

THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF CENTRAL SAANICH
COUNCIL POLICY

Effective Date January 1, 2024
Amendment Date(s):

POLICY NO.
02.PLAN

File No: TBD

SUBJECT: Priority Application Policy

Category: Planning

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to give direction to staff to prioritize the processing of development applications that would significantly contribute toward identified housing needs.

This policy shall apply to development applications for multi-unit housing containing more than eight dwelling units that would provide:

1. Non-market housing, see Figure 1
2. Rental housing for low to moderate income households
3. Housing for low to moderate income seniors
4. Accessible housing
5. Assisted living or supportive housing
6. Other housing gaps identified in the most recent Housing Needs Report
7. Co-operative housing or other innovative forms of affordable housing

APPLICATION:

This policy applies to Council and District staff when considering development applications that require approval from Council or their staff delegate.

REFERENCE:

This policy makes reference to the Local Government Act, Central Saanich Official Community Plan Bylaw, Central Saanich Land Use Bylaw, Central Saanich Development Application Procedures Bylaw, Central Saanich Delegation of Authority Bylaw,

DEFINITIONS:

“Accessible Housing” means housing units that are designed, constructed, or modified using universal design principles to enable independent living for persons with disabilities in accordance with the applicable BC Building Code Regulations.

“Affordable Housing” means a form of non-market housing that would cost no more than 30% of household income before taxes for low to moderate income households that is secured through a Housing Agreement.

“Assisted living” means housing that includes hospitality services (e.g. meals, housekeeping, social and recreational activities) and one or two prescribed services, such as regular assistance with activities of daily living, medication services or psychosocial supports. Assisted living housing is subject to registration by the BC Assisted Living Registrar and includes self-contained apartments for seniors or people with disabilities who need some support services to continue living independently, but do not need 24-hour facility care; or housing in which residents receive services related to mental health and substance use issues.

“Co-operative housing” means housing incorporated under the *Cooperative Association Act* that provides housing to its members. Members purchase a share to join and elect directors to govern the co-op, which are typically non-profit organizations.

“Development Application” means a development proposal that requires District approval prior to issuance of a Building Permit, including amendments to the Official Community Plan and/or Land Use Bylaw, Development Permits with or without variances, and Development Variance Permits.

“Director” means the Director of Planning and Building Services and includes their lawful designate.

“Housing Needs Report” means the most recent housing needs report completed in accordance with the *Local Government Act*.

“Non-profit housing” means rental housing that is owned and operated by community-based non-profit society or a government agency with a mandate to provide safe, secure, affordable accommodation to households with low to moderate incomes.

“Private market rental housing” means rental housing owned by a private individual or company that is rented to tenants who pay market rates. Rental housing can be in the form of apartments, townhouses, duplexes, secondary suites, or detached accessory dwellings.

“Public Hearing” means a Public Hearing of Council pursuant to the *Local Government Act*.

“Social housing” means housing owned by a not-for-profit organization, a housing co-operative, or government agency that have subsidized rents for people with lower incomes and household income must be below certain limits in order to be eligible.

“Supportive housing” means housing that provides ongoing assistance so residents can live independently:

- It's available for people who are homeless or at risk-of-homelessness and who may have barriers to housing such as mental illness or substance use
- It can be housing for seniors and others who require services such as meals, housekeeping, 24-hour response system and social and recreational activities
- Personal assistance services such as bathing, dressing, or medication assistance may be provided through third party care providers.

“Transitional housing” means housing provided for a minimum of 30 days that can last up to two or three years and includes the provision of on- or off-site support services to help residents move towards independence and self-sufficiency.

POLICY

The District’s Official Community Plan includes as a Fundamental Principle to “Provide a Range of Housing Opportunities, and Protect Housing Affordability” and includes as an objective “Housing for All: Encourage the creation of affordable, rental and special needs housing in the District and support various tenure options to ensure adequate housing for a range of income levels and needs in the community, including housing for First Nations.” The Official Community Plan includes a policy (4.1.10 – see below) to encourage development applications that address identified housing gaps.

Encourage development applications that address identified housing gaps. In particular, favourable consideration will be given to:

- a. Family oriented rental housing;*
- b. Rental housing for seniors;*
- c. Affordable, below market housing;*
- d. Housing for First Nations or WSÁNEĆ Nations;*
- e. Proposals that improve housing diversity, particularly those that allow people to remain in the community as they age (i.e., compact, ground oriented);*
- f. Fully accessible and adaptable housing;*
- g. Proposals designed for workforce housing, including farm workers, healthcare and emergency personnel; and*
- h. Various forms of supportive housing and multi-level care facilities.*

As with many communities and regions throughout the province the District recognizes the lack of housing supply and increased housing costs have created a housing crisis, therefore various strategies to expedite new housing projects are being explored. Additionally, a limited supply of assisted living and supportive housing may exacerbate pressures on the health care system.

