

**From:** [Barb Desjardins](#)  
**To:** [Ryan Jabs](#); [Mayor and Council](#)  
**Cc:** [Bill Brown](#); [Blair McDonald](#); [Jodi Graham](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Esquimalt policies - added costs for missing middle housing  
**Date:** July-29-20 2:49:30 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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thanks Ryan, I have asked for this to come to council as correspondence

Barb Desjardins  
Mayor  
Township of Esquimalt  
<http://www.esquimalt.ca/>

## **Barbara Desjardins**

Mayor, Township of Esquimalt  
Lekwungen Territory  
Tel: 1-250-883-1944

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**From:** Ryan Jabs <[ryanjabs@lapishomes.com](mailto:ryanjabs@lapishomes.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 29, 2020 2:45:28 PM  
**To:** Mayor and Council  
**Cc:** Bill Brown; Blair McDonald; Jodi Graham  
**Subject:** Esquimalt policies - added costs for missing middle housing

Dear Mayor and Council:

I want to once again thank you for approving my project at 937 Colville to add additional homes in the Lampson & Colville neighbourhood. I'm anticipating starting construction this November once I receive the building permit, which would see the building finished with folks moved in by the Fall of 2021 or early 2022.

I'm writing today about costs for missing middle housing – and in particular to ask that council consider a couple of specific policies that add considerable costs to missing middle housing in Esquimalt. These two policies make this 4500 square foot (425 square metre) large house I'll be building at 937 Colville nearly \$70,000 more expensive (including Victoria's Development Cost Charge), or 6-7%, to construct compared to if it were built three blocks away in the municipality of Victoria or in many other municipalities in the city.

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### **1. Sprinkler systems in small buildings:**

Esquimalt's bylaw 2899 requires buildings with more than three units to have full sprinkler and fire suppression monitoring system, which adds about \$50,000 to the cost of this project (Roughly \$40,000 for the sprinklers, \$3,000 for engineering designs and \$7,000 for the electrical fire system/monitoring), as well as ongoing costs to a very small strata for off-site monitoring.

I understand the intention of this bylaw: more people living in close proximity to one another means there's a larger potential for a fire to occur. However, there are already a significant number and a

layering of requirements that are written into the National and Provincial building codes – which have been developed, built upon and overlapped through years and years of expert study on safety. Meeting these code requirements are mandatory whether a sprinkler system is installed or not. For example, the building code requires 24 interconnected fire alarms, fire rating between units that will keep a fire contained within a single suite for 30 minutes to 2 hours, opening windows in each bedroom, as well as a fire escape stairway through the centre of the building (in addition to the balconies being provided).

And while I recognize the importance of sprinkler systems in many buildings – and am very supportive of a system like this in larger projects governed by Part 3 of the building code, like the one I'm proposing for 812 Craigflower – this policy makes missing middle housing even more expensive to build in Esquimalt than elsewhere, for little real benefit.

## **2. Underground services for small multi-family buildings:**

Secondly, I understand that the township wants to reduce the amount of overhead wires running across the street, and that makes sense for a number of reasons. However, I feel it's important to point out that this adds a real burden to the cost of missing middle housing, as undergrounding wires will add over \$35,000 to the cost of this project if I bring both Telus and Shaw to the site, in addition to a BC Hydro connection (\$23,000 for BC Hydro, \$11,000 for Telus and \$3,500 for Shaw – and this was after considerable negotiations).

As with the sprinklers, this policy makes missing middle housing more expensive to build compared to other jurisdictions.

Council and the community has generally expressed a desire for these types of smaller housing projects. They can add gentle density that will appeal to families for years to come, without significantly altering the form, character or family-friendly makeup of our neighbourhoods. These types of homes are also one of the most important ways Esquimalt and the CRD can reduce its environmental impact caused by sprawling into the Western Communities – by providing family-sized homes in smaller infill developments (one bedroom condos are great and very much needed, but we need a steady supply of 2 and 3 bedroom community-friendly, ground-oriented homes that are attractive to families and future families).

My ask is that council consider modifying these two policies and tying them both to buildings that are built to Part 3 of the building code (roughly 6,500 square feet, or over three storeys).

In full transparency, and as noted above, I'm going to build this regardless of whether you vary the bylaw for this project: I purchased the land a couple of years ago, so my land costs are reasonable, and I'm reducing my construction management costs by starting up my own construction company to manage the build.

However, these are the types of challenges (and there are many more) that make missing middle housing so much more difficult and less appealing for many to build, and it's these types of expensive (although well-intentioned) policies that could put the brakes on a few smaller projects if

the market begins to soften or as construction costs continue to rise in the future. It also could keep other small developers from developing in Esquimalt.

I recognize that I'm becoming a bit of a frequent writer to council, but I am hopeful that it reflects to you that I very much care about the work I'm doing in the municipality – and that I want to continue to see Esquimalt and the broader region prosper economically and in an environmentally sustainable and people-focused way, while maintaining the family-friendly, community-oriented, accepting nature that makes the Township and the city truly special.

As always, I would be happy to meet or exchange emails to discuss this in more detail if that would interest you.

I'd also be willing to present to council if that would be beneficial and if council would like additional perspective on the costs and challenges of missing middle housing.

Sincerely,

Ryan Jabs | President, Community Builder  
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