

DISCUSSION PAPER¹

Affordable housing in Metchosin

BACKGROUND

Metchosin is a rural community. Under the 2018 Regional Growth Strategy, Metchosin and other rural communities are expected to provide 5% of the housing in the Capital Regional District.

Metchosin's Land Use Bylaw 259 allows for either a secondary suite within the existing residence, or a detached secondary suite within 15 meters of the main residence. A detached secondary suite may be a maximum of 70 square meters. Only one attached or detached secondary suite is permitted.

Anecdotally, it is reported that it is difficult to retain volunteer firefighters, farm labour and other labour for local enterprises as they cannot find affordable housing.

Also anecdotally, it is reported that there are many non-conforming types of accommodation being rented out including multiple attached and detached secondary suites on individual properties, and space for occupied recreational vehicles.

"Tiny homes" are a form of detached secondary suite which would need to be properly inspected, installed, and permitted.

Housing affordability is a general issue throughout the capital region and elsewhere in the province.

DISCUSSION

It is in Metchosin's interest to encourage affordable housing for volunteer firefighters, farm labour and labour for local enterprises. Young families with children are an interest as they contribute to the school population and balance the demographics of the community. It is often mentioned that seniors wish to "age in place".

There are existing mechanisms within our Land Use Bylaw 259 to provide for attached and detached secondary suites. Property owners may be motivated to develop suites for rental income or to provide for family members. Rental may either be long term, or short term such as vacation rentals.

Metchosin is outside the urban containment boundary. Sewers do not extend into the District of Metchosin. CRD water service is limited to certain areas while wells service the balance of the community. Well water may become increasingly limited in the summer months requiring supplemental water being delivered by truck.

¹ This discussion paper was developed by Mark Atherton and Marie-Térèse Little in response to community feedback arising from all candidates' meetings as of October 1, 2022. It is intended to refocus the discussion in a Metchosin context. It is expected to further evolve.

Non-conforming accommodation may not be reflected in property assessments by the BC Assessment Authority. Consequently, the property tax obligation may be undervalued on such properties.

Metchosin has always been fearful of second residences being used as an argument to subdivide properties. The Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw 259 are written to prohibit this.

Not all properties are suitable for detached secondary suites due to water and septic limitations. Neighbouring property owners may be concerned by increased density adjacent to them.

There is no mechanism to limit rentals to target groups or to limit rents charged so that they are “affordable” which is defined as less than 30% of before-tax household income². Increasing the supply has been the most effective mechanism; however, a significant increase in density may not be compatible with our rural objectives.

Under the Regional Growth Strategy Metchosin is not expected to contribute affordable housing to the region.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The community previously engaged in a comprehensive process that resulted in the current policy for secondary suites. If the community wishes to amend the policy, or develop new policy, a new consultation process would need to be undertaken while recognizing there is little interest in reopening the Official Community Plan for review or amendment

The first step in a community consultation process would be to ask participants to define the questions that need to be addressed. Initially, these questions could include:

1. How to increase the supply of affordable accommodation within existing policy?
2. What policy amendments might be required if existing policy is no longer adequate?
3. How do we meet the needs of specific target groups such as volunteer firefighters, farm labour and others?
4. How do we support seniors who wish to remain on their properties?
5. How do we protect Metchosin’s rural values and work within the constraints of our unique ecosystems?
6. What other questions need to be addressed?

CONCLUSION

Provided the community is engaged on the issue, this process would provide Council with the information they need to make an informed decision.

² CMHC, “Definition of Variables.” [Housing in Canada Online - Definitions | CMHC \(beyond2020.com\)](https://www.beyond2020.com/cmhc/definition-of-variables/).