As many affordable housing projects would be provincially and/or federally funded through BC Housing and/or Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and are required to meet BC Housing Income Guidelines, the District will align income criteria requirements for all projects (eg: Housing Agreements, covenants) with the BC Housing Income Guidelines, that are updated annually, for the following:

- a. Housing Income Limits (HILS)
- b. Low to Moderate Income
- c. Middle Income

For more information visit: www.bchousing.org

To help support the creation of more housing that would contribute toward the above stated housing goals, Council directs staff to prioritize the processing of development applications for the following:

1. Non-market housing projects, including cooperative housing (see Figure 1)
2. Assisted living housing projects

3. Private market rental housing projects that incorporate a minimum of 20% of the total proposed units as affordable or accessible housing

Despite timelines that may be outlined in the Development Procedures Bylaw, priority development applications should be prioritized as follows:

- Once a new application is received, Planning staff shall initiate a comprehensive review as soon as possible and work on the priority application over other types of applications that are received or are mid-stream in the approval process.
- From the time of receiving a complete application, a priority application shall be referred to internal departments and be reviewed as soon as possible with comments provided to Planning within 15 business days.
- That within the scope of applicable guidelines and regulations, staff shall consider some leniencies in their interpretation to improve project feasibility, subject to all health and safety requirements being satisfied.
- From the time of receiving a complete application, planning staff will provide the applicant with review comments, including feedback from other departments, within 25 business days.
- That once a revised submission and further information is provided by the applicant as required, a report be presented to Council within one month of receiving the revised submission, or a summary presented to Council's delegate in accordance with the Delegation of Authority Bylaw within 15 business days.
- That Council will rely upon guiding documents available from external organizations when considering applications and avoid referring applications where not required, or alternatively refer application only to request input on specific matters within the mandate of the organization.
- When possible, Council will not require a public hearing where the proposal is consistent with the Official Community Plan in accordance with the *Local Government Act*.

Should more than one priority application be received, the level of priority would be determined as follows:

1. Projects where 100% of the units would be non-market housing
2. Projects that would provide the most subsidized form of non-market housing
3. Projects that would provide the highest overall number of non-market housing units
4. Mixed-use projects that would include child care facilities or health care services

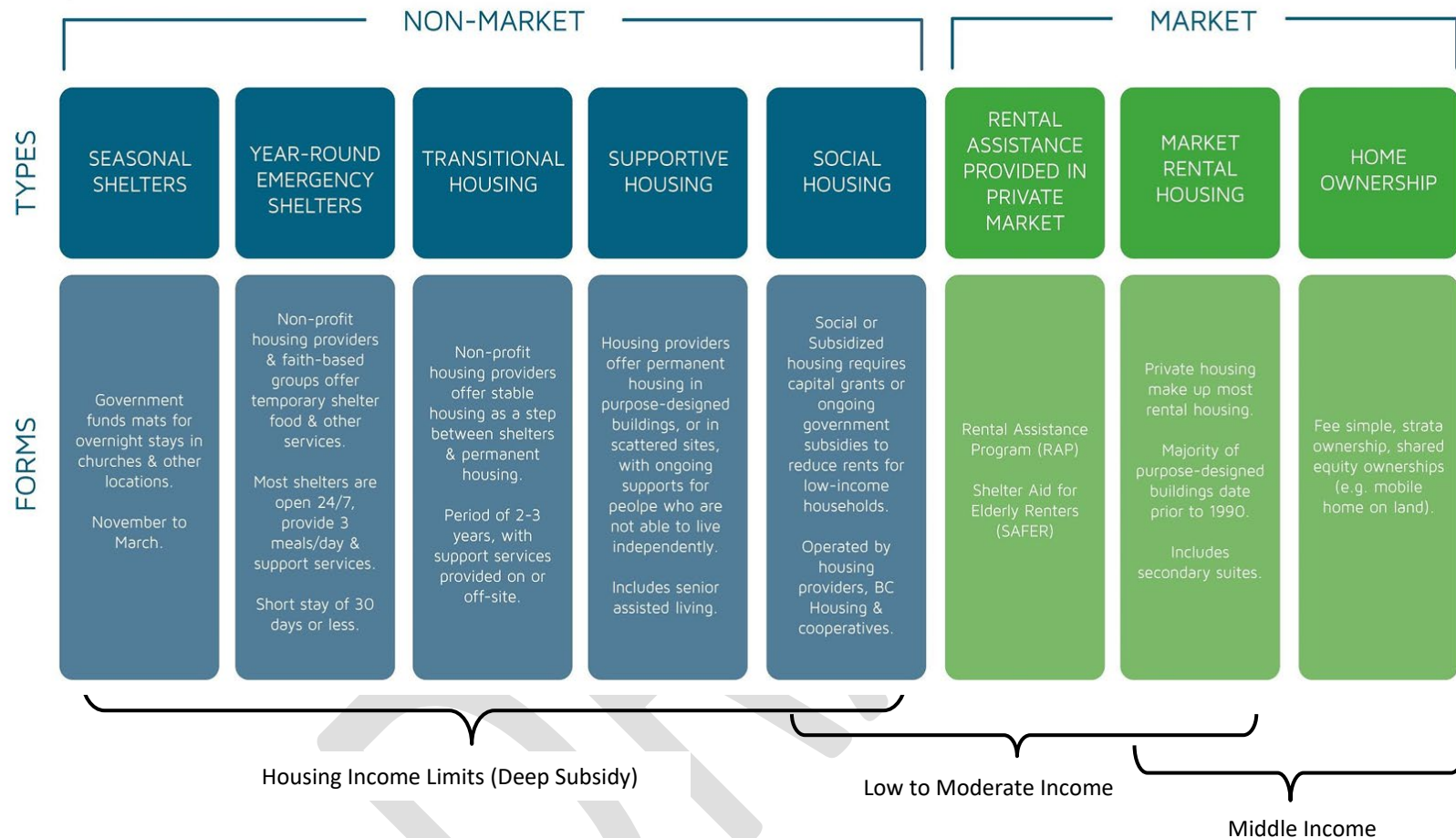


Figure 1: Housing Continuum