CITY OF NANAIMO
THE HARBOUR CITY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Increasing Housing *Options*

A series of recommended changes aimed at making housing more attainable in Nanaimo.

November, 2023



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Background

As we grapple with the growing challenges associated with affordability and increasing homelessness, the City of Nanaimo continues to take steps to plan and respond. The City's *Affordable Housing Strategy* (AHS), *Housing Needs Assessment* (HNA), and *City Plan: Nanaimo ReImagined (City Plan)* all highlight the importance of this work and provide a clear framework for decision-making going forward.

The City's AHS provides a framework for working with other levels of government, the private sector, and non-profit organizations to facilitate the development of affordable housing. The HNA uses quantitative and qualitative data to provide an understanding of current and anticipated housing needs and gaps, while City Plan provides policy direction for future land use decisions and contains over 30 affordable housing policies and actions to address housing supply gaps and needs.

Staff used the recommendations and policy direction from the documents above to draft a report to Council for consideration. On October 24, 2022, Council endorsed several projects to promote affordable housing and recommended prioritization of the following projects:

- Expand secondary suite and coach house regulations.
- Explore and support further opportunities for infill and intensification in existing neighbourhoods.
- Develop a family-friendly housing policy to encourage the construction of more two and three plus bedroom units in new multi-family developments.
- Develop an Accessible and Adaptable Housing policy to increase the amount of adaptable and accessible residential units.

Together, these four projects make up the Increasing Housing Options initiative.

Expanding Secondary Suites
Suites are an important part of the City's market rental housing stock. While some minor amendments have been made, secondary suite regulations have largely remained the same as when they were first added to the zoning bylaw in 2005. Since then, changes have been made in the *BC Building Code* (BCBC) to permit secondary suites more broadly in different unit types and to remove maximum size requirements of suites. To date, no changes to Nanaimo's secondary suite regulations have occurred in response to the revised BCBC.

Adding Infill in Existing Neighbourhoods
Infill housing is defined by the province as "housing that fits within an existing neighbourhood without significantly altering its character or appearance". There has been growing interest in infill housing across BC in the last few years, with the Provincial government recently introducing the *Housing Supply Act* (2022) and announcing the *Homes for People Action Plan* (2023), which includes potential changes Province-wide through the "more small-scale multi-unit townhomes, duplexes, and triplexes" action item.

Expanding Family-Friendly Housing
Increasing housing costs have made finding housing challenging for families requiring multiple bedrooms. Single-detached houses are often no longer affordable for families, and there is a need for more attainable alternatives, such as 2 and 3+ bedroom strata units, rental apartments, and townhouses.

Adaptable Housing
Findings from recent housing needs research indicates that seniors who own their homes are finding it challenging to age-in-place, because there are limited housing options that would allow them to downsize. Nanaimo's aging population is growing, and as a result there is an increased need to accommodate adequate housing for seniors, as well as for people with disabilities.

The engagement approach and survey results are summarized in this document. The comments from the ten stakeholder groups can be found in the Increasing Housing Options White Paper.

ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

2
Advertisements in both the 'Nanaimo News Bulletin' and 'Nanaimo News Now'

10
Stakeholder groups engaged Including Neighbourhood Associations and development community

80+
People attended the public Open House

864
Survey responses submitted

2,288
People who received 'eblast' notifications through Get Involved

3.5K
Visits to the Get Involved project page

24K
Combined followers targeted through social media

1 **Project Launch**
AUGUST 29
The project site was published on Get Involved, which included a survey. Social media posts were published at this time.

2 **Targeted Outreach**
AUGUST 30
Targeted 'eblast' notifications were sent to registered Get Involved participants.

3 **Advertisement**
AUGUST 30
An advertisement was published in the Nanaimo News Bulletin regarding the public Open House event.

4 **Targeted Invitations**
AUGUST 30
An email invitation was sent to all Neighbourhood Associations inviting them to attend the Public Open House.

5 **Stakeholder Presentation**
SEPTEMBER 6
Staff presented the Increasing Housing Options project to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness.

6 **Open House**
SEPTEMBER 12
Public Open House at Beban Social Centre.

7 **Stakeholder Presentation**
SEPTEMBER 14
Staff presented the Increasing Housing Options project to the Mayor's Leaders' Table.

8 **Stakeholder Presentation**
SEPTEMBER 14
Staff presented the Increasing Housing Options project to the Design Advisory Panel.

