



SMALL-SCALE MULTI-UNIT HOUSING (SSMUH) COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FINAL REPORT

July 2026

Prepared for:
Township of Esquimalt

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Executive Summary

Esquimalt is changing, and its residents want a say in how.

In 2023, the Province of British Columbia required every municipality with a population over 5,000 to update their zoning bylaw to permit Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH), on lots traditionally reserved for single detached homes or duplex housing. Esquimalt adopted Zoning Bylaw No. 3142 in June 2024, working within a compressed provincial timeline and without the option of a public hearing. It was a necessary first step, not necessarily a final one.

Since then, as new SSMUH homes have begun appearing on Esquimalt streets, residents have told Council what is working and what is not both formally and informally. Some see these developments as exactly the kind of gentle, attainable density their neighbourhoods need. Others have watched height, massing and setbacks stretch further than expected, and worry about trees, privacy, and whether “attainable” housing is genuinely within reach. Most residents understand that SSMUH is now provincial legislation, not a choice Esquimalt can opt out of, the real question is not whether Esquimalt grows, but how.

The Township ran a two-phase research process in 2026 to hear directly from the community using a structured engagement plan. Part of the research included comparison data from other BC municipalities. Input was gathered from several sources: a review of Council correspondence and internal staff input; thirteen interest-holder interviews, an on-line survey, and a full-day community workshop. Together with direct email input from residents, Council has one of the most detailed pictures yet of how the community wants to see SSMUH play out on the ground in Esquimalt.

What emerged was not a simple split between supporters and opponents. Across every engagement channel, the same throughlines kept surfacing: protect the trees and green space that give Esquimalt its character; make sure new buildings feel like they belong on their street, not just on their lot; give neighbours real, predictable information before a shovel goes in the ground; and keep new homes genuinely within reach of the people for whom the legislation was written. At the community workshop, protecting the environment was the single highest priority identified by participants, followed closely by more site-responsive approaches to setbacks and massing, clearer process and notification, and thoughtful building form.

These findings point toward three recommendations, each designed to move the Township forward now rather than waiting for a lengthy bylaw rewrite to begin the work.

Recommendation 1 directs 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 establishes 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 commits the Township to proactively notifying residents of new SSMUH applications, so neighbours learn about development on their street from the Township, not after the fact.

Taken together, these recommendations do not ask Esquimalt to choose between growth and character. They ask the Township to keep building the housing supply the province requires, while giving Council and Administration better tools to make sure that growth looks, feels and functions like Esquimalt, today, and as the community keeps changing in the future.

1. Introduction

Esquimalt is navigating a challenge familiar to municipalities across British Columbia: how to meet a new provincial housing mandate while staying true to what residents' value about their community. In May 2026, Council directed staff to lead a public engagement process on Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH), as outlined in staff report DEV-26-019, and to return with a summary of community input and recommended updates to the Township's bylaws and policies. This built on the Township's earlier adoption of zoning amendments to comply with Bill 44 (*Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act, 2023*), while affirming that Esquimalt retains discretion over specific zoning provisions that shape how new housing reflects community values, local priorities and neighbourhood character. Throughout, Council was clear that any resulting changes must be communicated openly to residents, businesses and the development community.

To keep with engagement process independent and impartial, *Neuquinn Consulting* was retained as a neutral third party to design, deliver and report on the engagement strategy.

This report tells that story in five parts: how other B.C. municipalities have responded to Bill 44; how Esquimalt engaged its own community through late June and early July of 2026; what residents said; the key themes that emerged from it; and the recommendations that follow.

What is Bill 44?

In 2023, the Province of British Columbia passed Bill 44 as part of a broader package of legislation aimed at increasing housing supply and changing how local governments plan for new homes — including small-scale multi-unit (or multi-family) housing.

The Bill was introduced as part of a larger provincial *Homes for People Action Plan* focused on four priorities – unlocking more homes faster; delivering better, more affordable homes; helping those with the greatest housing need; and creating a housing market for people, not speculators.

The Bill 44 legislation requires B.C. municipalities over 5,000 people to accommodate an increased number of residential units on properties which had been zoned for low-density residential uses. This includes single family or duplex properties, and those already zoned for secondary suites and detached accessory dwelling units. The number of living spaces permitted on a residential lot depends on lot size and location.

- **Up to 3 dwelling units** on lots under 280 square metres.
- **Up to 4 dwelling units** on lots 280 square metres or larger.
- **Up to 6 dwelling units** on lots over 280 square metres that are within 400 metres of a prescribed bus stop with frequent transit service.

There are some exemptions from the SSMUH requirements, including if the land is known to be subject to a hazardous condition such as risk from tsunami, wildfire, landslide, and flooding.

To comply with Bill 44, the Township of Esquimalt passed Bylaw 3142 in June 2024, creating two new residential zones, RSM-1 and RSM-2, that allow up to three or four dwelling units on most residential lots. Properties in tsunami hazard areas are exempt as depicted in the SSMUH Zoning Map. Esquimalt currently does not have any provincially recognized frequent transit stops.

Since Bylaw 3142 came into effect, the Township has heard both concerns and aspirations from the community about how the existing SSMUH regulations may shape neighbourhoods over time. In April 2026, Council directed staff to explore potential bylaw amendments and undertake targeted consultation with advisory bodies, key interest-holders, and the public before bringing forward recommendations for consideration.

What did Esquimalt do between the Provincial timeline to implement in June 2024 and now?

Provincial legislation (Bill 44) did not permit the Township to hold a public hearing for the zoning bylaw changes required to implement SSMUH. As a result, Bylaw 3142 was adopted in June 2024 without a public hearing.

Since Bylaw 3142 came into effect, the Township has heard both concerns and support from residents about how the existing SSMUH regulations may shape neighbourhoods over time. The engagement held in summer 2026 is the Township’s commitment to going back to the community and gather input on the areas where the Township has discretion to consider potential amendments so that any changes reflect the concerns and aspirations of the community. Decision-making authority remains with Council.

What provisions are municipalities allowed to change?

All municipalities subject to Bill 44 have control over how residential dwelling units are built and fit within their respective communities. The way municipalities are responding to design control varies by community and is evolving across the province. Design standards open for municipalities to influence are outlined in the table below.

Design Standard	Description
Building Height	How tall a new building can be
Setbacks	How far a building must sit from property lines
Lot coverage	Proportion of a lot that can be built on
Parking	Number of on-site spaces required per residential dwelling
Green Space/Landscaping	Requirements for planting, permeable surface, & outdoor amenities
Privacy & Overlook	Measures to protect neighbouring properties from upper floor sight lines
Building Form & Character	How buildings look and relate to the street and surrounding homes

Which municipalities are comparable to Esquimalt?

As part of the research for developing the public engagement strategy, thirty-one (31) municipalities in B.C. were assessed against Esquimalt as comparable communities with populations over 5,000 residents. Of the 31 municipalities, the top ten comparable communities were selected based on (1) population, (2) average age, (3) geographic size, (4) percent of home ownership, (5) percent of

visible minorities, (6) walkability score, and (7) socio-economic index score¹. The selection of criteria for community comparisons is highly quantitative and does not include a qualitative comparable assessment of community characteristics.

The results of this assessment indicated that Esquimalt shares the most attributes with the community characteristics of Oak Bay, Sidney, and White Rock. Other strong comparators include Langley, Port Alberni and Courtenay. More moderate comparators to Esquimalt are Cranbrook, Campbell River, Colwood, and View Royal.

The full listing of the 31 municipalities and their characteristics that were assessed with Esquimalt is contained in [Appendix A](#).

Rank	Municipality	Region	Population (2023)	Avg Age (2023)	Size (km ²)	Home Ownership %	Visible Minority %	Socio-economic Index	Walkability Score	Alignment Count	Key Strengths	Notes / Differences
*	Esquimalt	CRD (Benchmark)	19512	44	7.08	66.5	10.2	46.9	51	7	Reference municipality — all comparisons made against this profile	Alignment Count 7 — highest in dataset
1	Oak Bay	CRD	18526	49	10.52	74.5	10.7	60.9	52	5	Population, size, age, visible minority, walkability, alignment	Higher home ownership; older avg age (49 vs 44); higher SEI
2	Sidney	CRD	13445	55	5.11	76.8	6.2	49.2	51	4	Size, walkability, visible minority, alignment	Significantly older avg age (55); higher home ownership; smaller population
3	White Rock	Metro Vancouver	25057	52	5.17	64.8	16.4	50.9	60	4	Size, home ownership, walkability, alignment	Older avg age (52); slightly higher visible minority; higher walkability
4	City of Langley	Metro Vancouver	35444	41	10.18	62.9	13.8	46.8	55	4	Size, SEI, alignment, age	Larger population; slightly younger; higher visible minority
5	Port Alberni	Vancouver Island	19671	45	19.66	68.9	5.8	34.4	36	4	Population, home ownership, visible minority, alignment	Larger geographic size; lower SEI and walkability
6	Courtenay	Vancouver Island	20499	46	32.42	71.4	7	44.6	31	4	Population, home ownership, visible minority, alignment	Larger geographic size; lower walkability; lower SEI
7	Cranbrook	Interior	22703	44	31.97	73.6	5.1	46.4	33	4	Population, age, SEI, visible minority, alignment	Larger geographic size; different regional context; lower walkability
8	Campbell River	Vancouver Island	38800	45	144.38	71.7	5.1	42.9	28	4	Population, age, home ownership, SEI, alignment	Larger geographic size; lower SEI; lower walkability
9	Colwood	CRD	22794	42	17.66	73.4	7.5	52.6	32	3	Population, age, visible minority	Larger geographic size; higher home ownership; lower walkability
10	View Royal	CRD	12795	43	14.33	67.3	14.4	54.5	28	3	Population, age, home ownership	Slightly higher visible minority; lower walkability; higher SEI

How do Esquimalt's design standards compare to the Provincial recommendations?

Esquimalt's current bylaw is compliant with the recommended provincial minimum design standard for number of dwellings per lot, building height, lot coverage, front and rear setbacks, and parking as outlined in the table below. Of note is that while Esquimalt does not currently have any Transit Oriented Areas (TOAs), this may change in the future and require an Official Community Plan (OCP) amendment(s). The SSMUH engagement strategy focused on the current land-use zoning for RSM-1 and RSM-2 properties in Esquimalt.

¹ The **Socio-economic, Community, and Health Index** (SEI) is produced by BC Stats to measure socioeconomic wellbeing across geographic areas in British Columbia. The SEI captures 4 domains: **Economic Domain** indicators related to income, employment, and housing quality; **Education Domain** covers metrics such as high school course mark, high school completion rate, and educational attainment; **Health Domain** encompasses indicators like prevalence of chronic conditions; **Community Domain** reflects social cohesion and equity, including crime rates, ratio of single parents, and proportion of the population that is receiving income assistance.

The SEI is designed so that the average score across the province is 50. A score of 50 means that a community is close to the provincial average in the base year in terms of socioeconomic and health conditions. The values of the Index should be interpreted as relative not absolute (Source: BC Stats, B.C. Socioeconomic Index Methodology Report, March 2026).

Zoning and Parking Comparison to Recommended Provincial Minimums		
Design Standard	Province Recommended (Minimum)	Esquimalt's Current Bylaw
Dwellings per lot	Min. 3 units (small lots <280m ²) Min. 4 units (larger lots ≥280m ²) Min. 6 units near frequent transit	Up to 3 (lots <280m ²) Up to 4 (lots ≥280m ²)
Building Height	11m	11m
Lot coverage	50%	40% - 50%
Front setback	2.0m	2.0m – 4.0m
Rear Setback	1.5 m	4.5m
Parking	0.5 – 1.0 per unit (recommended)	0.5 – 1.0 per unit

How do Esquimalt's zoning and parking regulations compare to other B.C. municipalities?

Across the top ten comparison municipalities, there is general consistency in the application of Bill 44 with respect to the number of dwellings per residential lot. There is also general consistency for building height and parking, with the exception of the communities of Oak Bay and White Rock, which have lower building height allowances, and higher parking provisions than Esquimalt.

With respect to lot coverage, Esquimalt's current bylaw allows for 40%-50%. Of the ten municipalities, two municipalities (Port Alberni and Courtenay) are at the upper end of the lot coverage range at 60% and 70% respectively, which is above that of Esquimalt's current bylaw. Five of the ten communities have lower minimum thresholds of their lot coverage range than Esquimalt.

There are greater variances between the top 10 comparator municipalities for front and rear setbacks. Esquimalt has the lowest front setback range minimum, at 2 metres, among the comparator communities and a generally lower maximum range for rear setbacks as outlined in the table below.

A full listing of the design standards for all 31 municipalities assessed in June 2026 is contained in [Appendix B](#).

