CITY OF NANAIMO
THE HARBOUR CITY

Information Report

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SUBJECT **FORM AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT PERMIT GUIDELINES PROJECT**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To provide an update about the Form and Character Development Permit (DP) Guidelines Project, and the upcoming public engagement and consultation opportunities for this project.

BACKGROUND

A Development Permit (DP) is a land use permit used by local governments to review proposed developments to ensure they meet the policies and objectives of the Official Community Plan (*City Plan*). In February 2024, Staff retained consultants to create new DP design guidelines for 'Development Permit Area 8 (DPA8) Form and Character' for intensive residential, commercial, industrial, and multi-unit development. DPA8 also promotes energy and water conservation, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Development Permit guidelines provide certainty for developers to understand the City's expectation for urban design.

The DP guideline project satisfies two priority actions in the Integrated Action Plan:

1. "Update the Development Permit Area guidelines to be consistent with City Plan policies, with specific focus on: General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines." (Priority Action #202)

2. "Update development permit requirements to include energy, climate, and water efficiency from a site and building design perspective. Develop guidelines that may include passive design techniques, shading, rainwater management, green roofs, building orientation, Water Wise landscape, building energy systems and renewable power generation, among other topics." (Priority Action #5)

In accordance with the Local Government Act, *City Plan* provides the justification and objectives for the City of Nanaimo's DP areas, as well as the DP map schedules (See Attachment A: City Plan – DPA 8 Form & Character).

The City's DP guidelines are within Part 18 of the City of Nanaimo "Zoning Bylaw 2011 No. 4500". The text in DPA8 of the Zoning Bylaw will be updated, and existing design guidelines will be replaced with updated, modernized design guidelines. Also, robust landscaping guidelines are to be included in the new DPA8 design guidelines, which may in whole, or in part, replace 'Part 17 – Landscaping' in the Zoning Bylaw.

DISCUSSION

The new form and character DP guidelines will be informed by *City Plan* policies (including Area Plans and Neighbourhood Plans), and by several engagement and consultation events scheduled for late June 2024.

City Plan

City Plan provides the policy guidance for creating the new form and character DP guidelines. Each *City Plan* land use designation serves a unique purpose, and the design guidelines will be a critical tool for ensuring that each proposed development is contributing to the purpose of the land use designation. In addition, the guidelines will help the City to achieve the five goal areas of *City Plan.*

- *A Green Nanaimo* – The new DP guidelines will promote the reduction of GHG emissions; address climate change adaptation (site and building design, landscaping); encourage protecting and enhancing the city's urban tree canopy, natural areas, and greenways; encourage landscaping with innovative rainwater management; encourage efficient and attractive recycling, organics, and waste management, and dark sky lighting.

- *A Connected Nanaimo* – In each land use designation the design guidelines shall contribute to neighbourhood connections, enhancing the public realm, well defined streets and transit supportive design.

- *A Healthy Nanaimo* – In each land use designation the design guidelines will contribute to promoting safety and security; opportunities for recreation, amenities, food security, and intergenerational living; as well as adaptable and family-friendly design and amenities.

- *An Empowered Nanaimo* – In each land use designation the design guidelines will contribute to promoting culture, heritage, public art, access for all, inclusivity, and equity.

- *A Prosperous Nanaimo* – In each land use designation the design guidelines will contribute to promoting quality physical infrastructure and amenities; as well as enhancing Nanaimo's unique features that contribute to quality of life for people and businesses.

The design guidelines in City Plan's associated Area Plans, and the design guidelines in the Neighbourhood Plans will also inform the creation of new DP guidelines. In general, the new DP guidelines will reflect best practices to improve the quality and experience of the built environment; advance the public interest; enhance functionality; clarify expectations; as well as promote neighbourliness and fit into existing neighbourhoods.

Consultation and Engagement

With the support of the consultants, Staff have several engagement and consultation events proposed in late June 2024 as listed below. Email invitations to the events will be sent in late May and early June. Promotion for the public event and for the project generally will occur through social media, newspaper ads, press release, and a Get Involved web page.

Proposed events are:

- General public consultation event
- Neighbourhood Association consultation event
- Development community workshop
- Design Advisory Panel (DAP)
- Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI)

After the engagement events, input received will be considered for incorporation into the draft form and character DP guidelines. The proposed new DP guidelines will then be presented at a Governance and Priorities Committee meeting in the fall of 2024 for consideration of endorsement. The general public, and all who participated in the engagement events, will then have an opportunity to review the updated draft form and character DP guidelines. If Council proceeds with giving first and second reading to the zoning amending bylaw (with the new DPA8 Form and Character DP guidelines), a public hearing would be required.

CONCLUSION

This report provides an update about the Form and Character Development Permit (DP) Guidelines Project, and the upcoming public engagement, consultation opportunities and next steps.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Council has directed that the City's DPA8 form and character development permit guidelines be updated for intensive residential, commercial, industrial, and multi-unit development. DPA8 also promotes energy and water conservation, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- The new form and character DP guidelines will be informed by *City Plan* policies, and by several engagement and consultation events scheduled for late June 2024.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: City Plan – DPA 8 Form & Character.

Submitted by:

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Concurrence by:

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ATTACHMENT A
Pages 243-242 from City Plan

DPA 8 | Form & Character

Basis for Designation

The Development Permit Area designates areas for the purpose of establishing guidelines for the form and character of intensive residential development; the form and character of commercial, industrial, or multi-family residential development; and for the promotion of energy and water conservation and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, pursuant to Section 488(1)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification for the Designation

To reflect the rapid growth, infill development, and redevelopment of existing areas throughout the city, there is a need to ensure high quality design, a variety of housing types, and provision of mixed-use developments to strengthen neighbourhoods. This growth and infill development comes with the expectation that new development will minimize impact on existing development and enhance the vitality of the community. This then places design conditions on the form and character of all commercial, industrial, multi-family residential, and mixed-use (residential and commercial) development within the city boundaries. The City has adopted housing guidelines to promote the development of a wide variety of housing types as well as promoting housing affordability.

Over the past three decades, Neighbourhood Plans for different areas of the city have been created and include design guidelines with unique and common elements. DPA 8 consolidates these form and character preferences and supports their implementation. This DPA also supports general design guidelines for the entire community, as well as specific Neighbourhood Plan and Area Plan guidelines. Refer to *Schedule 13* of *City Plan* for lands subject to DPA 8.

Objectives

1 To ensure a high level of design and quality of construction of all future development.

2 To ensure infill development in existing neighbourhoods contributes to the preservation of the neighbourhood character while meeting city goals for housing, employment, and services.

3 To ensure that mixed-use commercial and multi-family development is integrated into the neighbourhood appropriately, considering scale, massing, access, landscaping, and screening.

4 To improve the character of commercial development fronting onto major arterials, including consideration of building materials, extent of transparent materials, pedestrian orientation, and other design elements.

5 To incorporate and integrate community institutional buildings as welcoming service providers.

6 To encourage development that supports walking, rolling, cycling, and transit use within the city.

7 To support gentle increase in density of existing neighbourhoods through the integration of duplex, triplex, and fourplex units into single-detached neighbourhoods.

8 To respect public views and access to the waterfront where applicable.

9 To ensure that new housing types and sizes support all income and accessibility groups.

10 To ensure new development incorporates measures for water conservation and energy efficient design that supports the actions identified in *City Plan* Goal 1: A Green Nanaimo.

11 To promote net zero emissions in new development, including alterations or additions to existing buildings.