



The Corporation of the District of Central Saanich

SPECIAL COUNCIL REPORT

For the Special Council meeting on Monday, January 22, 2024

Re: Priority Application Policy

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Council adopt Planning Policy 02. PLAN Priority Application Policy as presented in the January 22, 2024 Council Report to be effective immediately, and

THAT amendments to the Development Procedures Bylaw, Development Application Process Policy, and other related documents reflecting the new policy be brought forward for consideration.

NOTE: This report is one of four companion reports being presented to Council at the January 22, 2024 meeting pertaining to advancing housing strategies in response to a number of provincial legislative requirements, previously identified Council initiatives, and Official Community Plan policies.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present a draft Council Policy for consideration that would prioritize the processing of development applications that would result in more non-market housing or applications increasing the supply of housing that specifically address housing gaps as identified in the most recent Housing Needs Assessment report.

BACKGROUND:

As Council is aware there is an urgent need for more affordable and attainable housing in the District, the Capital Region, and across the province. The District's most recent Housing Needs Assessment (2020) identified the following housing gaps:

- Affordable housing.
- Rental housing.
- Housing for people with disabilities.
- Housing for seniors.
- Housing for families.
- Housing to address homelessness.

DISCUSSION:

The provincial messaging is that barriers to housing include the cumulative impact of numerous requirements and processes to the approval process, which have ultimately been implemented in accordance with provincial acts, particularly the *Community Charter* and *Local Government Act*. Although the province has amended their requirements to enable more streamlining of processes in recent years,

and the District has implemented improvements to its development application process, more can be done to respond to identified housing needs. With the recent enactments, the province is now mandating local governments to approve more housing projects and to reduce timelines to the approval process.

Past practices have generally considered all applications on their merit and they are treated similarly as they go through the approval process, including non-market housing. The purpose of adopting a policy to prioritize specified types of applications could be summarized as follows:

1. It signals to housing organizations that the District acknowledges our housing needs and will prioritize applications for non-market housing projects. This may be particularly beneficial given local housing providers consider sites within the entire region so every message of support could put the District at an advantage.
2. That development applications do not have to be processed with a first come, first serve approach.
3. Development projects that improve housing diversity and affordability are preferred, particularly where they are consistent with the Official Community Plan (ie; location and design objectives) and where they include a community amenity such as child care.
4. Development of more single-family housing or low density housing are not priorities, and therefore may take longer to process. This is particularly important in smaller organizations with fewer resources.
5. That Council supports focusing resources on applications or projects that address the greatest needs of the community and not individual property owners.

Should Council endorse the priority application policy, any recommended amendments to incorporate this into other related bylaws or policies will be included with comprehensive amendments to streamline the approval processes.



CONCLUSION:

Through adopting a Priority Application Policy, the District will indicate that it prioritizes and will put resources toward processing applications for non-market multi-unit housing projects and demonstrate that all options to expedite their approval are implemented.

Report written by:	Andrea Pickard, Planner
Report reviewed by:	Kerri Clark, Manager of Development Services
Respectfully submitted by:	Jarret Matanowitsch, Director of Planning and Building Services
Concurrence by:	Christine Culham, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A: Draft Priority Application Policy