Esquimalt SSMUH Bylaw 3142 — Design Standard Comparison				
Province recommended minimums Esquimalt's current bylaw Range across 31 BC municipalities reviewed Top 10 comparator municipalities				
Design Standard	Provincial Recommended (Minimum)	Esquimalt's Current Bylaw	Range Across Other BC Municipalities	Top 10 Comparator Municipalities (all 10 listed — TBC = data not in source)
Dwellings per lot	Min. 3 units (small lots 280m ²) Min. 4 units (larger lots ≥280m ²) Min. 6 units near frequent transit	Up to 3 (lots <280m ²) Up to 4 (lots ≥280m ²)	Consistent across all 31 municipalities: • 3 units (small lots) • 4 units (larger lots)	• Oak Bay: Up to 3 / Up to 4 / N/A (no FTAs) • Sidney: Up to 3 / Up to 4 / N/A (no FTAs) • White Rock: Up to 3/ Up to 4/ Up to 6 • Langley City: Up to 3 / Up to 4 / Up to 6 • Port Alberni: Up to 3 / Up to 4 / N/A • Courtenay: Up to 4 / N/A

Esquimalt SSMUH Bylaw 3142 — Design Standard Comparison				
Province recommended minimums Esquimalt's current bylaw Range across 31 BC municipalities reviewed Top 10 comparator municipalities				
Design Standard	Provincial Recommended (Minimum)	Esquimalt's Current Bylaw	Range Across Other BC Municipalities	Top 10 Comparator Municipalities (all 10 listed — TBC = data not in source)
			• 6 units near frequent transit (N/A where no FTAs exist)	• Colwood: Up to 3 / Up to 4 / Up to 6 • View Royal: Up to 3 / Up to 4 / Up to 6 • Cranbrook: Up to 3 / Up to 4 / N/A • Campbell River: Up to 3 / Up to 4 / N/A
Building Height	11m	11m	7.6m – 14m across all 31 municipalities • Most common: ~11m / 3 storeys • Below 11m: Langley City (9m), Delta (8m), Burnaby (10m) • Above 11m: Victoria (up to 32m), Sidney (10.5–12m), Sooke (12m), City of North Van (12m) • Median: 11m / 3 storeys	• Oak Bay: 5.1m – 10m (varies by lot width) • Sidney: 10.5m – 12m • White Rock: 7.7m • Langley City: up to 9m • Port Alberni: 11m / 3 storeys • Courtenay: 11m • Colwood: 11m / 3 storeys • View Royal: 11m / 3 storeys • Cranbrook: 11m / 3 storeys • Campbell River: 11m / 3 storeys Range (excl. TBC): 5.1m – 12m
Lot Coverage	Province recommends 50% baseline	40% – 50% (depending on lot size and unit count)	20% – 70% across all 31 municipalities • Most common: 40% – 55% • Low end: Oak Bay (30–35%), City of Langley (36%), Surrey (20–65%) • High end: Courtenay (70%), Nanaimo (40–70%) • Several use FAR instead of %	• Oak Bay: 30% – 35% • Sidney: 35% – 50% • White Rock: 25% - 50% • Langley City: 36% • Port Alberni: 40% – 60% • Courtenay: 70% • Colwood: 0.5 FAR (not % based) • View Royal: 30% – 50% • Cranbrook: 40% – 50% • Campbell River: 50% Range (excl. TBC): 30% – 70%
Front setback	Reduction of front setback encouraged	2m – 4m (depending on lot size)	2m – 10.7m across all 31 municipalities • Most common: 3m – 6m • Smallest: District of North Van, City of North Van (3m) • Largest: Oak Bay (6–10.7m), Langley City (6–7.5m) • Several encourage reduction near transit	• Oak Bay: 6m – 10.7m • Sidney: 3m – 4.5m • White Rock: 3m - 6m • Langley City: 6m • Port Alberni: 3m – 6m • Courtenay: 4m • Colwood: 4m • View Royal: 4m – 6m • Cranbrook: 4.5m – 6m • Campbell River: 4m Range (excl. TBC): 3m – 10.7m
Rear setback	Reduction of rear setback encouraged	4.5m	1.5m – 9m across all 31 municipalities • Most common: 3m – 6m • Smallest: District of North Van, City of North Van (1.5m) • Largest: Delta (9m), New Westminster (7.62m) • Several encourage reduction near transit	• Oak Bay: 7.6m minimum • Sidney: 1.5m – 5.5m • White Rock: 3m -6m • Langley City: 6m • Port Alberni: 5m – 6m • Courtenay: 5m • Colwood: 3m • View Royal: 3.5m – 7m • Cranbrook: 6m • Campbell River: 3m Range (excl. TBC): 1.5m – 7.6m

Esquimalt SSMUH Bylaw 3142 — Design Standard Comparison				
Province recommended minimums Esquimalt's current bylaw Range across 31 BC municipalities reviewed Top 10 comparator municipalities				
Design Standard	Provincial Recommended (Minimum)	Esquimalt's Current Bylaw	Range Across Other BC Municipalities	Top 10 Comparator Municipalities (all 10 listed — TBC = data not in source)
Parking	0.5 – 1.0 per unit (recommended)	0.5 - 1 per unit	0 – 2 per unit across all 26 municipalities - No minimum: New Westminster - Low (0–0.75): several municipalities near FTAs - High: Sooke (1.5), Cranbrook / Maple Ridge (1.5–2) - Most common: 1 per unit	- Oak Bay: 0.5 – 2 per unit (dwelling type) - Sidney: 1 per unit - White Rock: 2 per unit (0.75 near FTA) - Langley City: 1 to 2 per unit (0 near FTA) - Port Alberni: 1 per unit - Courtenay: 1 per unit - Colwood: 1 per unit (0 near FTA) - View Royal: 1 per unit - Cranbrook: 2 per unit - Campbell River: 1 per unit Range (excl. TBC): 0.5 – 2 per unit

2. Engagement Methodology

The SSMUH engagement strategy was developed using the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), an internationally recognized approach to meaningful and transparent public participation. This clarified the public's role in the decision-making process and was guided by the following promise: "We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision" (IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation).

Phase 1, undertaken in early June included research, correspondence review and internal staff engagement. **Phase 2** focused on design of community conversations interview guide, survey design and SSMUH workshop design, which included identifying internal and external subject matter experts to participate in the workshop session. The diagram summarized below summarizes the project activities that took place prior to and after the public engagement launch on June 22, 2026.



Phase 1: Research, Correspondence & Internal Engagement

Council Correspondence Review

As an initial step in understanding where the currently engaged community concerns sit within the areas of municipal discretion for SSMUH and potential amendments, Neuquinn Consulting reviewed publicly available communications that was sent to members of Council during the period of April 20 – April 27, 2026, prior to Council direction in late April 2026.

Internal Staff Engagement

An initial engagement session with Township staff was held on June 8, 2026, to draw on the internal expertise of those directly involved in SSMUH implementation to inform the design of the public engagement workshop. The intent of the session was to ensure the engagement process builds relationships, provides accurate information, and that the community understands their role, how to participate, and how their input will be used in the decision-making process related to proposed zoning bylaw amendments. Eight representatives from Development Services, Bylaw, Economic Development, Fire, Engineering and Public Works, and Parks and Recreation Departments participated.

Participants provided valuable insights into what they have heard from the public, what they observe in their respective departments, and identified concerns, risks and sensitivities. From the session, four themes emerged in the areas of:

- (1) economics
- (2) education (clarity on where the Township has discretion)
- (3) parking & curb management
- (4) form, scale and character

In addition to providing foundational input for the workshop design, staff also identified operational pressures that sit within the organization around increased complexity of permit reviews, staffing capacity and life safety obligations.

Public Awareness Campaign

Promotion and awareness of engagement opportunities related to SSMUH began on June 22, 2026, through the posting of the on-line survey on engagingesquimalt.ca and survey promotion and workshop information on Esquimalt.ca. Digital posters were displayed in the Esquimalt Recreation Centre, Archie Browning Sports Centre, Gorge Pavilion and Municipal Hall.

Emails were also sent directly to:

- 243 individuals subscribed to hear about development news
- 752 individuals subscribed to hear about general news/events
- 15 individuals that had previously corresponded with Council about SSMUH in April 2026

Other general proactive communication through social media posts and Meta Ad promoting the survey was also undertaken.

Phase 2: Engagement

Community input was gathered through three primary and complementary methods, each designed to capture different kinds of evidence and perspectives. No single method is sufficient on its own. The strength of the findings comes from triangulating across all three.

Method	What it provides	Limitations
Interest-holder interviews	Rich, qualitative perspectives from a targeted range of community members and organisations. Surfaces nuance, lived experience, and concerns that don't fit structured questions.	Targeted participants. Perspectives are not statistically representative of the full community. Sample is small by design to provide a cross section of key interest groups.
On-line survey	Quantifiable data on sentiment, awareness, and priorities across the discretionary provisions of zoning bylaw. Allows directional claims about where concern is concentrated.	Voluntary participation. Likely over-represents engaged, concerned residents. Results are directional, not statistically valid.
Community workshop	Direct, facilitated input from interested parties, including residents, developers, designers, advisory body members, and others affected by SSMUH in intended and unintended ways. Brings multiple perspectives together to better understand issues, discuss trade-offs, and identify potential solutions.	Not everyone who wanted to attend may have been able to attend, and voluntary participation may overrepresent some perspectives.

Out of scope for this engagement were requests to prohibit SSMUH, to reintroduce discretionary approvals that conflict with provincial requirements, or to set standards that would effectively prevent the forms of housing required to be permitted.

Interest-holder Interviews

The interviews were designed to build rapport with community members and interest-holders, gather informed perspectives before the workshop, and surface the informal intelligence that may not appear in formal processes. They were conducted before the survey launch and workshop design to ensure that both engagement opportunities were grounded in what participants understood about SSMUH, as well as what they cared about and considered important.

Participants

Participants represent a range of perspectives including diverse age demographics from younger professionals and senior residents, developers, designers, architects, builders, neighbourhood associations, realtor, planner, current and retired municipal and government employees, Registered planner, Advisory Planning Commission (APC) member, Development Review Committee member, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Individuals within the range of participants invited were selected from each group by the Township, and introductions were made by the Director of Development Services to ensure credibility and trust. Interviewees knew the topic in advance and may have prepared responses that reflect considered rather than spontaneous views.

Method

Thirteen interviews were conducted by video conference or phone using an unstructured format. Questions served as opening prompts, not a fixed script, allowing the interviewer to follow the conversation and using probing questions where important issues or perspectives emerged.

Some participants also provided additional written information or supporting materials outside of the interview. This information was reviewed and, where relevant, incorporated into the analysis of community input.

All responses were summarised without attribution. Findings are presented as themes rather than frequencies. The interview guide is in [Appendix C](#).

On-line Survey

The survey was designed to gather measurable community input on the discretionary provisions of Bylaw 3142, the areas where the Township has authority to make amendments. It was also designed to establish baseline levels of awareness so that Council receives a clear picture of where the public starts from, not just where they end up.

Design principles

Each question was framed to be neutral, non-leading, and defensible under public and media scrutiny. No question implies a predetermined outcome or preference. The questions included a data note explaining what it is designed to measure and how the findings will be used. The survey was reviewed for plain language and accessibility.

Response data

The on-line survey was open from June 22 to July 4 through the [engagingsquimalt.ca](#) portal. A full list of the survey questions is contained in [Appendix D](#).

Limitations

- The survey was voluntary and on-line. Participation was self-selected, which means results are likely to over-represent residents who are already engaged with or concerned about SSMUH. Those who are supportive or neutral are less likely to respond to a voluntary survey addressing a contentious planning issue.
- The sample is not statistically representative of the Esquimalt community. Results should be treated as directional; they indicate where concern is concentrated, not the precise proportion of the community that holds any given view.
- Section B of the survey measured respondents' baseline awareness before they answered the substantive questions. Where responses indicate low awareness, the sentiment expressed in Sections D and E is interpreted accordingly, it reflects uninformed opinion, which is still valid input but carries different weight than informed opinion.
- The timeline available to hold this engagement was limited, as Council meeting availability was constrained by the summer holiday period and the upcoming election schedule. Findings needed to be reported to Council on July 20, 2026, which limited the time available to execute engagement activities such as an open house.
- A randomized and statistically significant survey was not possible in the budget and timeframe available to this project.

Community Workshop

The workshop was designed to provide participants with the background information needed to participate meaningfully, and to gather direct, facilitated input on the specific provisions of the zoning Bylaw open to amendment. It was the primary venue for the Township to fulfill its promise to the public: to listen, to acknowledge, and to explain how input will be used. To support informed and balanced discussion, the workshop provided planning and development information, visual design examples, and a development-cost perspective video. Participants also had opportunities to discuss trade-offs and share their concerns and aspirations within the areas where the Township has discretion to consider potential SSMUH amendments in Esquimalt.

Format

The workshop was held on June 29, 2026, at the Esquimalt Gorge Pavilion from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Approximately 40 people were in attendance. This includes key Esquimalt staff acting as subject matter experts who were available to answer technical questions. The session was facilitated by Patricia Quinn-Nichols of Neuquinn Consulting and included background presentations, small group discussions, and a report-back on priorities. Visual materials including 3D representations of potential SSMUH development under the current bylaw, were provided to ground the conversation in what could be proposed.