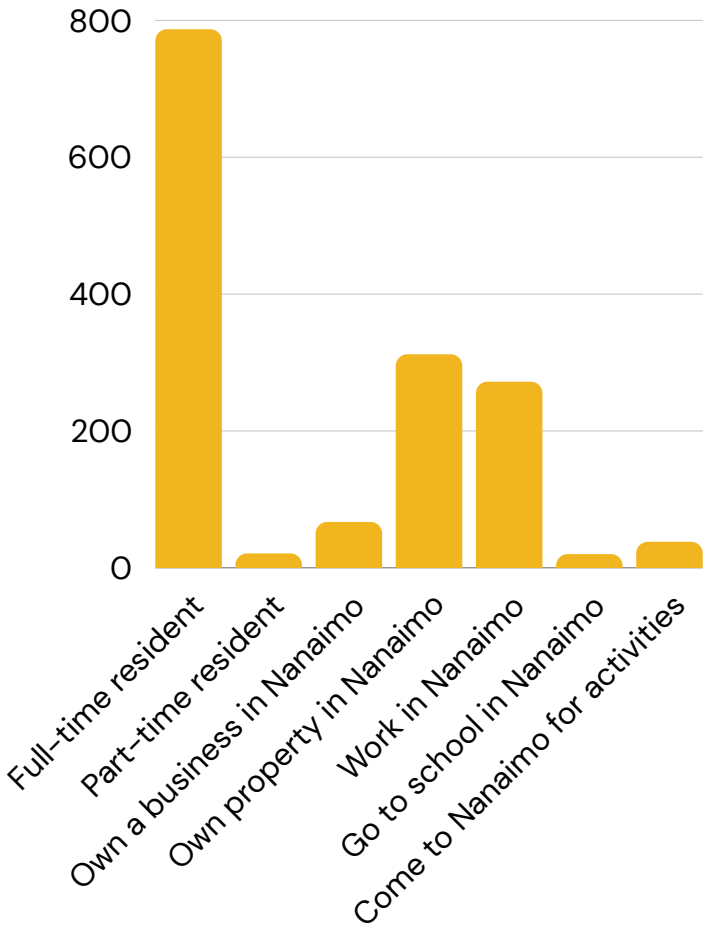
9 **Stakeholder Presentation**
SEPTEMBER 22
Staff presented the Increasing Housing Options project to the Development Community.

10 **Survey Closes**
SEPTEMBER 29
Increasing Housing Options survey closes.

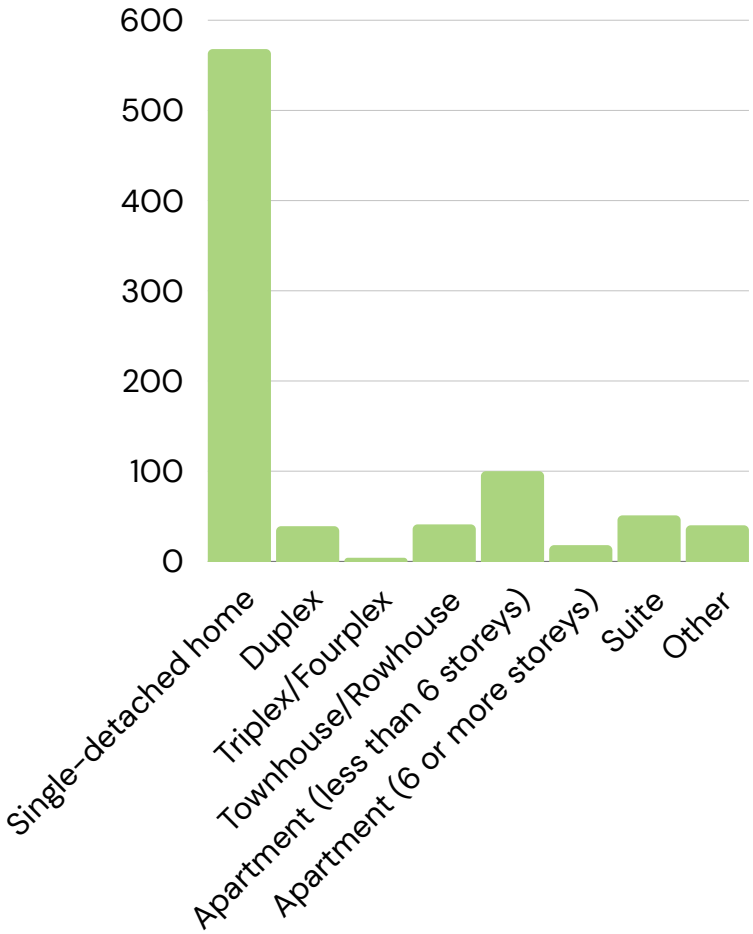
11 **Stakeholder Presentation**
OCTOBER 4
Staff presented the Increasing Housing Options project to the Nanaimo Neighbourhood Network.

