalities to develop a common base of accessible housing design and promotion approaches, and resolution of Building Code related issues.

Objective 6: Increase the housing options available to persons with specialized needs.

Actions

The City will:

1. Liaise with the provincial group tasked with streamlining and coordinating provincial funding and delivery of special needs housing.
2. Seek and support collaborative proposals which meet the provincial housing goals of increasing the ability of community groups and non-profit organizations to create specialized housing and which are eligible for provincial funding support.
3. Develop a definition of "special needs housing," and an appropriate range of housing options and services, through consultation with advocates and advocacy groups, housing and support service providers, North Shore Regional Operating Agency, and the North Shore Health Region.
4. Assess current City policies and develop additional policies which address housing and services for persons with special needs.

Objective 7: Support and promote innovative housing.

Actions

The City will:

1. Give priority to innovative housing projects in terms of staff time, available funding for feasibility work and capital cost sharing, and development approvals procedures.
2. Seek opportunities to develop pilot projects in collaboration with local housing groups and community organizations which target priority housing needs.
3. Develop guidelines which allow for consideration of innovative housing concepts which meet specialized housing needs of individuals or families, but which do not fit within the standard zoning bylaw requirements.

Objective 8: Increase public understanding and acceptance of affordable and specialized housing options throughout the City.

Actions

The City will:

1. Connect with provincial initiatives to increase neighbourhood acceptance of special needs housing.
2. Define City roles and actions in conjunction with community-based initiatives which will educate the public regarding the importance of affordable and specialized housing options in a healthy, inclusive community.

Objective 9: Address the gap in housing information, education, and referral services for City residents.

Actions

The City will:

1. Collaborate with community organizations to assess the development of information, education, and referral services, with an emphasis on rental, affordable, and specialized housing.