Presentations and Information Sharing

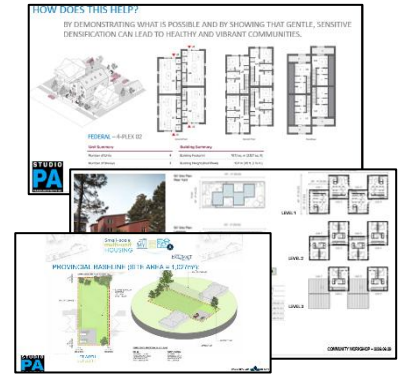
A key foundational piece to start the Workshop included two presentations and a video, each of which was followed by a question-and-answer period. The first presentation was from *SMS Law*, a firm specializing in providing advice and advocacy support to local governments on planning and development law. The presentation provided an overview of the provincial legislative requirements in British Columbia, including bylaws related to single family homes and duplexes, transit zone requirements, exemptions, as well as Provincial guidelines that municipalities must consider when adopting or amending zoning bylaws for site design standards.



The second portion of the workshop informational session included a video produced by *SilentStory*, a construction and real estate media studio based on Vancouver Island. The video walked through the building process, including hard and soft costs to be considered.



The final presentation was from the principal architect from *Studio PA*, an Esquimalt based firm that works on multi-family, mixed-use, and commercial projects across Vancouver Island. The presentation provided visual examples of what is possible on different lot sizes compared to the provincial baseline recommendations and minimum guidelines. The session also included provided sample comparisons of other approaches taken on SSMUH related zoning bylaws in Oak Bay and Burnaby. The presentation reinforced that densification can be done successfully when community values and local context are reflected, ensuring that impacts on neighbouring properties are considered, while being financially feasible and using SSMUH as an opportunity to be inclusive and welcoming.



What the findings do and do not tell Council:

- The findings tell Council where community concern is concentrated, what residents value, and what they want to see addressed in any amendments to the Zoning Bylaw.
- The findings do not tell Council what the right answer is. Decision-making authority remains with Council. The engagement process is designed to ensure that decisions are informed by community perspectives, not determined by them.
- The findings do not represent a statistically valid sample of Esquimalt residents. They represent the perspectives of those who chose to participate. Council should weigh them accordingly.

3. What We Heard

The following section of the report provides a summary of input from four sources used to inform the findings and recommendations. This includes interviews and Council correspondence (combined), on-line survey and community workshop².

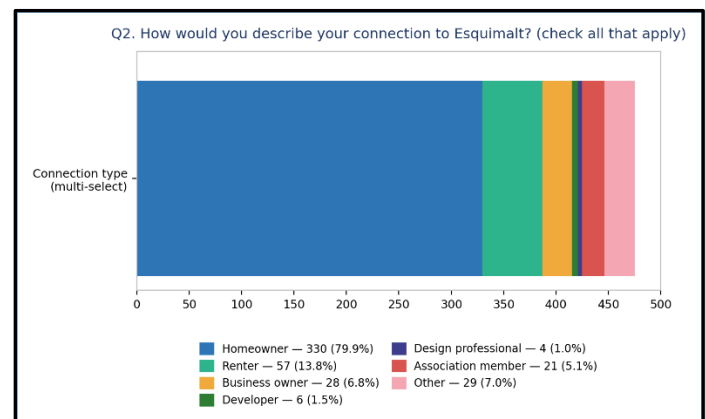
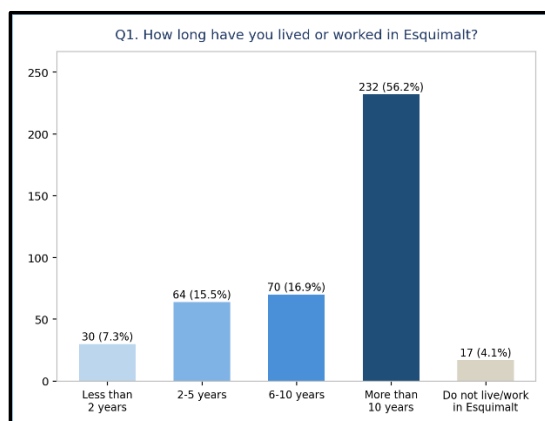
On-line Survey

A total of 413 responses were received through the on-line survey between June 22 and July 4, 2026. The following section outlines the results of the respondent profile, awareness and understanding, community characteristics and values, community sentiment, and priorities related to discretionary provisions in the zoning bylaw.

Respondent Profile

The demographic profile of respondents was explored through two initial questions to understand how long respondents have lived or worked in Esquimalt, as well as their connection to the Township. This information helps identify whether perspectives vary by length of residency, location or relationship to the community. It also provides context for interpreting how closely respondents reflect the broader Esquimalt population.

An expected outcome of the survey is that most of the respondents are either interested in or affected SSMUH by therefore more informed, as it is a complex subject, and this type of engagement brings in those that are highly connected and value community, particularly homeowners that are also long-time residents.

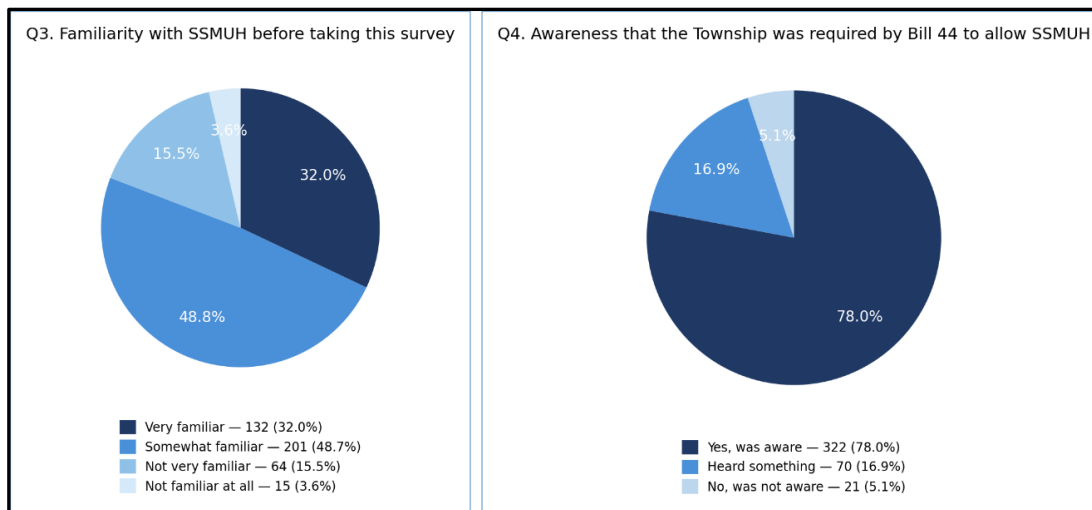


Awareness and Understanding

This section of the survey probed two questions around awareness and understanding to assess familiarity with what was happening in Esquimalt around SSMUH, and the other was around awareness of the provincial legislation. These questions were intended to identify information gaps

² The results of input from internal staff is contained in Methodology Approach (Section 2) of this report.

and misconceptions and used to calibrate what the public needs to know before they can provide meaningful input.

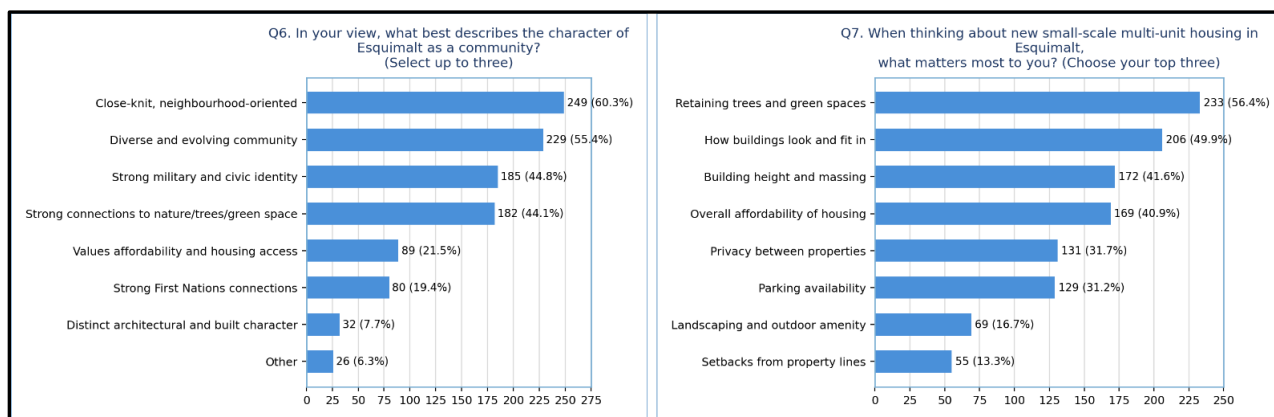


A large majority of respondents were very familiar with SSMUH, with 80.6% being somewhat or very familiar before taking the survey. Similarly, 78% felt they were aware of what was required by the Township.

When asked how respondents learned about SSMUH, local news or media was the top information channel, with 70.9% (293 responses) of participants using it to stay informed. Nearly half of respondents (46.5%, or 192 responses) get their information directly from the Township of Esquimalt website or email communications, and another 39.7% heard through word of mouth from neighbours, friends, or family. Others were informed through general social media (29.1%) and/or through the Township's own social media (22.5%). A small percentage (5.3%) reported that they had not seen or heard much about the topic prior to the survey.

Community Character and Values

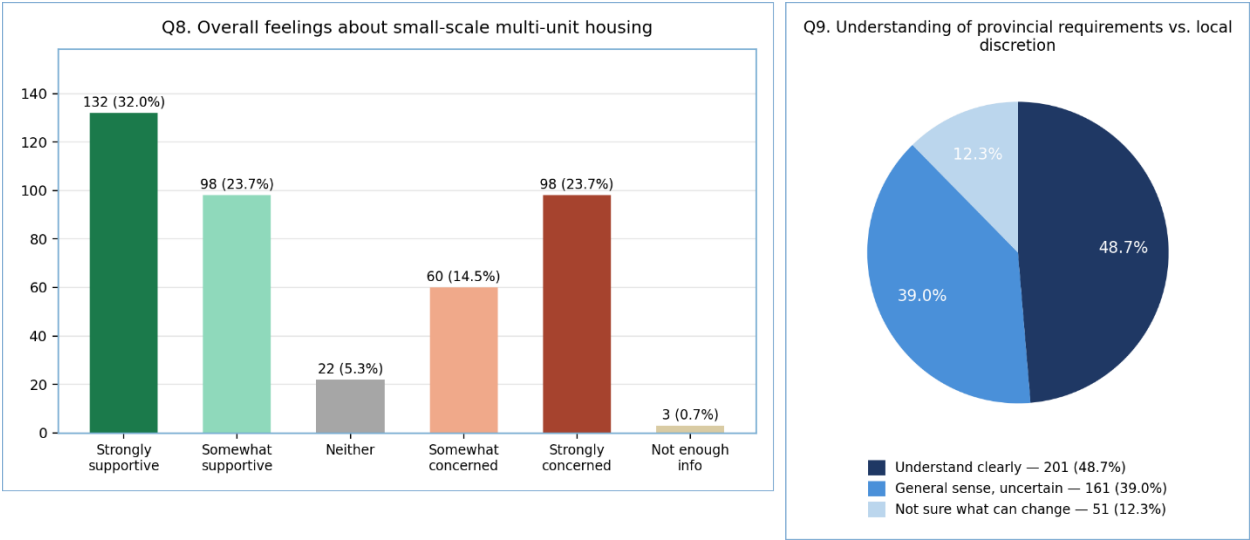
This section of the survey captured what residents value about Esquimalt and what they want reflected in any amendments. This information was used to ground proposed amendments in community identity, and to provide Council with a qualitative picture of community values.



The highest ranked characteristics that respondents felt reflected Esquimalt were (1) close-knit, neighbourhood-oriented (2) a diverse and evolving community, (3) a strong military and civic identity, and (4) having strong connections to nature/trees/green space. This compares to what individuals want for new SSMUH developments around (1) retaining trees and green spaces, (2) how buildings look and fit in, and (3) building height and massing, which was closely followed by overall affordability of housing (41.6% vs. 40.9%).

Zoning Bylaw Provisions

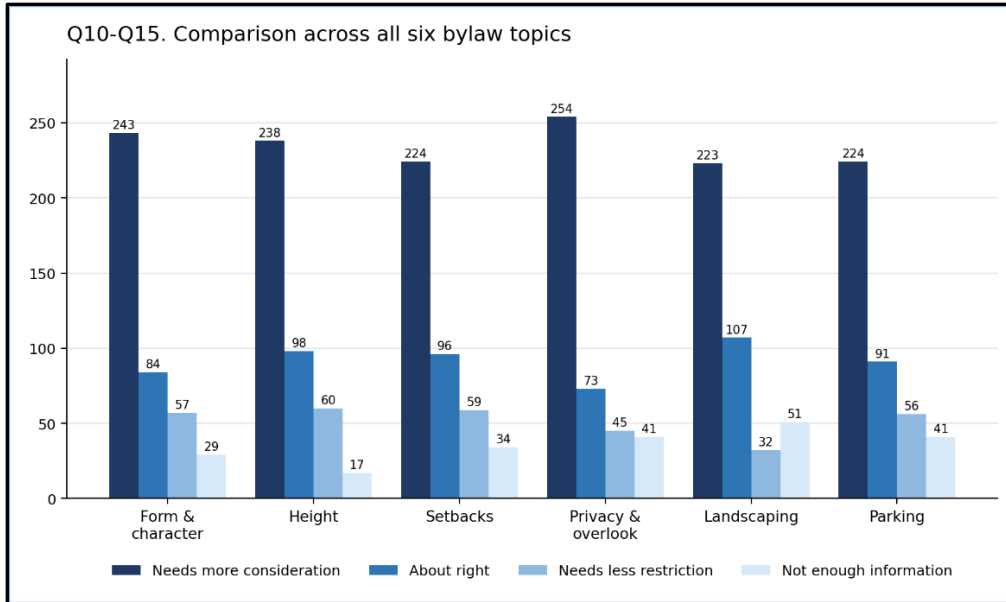
The following questions were asked to directly correlate to proposed amendments. This information is used to prioritise which provisions need adjustment and to demonstrate that amendments reflect informed community input.



