



## 4. Housing Choices in Distinctive Neighbourhoods

The 2000 *Corporate Strategic Plan* confirmed residents' desire to preserve the high quality and individual characteristics of their neighbourhoods while ensuring housing choice. These two issues are interwoven. As residents' needs change over time, strategies for providing a wider range of local housing forms could present both challenges and opportunities for neighbourhood character. Related to this is the issue of heritage preservation, which enhances neighbourhood distinctiveness through reminders of a community's past. In fulfilling Coquitlam's regional commitments and continuing to meet community needs as they evolve, the Citywide Official Community Plan provides a framework for responding to change in positive ways that respect neighbourhood quality, provide stability and foster choices.

## 4.1 Housing Choice and Affordability

### ISSUES

#### CHANGING POPULATION NEEDS

With a range of household types and age groups to accommodate, Coquitlam has made strides in providing appropriate housing forms – at large and within individual communities and neighbourhoods. To ensure choices for all, including newcomers and longtime residents, Coquitlam must continue to encourage a range of housing forms, both now and as population needs continue to change. Ways to achieve this include: understanding the nature and implications of potential changes; and developing strategies to build greater flexibility into the land use planning framework over time.

#### LAND SUPPLY CONSTRAINTS TO MEETING FUTURE NEEDS

Future housing options may be constrained by a diminishing undeveloped land supply in areas outside the Northeast. One solution could include some intensification or infill of existing areas, which brings both challenges and opportunities. Unchecked, infill may be disruptive to neighbourhoods, but if undertaken carefully, infill can help enhance existing neighbourhood assets and allow more choice. To ensure positive longer term outcomes, a process could be developed for considering and accommodating residential intensification in other areas, where appropriate and desired by the community. Any such process should also seek to respect local character where feasible. This could also include developing new housing forms featuring ground orientation and connection with many features of the single-detached home.

#### RISING HOUSING COSTS

Coquitlam is part of a broader region where housing costs have steadily risen over the last two decades. Despite recent fluctuations, prices are expected to continue rising over the longer term. Beyond addressing changing needs and land constraints, Coquitlam can also help create appropriate conditions for other businesses and agencies to provide both market and non-market housing options. As there are resource implications for doing so, and many other groups with a role to play in this area, Coquitlam's focus on harnessing partnerships will be vital.

#### OTHER SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS

As part of ensuring choice, an opportunity exists to address the special housing needs of seniors and people with disabilities, through appropriate design measures. Such efforts should be undertaken in a manner that avoids undue impacts on housing costs, and based on lessons learned from other successful approaches in other communities.

*Future changes to address could include:*

- *Continued need to house families with children;*
- *More housing for seniors;*
- *More one-person households.*

*Eight percent of Coquitlam residents have a disability. As the population ages, this number will increase.*

## RESPONSES

### OBJECTIVE 1

To understand and continue to provide for the housing needs of Coquitlam's diverse population both now and in future.

#### POLICIES

- a) **Obtain and use the best available information on community housing needs to inform related policy decisions.** This may include periodic local housing needs studies, which consider population and age-related forecasts as well as age-specific housing preferences.
- b) **Create the right planning tools to provide for a greater range of attractive, reasonably priced housing choices.** Develop a broader range of zoning options to accommodate small-lot detached housing and other housing forms to suit different needs and lifestyles, such as single-person households, ground-oriented housing, and other innovative multiple-family housing.
- c) **Develop other strategies as appropriate for meeting the housing needs of our diverse population.**

### OBJECTIVE 2

To recognize and address land constraints to meeting the changing housing needs of Coquitlam's population while balancing the need for affordability and neighbourhood stability.

#### POLICIES

- a) **Develop a prudent and comprehensive process for residential intensification through sensitive development that integrates with community characters.** This might include:
  - Community consultation;
  - Both single-family and multiple family options for intensification;
  - An urban design approach that respects existing community character, and allows for unique neighbourhood identity; and
  - Appropriate financing mechanisms for servicing new development.

In the interim, it may be necessary to identify provisional means of addressing this issue, created by focussing on the characteristics and specific needs of areas likely to experience significant demand for infill.

- b) **Continue to respond to land constraints by facilitating attractive forms of compact housing types.** Encourage multi-family housing that appeals to people seeking features traditionally associated with single-family housing. Such features may include: an area to garden, play or enjoy the outdoors; direct access to grade; workshop space; larger units; and locations in family-oriented neighbourhoods.





