

MOTION

8. Enabling Creative and Easily Replicated “Missing Middle” Housing Pilots

At the Council meeting on July 21, 2020, Council referred the following motion to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on July 22, 2020, in order to hear from speakers.

Submitted by: Councillor Dominato

WHEREAS

1. It is the Mission of the City of Vancouver to create a great city of communities that cares about its people, the environment, and opportunities to live, work, and prosper;
2. Among the six core values that guide the City’s Mission are the values of “Responsiveness,” whereby the City is responsive to the needs of citizens and our City colleagues, and “Excellence,” whereby we strive for the best results;
3. There is a significant equity problem and mismatch between our land use regulations and our local incomes: roughly 60% of the City of Vancouver’s land base is currently zoned RS-1 for single detached housing, a form of development that is affordable to only roughly 5% of households based on Greater Vancouver incomes;
4. The City of Vancouver uses community plans to provide clear but flexible frameworks to guide positive change and development in neighbourhoods over a period of approximately 20 – 30 years. Community plans are policy documents that provide guidance and direction on a variety of topics, from land use and urban design, to housing, transportation, and community facilities. A community plan also recognizes aspects of the community valued by its citizens and addresses the specific issues and initiatives of each community area. Each community plan considers long-range and shorter-term goals, and works within broader objectives established for the entire city and at regional and provincial levels;
5. The 2012 Mayor’s Task Force on Housing Affordability co-chaired by Olga Ilich, along with the Report from the Round table on Building Form and Design (the Geller Report), pointed to the need to increase the supply of different types of housing, particularly for families with children. The 2012 report recommended identifying opportunities to add ground-oriented medium density housing forms such as townhouses, row houses or stacked townhouses in low-density residential areas;
6. The Mayor’s Task Force on Housing Affordability report also encouraged the creative use of underutilized city land, such as streets, to enable affordable, ground-oriented medium density housing forms;
7. At the November 29, 2017, meeting of the Standing Committee of Council on Policy and Strategic Priorities, the previous Council approved the Housing Vancouver Strategy (2018 – 2027), including Appendices A and B of the Administrative Report dated November 15, 2017, entitled “*Housing Vancouver Strategy (2018 - 2027) and 3-Year Action Plan (2018 - 2020)*”, as the basis for addressing Vancouver’s housing affordability crisis, with direction to staff to proceed with next steps towards implementation;

8. A key objective of the [Housing Vancouver Strategy](#) is a shift toward the right supply of housing to meet the needs of people who live and work in Vancouver. To meet the right supply targets, the City is continually looking at new opportunities to add housing choice across the city in low-density neighbourhoods as a key building block of a future city-wide plan. The aim is to deliver housing that falls into the “missing middle” between single-family homes and higher density apartments;
9. The intent of the Housing Vancouver Strategy is to provide a strong foundation for the future in Vancouver and for Vancouver to be a place where:
 - Neighbourhoods are full of families;
 - Young people can afford to buy a home; and
 - People of all incomes and backgrounds can participate in their communities;
10. In May 2018, City Staff embarked on a Regulation Redesign project to simplify the City’s land use regulatory framework in order to improve permit processing – consistent with a corporate priority in the City’s 2019 Corporate Plan (Goal 1C – Excellent Service) and consistent with a key regulatory framework action item in the Housing Vancouver strategy;
11. The key objectives of Regulation Redesign is to:
 - simplify regulations;
 - reconcile competing objectives;
 - improve consistency between by-laws and policies;
 - ensure land use policies and regulations advance City priorities; and
 - improve external and internal communication;
12. At the June 20, 2018, meeting of the Standing Committee of Council on Policy on Strategic Priorities, the previous Council endorsed a proposed program outlined in the Making Room Housing Program presentation dated June 19, 2018 (*Making Room Housing Program: Overview and Quick Start Actions*, June 5, 2018). The Making Room Housing Program was created to address a key objective of the Housing Vancouver Strategy, namely, to add housing choice to neighbourhoods across Vancouver;
13. Following the October 20, 2018, municipal election, the newly-elected Council requested that staff focus planning efforts on initiating a City-wide Plan. As a result, the Making Room Housing Program was transitioned from being an independent planning program focused on adding housing choice to low density neighbourhoods into a broader integrated planning effort to create complete communities as part of the work of the City-wide Plan;
14. While the City of Vancouver has many plans and policies for communities, housing, transportation, and infrastructure, the City currently does not have a master plan that sets the direction for the entire city. The Vancouver Plan (i.e., City-wide Plan) is intended to help unify all of the City’s existing plans, and prioritize future directions for the city we want to become, with an acknowledgement that the choices we make today will have a large impact on future generations and that without a clear vision, our daily decisions and policies may not lead us in a direction that we, as a city, desire;