When asked about their feelings on SSMUH, the majority of respondents were either strongly or somewhat supportive, at 55.7%. The “Concerned” categories represent 38.3%, and a small margin (6.1%) falls into the neutral or “not enough information” categories.

Approximately half (48.7%) of the respondents indicated that they clearly understood provincial requirements, with another 39% indicating they have a general sense.

The final questions of the survey probed six different discretionary areas of the bylaw to assess where they felt the Township should focus its efforts. Across all six areas, there was a strong trend for more consideration in all areas as depicted in the graph below. Across all six areas, there was a strong trend for more consideration, ranging from 54.0% to 61.5%, as depicted in the graph below. Privacy and overlook mitigation drew the strongest call for more consideration, at 61.5%, followed by building form and character at 58.8% and building height at 57.6%. Setbacks, parking, and landscaping were essentially tied at the lower end, each falling between 54.0% and 54.2%. Similarly, a similar trend is noted for all other feelings of focus being ‘about right’, ‘less restriction’ and ‘needs more information’.



Open Comments Summary

The final portion of the survey provided an unstructured format and opportunity for open ended comments. Overall, there were 262 comments, which are summarized in [Appendix E](#).

4. Key Themes

Interviews and Written Submission Themes

The interviews and written submissions reflected a wide range of views about SSMUH, but several consistent themes emerged. The comments were often grounded in direct experience with recent development, concern about future neighbourhood change, and differing views about how the Township should use the discretion available to it.

1. Provincial requirements and local discretion

Participants recognized that the Province has required municipalities to allow SSMUH, while also emphasizing that the Township retains discretion over matters such as height, setbacks, lot coverage, tree retention, privacy and design.

Some felt the Township should make fuller use of those tools to better respond to local conditions. Others questioned the provincial direction itself. Across both perspectives, there was a clear desire for greater clarity about what is fixed by provincial legislation and what remains open to local decision-making.

2. Affordability remains a central concern

A recurring concern was the difference between the intended purpose of SSMUH and the price of some completed units. Participants questioned whether homes selling at prices beyond the reach of many local households can reasonably be described as attainable or middle-income housing. At the same time, supportive submissions described SSMUH as one of the few realistic paths to homeownership for working households that cannot afford a detached home. The common concern was not whether more housing is needed, but whether current outcomes are delivering housing that is genuinely more attainable.

3. Building scale, fit and site design

Many comments focused on the physical scale and form of recent development. Concerns included:

- building height;
- limited setbacks;
- large building footprints;
- loss of sunlight;
- privacy and overlook;
- limited space for trees and landscaping; and
- buildings that appear out of scale with surrounding homes.

Some participants also questioned whether the current bylaw allows more building volume than is necessary to achieve the provincial housing objective.

Others emphasized that additional restrictions could make projects less feasible or push more floor area outward across a site. This points to the need for careful technical review of height, setbacks, lot coverage, floor area and unit size together, rather than adjusting any one element in isolation.

4. Infrastructure and service capacity

Participants raised concerns about the cumulative effect of increased density on:

- water and sewer systems;
- roads and traffic;
- recreation facilities;
- schools;
- medical services;
- policing; and
- other municipal services.

There was also concern about how future infrastructure costs may be shared among developers, new residents and existing taxpayers also referred to Development Cost Charges (DCC) and amenity contributions. These comments suggest that discussion of SSMUH should be connected to broader growth management and infrastructure planning.

5. Environmental impacts and benefits

- Tree canopy loss was one of the strongest concerns.
- Participants described mature trees as important community assets that support shade, stormwater management, habitat, cooling and neighbourhood character. Some felt current building footprints and parking requirements leave too little space for meaningful tree retention.
- Others noted that compact housing can reduce pressure for outward growth, support lower-carbon living and make better use of existing serviced land.
- The shared interest was in finding ways to increase housing supply while protecting trees, green space and climate resilience.

6. Confidence in the development process and consistency of decision-making

Some comments reflected uncertainty about whether development expectations, approvals and policy directions are being applied consistently over time.

Participants referred to:

- changing development expectations;
- concern about applications being advanced before possible bylaw amendments;
- questions about how similar development proposals are treated;
- uncertainty about how public input is considered; and
- differing perceptions of whether planning principles are being applied consistently across project types.

These comments are best understood as concerns about predictability, transparency and confidence in the process, rather than as criticism of any single developer, staff member or Council decision. They point to the value of:

- clear rules;
- consistent interpretation;
- timely communication;

- transparent development tracking;
- clear explanation of how decisions are made; and
- well-defined transitions when policies or bylaws are under review.

7. Benefits experienced by SSMUH residents

Supportive submissions described tangible benefits associated with SSMUH, including:

- access to homeownership;
- the ability for working households to remain in Esquimalt;
- stronger relationships with neighbours;
- walking to local businesses and services; and
- a greater sense of connection than some residents had experienced in larger apartment buildings.

These experiences show that SSMUH can contribute to both housing choice and community connection when it is well designed and appropriately located.

8. Different views about community response to change

Some submissions described current opposition as a natural response to rapid neighbourhood change that may lessen over time as new residents become part of the community. Others viewed the concerns as evidence that the current bylaw requires adjustment before more development proceeds. Both perspectives reflect a broader tension between responding to immediate impacts and taking a longer-term view of how neighbourhoods evolve.

9. Common ground

Despite differing views, there was meaningful common ground. Participants generally agreed that:

- Esquimalt needs more housing options;
- affordability matters;
- SSMUH can be done well;
- tree protection and green space are important;
- neighbourhood impacts should be addressed;
- clearer and more predictable rules are needed; and
- public confidence depends on transparency and consistent implementation.

The main disagreement was not about whether SSMUH should exist, but whether current outcomes reflect the right balance between housing supply, affordability, neighbourhood fit, environmental protection and development feasibility.

Summary: Interviews and Written Submissions

The interviews and written submissions show that the discussion is not simply divided between support and opposition. Some participants emphasized the need for stronger local controls, while others emphasized the importance of keeping SSMUH feasible and avoiding rules that could reduce housing supply or increase costs. The strongest shared direction is toward a more predictable, transparent and technically balanced approach that:

- uses local discretion clearly;
- protects trees, privacy and neighbourhood livability;
- supports housing feasibility and affordability;
- considers infrastructure and cumulative impacts; and
- provides clear reasons for future bylaw and policy decisions.

Workshop Themes

Participants came prepared to engage constructively

At the beginning of the workshop, participants identified patience, listening, focus and kindness as qualities they would bring to the day. They asked others for respect, information, understanding, openness, honesty and a willingness to listen. Participants also asked the facilitator to provide structure, guidance, clarification, conflict management and assurance that all voices would be heard. This indicated that, despite differing views, participants were willing to engage with one another and contribute to a thoughtful discussion. More details about workshop participant concerns, aspirations and recommendations are contained in [Appendix F](#).

The workshop increased understanding without creating a negative shift in opinion. Of the 14 participants who responded to the closing poll:

- four indicated their understanding or opinion changed positively;
- two indicated it changed somewhat positively;
- five indicated it had not changed or they were unsure; and
- none indicated a negative change.

Among the 14 participants who responded to the closing poll, the workshop appears to have increased understanding for some participants without creating a negative shift in opinion.

Participants focused on how SSMUH could work better in Esquimalt

The workshop discussion focused less on whether SSMUH should be permitted and more on how it could be implemented in a way that better reflects Esquimalt's local context, community values, neighbourhood character, and the practical impacts of development.

As the number of units required under provincial legislation was outside the scope of the workshop, the discussion focused on how SSMUH could be implemented in ways that:

- protect trees and green space;
- respond to the size and conditions of individual lots;
- reduce privacy, shadowing and massing impacts;
- contribute positively to neighbourhood form and character;
- provide clearer notice and information;
- maintain development feasibility; and
- support more diverse and financially attainable housing choices.

Participants identified and prioritized seven themes

After identifying their individual concerns and aspirations, participants shared their comments at their tables and grouped similar ideas. The leading themes from each table were then consolidated into seven overall themes. Participants were asked to identify their top three priorities.

Environment was the highest-priority theme, followed by Setbacks & Massing and Process. Form & Character was also a significant priority. Bylaw and Lifestyle received equal support. Parking received no votes as a stand-alone priority; however, parking concerns continued to appear throughout discussions about lifestyle, environment, site design and affordability.

Environment was the highest-priority theme

Environment received 14 votes, the highest of the seven participant-generated themes.

Participants raised concerns about:

- loss of mature trees and tree canopy;
- reduced green space and permeable area;
- stormwater impacts;
- shade and cooling;
- habitat loss;
- climate resilience;
- relationship between large building footprints and limited room for trees; and
- length of time required for replacement trees to provide similar benefits.

The Environment group developed three related recommendations:

“Changes in setbacks + site coverage to address more adequate tree protection + green space + bring zoning closer to the DPA guidelines.”

“Ideally through flexibility within the bylaw to consider siting where planning can adjust setbacks to help protect a site’s natural assets where possible.”

“Right now the footprints are too large to allow for tree canopy protection/adequate green space + their values to community: climate resiliency, stormwater, shade, cooling, habitat, community well-being, etc.”

Participants were asked whether the Township should explore the Environment group’s recommendations further. Thirteen participants strongly agreed, five agreed and two were neutral.

Setbacks and massing should respond more directly to lot conditions

Setbacks & Massing received 10 votes. Participants raised concerns about:

- uniform height and setback rules;
- differences in lot size;
- sunlight and shadowing;
- privacy;
- the relationship between building height and property boundaries;
- building footprint;
- green space;

- neighbourhood character; and
- the scale of development next to existing homes.

They also expressed interest in:

- setbacks that respond to lot size;
- greater staff discretion for setback and height decisions;
- clearer and more predictable variance processes;
- reconsideration of floor-area-ratio controls;
- clearer definitions and measurement methods; and
- angular-plane approaches that relate building height to distance from a property boundary.

The Setbacks and Massing group recommended:

“Explore angular planes to determine setbacks.”

Participants were asked whether the Township should explore the Setbacks and Massing group’s recommendation further. Eight participants strongly agreed, six agreed and four were neutral.

Participants wanted earlier, clearer and more consistent information

Process received ten votes. Participants raised concerns about:

- notice to nearby residents;
- knowing when a SSMUH proposal has been submitted;
- understanding what is permitted and what may be varied;
- the role of immediate neighbours;
- provincial versus local authority;
- spending time discussing matters that cannot be changed; and
- understanding how input will translate into action.

The Process group recommended:

“Development tracker should have notification tracker.”

“Notification process.”

The Process group also recommended email notification through the Township’s communications channels when a new SSMUH application is received:

“Explore increasing staff discretionary powers to approve variances, if they have neighbour involvement + concurrence. This would avoid hearings + Council, improving timelines + affordability.”

Participants were asked whether the Township should explore the Process group’s recommendations further. Sixteen participants strongly agreed, four agreed and one strongly disagreed.

Form and character recommendations focused on scale, lot coverage, setbacks and privacy

Form & Character received nine votes. Participants raised concerns about buildings that could feel:

- big or bulky;

- overpowering;
- disconnected from the street;
- inconsistent with neighbouring scale; or
- harmful to privacy and sunlight.

Participants also expressed aspirations for:

- sensitive infill;
- visually interesting and appealing buildings;
- housing that supports aging in place;
- more walking-distance amenities;
- affordable missing-middle housing;
- protection of tree canopy; and
- buildings that contribute positively to Esquimalt's identity.

The Form and Character group's recommendations combined potential zoning directions with broader aspirations for future development:

1. **Height:** Change [height from a min of current 11m] to 5.1 m to 10 m, depending on neighbour view angles and aspects, and lot dimensions. Look at the existing community building heights.
2. **Lot Coverage:** State a minimum amount of soft landscaping. Consider dividing buildings.
3. **Setbacks:** Consistent with block level

4. Privacy Considerations

a. Bylaw requirements: Percentage of windows, window overlook, frosted windows, decks not overlooking neighbouring property, and higher fence height. Consult with neighbours on these requirements before approving development.

b. Mitigation of costs: The developer should address costs related to existing neighbours having to take measures to restore lost privacy.

Participants were asked whether the Township should explore the Form and Character group's recommendations further. Seventeen participants strongly agreed, five agreed, one was neutral, one disagreed and two strongly disagreed.

The results indicate strong overall support for further exploration of form and character provisions, while also showing that participants held different views about what "fit" and "character" should mean in practice.