### OBJECTIVE 3

To address housing cost issues by ensuring a diverse range of lower cost market and government-subsidized housing options and identifying opportunities for collaboration in achieving these.

#### POLICIES

- a) **In connection with the City's affordable housing strategy, acknowledge the importance of rental housing options within Coquitlam.** Work with other agencies and stakeholders to develop appropriate strategies for providing these options.
- b) **Continue to regulate strata conversion of rental housing units.**
- c) **Continue to ensure that tenants displaced by redevelopment are protected through relocation assistance from the developer.**
- d) **Continue to administer and update the Secondary Suites program, as needed.**
- e) **Reaffirm Coquitlam's existing commitment to accepting special needs housing, in appropriate locations and as an appropriate share of Coquitlam's housing stock.**
- f) **Work with a range of groups to support creation of new assisted housing in appropriate locations.** This may include:
  - Investigating opportunities to secure a percentage of affordable or rental housing through development negotiations;
  - Identifying strategies for non-profit groups and other government agencies to manage and administer any scattered rental units that the City owns or may acquire through development negotiations; and
  - Pursuing other partnerships with non-profit groups, as appropriate.
- g) **Consider additional density on certain sites to support the development of affordable or special needs housing on a case-by-case basis and on the following general conditions:<sup>1</sup>**
  - Located within 'Core' or 'Shoulder' areas as identified in the Transit-Oriented Development Strategy;
  - In close proximity (walking and cycling distance) to transit service, commercial services and public amenities;
  - Meets an affordable or special needs housing need; and
  - Addresses design/massing, servicing, parking and transportation requirements.
- h) **Provide incentives to develop purpose-built rental units.<sup>2</sup>** This may include the following:
  - Exempting purpose-built rental units from maximum density allowances in cases where maximum density has been achieved through density bonus and other methods according to the Zoning Bylaw, subject to servicing, parking, traffic, urban design, building height/massing review and the amount and type of

<sup>1</sup>AMENDED JUNE 1, 2015 – BYLAW 4561

<sup>2</sup>AMENDED NOVEMBER 27, 2017 – BYLAW 4818

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purpose-built rental units proposed, to a maximum additional density of:

- o 1.0 Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for high-density projects that utilize the RM-4, RM-5, RM-6, C-4, C-5 and C-7 zones; and
  - o 10% of the applicable FAR for medium-density projects that utilize the RM-2 and RM-3 zones.
  - Allowing an additional 0.5 FAR, in addition to the extra 1.0 FAR noted above, through rezoning to a CD zone (based on the corresponding zone) in cases where more than 40% of the units provided in the additional 0.5 FAR are below-market and non-market rental units and more than 20% of the units in the additional 1.0 FAR are Priority Unit Types.
- i) **Establish specific forms of purpose-built rental housing as priority unit types.**<sup>1</sup> While all forms of purpose-built rental housing are valuable, a higher level of priority may be placed on the provision of the following types of rental units:
- Below-market rental units;
  - Non-market rental units;
  - Accessible rental units; and
  - Three-plus bedroom rental units.
- j) **On a case-by-case basis, consider allowing reductions in the amount of Common Amenity Area required as an incentive to provide purpose-built rental units.**<sup>1</sup> The reductions in the required amount of Common Amenity Area will be considered as follows:
- For purpose-built market rental, minor reductions of up to 20% of the required Common Amenity Area; and
  - For below-market rental and non-market rental, further reductions of over 20% of the required Common Amenity Area, based on the level of rental housing affordability and the proximity to local amenities such as community recreation facilities, parks, playgrounds, pools, meeting rooms, private fitness facilities, and other amenities that could be available to residents.
- k) **Consider reducing or waiving the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund (AHRF) contribution required to achieve density bonuses in Apartment Residential and Commercial zones, based on the following considerations:**<sup>1</sup>
- The number of below-market or non-market rental units provided in the development;
  - The level of affordability of the below-market or non-market rental units; and
  - The formation of a partnership with a third party housing partner that enters into an agreement with the City and the



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developer of the housing units, to provide resources dedicated to manage the rental housing units.

