

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

8. Enabling the Next Generation of Vancouver Specials

Submitted by: Councillor Wiebe

WHEREAS

1. Vancouver currently has a housing affordability and climate crisis;
2. Buildings are a significant contributor to the climate crisis, as buildings and construction account for 39% of global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions and 21% of total GHG emissions in BC as per the 2020 CleanBC Climate Change Accountability Report;
3. The CMHC 2022 Housing Supply Report highlighted the need for Vancouver to innovate and diversify new housing to provide adequate new supply that is affordable to a wider range of households, in terms of built-form, location/geography and tenure;
4. The Vancouver Heritage Foundation states that “The Vancouver Special is the only house style that developed in Greater Vancouver from 1965-85, found nowhere else. They were a response to a City of Vancouver by-law change to address the need for more housing. As a result, the design of the Special maximized the square footage of a home on the narrow lots of the city at a low cost. This made them very widespread. The plans were particularly popular with multi-generational households”;
5. The Vancouver Special Competition of 1985 highlighted the benefits of the original “Vancouver Special” including short permit times (2 to 3 days), simplified labour needs, standardized local materials, and shorter building timelines which benefited tenants and small builders;
6. A catalogue of next generation Vancouver Special houses could be created with pre-approved building forms that allow for an expedited permitting and construction process – a repeatable house that meets net zero energy and universal design standards, is constructed with wood and modular prefabrication by way of social employment and local procurement and operates with 100% renewable sources of energy; and
7. A pilot version of a next generation Vancouver Special could be designed by City of Vancouver architects and designers for a backyard mini modular Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), which BC Housing refers to as all forms of additional units on residential (or even commercial/industrial) properties which could be scaled up.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to report back on a pathway for an expedited building permit and construction process for a new generation of Vancouver Specials (repeatable building forms) from a modular Tiny Home (ADU) to a multifamily building that would deliver diverse spaces for multigenerational living as easy as a single family home to tackle the climate and affordability crisis head-on.

* * * * *

https://urbanarium.org/sites/default/files/archive-items/The%20Vancouver%20Special%20Competition%20%28small_0.pdf [urbanarium.org]