Bylaw, Lifestyle and Parking were combined for the Deep Dive

Bylaw and Lifestyle each received six priority votes, while Parking received no votes as a stand-alone priority. For the Deep Dive activity, participants combined these three related themes into one group. Their discussion considered how bylaw requirements, neighbourhood lifestyle impacts and parking design interact. Participants raised concerns about:

- understanding which provisions are fixed by provincial legislation and which provisions Council can amend;

- whether sufficient time has passed to understand how the current bylaw is working in practice;
- housing policy contributing to a widening wealth gap;
- housing affordability continuing to worsen;
- the next generation being forced to move elsewhere;
- noise, privacy and loss of sunlight;
- parking being pushed onto the street;
- illegal suites and bylaw enforcement;
- the amount of land devoted to vehicles and asphalt; and
- green space being replaced by parking areas.

Participants also expressed aspirations for:

- housing that becomes more financially affordable;
- bringing new families into Esquimalt;
- abundant housing options;
- aesthetically pleasing development that complement the neighbourhood;
- connections to community amenities;
- dense neighbourhoods designed for walking, cycling, buses and cars;
- building homes for living, not for parking cars; and
- greater clarity and flexibility in how the bylaw is applied.

The combined Bylaw, Lifestyle and Parking group recommended:

“We are happy with the current parking minimums and see off-street as workable. We’d like more regulations on parking and what that looks like: pavers vs asphalt, gardens between spots, bike parking.”

The group also identified the following strength and opportunity:

“Parking + asphalt impacts tree coverage & greenery too!”

Participants were asked whether the Township should explore the combined group’s recommendation further. Nine participants strongly agreed, five agreed and two were neutral.

Although Parking received no votes as a stand-alone priority, the Deep Dive discussion showed that it remained closely connected to bylaw design, neighbourhood lifestyle, affordability, landscaping, tree canopy and the use of space on individual lots.

Participants supported further exploration, not automatic adoption

Following the Deep Dive discussions, participants were asked whether the Township should explore each group’s recommendation further. The results reflect support for additional consideration and analysis; they do not represent approval of specific bylaw wording or automatic adoption of the recommendations.

Overall, participants indicated that the recommendations were worthy of further exploration. Additional legal, technical, financial and operational analysis would still be required before Council considers whether or how to amend the bylaw.

Participants want to understand what happens next

Closing comments indicated that:

- several participants felt their opening challenge had been addressed;
- participants appreciated the quality of the discussion and the openness of staff;
- the workshop provided more information;
- some participants felt the day was rushed because of the amount of material;
- there was concern about additional administrative burden on the Township;
- some participants supported simplifying permitting and delegating more variances to staff;
- one participant felt the composition of the workshop overemphasized “too big, too tall” perspectives;
- one participant expressed concern about long-time residents making decisions affecting future residents; and
- several participants remained interested in how the discussion would translate into action.

These comments reinforce the importance of closing the feedback loop by clearly explaining:

- what was heard;
- which recommendations will be explored;
- which cannot be pursued and why;
- what further analysis is required;
- what amendments are proposed; and
- how workshop and on-line input influenced those proposals.

Summary: Workshop Finding

Workshop participants generally accepted that SSMUH is required under provincial legislation and focused their discussion on how its implementation could better reflect Esquimalt’s local context. The strongest priorities were protecting trees and green space, exploring more site-responsive approaches to setbacks and massing, improving transparency and notification, and supporting sensitive building form and character.

Participants also recognized the need to balance neighbourhood impacts with housing affordability, development feasibility and the Township’s administrative capacity. Voting showed strong support for the Township to explore the group recommendations further, but not necessarily to adopt them without additional technical, legal and financial analysis.

The workshop findings represent the perspectives of those who participated and are not statistically representative of the entire Esquimalt community.

On-line Survey Themes

The on-line survey received 413 responses. Most respondents identified as homeowners, and more than half had lived or worked in Esquimalt for more than 10 years. Because participation was voluntary, the survey reflects the views of self-selected respondents and should not be interpreted as a statistically representative sample of the entire community.

Retaining trees and green space was the highest-ranked survey priority, selected by 56.4% of respondents. Landscaping and outdoor amenity space was selected as a top-three priority by 16.7%, while 54.0% said landscaping requirements need more consideration.

Building form, height, massing and neighbourhood fit

How buildings look and fit into the neighbourhood was selected by 49.9% of respondents, building height and massing by 41.6%, and affordability by 40.9%. More than half said form and character, height and setbacks need more consideration.

Privacy and overlook

Privacy was selected as a top three priority by 31.7% of respondents. Privacy and overlook mitigation received the highest 'needs more consideration' response among the individual bylaw topics, at 61.5%.

Affordability

Affordability remained a central but unresolved concern. Some respondents questioned whether current market outcomes are genuinely attainable, while others cautioned that additional restrictions could increase costs or make projects unworkable.

Parking

Parking was selected as a top three priority by 31.2% of respondents, and 54.2% said the current parking provisions need more consideration. Views differed between those seeking more off-street parking and those supporting reduced requirements near transit.

Transparency and local discretion

Although 78.0% were aware that the Township was required to permit SSMUH, less than half (48.7%) said they clearly understood the difference between provincial requirements and what the Township can change. A further 39.0% had a general understanding but were uncertain, and 12.3% were not sure what the Township could change.

Overall survey sentiment

A total of 55.7% of respondents were strongly or somewhat supportive of SSMUH, while 38.3% were strongly or somewhat concerned. This indicates that support for SSMUH and concern about how it is implemented are not mutually exclusive. For each bylaw topic, the largest response was 'needs more consideration,' while meaningful minorities considered the current provisions about right or wanted less restriction.

Integrated Findings Across All Engagement Sources

The Council correspondence, interest-holder interviews, workshop and on-line survey were reviewed together to identify areas of alignment and difference. Across all four sources, the discussion was not simply divided between support and opposition. The stronger common ground was that SSMUH can contribute to Esquimalt's housing needs, but its success depends on how well local regulations address scale, affordability, environmental protection, privacy, neighbourhood fit, transparency and development feasibility. As the survey was voluntary and self-

selected, its findings should be interpreted as directional rather than statistically representative of the broader community.

Areas of strongest alignment

- More site-responsive approaches to building height, setbacks, massing and lot coverage.
- Stronger protection of mature trees, green space, permeable area and stormwater capacity.
- Clearer expectations for privacy, overlook, building form and relationship to neighbouring properties.
- Greater transparency, notification and clarity about provincial requirements and local discretion.
- Consideration of parking as a site-design, affordability, transportation and environmental issues.
- Recognition that affordability and housing feasibility must be assessed alongside additional design requirements.

Where views differed

Some participants wanted stronger controls related to height, setbacks, privacy, trees and parking. Others cautioned that additional restrictions could reduce housing feasibility, increase costs, encourage demolition or make incremental development unworkable. A related but distinct position, raised in later survey responses, called for extending the same height and setback flexibility to existing homeowners seeking to renovate or expand their own properties, rather than reserving it for new multi-unit development. Infrastructure and service capacity were emphasized more strongly in interviews, correspondence and open-ended survey comments, including specific concerns about school capacity, recreation facilities and emergency/urgent care access, while the workshop placed greater emphasis on site-specific design tools, notification, staff discretion and closing the feedback loop.

Overall synthesis

Taken together, the findings support targeted and site-responsive review rather than assuming that all concerns point toward either more restriction or less restriction. The clearest opportunity is to develop more predictable and transparent rules that protect trees, privacy and neighbourhood livability while preserving housing feasibility, affordability and flexibility. The consolidated community input by discretion areas is in [Appendix H](#).

5. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Interim Use of Available Administrative Discretion

1. Council direct Administration, when reviewing Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing applications and where discretion is lawfully available under the Zoning Bylaw, applicable Development Permit Area guidelines, delegated authority or provincial legislation, to consider site-specific circumstances and apply professional judgment until Council considers amendments to the Zoning Bylaw.
2. Where such discretion is available, Administration may consider the community priorities identified through the engagement process in exercising that discretion., including,
3. That Administration seek a reasonable balance among neighbourhood context and impacts; protection of trees, green space and natural features; privacy and livability; housing feasibility and affordability; clarity and predictability for applicants and neighbours; and the objectives of the Official Community Plan and applicable Development Permit Area guidelines.
4. That this direction does not authorize Administration to waive, vary or disregard a requirement where such authority is not already provided by legislation, bylaw, Development Permit Area guidelines or delegated authority.
5. That Administration report back to Council on any additional delegation, policy direction or bylaw amendments required to support a more flexible and site-responsive approach, including more specific building height, setbacks, lot coverage, or parking.
6. That this interim direction remain in effect until Council adopts amendments to the Zoning Bylaw or provides alternative direction.
7. Council direct Administration to implement a new preliminary assessment tool covering all discretionary provisions of the bylaw, to provide transparency into the initial development application review process.

Supporting Rationale

The engagement findings showed consistent interest in greater site-specific consideration rather than a single prescribed solution for every property.

Participants identified concerns and aspirations related to building height, setbacks, lot coverage, parking, landscaping and green space, privacy and overlook, and building form and character. These are all areas where the Township has discretion to make changes through a future Zoning Bylaw amendment; in the absence of such an amendment, Administration has no authority to adjust these provisions on its own. The input also reflected differing views about how these matters should be addressed. Some participants supported stronger controls, while others cautioned that additional restrictions could reduce housing feasibility, increase costs or create unintended consequences.

The recommendation therefore does not prescribe specific technical outcomes. It provides interim direction for Administration to consider site conditions and apply professional judgment only where lawful discretion already exists. This would allow Administration to consider whether an application could better respond to neighbouring properties, tree retention, privacy, green space, site design

and housing feasibility while the Township completes its technical review and Council considers amendments to the bylaw.

Recommendation 2: Establish an SSMUH Select Committee

1. That Council establish a SSMUH Select Committee (the “Committee”) and adopt the Terms of Reference attached to this report in [Appendix G](#).

That the Committee be directed to review and provide advice on targeted amendments concerning:

- a. building scale and site design, including height, setbacks, massing, lot coverage and the relationship of development to neighbouring properties and the surrounding block;
 - b. environmental and privacy protections, including tree retention, soft landscaping, permeable area, privacy, overlook and mitigation of impacts on adjacent properties;
 - c. process, predictability and implementation, including public notification, development tracking, staff discretion and variance processes; and
 - d. housing feasibility and affordability impacts, including whether proposed amendments could unintentionally increase costs, reduce housing choice or make incremental development unworkable.
2. That the Committee provide input on the Affordability Strategy, applicable Development Permit Area guidelines and the Official Community Plan only where directly related to its targeted SSMUH recommendations.
 3. That the Committee provide preliminary recommendations to Council before the end of March 31, 2027, and final technical recommendations by June 30, 2027.
 4. That Administration review the Committee’s advice and prepare any proposed bylaw, policy or guideline amendments for Council’s consideration.

Recommendation 3: Implement Proactive Notifications of SSMUH Applications

1. That Council endorse Administration expanding the existing development tracker to increase transparency and consistency of application of the interim zoning bylaw direction to proactively inform residents and interested parties of new SSMUH applications.
2. Confirm application of the draft SSMUH Preliminary Assessment tool to support transparency of the application of discretionary provisions for SSMUH Developments.

Appendices

Appendix A: Community Profile Comparisons

Bill 44 Community Profile Comparison - Select Municipalities in BC								
Municipality Name	Population (2025)	Average Age (2023)	Geographic Size by Community (KM ²)	% of Home Ownership	Visible Minority Pop %	Socio-economic Index Score	Walkability Score	Alignment Count
CRD								
Esquimalt	19,512	44	7.08	66.5	10.2	46.9	51	7
Victoria	103,888	44	19.45	39.5	15.1	51.1	76	3
Saanich	126,011	46	103.59	62.9	22.1	52.3	40	2
Oak Bay	18,626	49	10.52	74.5	10.7	60.9	52	5
Langford	59,664	39	41.43	64.8	10.3	56.7	33	2
View Royal	12,795	43	14.33	67.3	14.4	54.5	28	3
Central Saanich	18,184	46	41.2	79.9	6.5	52.3	22	3
Colwood	22,794	42	17.66	73.4	7.5	52.6	32	3
Sidney	13,445	55	5.11	76.8	6.2	49.2	51	4
Sooke	17,248	43	56.6	80.4	3.6	47.8	12	3
Metro Vancouver								
Burnaby	299,682	41	90.57	60.5	63.6	56.1	60	2
Coquitlam	173,599	40	122.15	69.3	50.2	55.9	47	1
Surrey	703,531	38	316.11	69.5	58.5	51.8	46	1
District of North Van	97,845	42	160.66	74.6	25.6	62	43	2
City of North Van	66,624	42	11.83	53.3	31.1	57.8	77	3
Richmond	239,584	42	128.87	71.3	76.3	55.2	48	2
New Westminster	92,124	41	15.62	54.7	38.9	54.2	72	2
Langley (City)	35,444	41	10.18	62.9	13.8	46.8	55	4
Delta	124,670	42	179.66	75.6	36	53.3	39	2
Maple Ridge	105,925	40	267.82	79.1	15	53	34	0
Pitt Meadows	20,892	41	86.34	79.5	18.9	51	45	1
White Rock	25,057	52	5.17	64.8	16.4	50.9	60	4
Vancouver Island								
Nanaimo	111,845	44	90.45	66.7	9.9	44.8	35	4
Port Alberni	19,671	45	19.66	68.9	5.8	34.4	36	4
Courtenay	20,499	46	32.42	71.4	7	44.6	31	4
Campbell River	38,800	45	144.38	71.7	5.1	42.9	28	4
Comox	80,105	48	16.87	77.2	3.8	51.3	29	2
Interior								
Cranbrook	22,703	44	31.97	73.6	5.1	46.4	33	4
Salmon Arm	20,891	40	155.19	77.7	3.8	44.7	21	1
Fort St. John	24,383	33	32.67	57.8	11.9	50.2	36	2
Squamish	28,578	38	104.71	70	14.7	57.1	22	2
Penticton	39,068	47	43.03	63.2	7	43.5	43	3
Comparability Assessment	>50,000 Pop	2 Years (+/-)	Under 30 Square KM	(+/-) 10%	(+/-) 10% Points	(+/-) 4 Points	Above Esquimalt at 9th Ranking	3 or Above

* Cells that are shaded grey are characteristics that are comparable to Esquimalt.