The value and leverage of units created must be equal to or greater than the reduction in the AHRF contribution.

l) **Consider reducing or waiving the financial contribution towards amenities required to achieve density bonuses in Apartment Residential and Commercial zones, based on the following considerations:<sup>1</sup>**

- All of the financial contribution towards the AHRF has already been waived due to the provision of below-market or non-market rental units; and
- Additional below-market or non-market rental units are provided of a value at least 20% greater than the amount waived (i.e., the City will waive \$1.00 of amenity contribution for every \$1.20 of demonstrated value provided in additional below-market, accessible, or non-market rental units).

The City will seek strongly leveraged value before it will consider reducing the important contributions towards amenities.

**Objective 4**

To encourage the cost-effective provision of housing which either meet, or can readily be adapted to meet, the needs of people with disabilities.

**POLICIES**

- a) **Monitor the efforts of other cities in providing for barrier-free and adaptable housing, to determine the best approach for Coquitlam.**
- b) **Consider guidelines for adaptable housing to inform developers of measures that can be incorporated into their housing projects to facilitate the future conversion of units to become barrier-free.**
- c) **Encourage other levels of government to continue to and enhance their activities in providing special needs housing.**

<sup>1</sup>AMENDED NOVEMBER 27, 2017 – BYLAW 4818

## 4.2 Neighbourhoods

### ISSUES

#### **MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER**

Coquitlam residents have expressed the desire to maintain and enhance the appearance and overall experience of their neighbourhoods. Physical features which may help achieve this by ensuring both internal consistency and a unique identity include: the presence of mature vegetation; preservation and creation of public views; common housing forms, ages or design elements (such as gables and porches); and historic buildings. Consistency does not mean that all homes should look alike; rather, it means that one or more elements or patterns that contribute to a particular neighbourhood's identity are repeated. There is also the concern that neighbourhoods currently sharing key elements are in peril of losing them through redevelopment. As neighbourhoods face the challenges brought on by change, Coquitlam should investigate opportunities for new developments to build on existing neighbourhood patterns to foster the sense of consistency over time.

#### **ATTRACTIVE AND SAFE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENTS**

Another important aspect of neighbourhood character is the provision of safe environments for walking and cycling. Sidewalks are an important aspect of pedestrian-friendly streets, as are building and landscape design. In addition to providing sidewalks (see transportation and utilities chapters), Coquitlam has an opportunity to enhance pedestrian environments in neighbourhoods by revisiting its standards for setbacks, street visibility, access, and front yard fencing.

#### **NEIGHBOURHOOD GATHERING OPPORTUNITIES**

Opportunities exist to provide for the functional integration of public gathering places with residential neighbourhoods, including the mitigation of any potential negative impacts.



*Ideas for reinforcing landscaping could include:*

- *Encouraging new multiple family developments and lower density subdivisions to enhance landscaping in key locations;*
- *Appropriate construction protection measures for landscaping;*
- *Recognizing landscaping enhancement opportunities where parks interface with adjacent residential; and*
- *Fulfilling the 2000 Strategic Plan commitment for a comprehensive landscape/urban forest policy, including the potential neighbourhood landscaping themes as part of this exercise.*

*Consistent building design treatments might reinforce:*

- *Heritage features;*
- *Similar building heights;*
- *Rooflines and cornices;*
- *Window sizes and treatments;*
- *Street orientation; and*
- *Less prominent placement of garages.*

## RESPONSES

### OBJECTIVE 1

To respect and enhance the character of Coquitlam's neighbourhoods by celebrating their unique features.

#### POLICIES

- a) **Reinforce landscaping as a character element.** Retain and augment mature landscaping and trees where possible, focusing on multi-family developments and new subdivisions.
- b) **Recognize the importance of built form in respecting neighbourhood character.** Investigate consistent building design treatments for individual neighbourhoods likely to experience some form of redevelopment or infill. Preferably this would occur through neighbourhood planning exercises; however, interim strategies may be needed in some cases.

### OBJECTIVE 2

To ensure that new developments enhance neighbourhood streetscapes and pedestrian experiences.

