

GROUND-ORIENTED SMALL DEVELOPMENTS

PROPOSED BY – COUNCILLOR CAVENS

DATE – 23 SEPTEMBER 2024

DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

This initiative aims to identify and address barriers to building family-sized, small-scale developments such as townhouses and detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs) in Esquimalt. By consulting with developers and neighboring municipalities, the goal is to suggest bylaw and process improvements to make these housing options more viable and affordable for families.

The intent is to combine two projects from the Future Projects list (DADU Housing Simplification Program and Townhouse Zoning Incentive Program) into this new work.

BACKGROUND

Council regularly hears the need for more family-sized (2+, but primarily 3+ bedroom) units in Esquimalt. However, developers report that the high cost of including these units in multi-family condo projects makes them unaffordable, often pricing them similarly to townhouses or small ground oriented housing types, which are more appealing to families.

The Official Community Plan (OCP) encourages the development of townhouses and DADUs, and recent provincial updates now allow up to four units on all lots in Esquimalt. While small-scale, ground-oriented housing options are attractive to families, developers have noted that lower profit margins on these types of projects make them vulnerable to the impact of regulations and permitting processes, which can hinder development.

Certain regulations, like requiring an owner to be present on lots with DADUs, are not applied equally to all unit types and can add significant complexity and cost. For example, some residents have reported that mortgage companies refuse to approve loans on properties with this requirement, effectively blocking projects.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Consult with small-scale developers and planners from nearby municipalities to evaluate which bylaws and development processes make it harder to build family-sized units in Esquimalt.
- Propose bylaw and process improvements to Council, including potential negative side effects, for discussion at an upcoming Committee of the Whole (COTW) meeting.

ANTICIPATED SCOPE

To be explored should Council want to pursue this initiative.