Appendix B: Design Standard Comparison

Bill 44 Implementation Comparison - Select Municipalities in BC									
Municipality	Allowable units on small lots (>280 Sq ^m)	Allowable units larger size lots (< 280 sq ^m)	Units near Prescribed Bus Stops*	Minimum Parking Spaces Required	Allowable Height	Max. Lot Coverage (Depending on lot size and # of units)	Front Setback	Rear Setback	Notes
Recommended Province Direction (Baseline)	Minimum 3	Minimum 4	Minimum 6	0.5 - 1 per unit	3 storeys or 11 metres	50%	Reduction of front and rear setback	Reduction of front and rear setback	*Bus stops with 15-min frequencies
CRD									
Esquimalt	Up to 3	Up to 4		0.5 - 1 per unit	11 metres	40% - 50%	Minimum 2 or 4 metres (depending on lot size)	4.5m	Tsunami prone areas are exempt
Victoria		Minimum 3		0.75 to 1.3 per unit depending on lot size	7.6m if < 3 units; 12m if 3 storeys with < 3 units; 14m to 32m for buildings greater than 3 storeys with > 3 or more units	40 to 55%	Minimum 2 to 4 metres	6m to 8m	GRD-1 Zoning permits medium density up to 6 storeys by default
Saanich	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	1 per unit; 0 to 0.5 per unit within proximity of bus stop	8m to 11m, up to 3 storeys	40-55%	4m	5m	
Oak Bay	Up to 3	Up to 4	N/A*	0.5 to 2 per unit (depending on dwelling type)	5.1m to 10m depending on lot breadth**	30-35%	6 to 10.7m minimum depending on lot size	7.6m minimum	*no FTAs; **
Langford	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	1 per unit; 0 per unit within 400m of transit stop	11m, up to 3 storeys	50%	3m	3m	
View Royal	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	1 per unit	11m, up to 3 storeys	30-50%	4 to 6m	3.5 to 7m	
Central Saanich	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	1 per unit	8 to 11m, up to 3 storeys	35-45%	6m	3 to 7m	
Colwood	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	1 per unit; 0 per unit within 400m of transit stop	11m; up to 3 storeys	50%	4m	3	
Sidney	Up to 3	Up to 4	N/A*	1 per unit *	3 storeys between 10.5 to 12m	35-50%	3-4.5m	1.5-5.5m	*no FTAs **subject to bylaw update
Sooke	Up to 3	Up to 4	N/A	1.5 per unit	3 storeys up to 12m	50%	4m	4m	
Metro Vancouver									
Burnaby	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	1 per unit plus 0.5 per additional unit; None required within FTA	Up to 3 storeys, no more than 10m	30-55%	4m	3m	Requires at least 1 unit with 3+ bedrooms in 1-3 unit dwellings; At least 2 units with 3+ bedrooms in 4-6 unit dwellings
Coquitlam	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	1 to 2 per unit depending on dwelling size	9.5 to 11 depending on zoning type	50%	4 to 5.5	6m	
Surrey	2 to 6 depending on lot size and proximity to transit			1 per unit/0 near FTA	11m with sloped roofs; 9.2 (12 on floodplain)	20-65%	3.5 to 7.5	7.5m	Reconsolidated into 7 zones depending on lot size
District of North Van	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	1 per unit/ 0 per unit near FTA	Up to 11m or 3 storeys	45-55%	3m	1.5m	
City of North Van	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	1 per unit/ 0 per unit near FTA	Up to 12m or 3 storeys	35-50%	3m	1.5m	
Richmond	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	0.5/unit; 0/unit within 400m of prescribed bus stop	10 m	45%	6m	6m	
New Westminster	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	No parking minimums	Up to 3 storeys	40%*	4.3m	7.62m	*Flexibly distributed across principal building and accessory structures
City of Langley	N/A	Up to 4	Up to 6	1 per unit, minimum 2 per lot	Up to 9m	36%	6m	6m	
Delta	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	1 per unit; 0 per unit Within FTA; 0 per unit (below 355 sqft)	Up to 8m or 2.5 storeys	40-45%	6.5m	9m	
White Rock	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	/0 per unit near bus stop	7.7m	25 - 50%	3 - 6m	3 - 6m	
Maple Ridge	Up to 3	Up to 4	Up to 6	1.5 to 2 per unit	Up to 9.5m	40-50%	5.5m - 7.5m	6m	

Bill 44 Implementation Comparison - Select Municipalities in BC									
Municipality	Allowable units on small lots (>280 Sq ^m)	Allowable units larger size lots (280 sq ^m)	Units near Prescribed Bus Stops*	Minimum Parking Spaces Required	Allowable Height	Max. Lot Coverage (Depending on lot size and # of units)	Front Setback	Rear Setback	Notes
Recommended Province Direction (Baseline)	Minimum 3	Minimum 4	Minimum 6	0.5 - 1 per unit	3 storeys or 11 metres	50%	Reduction of front and rear setback	Reduction of front and rear setback	*Bus stops with 15-min frequencies
Island Municipalities									
Nanaimo	Up to 3	Up to 4	6 to 10 units	2 per unit;0 per unit within FTA	7m to 10.5m	40 - 70%	3 to 7.5m	3 to 7.5m	
Port Alberni	Up to 3	Up to 4	N/A	1 per unit	11m or up to 3 storeys	40-60%	3 to 6m	5m to 6m	
Courtenay	Up to 4		N/A	1 per unit	11m	70%%	4m	5m	
Campbell River	Up to 3	Up to 4	N/A	1 per unit	10m or 3 storeys	50%	4m	3m	
Comox	Up to 4		N/A	1 per unit	11m or 3 storeys	50%	6m	5m	
Interior Municipalities									
Cranbrook	Up to 3	Up to 4	N/A	2 per unit	11m or up to 3 storeys	40-50%	4.5 to 6m	6m	
Salmon Arm	Up to 3	Up to 4	N/A*	2 per unit	Up to 10m	40%	6m	6m	
Fort St. John	Up to 4		N/A*	2 per unit	10.5 to 11m	40 - 60%	6 to 7.5m	6 to 7.5m	
Squamish	Up to 5		Up to 6	1 to 2 per unit depending on dwelling type	9 to 11m, or up to 3 storeys	33 - 50%	3m to 7.62m	3m to 7.62m	
Penticton	Up to 4		N/A	N/A	11m or up to 3 storeys	40-50%	4.5m	6m	

Appendix C: Community Conversation Interview Guide

Section 1 — Awareness and understanding of SSMUH

1 What have you heard about small-scale multi-unit housing — or SSMUH — in Esquimalt?

► **Possible probes:**

- *Where did you first hear about it?*
- *What was your initial reaction?*
- *Has your understanding of it changed at all since then?*

2 How would you describe what SSMUH means in your own words?

► **Possible probes:**

- *What do you understand it to allow?*
- *Is there anything about it that is still unclear to you?*
- *What questions do you wish someone had answered for you earlier?*

3 Are you familiar with the provincial legislation — Bill 44 — that required municipalities like Esquimalt to make these zoning changes?

► **Possible probes:**

- *Did you know this was a provincial requirement, not a local choice?*
- *Does that change how you think about it?*

4 Do you understand the difference between what the Province requires Esquimalt to allow, and what the Township itself has the ability to change through Bylaw 3142?

► **Possible probes:**

- *Can you give an example of something you think the Township can control?*
- *Is there anything you assumed the Township could change that you're not sure about?*
- *What would help you understand that distinction more clearly?*

Section 2 — Challenges and opportunities

5 What concerns, if any, do you have about how SSMUH might affect Esquimalt?

► **Possible probes:**

- *Are there specific areas of the community you are more worried about than others?*
- *Is this a concern you hold personally, or one you've heard others express?*
- *What would need to happen for that concern to be addressed?*

6 When you think about what new small-scale multi-unit buildings might look like in your neighbourhood, the height, the scale, how they sit on the lot, what comes to mind?

► **Possible probes:**

- *Have you seen any examples locally that concerned you, or that you thought worked well?*
- *What would make a new building feel like it fits, or doesn't fit?*

- Have you heard anything from others about shadows, height, or the scale of new buildings? What are people saying?

7 How do you feel about parking in your neighbourhood right now, and what do you anticipate might change?

► Possible probes:

- Do you feel parking is adequate currently?
- What do you think will happen to on-street parking as more units are added?
- What would a good outcome look like to you on this issue?

8 Trees and green space came up as significant concerns in our early research. What is your sense of how SSMUH might affect the tree canopy and green space in Esquimalt?

► Possible probes:

- Have you seen tree loss on properties near you as a result of development?
- What do you think the Township should be able to require when it comes to landscaping?
- What would feel like an acceptable trade-off, if any?

9 Do you see any potential benefits from SSMUH — for yourself, your neighbours, or the community?

► Possible probes:

- Who do you think benefits most from these changes?
- Are there people or groups in Esquimalt who need more housing options? Who are they?

Section 3 — Community sentiment

10 What are you hearing from people around you — neighbours, friends, colleagues — about SSMUH or the changes happening in Esquimalt?

► Possible probes:

- What seems to concern people most?
- What do people seem to support or feel positive about?
- Have you heard specific concerns about shadows, tree loss, parking, or the scale of new buildings?
- Is there a particular phrase or concern that keeps coming up?

Section 4 — Participation and engagement

11 Is there anyone else you think we should speak with as part of this process — individuals, groups, or organisations who have a stake in this?

► Possible probes:

- Is there anyone who is particularly vocal about this issue — positively or negatively?
- Are there groups who are affected but rarely heard from?

Closing

"Before we finish — is there anything else you'd like to share that we haven't covered? Anything that feels important for the Township to understand as it designs this engagement process?"

Appendix D: On-Line Survey Questionnaire

Section A — About you

A1 How long have you lived or worked in Esquimalt?

- Less than 2 years
- 2–5 years
- 6–10 years
- More than 10 years
- I do not live or work in Esquimalt but have an interest in this issue

A2 How would you describe your connection to Esquimalt? (Select all that apply)

- Resident — homeowner
- Resident — renter
- Business owner or operator
- Property developer or builder
- Design or planning professional
- Community or neighbourhood association member
- Other (please describe): _____

Section B — Awareness and understanding

B1 Before taking this survey, how familiar were you with Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH) in Esquimalt?

- Very familiar — I have been following this closely
- Somewhat familiar — I had heard about it
- Not very familiar — I knew very little about it
- Not familiar at all — this is new to me

B2 Were you aware that the Township was required by provincial legislation (Bill 44) to allow small-scale multi-unit housing in residential areas?

- Yes, I was aware
- I had heard something about it but was not sure of the details
- No, I was not aware

B3 Do you understand the difference between what the Province requires the Township to allow, and what the Township itself has the ability to change through amendments to the Zoning Bylaw.

- Yes, I understand the difference clearly
- I have a general sense of it but am not certain
- No, I am not sure what the Township can and cannot change

B4 Where have you learned about SSMUH (Select all that apply)

- Township of Esquimalt website or communications
- Local news or media
- Social media

- Neighbours, friends, or family
- Community or neighbourhood association
- I have not seen or heard much about it
- Other: _____

Section C — Community character and values

C1 In your view, what best describes the character of Esquimalt as a community? (Select up to three)

- A close-knit, neighbourhood-oriented community
- A diverse and evolving community
- A community with a strong military and civic identity
- A community with strong First Nations connections
- A community with strong connections to nature, trees, and green space
- A community with a distinct architectural and built character
- A community that values affordability and housing access
- Other: _____

C2 When thinking about new small-scale multi-unit housing in Esquimalt, what matters most to you? (Choose your top three)

- How buildings look and fit into the neighbourhood
- Privacy between properties
- Retaining trees and green space
- Parking availability
- Building height and massing
- Setbacks from property lines
- Landscaping and outdoor amenity space
- Overall affordability of housing in the community

Section D — Community sentiment

D1 Overall, how would you describe your feelings about small-scale multi-unit housing in Esquimalt?

- Strongly supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Neither supportive nor opposed
- Somewhat concerned
- Strongly concerned
- I don't have enough information to have a view

D2 What is your general sense of how your neighbours and community feel about SSMUH?

