

MOTION

12. A Closer Look at Tiny Homes and Shelters

At the Council meeting on October 6, 2020, Council referred the following motion to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on October 7, 2020, to hear from speakers.

Submitted by: Councillor Fry

WHEREAS

1. Vancouver faces a scarcity of affordable housing;
2. Through work on City Wide Plan, Housing Vancouver Strategy, and Making Room Housing Program the City of Vancouver seeks to add more housing choices to accommodate a broad range of incomes, occupations, and households at all stages of life across the city;
3. Tiny homes and shelters are small single dwellings, typically under 50 m², and constructed to facilitate affordability and environmental sustainability. Typology includes:
 - a. Mobile tiny homes, typically factory-built on trailer beds and often certified as Recreational Vehicles afford a degree of portability and thus aren't site dependent (example: Vancouver-based manufacturer Mint Tiny Homes <https://www.minttinyhomes.com>);
 - b. Fixed tiny homes, typically built as detached or semi-detached structures on a slab or post and pier foundation allow for more site-specific and custom construction options. (example: Tiny Society: Tiny Houses on Foundations <https://www.tinysociety.co/articles/tiny-houses-on-foundations>);
 - c. Temporary modular shelters, are built from pre-fabricated components that can be deployed rapidly and relatively inexpensively, with beds, wiring, insulation, egress and security often for just a few thousand dollars. (example: Seattle-based Pallet Shelter <https://www.palletshelter.com>);
4. Tiny homes and shelters have been enabled in other jurisdictions on private and public land; in partnership with NGO, community, and religious groups; and in market, co-op and supportive housing models to provide a vital part of the housing continuum, and often as an affordable, practical and rapid deployment option for under housed populations;
 - a. Opportunity Village in Eugene, Dignity Village in Portland Oregon are successful examples of intentional transitional communities of tiny houses on public land, with congregate kitchen, bathroom and shower facilities that provide a housing first solution for people facing homelessness. (<http://www.vancouversun.com/life/Pete+McMartin+Portland+micro+apprach+housing+homeless/10329522/story.html>);

- b. Homes for Heroes Foundation has built a fifteen unit co-housing model for homeless veterans in Calgary. (<https://www.businessinsider.com/tiny-home-village-for-homeless-veterans-calgary-canada-2019-11>);
- 5. In Vancouver, the construction of shelters and dwelling units, whether built on site or in a factory are variously regulated by:
 - a. The National Building Code of Canada;
 - b. Canadian Standards Association (CSA);
 - c. BC Building Code (BCBC); and
 - d. Vancouver Building By-Law 12511;
- 6. In Vancouver, the regulation of land-use, development permit requirements and establishment of zoning districts are variously regulated by the Zoning and Development By-Law 3575;
- 7. Currently, neither the Vancouver Building By-law 12511 nor the Zoning and Development By-law 3575 support the building and permitting of tiny homes or shelters;
- 8. Some code authorities and local governments are revisiting their respective building by-law codes to better support tiny homes and shelters. Building codes for on-site and factory built tiny homes and shelters variously provide for minimum floor space, room size, life safety, anchorage or foundation, climate control and building envelope. Some jurisdictions have modernized their building codes to support the construction of tiny homes and shelters, for example:
 - a. International Residential Code (2018) - Appendix Q: Tiny Houses
https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IRC2018/appendix-q-tiny-houses?site_type=public
Advises Maximum size (37 m²), emergency escapes and rescue openings, headroom, lofts and stairs, etc;
 - b. Ontario Building Code “Build or Buy a Tiny Home” (2019)
https://files.ontario.ca/mmah_tiny_homes_en_20191129.pdf
Advises Minimum size (17.5 m²) and building standards;
- 9. Local governments are revisiting their respective zoning policies to better support tiny homes and shelters. Zoning policies to support tiny homes and shelters variously accommodate new land use models and building forms. Some jurisdictions have modernized their zoning regulations to support the permitting of tiny homes and shelters, for example:
 - a. San Diego “Movable Tiny Houses Municipal Code Amendment” (2020)
https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/dsd_pc_20-017_movable_tiny_houses.pdf;
Amendments to San Diego Municipal Code to support “Companion units, junior units, and movable tiny houses” in Residential, Agricultural-Residential zones and in specific district regulations;

- b. City of Edmonton enables ‘tiny homes’ through zoning by-law change (2019)
<https://canada.constructconnect.com/joc/news/government/2019/12/city-of-edmonton-enables-tiny-homes-through-zoning-bylaw-change>
 New zoning regulations to permit tiny home communities and infills as a “missing middle” housing allowance;
- 10. In June 2019, Council unanimously passed the motion “Transparent Process and Taxation for Land Banks Repurposed as Temporary Recreational Properties” with direction for staff to report back with recommendations for conditional conversions of development sites for temporary use as “recreational property.” BC Assessment classifies land according to its use, and the city applies a mill rate to the classification to determine taxes, for example:
 - a. The 2020 mill rate for Class 6 Business, other is \$6.73 per \$1,000 of assessed value;
 - b. The 2020 mill rate for Class 8 Recreational Property, Non-profit Organization (Community Gardens) is \$2.63 per \$1,000 of assessed value;
 - c. The 2020 mill rate for Class 3 Supportive Housing (Cabinet designation, for people homeless or at risk of homelessness) is \$0.14 per \$1,000 of assessed value;
- 11. On September 14 2020, Council directed staff to report back on the feasibility and costs of options to accelerate the creation of emergency housing for homeless Vancouver residents, including “Establishing temporary tiny house villages on vacant public or private land”.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct the Office of the Chief Building Official (CBO) and General Manager of Planning, Urban Design, and Sustainability to report back with analysis for potential implementation of Tiny Homes and Shelters.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to report back with recommendations of possible changes to Building By-law to support tiny homes and shelters, that consider:
 - i. Minimum and maximum sizes, life safety and livability;
 - ii. Options for congregate settings and shared facilities like showers, washrooms and kitchens; and
 - iii. Options for mobile, fixed, and temporary modular tiny homes and shelters.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to report back with recommendations of possible changes to Zoning and Development By-law, that consider:
 - i. Temporary and semi-permanent location of Tiny Homes and Shelters in R-, C-, and I- zones;

- ii. Options for infill and secondary units; and
 - iii. Options for mobile units in parking lots.
- D. THAT Council direct staff to report back with any legal and public engagement considerations that include:
 - i. Options for temporary zoning of vacant pre-development sites that might facilitate their use as tiny house villages and facilitate their property assessment as Class 3 - Supportive Housing, or Class 8 - Recreational not for profit, much like the current practice of temporary community gardens on vacant pre-development sites; and
 - ii. Best practices and obligations for public engagement on respective zoning and by-law changes, as well as any specific permanent and temporary installations.

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