

PART B: POLICIES

9. Housing



9.1 Overview

Colwood has a very high percentage of residents who live in single detached dwellings and a lower percentage of people who live in apartments as compared with the provincial average. In Colwood, 51% of households reside single-detached homes and 38% reside in duplexes and rowhouses. Just 11% live in apartments, with a slim minority living in buildings in five or more storeys.

However projections for housing demand in West Shore communities include a greater emphasis on apartments, with housing starts for single-detached houses decreasing and those for multi-unit buildings increasing.

While Colwood remains a more affordable option compared with many other coastal communities, high house prices combined with commuting costs create challenges for many households. According to the Victoria Real Estate Board, in July 2017 the average cost of a single-detached house in Colwood was over \$660,000, an increase of over \$112,000 in the prior year. The average household income in Colwood is several times below the CMHC debt service ratio.

The average cost of a condo apartment was more affordable – just over \$366,000 – but is also rapidly increasing in cost.

Regionally, the vacancy rate for the rental market is well below what is considered a healthy vacancy rate (3%) and was sitting at 0.7% in October 2016 and not projected to increase significantly by 2018.

While housing falls within the jurisdiction of senior levels of government, the policies in this section draw on land use and other tools – such as incentives and partnerships – available to local governments in helping meet community housing goals for housing diversity and choice.

9.2 Objectives and Policies

Objective: 9.2.1

To increase housing choices for existing and future residents – recognizing that Colwood is a family-oriented community that is also aging – and enhance diversity of housing types for a variety of household sizes, incomes, tenures, needs and preferences.

POLICY 9.2.1.1 FAMILY-FRIENDLY AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Maintain the attractiveness and affordability of housing in Colwood by requiring the following in rezoning processes:

- a. The provision of ground floor units with front door access to the street in all residential developments greater than three storeys in height;
- b. The establishment of outdoor amenity space for all multi-unit residential developments; and
- c. Incorporate measures that respond to the needs of seniors to age in place, people with disabilities, and families by invoking the BC Building Code and creating new opportunities where appropriate.

POLICY 9.2.1.2 DISTRIBUTED HOUSING CHOICES

While future residential growth will be focused in mixed-use centres and along the frequent transit network, enable distribution of diverse housing types throughout the city in all neighbourhoods. Refer to Part B, Sections 6 and 7.

IMPLEMENTATION

- ACTION: Review and make necessary updates to the Zoning Bylaw to increase flexibility for secondary suites and other suites.
- TIMING: Before 2023.

POLICY 9.2.1.3 SECONDARY SUITES AND OTHER SUITES

Continue supporting the expansion of secondary suites including coach houses throughout the city to increase the rental stock and improve housing affordability, limiting them to lots that are of sufficient size and width to accommodate off-street parking without compromising onsite landscaping, boulevards, street trees and the overall visual aesthetics of streetscapes.

POLICY 9.2.1.4 FLEXIBLE HOUSING

Support flexible housing design that allows a residential unit to accommodate renovations for a variety of household sizes and needs over time, which could include one, two, or three separate units.

Objective: 9.2.2

To support rental housing and a range of non-market housing options and needs along the housing spectrum.

IMPLEMENTATION

- ACTION: The City should clarify and update a working definition of “affordable housing” for home ownership and rental.
- TIMING: Before 2023.

POLICY 9.2.2.1 NON-MARKET AND RENTAL HOUSING

Support new affordable rental housing, particularly in transit-accessible locations by:

- a. Applying and reviewing the Attainable Housing Policy at least every five years;
- b. Regularly reviewing the disbursement of funds in the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund;
- c. Reducing community amenity contributions for affordable rental housing developments and considering reductions for developments that include secure market rental units;
- d. Supporting the addition of ancillary rental or affordable housing on institutional sites, such as places of workshop, where additional development can be accommodated;
- e. Seeking partnerships with non-profit agencies and other levels of government to access housing programs directed toward specific populations such as seniors, families with children, people with special needs, and those at risk of homelessness.

POLICY 9.2.2.2 DISTRIBUTED NON-MARKET AND RENTAL HOUSING

Co-locate non-market, rental, and special needs housing with transit and other amenities to enable accessibility, while ensuring that these housing types are distributed throughout the city and integrated into diverse neighbourhoods.