

Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH) Community Engagement

Final Report

Township of Esquimalt

July 20, 2026

NEUQUINN

CONSULTING

Caring-Connected-Communities

SSMUH Survey & Workshop Design Process

Phase 1:



Research and Understanding

Confirm the facts on Bill 44 discretionary areas.

Research what others are doing.

How we compare across B.C.

Identify external expertise (Lawyer, Architect and DCG Videographer).



Correspondence Review

Understand community concerns identified through a review of proactive correspondence from the public to Council on SSMUH.



Internal Staff Engagement

Scope the breadth of potential operational issues.

Understand the diverse and convergent perspectives of residents, renters, developers.

Phase 2:



Community Conversations

Interviews to gather a broad range of perspectives from community and interest holders.



On-line Survey Design

Develop a questionnaire to assess the scope of understanding of SSMUH and Bylaw.

Respondents identify priorities.



SSMUH Workshop Design

Understand community perspectives to develop workshop approach.

Develop subject matter expert presentations and agenda.

Scope of Engagement – What was open for Input



- Height
- Setbacks
- Lot coverage
- Parking
- Landscaping / greenspace
- Privacy / overlook
- Form and character

Promise to the Community

“We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision”

Common themes across all sources

- Trees, green space, and the environment
- Height, setbacks and massing, form and character
- Privacy and overlook
- Affordability and feasibility
- Parking and site design
- Lot coverage
- Transparency and predictability
- Notifications

Interviews & Written Correspondence

Key Themes

- Provincial requirements vs. local discretion
- Affordability and attainability
- Building scale, fit and site design
- Infrastructure and service capacity
- Environmental impacts (tree canopy loss)
- Consistency and predictability of decisions
- Benefits experienced by SSMUH residents
- Differing views on community change
- Common ground: more housing, done well

What workshop participants asked and what they want...

Questions reveal more than information gaps - they show a need for:



Clarity



Confidence



Early impact
review



Site-responsive
discretion



Clearer process
information

Predictability

- Clear rules
- Consistent decisions
- Understandable process

Flexibility

- Respond to site conditions
- Protect trees
- Address privacy and fit

Workshop Group Recommendations

Environment — Adjust setbacks and site coverage together to protect trees and greenspace; bring zoning closer to DPA guidelines (13 strongly agree, 5 agree, 2 neutral)

Setbacks & Massing — Explore angular planes to determine setbacks based on lot conditions (8 strongly agree, 6 agree, 4 neutral)

Process — Add a notification tracker; email residents when a new SSMUH application is received; explore more staff discretion for variances with neighbour concurrence (16 strongly agree, 4 agree, 1 strongly disagree (highest agreement of any group))

Form & Character — Height band of 5.1–10m based on lot/context; minimum soft landscaping; block-level setback consistency; privacy protections (window placement, frosted glazing, fencing, neighbour consultation) (17 strongly agree, 5 agree, 1 neutral, 1 disagree, 2 strongly disagree)

Bylaw, Lifestyle & Parking — Keep current parking minimums; regulate design specifics instead, pavers vs. asphalt, gardens between spots, bike parking (9 strongly agree, 5 agree, 2 neutral)

Survey Results - Key Themes Reinforced

Trees / green space:	56%
Building fit	50%
Height / massing	42%
Affordability	41%
Privacy	32%
Parking	31%

How the input adds up

Recommendation 1: Interim Administrative Discretion

INTERVIEWS

Clear desire for the Township to use existing discretion now, not wait

WORKSHOP

Setbacks & Massing group specifically asked for more staff discretion

SURVEY

All six discretionary areas show majorities wanting more consideration now (54–62%)

Recommendation 2: SSMUH Select Committee

INTERVIEWS

Called for careful technical review of height, setbacks, coverage & unit size together

WORKSHOP

4 of 5 groups produced recommendations needing dedicated technical & legal analysis

SURVEY

Privacy (62%), form/character (59%) & height (58%) map directly to the Committee's mandate

Recommendation 3: Proactive Notifications

INTERVIEWS

Named "transparent development tracking" as something participants wanted

WORKSHOP

Process group: highest agreement of the entire workshop (16 strongly agree, 1 disagree)

SURVEY

Transparency gap: 78% know it's required, only 49% understand local discretion

The pattern: the same concerns surfaced, unprompted, across four separate methods run at different times with different people — that convergence is what makes these recommendations defensible as community-driven, not staff-driven.

Recommendation 1: Interim Administrative Discretion

Direct Administration to use whatever discretion it already lawfully holds under the current Zoning Bylaw, Development Permit Area guidelines, delegated authority or provincial legislation, to weigh site-specific context immediately, rather than waiting for future amendments before responding to what residents have raised.

It does not grant new authority over height, setbacks, lot coverage or other standards; those remain subject to a future Council-approved amendment, which Recommendation 2 puts in motion.

Recommendation 2: Interim SSMUH Advisory Committee

Establish a select Committee to work through the technical, legal and financial detail behind targeted bylaw changes, reporting preliminary advice before March 31, 2027, and final recommendations by June 30, 2027.

Recommendation 3: Proactive SSMUH Notifications

Commit the Township to proactively notify residents of new SSMUH applications, so neighbours learn about development on their street from the Township, not after the fact.

Forward-Focused Conclusion

Findings support:

- more predictable
- site-responsive
- technically tested
- transparent about trade-offs
- report back to community

Questions and Discussion

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Prepared for:
Township of Esquimalt

Prepared by:

NEUQUINN CONSULTING
Caring. Connected. Collaborative.