- Most people I know are supportive
- Opinions seem mixed
- Most people I know are concerned
- I haven't discussed it with anyone

Section E — Discretionary provisions of Zoning Bylaw

E1 Building form and character — how new buildings look and relate to the streetscape

- Needs more consideration
- About right
- Needs less restriction
- I don't have enough information

E2 Building height — the maximum height of new small-scale multi-unit buildings

- Needs more consideration
- About right
- Needs less restriction
- I don't have enough information

E3 Setbacks — the required distance between a building and property lines

- Needs more consideration
- About right
- Needs less restriction
- I don't have enough information

E4 Privacy and overlook mitigation — measures to protect privacy between neighbouring properties

- Needs more consideration
- About right
- Needs less restriction
- I don't have enough information

E6 Landscaping — requirements for planting, green space, and outdoor amenity

- Needs more consideration
- About right
- Needs less restriction
- I don't have enough information

E7 Parking — the number of parking spaces required for new units

- Needs more consideration
- About right
- Needs less restriction
- I don't have enough information

Section F — Final comments

F1 Is there anything else you would like the Township to know as it considers amendments to the Zoning Bylaw?

[Open text field]

Appendix E: Open Ended Survey Comment Highlights

Overview: The survey's open-ended question (“Is there anything else you would like the Township to know as it considers amendments to the Zoning Bylaw?”) drew 262 written responses out of 413 total survey participants. Comments ranged from one-line statements to detailed, multi-page technical submissions. The themes below reflect 262 comments.

Trees, green space and tree canopy loss: The single most frequent theme across the open comments. Mature trees, especially Garry oaks, were repeatedly described as irreplaceable community assets tied to shade, stormwater management, habitat and neighbourhood identity. Some balanced this against the view that compact infill reduces outward sprawl and car-dependent development elsewhere.

Height, massing and neighbourhood fit: A large volume of comments described specific recent developments (most often on Munro Street and at Dunsmuir/Lampson) as towering over neighbouring single-storey homes, blocking light, and using the maximum buildable envelope with little regard for surrounding scale. A smaller number of comments offered a positive counter-example — a recently completed multi-unit building on Drake Street was cited by name as a development that preserved green space, retained mature trees, and provided adequate parking and setbacks.

Privacy and overlook: Frequently linked to height and setbacks, with specific complaints about upper-storey windows and balconies overlooking neighbouring yards, patios and gardens. Several comments proposed frosted glazing, deck reorientation, or neighbour consultation before permit approval.

Parking: One of the most frequently raised topics in the later comments specifically. Concerns centred on insufficient off-street parking pushing vehicles onto increasingly congested side streets, with several respondents asking for at least one full-size space per unit. A smaller number of respondents, often self-identified renters, argued for the opposite, reduced parking minimums in favour of outdoor amenity space, storage, or lower construction costs.

Affordability: Remained deeply contested. Many comments questioned whether units priced at or above \$1.5 million can reasonably be called attainable or “missing middle” housing. Others cautioned that additional restrictions would raise costs further and reduce housing choice. A smaller number of comments proposed mandated income-mix ratios (citing the loss of low-income units at a specific local redevelopment) or pointed to co-op and non-market housing models as a more direct route to affordability than market-rate SSMUH.

Infrastructure and municipal capacity: Raised more often and more specifically in the later comments, including named concerns about school capacity (Macaulay Elementary), recreation facilities, and urgent care access, alongside more general concerns about sewer, water and road capacity.

Process, notification and trust: A recurring request for earlier, clearer notification of nearby SSMUH applications, and criticism that permits are approved at the staff level with limited opportunity for neighbour input beforehand. A number of comments received in the final days of the survey also raised concerns about the survey instrument itself, noting it could be completed

anonymously and more than once — and several respondents said they only learned of the survey shortly before it closed.

Support for SSMUH: A consistent minority of comments expressed clear support for densification, describing specific positive experiences living in multi-unit housing, welcoming more housing choice and diversity, and cautioning the Township against giving disproportionate weight to vocal opposition over the broader community's housing needs.

Appendix F: Workshop Concerns, Aspirations & Recommendations

The following reflects participant wording and the group recommendation developed during the workshop discussion.

Environment

Surfacing

- Some concerns are addressed in other legislation (Building Code).

Strengths and Opportunities

- Emphasis on flexibility.

Concerns and Aspirations

- Developers bought home next door, construction will be a year and a half.
- Losing the trees in my community is not ok.
- To plant new ones takes forever to grow.
- 2 story with 2–3 residents ok, but 3 stories, 4 or 6 residences are community changing.
- Habitat trees are being cut down for development.
- Current footprint is resulting in tree canopy loss + reduction of green space.
- Impact on existing infrastructure — who pays for upgrades?
- Why can't setbacks and height be altered (made more green space) in Bill 44?
- Character — we are losing shade and green space — we need to plant and protect for the future.
- We fail to build in a climate resilient way — setting the Township up for big future problems.
- Policy responds to the climate crisis and the housing crisis in a synergistic way.
- Concern = landscaping, tree canopy and green space.

Group Recommendations

1. Changes in setbacks + site coverage to address more adequate tree protection + green space + bring zoning closer to the DPA guidelines.
2. Ideally through flexibility within the bylaw to consider siting where planning can adjust setbacks to help protect a site's natural assets where possible.
3. Right now the footprints are too large to allow for tree canopy protection/adequate green space + their values to community: climate resiliency, stormwater, shade, cooling, habitat, community well-being, etc.

Participant Response to the Recommendations

Response	Number of participants
Neutral	2
Agree	5
Strongly agree	13

Setbacks and Massing

Concerns and Aspirations

- Greater than 2 buildings — flexible setbacks.
- Setbacks should be greater in areas with larger lots — more in proportion to lot size.
- We can define our own setbacks and heights, following the base of what was given to us, but reflecting more on what we want to see.
- Heights — 11 m blanket is terrible. Impacts on neighbours in relation to sunlight, privacy, etc. need to be considered.
- Height: SFD 7.5 m; Bill 44 — 11 m.
- Loss of privacy.
- Massing control.
- The height question — contradiction of DPA 3 with Bylaw 3142.
- How is it measured?
- 11 m — what does it allow?
- 8–9 ft. ceilings.
- SAR + FAR.
- Height predicates unit size.
- Predictability.
- Increase delegation for setback and height to staff.
- Revise minimum rules within Bill 44.
- More setback and massing variances without Council.
- Increase the types of development where staff can make decisions on setbacks and heights.
- History of development: FAR was creating livability/quality issues. This is why FAR wasn't in SSMUH initially.
- If FAR is added, consider definitions.
- Site sign posts explaining upcoming development.
- Website updates.
- Bring FAR back with bonus density.
- 1 unit / 1,000 sq. ft.
- Setbacks — not one size fits all.
- Balance — consider character.
- Plan 50 years in advance.
- Not building affordable units.
- Size is compatible with community character.
- Parking pushes too many vehicles onto the streets.
- “As the crow flies” to a bus stop is an issue — define better.
- Protect + plant green space.
- Enhance green space.
- Less space for parking.
- Setbacks in proportion to lot size — bigger lots should have larger setbacks.
- Like density.
- Housing for all.
- Many sizes.
- Less gatekeeping from neighbourhoods.
- Angular planes — “height to boundary” for setbacks.
- 11 m to mid-grade.

Group Recommendation

Explore angular planes to determine setbacks.

Participant Response to the Recommendation

Response	Number of participants
Neutral	4
Agree	6
Strongly agree	8

Process

Concerns and Aspirations

- Proper notice to neighbours by developers and municipality.
- Aspiration — find a way for Council to engage with the immediate community re: new development.
- Provincial over-reach — role of local government + public process.
- I'd like to see less gate keeping of neighbourhoods.
- Not recognizing opportunities that exist due to anger that this legislation exists.
- Lack of discussion around incentivizing what we want.
- Spending a lot of time on discussions that can't create change.
- More resident input and say into what is going up next door.
- I'm concerned that a group of people who have owned for a long time and may not be here much longer are making decisions for the next 50 years.
- Concern = we make big policy changes before allowing enough time to see how the current bylaw actually lands.
- Aspiration = with no public consult allowed in legislation, how will Council + staff engage us in a meaningful way?

Concerns and Challenges Identified on recommendation

- It's a fine line — maintain predictability but add flexibility.
- In applying it, requires the right new staff need to explain.

Group Recommendations

- Development tracker should [also] have a notification tracker.
- Notification process.
- Email notification of new SSMUH.
- Explore increasing staff discretionary powers to approve variances, if they have neighbour involvement + concurrence. This would avoid hearings + Council, improving timelines + affordability.

Participant Response to the Recommendations

Response	Number of participants
Strongly disagree	1
Agree	4
Strongly agree	16

Form and Character

Surfacing – table discussion

- Big, bulky, over tower everything
- Set Height? Variation?
- Variation of height depending on view angles, lot dimensions
- Change to differentiate height
- Lot Coverage – minimum amount of soft scaping? Divided?
- Loss of privacy is a big concern
- Mandatory to neighbour, Hedges have to be made. Consult with neighbour?

- Decks, windows
- Fence height for privacy
- If development encroaches on developer, developer should provide compensation
- Setbacks consistent at a block level

Concerns and Aspirations

- Aspiration: SENSITIVE INFILL
- Keep the existing character of the neighbourhood
- Keeping in community character, size — heights etc.
- Visually interesting + appealing
- New construction will better accommodate aging in place than much of the existing housing stock
- I want to see more walking distance amenities in Esquimalt. I expect more housing density to make this easier.
- 3 storeys will remove my sunlight
- Privacy in my front + backyard
- Environment
- Setbacks + massing

Group Recommendations

- Building form and character — how buildings look + how they relate to the street and surrounding homes
- FIT IN COMMUNITY
- An aspiration = we adjust the current zoning to bring more balance that allows for affordable missing middle density and considers protection of tree canopy
- SENSITIVE INFILL
- Keep the existing character of the neighbourhood
- Keeping in community character, size — heights etc.
- Visually interesting + appealing
- New construction will better accommodate aging in place than much of the existing housing stock
- I want to see more walking distance amenities in Esquimalt. I expect more housing density to make this easier.

Strengths and Opportunities Comment on Recommendations

This is what is needed in scale and form to establish neighbourhoods.

Participant Response to the Recommendations

Response	Number of participants
Strongly disagree	2
Disagree	1
Neutral	1
Agree	5
Strongly agree	17

Lifestyle: Concerns, Aspirations and Group Recommendation

Concerns

- Aesthetically pleasing - complementing the neighbourhood
- Connecting to community amenities
- Dense neighbourhoods designed for walking, cycling, buses and cars
- Housing policy contributing to the widening wealth gap
- Housing affordability continues to get worse
- The next generation will be forced to move elsewhere
- Are we pushing parking to the street?
- Concerns for parking + proper use of space
- Enforcement of bylaws
- Protocols written into the bylaw - how to ensure illegal suites don't get added

Aspirations

- Housing that is oriented to become more financially affordable
- Bringing new families into Esquimalt
- Abundant housing options
- Building homes for living, not for parking cars

Key Focus Areas

- Green space, not a parking lot, as the primary viewpoint from the street
- Parking requirement - potential 8 cars; replace with half
- Flexibility on bylaws - reduction of # parking
- More regulations on parking and what that looks like
- Pavers vs asphalt
- Gardens between spots
- Bike parking

Group Recommendation

"We are happy with the current parking minimums and see off-street as workable. We'd like more regulations on parking and what that looks like: pavers vs asphalt, gardens between spots, bike parking."

Strength and Opportunity Identified

- Parking + asphalt impacts tree coverage & greenery too!

Participant Response to the Recommendation

Response	Number of participants
Neutral	2
Agreed	5
Strongly agreed	9

Appendix G: Draft Terms of Reference - Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing Select Committee

Purpose

The purpose of the Interim Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing Advisory Committee is to assist Township staff and Council in identifying and evaluating specific technical amendments to the Zoning Bylaw and related policies for matters that remain within the Township's discretion.

Mandate

The Committee will investigate and provide recommendations on the following targeted areas:

1. Building scale and site design, including building height, setbacks, massing, lot coverage, relationship to neighbouring buildings, block-level context and site-responsive tools.
2. Environmental and privacy protections, including tree retention, minimum soft landscaping, permeable area, stormwater considerations, window and deck placement, privacy and overlook, screening and mitigation of impacts.
3. Process, predictability and implementation, including public notification, development tracking, clarity regarding provincial requirements and local discretion, staff discretion and variance processes.
4. Housing feasibility and affordability impacts, including cumulative requirements, project costs, adaptations to existing homes, third- and fourth-unit feasibility and unintended consequences.
5. Provide preliminary recommendations to Council before March 31, 2027 and final technical recommendations by June 30, 2027.
6. Provide input on the Affordability Strategy, Development Permit Area guidelines and Official Community Plan only where directly related to the Committee's targeted SSMUH recommendations.
7. Consider relevant legal, technical, financial, environmental and operational information provided by Township staff and external specialists.
8. Identify where additional analysis is required before Council considers a proposed amendment.

Guiding Principles

- Recognize that the Township is required by provincial legislation to permit SSMUH.
- Focus on matters within the Township's authority.
- Consider findings from Council correspondence, interest-holder interviews, the public workshop and on-line survey.
- Balance neighbourhood impacts with housing feasibility and affordability.
- Support clear, predictable and transparent regulation.
- Consider site-specific and block-level conditions.
- Avoid recommendations that unintentionally make permitted housing unworkable.
- Distinguish between technical recommendations and broader policy matters.