15. At the May 15, 2019, meeting of the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities, Council received a policy report from the General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability (stemming from the Regulation Redesign project). The policy report recommended various regulatory amendments and the repeal of outdated or superseded policy and guideline documents. The regulatory changes were sought to help to update regulations, to make the Zoning and Development By-law more user-friendly, and to improve clarity for staff and applicants;
16. On November 14, 2019, City Staff embarked on the Vancouver Plan planning and engagement process and began asking the public questions to better understand the challenges and priorities of residents. To date, the listening process has heard the hopes, concerns, and aspirations of over 10,000 residents, employees, business owners, and visitors as part of the initial phase. The thoughts that have been gathered are considered to be valuable and will guide the next phase of the Vancouver Plan process and conversations on “The Future We Want.”;
17. At the March 11, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities, Council received an update on Phase 1 of the Vancouver Plan process. Background and context information was included in the Staff presentation and the following points were noted as to why there is a need for a plan and why now:
 - It’s a moment in time for Vancouver;
 - High level of public anxiety about present and future;
 - The power of a unifying vision and action strategy;
 - Leveraging regional alignment and partnerships;
 - Framework for better decision-making; and
 - Reforming ongoing civic engagement and building trust;
18. The Vancouver Plan will ultimately set directions to guide the city’s future priorities into 2050 and beyond, and the timeline to move from a plan to the action phase is slated to take place between November 2021 and July 2022;
19. Due to the transitioning and subsuming of previous City planning processes into the new Vancouver Plan process, the City’s existing Affordable Housing Choices Interim Rezoning Policy (AHC IRP), which was established to encourage innovation and enable real examples of ground-oriented and mid-rise affordable housing types to be tested for potential wider application and provide ongoing housing opportunities, has expired. New proposals for innovative housing are not being accepted under the program at this time and opportunities are potentially being missed as a result;
20. The ongoing need for innovation in the Vancouver housing market has never been greater and has been a hallmark of Vancouver planning efforts going back many decades. It has long been recognized that, if population growth and demographic changes in the city are to be accommodated successfully, developing various medium density forms that are economically viable and at the same time can be successfully accommodated within, or adjacent to, single-family neighbourhoods, is vitally important. Recognition of this fact is as evident today as it was in decades past as can be seen in such City policies and plans as CityPlan and the Neighbourhood Housing Demonstration Program from the 1990s; ⁱ
https://council.vancouver.ca/previous_years/970225/a5.htm

21. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed gaps in our housing framework and presented opportunities to be bold in tackling much needed housing forms. The Vancouver Plan has been refocused on recovery and short term recovery actions are being pursued for 2020. These include a focus on complete neighbourhoods, intergenerational living and affordable housing; and
22. Given the urgent need to shift toward the right supply of housing in the City that can meet the needs of the people who live and work in Vancouver, and meeting the right supply targets for that housing, it is imperative that the City continue to identify opportunities to add innovative new housing choice across the City in our lower-density neighbourhoods as a key building block of a future citywide plan. Council's ongoing aim should be to address the housing shortage identified as the "missing middle", as it relates to a middle income rental housing and affordable home ownership, as an ongoing priority as we work toward a comprehensive City-wide Vancouver Plan.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to report back in Q4 2020 with short term recovery actions to enable creative and experimental ground-oriented housing types in RS and RT zones that:

- are suitable and affordable for a wider spectrum of Vancouver families;
- that can be easily replicated on a wider scale throughout the city, and
- which would inherently complement and/or dovetail with the core objectives of a new City-wide Vancouver Plan;

so as not to lose out on innovative housing opportunities that could be lost due to the lack of a working policy, while the City and staff work toward the realization of a comprehensive Vancouver Plan;

FURTHER THAT any recommended short term recovery actions consider pilots on city owned and private land, consider rental and freehold tenure, incentives, and relaxations in height, density and parking for creative infill and ground oriented proposals that significantly widen the spectrum of housing affordability in these areas by increasing the intensity of land use whilst preserving good design and livability characteristic of Vancouver neighbourhoods;

AND FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to report back Q2 2021 on options for a revised policy framework that would enable additional density for housing options along arterials and transit hubs and would serve the needs of moderate income households, delivering more units than the current Moderate Income Rental Housing Pilot Program (MIRHPP).

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ⁱ On June 6, 1995, Council adopted CITYPLAN: DIRECTIONS FOR VANCOUVER. One of the directions of CityPlan is to increase housing variety in the city. As a next step to increasing housing variety, CityPlan recommended that: "Vancouver should build demonstration projects for new types of housing that offer the features of single-family housing at higher densities." As CityPlan noted, only 3% of the city's stock in the 1990s was in the form of row or townhouses while postulating that ground-oriented, medium density housing such as row and townhouses would be in the great demand over the next decades in the city and the region.