#### POLICIES

- a) **Improve integration of all transportation modes.** This may be achieved through such measures as:
  - Minimizing the amount of street frontage occupied by garages; or
  - Locating garages to the rear of properties to enhance direct visual surveillance from living areas.
- b) **Help enhance the perception of neighbourhood street safety.** This may be achieved by encouraging new developments to:
  - Provide for street overlook through windows, balconies or porches;
  - Pronounce entrances, at appropriate scales;
  - Provide for pedestrian-scaled lighting features, as appropriate; and
  - Maximize direct grade access to the street for individual units.
- c) **Encourage new development to respect views from the public realm.** Such views may include near, mid and far views, and may be achieved by avoiding overshadowing, minimizing building footprint size, and having breaks between structures to prevent a "fortress" appearance.
- d) **Where significant redevelopment is to occur, enhance the sense of a unified streetscape.** Recognize that neighbourhood plans provide an opportunity to achieve this in a comprehensive manner. Where redevelopment occurs in advance of this planning, provide for appropriate levels of consistency with adjacent properties through development variance permits, covenants, or other appropriate measures.
- e) **Provide for neighbourly front yards in infill and multiple family situations.** Ideally this will occur in neighbourhood planning processes, although interim strategies could be required.



### OBJECTIVE 3

To functionally integrate local gathering places such as parks, community centres, and main street commercial areas with nearby residential, while minimizing any negative impacts.

#### POLICIES

- a) **Promote compatibility between retail and service commercial and residential neighbourhoods.** This may be achieved through appropriate siting, buffering, access configurations, and other design measures. Refine development permit guidelines pertaining to retail and service commercial developments to further enhance this compatibility.
- b) **Strengthen the sense of shared identity between residential areas and nearby commercial where appropriate.** Identify and implement appropriate design elements to be achieved either as redevelopment occurs or through any initiatives such as business improvement area projects.
- c) **Create opportunities for public gathering spaces such as "village squares" in and around larger commercial areas.** Encourage the use of the local community centre and school as gathering places for special events, while taking steps to reduce traffic and safety impacts for nearby homes.

*Options for promoting neighbourly front yards could include:*

- *Landscaping and consistent building design;*
- *Avoiding a barricade-effect in front yards, through landscaping or provision for low and transparent fencing treatments; and*
- *Revisiting fencing provisions within the Zoning Bylaw, as appropriate.*

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*An example of residential and commercial integration in a "main street" setting. Note the secure, yet neighbourly treatment of the staircase leading to units above grade.*

#### **OBJECTIVE 4<sup>1</sup>**

Minimize retaining wall heights and build liveable and attractive neighbourhoods in steep slope conditions for one-family residential development.

#### **POLICIES**

a) **In one-family residential developments:**

- i. Site and building designs are to respond to the natural topography;
- ii. Cut and fill excavations are to be minimized to help preserve the natural topography;
- iii. In highly visible locations, landscaping is to be used to blend retaining walls into the terrain; and
- iv. Stepped (terraced) retaining walls are to follow the natural terrain.

b) **Employ slope adaptive architectural elements that are considered appropriate for the neighbourhood context.**

This might include (but not limited to):

- i. A reduction in finished grades;
- ii. Minimizing massing of retaining walls;
- iii. Increasing useable area of rear yards; and
- iv. The consideration of variances for the following:
  1. A secondary suite two floors below grade;
  2. A porch on the top level up to 4.5 metres to the structure of the porch roof; or
  3. Building height and roof pitch.

## 4.3 Community Heritage

### ISSUES

#### CELEBRATING COQUITLAM'S DISTINCTIVE PAST

Coquitlam enjoys a rich heritage, evident in many features throughout the City. The notion of heritage extends beyond individual buildings, affecting overall streetscapes and neighbourhoods. Maintaining and caring for this heritage brings many benefits, such as: enhancing the community's distinct identity and pride through the preservation of the roots of its ancestors; providing a sense of continuity between the past, present and future; and demonstrating a commitment to the general principle of sustainability, in that valued heritage resources are retained and not discarded.



### RESPONSE

#### OBJECTIVE 1

To guide the retention and enhancement of Coquitlam's distinct and valued heritage for the enlightened enjoyment of future generations.

#### POLICIES

- a) **Encourage community input to identify an inventory of significant heritage resources, some of which could be considered for future voluntary protection.**
- b) **Develop a Heritage Management Plan to provide a comprehensive and balanced framework to plan for and manage heritage resources.**
- c) **Encourage partnerships and coordination of resources between community organizations and outside agencies to promote awareness of Coquitlam's proud heritage.**
- d) **Use multiple methods of communication to make heritage information available to a broad spectrum of people.**
- e) **Maintain and promote the corporate memory and organizational history of the City of Coquitlam by preserving and making accessible its records of archival value.**

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