- Provide clear reasons for recommendations.

Membership

The Committee will consist of up to nine voting members and up to four non-voting members.

Voting Members

Council may appoint up to nine members including at least one from Council who collectively bring a balance of technical knowledge, community perspectives and lived experience. Membership should include a balanced combination of residents, renters, business or neighbourhood representatives and individuals with experience in planning, architecture, landscape architecture, housing development, construction, real estate, affordability or municipal regulation.

Non-Voting Members

- One staff liaison appointed in accordance with Council Policy ADMIN-61.
- One recording secretary.

Additional staff or technical specialists may attend meetings as required to provide information.

Appointment Process

Council will appoint voting members through an open application process. Applicants should identify:

- their connection to Esquimalt;
- relevant professional, technical or lived experience;
- the perspectives they would bring;
- any actual or potential conflicts of interest; and
- their availability for the required meeting schedule.

Chair and Vice-Chair

The Committee will elect a Chair and Vice-Chair from among its voting members at its first meeting.

Term and Meetings

The Committee will be established for an eighteen-month term commencing December 2026.

Initial Work Plan

- Orientation on provincial SSMUH requirements and the Township's areas of discretion.
- Review of engagement findings, existing zoning and Development Permit Area provisions.
- Review of technical and operational information from Township staff and relevant approaches used by other municipalities.
- Identification and assessment of amendment options, benefits, costs and trade-offs.
- Preparation of preliminary and final recommendations to Council.

Deliverables

- A summary of issues reviewed.
- Recommended amendments to the Zoning Bylaw and related Development Permit Area guidelines.
- Recommended OCP amendments, where directly required.
- Advice on the SSMUH-related scope of the Affordability Strategy.
- An explanation of anticipated benefits, costs and trade-offs.
- Identification of recommendations requiring further legal, technical or financial review.
- A summary of areas of agreement and differing views.

Decision-Making

The Committee will make recommendations by majority vote. Where there are significant dissenting or minority perspectives, those views and the reasons behind them will be reported to Council alongside the majority recommendation. Authority and Limitations

The Committee is advisory to Council and does not have authority to:

- direct staff;
- approve development applications;
- amend bylaws or policies;
- commit Township funds;
- negotiate on behalf of the Township; or
- make decisions reserved for Council.

The Committee will not draft final bylaw language or provide legal interpretations. Administration will review the Committee's advice and prepare any proposed bylaw, policy or guideline amendments for Council's consideration.

Conflict of Interest

Members must disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest. A member with a direct financial interest in a specific matter should not participate in discussion or voting on that matter.

Reporting to Council

The Committee will provide preliminary recommendations before the end of 2026 and final technical recommendations by March 31, 2027. A final report on the Committee's work will be submitted before the end of its term.

Appendix H: Consolidated Community Input by Discretion Area

Consolidated Community Input by Discretion Area

This chart maps the 7 areas of Township discretion, plus Dwellings per Lot (set provincially), against the Provincial recommended minimum, Esquimalt's current bylaw, and community input received to date. Input is unattributed and consolidated from the workshop, interviews, correspondence, survey, and public submissions, including a full review of all 262 survey comments.

Input outside the 7 discretion areas is listed separately at the end.

Discretion Area	Province Recommended (Minimum)	Esquimalt's Current Bylaw	Community Input
1. Building Height	3 storeys or 11m	11m	• Change to a height band (e.g. 5.1m–10m) that varies with neighbour view angles, lot dimensions, and context, rather than one flat number. • Explore an angular-plane approach relating permitted height to distance from the property boundary. • Clarify and publicly confirm how height is actually measured (e.g. to peak vs. average/mid-grade) — raised as an open question and unconfirmed to date. • If a single limit is retained, 9m is defensible for three conventional 8' storeys with a flat/shallow roof; 10m is reasonable if the extra metre is explicitly reserved for a modest pitched roof, not additional ceiling height or luxury features. • Distinguish a single principal (front) building, which keeps the fuller height allowance, from a second/rear building limited to two storeys and roughly 7.5m. • Adopt precedents already used elsewhere: 3 storeys front / 2 storeys rear, 10m to peak. • Height was cited as a major driver of construction cost; a lower limit could meaningfully reduce cost.
2. Setbacks	Reduction of front and rear setback encouraged	Front: 2m–4m Rear: 4.5m	• Apply setback consistency at the block level. • If angular planes are adopted, focus them on the third storey only, rather than all three floors; first- and second-floor setbacks should stay close to traditional distances. • Increase the rear setback (e.g. from 4.5m toward 6m or more, or ~8m) to preserve tree-planting

Discretion Area	Province Recommended (Minimum)	Esquimalt's Current Bylaw	Community Input
			space and building separation; consider expressing rear setback as a percentage of lot depth on deep lots. • Retain the front setback in the range already used (~4m), seen as supportive of tree-friendly streets; consider a smaller front setback specifically if paired with a larger rear setback. • A specific 1.2m setback reduction on one project was called excessive and raised as a safety concern (an entry door positioned next to a chimney). • Exempt garden suites specifically from rear setback restrictions, treating them distinctly from standard SSMUH massing. • Allow a small amount of front amenity space in place of a purely private front lawn setback, to improve street-level community feel. • Where a lot has two principal buildings, apply a larger rear setback and/or reduced height to whichever building faces the rear property line, to protect privacy. • A related but distinct position, raised in later survey responses, called for extending the same height and setback flexibility to existing single-family homeowners seeking to renovate or expand their own homes, rather than reserving it only for new multi-unit development.
3. Lot Coverage	Province recommends 50% baseline	40% – 50%	• Adjust setbacks and site coverage together (not independently) to allow more adequate tree protection and green space — the highest-voted workshop theme overall. • Reduce coverage on smaller lots (e.g. from 50% toward 40%), matching the standard already used on larger lots; even at 40% across three storeys, units still land well above the bylaw's own minimum size. • Add a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) or Floor Space Ratio (FSR) control, since coverage and height alone can still produce units roughly double the size described in provincial design guidance; a tiered formula (e.g. Richmond's) can produce average unit sizes much closer to that guidance. • Cap overall building scale directly, citing View Royal's approach (fourplex 372m² / sixplex 558m², ~1,000 sq ft average unit) — raised independently by two separate survey respondents.

Discretion Area	Province Recommended (Minimum)	Esquimalt's Current Bylaw	Community Input
			• Increase permitted FAR specifically for one- and two-unit homes, to preserve the ability to add a legal third unit or expand within an existing footprint without demolishing the existing house. • State a minimum soft-landscaping requirement tied to coverage; consider dividing buildings on larger lots.
4. Parking	0.5 – 1.0 per unit (recommended)	0.5 – 1.0 per unit	• Current parking minimums are generally workable as-is; further regulation should focus on design specifics — pavers vs. asphalt, gardens between spaces, and bike parking — rather than minimum counts. • The Frequent Transit Area boundary used for the reduced 0.5/unit minimum may be drawn too narrowly, excluding walkable parts of south Esquimalt. • Some individual comments asked for at least one full-size space per unit, citing existing street parking pressure and household car ownership rising as children reach driving age. • Consider driveway width limits and permeable driveway surfaces as part of an overall parking and site-design approach. • A smaller number of respondents, often self-identified renters or car-light households, proposed the opposite: trading mandated parking for outdoor amenity space, storage, or reduced construction costs, particularly for units near frequent transit.
5. Landscaping and Green Space	<i>No specific standard in the original comparison chart</i>	<i>No specific standard in the original comparison chart</i>	• Build flexibility into the bylaw so setbacks/siting can be adjusted specifically to protect a significant tree or other natural feature, rather than only reducing unit count. • Strengthen soft-landscape and tree-canopy requirements; introduce a separate impervious-surface (stormwater) standard, since lot coverage doesn't currently distinguish paved from permeable surface. • Require permeable driveways and stormwater management plans for multiplexes to prevent runoff onto neighbouring properties. • Favours off-site modular construction partly because it limits construction footprint and preserves existing trees compared to conventional on-site building.

Discretion Area	Province Recommended (Minimum)	Esquimalt's Current Bylaw	Community Input
			Tree canopy loss (mature Garry Oak and Fir) was the top environmental concern, weighed against the counter argument that compact infill reduces sprawl elsewhere.
6. Privacy and Overlook	<i>No specific standard in the original comparison chart</i>	<i>No specific standard in the original comparison chart</i>	- Establish requirements on window placement/overlook, frosted windows, decks that don't overlook neighbours, and higher fences; require neighbour consultation before approval; require the developer to address costs where an existing neighbour must take measures to restore lost privacy. - Add a third-storey setback requirement or window-placement limits; where a lot has two principal buildings, reduce height/storey count for whichever faces the rear property line. - A second-floor balcony positioned five feet from a neighbouring yard and ten feet above grade was cited as a direct consequence of reduced setbacks without accompanying privacy measures. - Limit upper-floor window placement facing neighbouring yards; require third-storey decks to face the street; mandate privacy screens for upper-level outdoor space; require deeper balcony setbacks; use landscape screening; discourage rooftop decks affecting neighbouring privacy.
7. Building Form and Character	<i>No specific standard in the original comparison chart</i>	<i>No specific standard in the original comparison chart</i>	- Require articulated façades (step-backs, bays, porches) so buildings don't present a flat three-storey wall to the street; mandate pitched or articulated rooflines instead of flat roofs; require a street-facing front door for at least one unit; limit maximum building width; require high-quality exterior materials; encourage house-scale massing with upper floors stepped back. - Massing controls (height, coverage, setbacks, FAR) are what most directly determine whether a building reads as "modest" and compatible — form and character is downstream of those controls, not a separate rule. - Recurring complaints that specific completed developments don't fit their surrounding single-storey or older neighbourhood context, raised repeatedly as lived evidence of the problem. - A recently completed multi-unit development on Drake Street was cited by name as a positive counter-example, credited with retaining mature trees, providing meaningful green space, orienting

Discretion Area	Province Recommended (Minimum)	Esquimalt's Current Bylaw	Community Input
			units toward the street, and including adequate on-site parking.
8. Dwellings per Lot / Unit Count (outside the 7 — set provincially)	Min. 3 units (<280m ²) Min. 4 units (≥280m ²) Min. 6 units near frequent transit	Up to 3 (<280m ²) Up to 4 (≥280m ²)	- Unit count itself was generally not contested — it's fixed provincially; input focused on how units are configured, not how many. - Allow suites and lock-off suites to count toward a higher total (e.g. 6 units where some are suites) to maximize housing diversity and affordability; suites could be exempt from parking requirements. - Preserve the ability to add a legal third unit under current standards — several submissions argued that tightening height, coverage, or setbacks could make a technically-permitted third unit physically or financially impossible to actually build.

Outside the 7 discretion areas

These don't map to any design standard above — named separately rather than forced into a category they don't belong in.

A. Process, notification, and governance

- Add a notification tracker; establish a general notification process for new SSMUH applications; explore increasing staff discretion to approve variances with neighbour concurrence. Received the highest agreement of any workshop theme.
- Site sign-posts and website updates on active applications.
- Create an entirely new Development Permit Area (DPA #13) specifically for SSMUH, modelled on the existing DPA #11 (West Bay).
- Requested clarity on how Council wishes to receive further community input through permitted channels, explicitly not a request for a public hearing.
- Raised a governance/transparency concern about industry lobbying influence on provincial and local SSMUH policy design.
- Concerns about lack of advance neighbour notice given staff-level permit approval, and inconsistent bylaw enforcement even after formal complaints.
- A number of respondents in the final days of the survey questioned the engagement process itself, noting the survey could be completed anonymously and more than once, that questions were unclear or leading, and that awareness of the survey's existence was low until shortly before it closed. One submission specifically recommended a more proactive, multi-channel communications strategy given how predictably contentious this topic was expected to be.

B. Affordability

- The central, unresolved outcome measure every other category is judged against, not a design lever itself. Positions range from "current outcomes aren't affordable" to "SSMUH is one of the only realistic ownership paths available."
- A smaller number of submissions proposed a mandated mix of low-, medium- and high-income units within the Township (citing the loss of low-income rental units at a specific local redevelopment), and pointed to co-op and non-market housing models as a more direct route to affordability than market-rate SSMUH alone.

C. Infrastructure and utility capacity

- Concerns about water supply, sewer capacity (Inflow & Infiltration), roads, schools, recreation, and policing being strained by added density, and who bears the cost.
- Later survey comments named specific pressure points, including Macaulay Elementary operating over capacity and local urgent care access being described as inadequate, alongside general concerns about sewer, water and road capacity.

D. Modular and off-site construction

- Incentivize micro-modular fabrication to speed delivery, reduce construction disruption, and limit site/tree disturbance compared to conventional building.

E. Natural light and accessibility

- Existing checklist requirements (window size/orientation for sunlight, sunlight in all bedrooms, accessible pathways, universally accessible ground floor), well covered already, but outside the 7-category framework entirely.

F. Lighting, waste enclosures, driveway width, and corner lots

- Neighbourhood-scale lighting standards; garbage/recycling enclosure standards; driveway width limits; corner-lot design guidelines addressing both street frontages.