Demographic Information

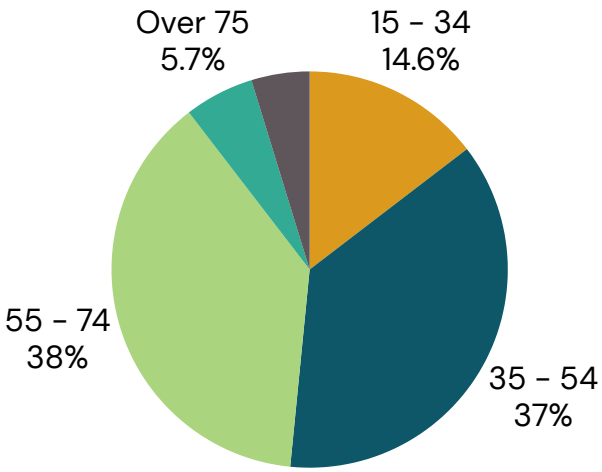
What is your relationship to Nanaimo...



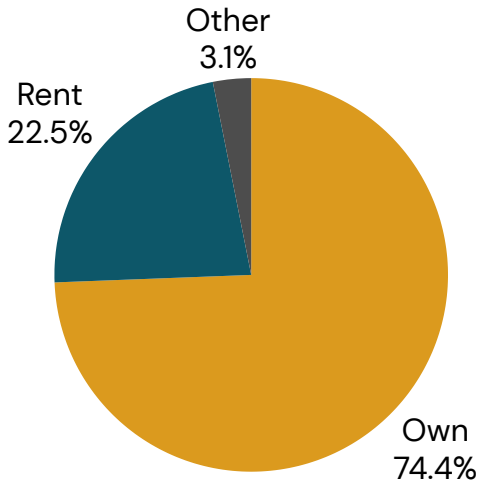
What type of housing do you live in...



What is your age range...

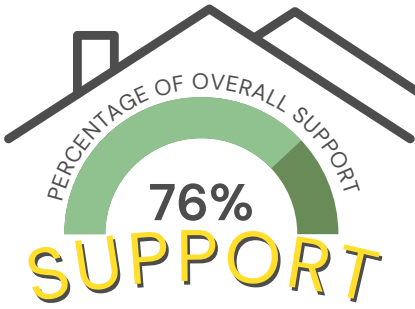


Do you currently rent or own your home...



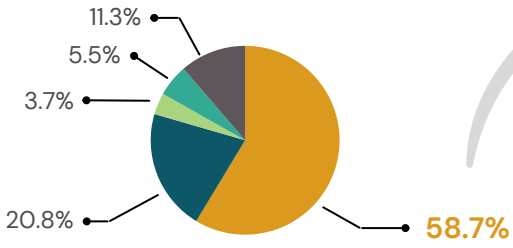


Expanding Secondary Suites

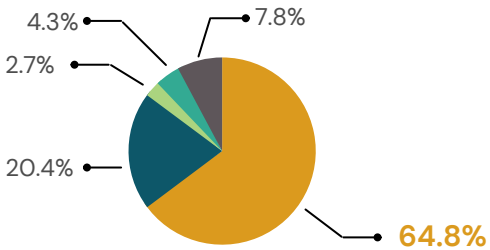


When asked whether or not they supported...

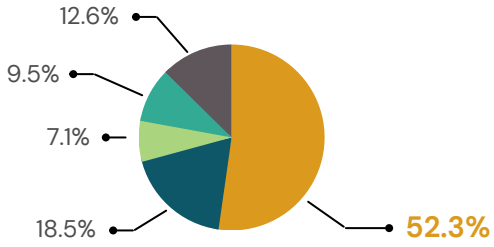
Changes to increase the number of secondary suites allowed on a residential lot.



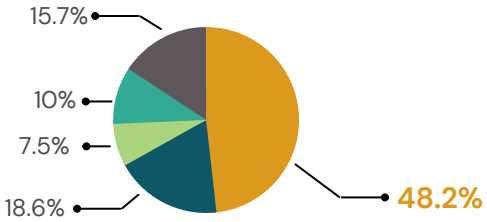
Changes to expand the eligibility of where detached suites are permitted.



Allowing one secondary suite in side-by-side or detached duplex.



Allowing one secondary suite in each side-by-side townhouse.



Definitely support | Somewhat support | Neutral | Somewhat do not support | Definitely do not support

When asked if they had any comments...

The majority of respondents touched on three major themes. The following is a general sense of how people felt toward the recommendations based on comments received.

DENSITY & TYPE OF HOUSING

44% of all comments received on expanding secondary suites mentioned density and/or housing type. Most people see increased density as necessary, but noted issues like parking and design as concerning.

40% 😁 40% 😐 20% 😔

"Strongly support efforts to increase density and reduce unused space."

PARKING & TRAFFIC

32% of all comments received on expanding secondary suites mentioned parking. The majority of which had mixed feelings in that they support the increase in density provided parking is managed appropriately.

81% 😐 13% 😔 6% 😁

"My only concern is making sure there is adequate room for parking."

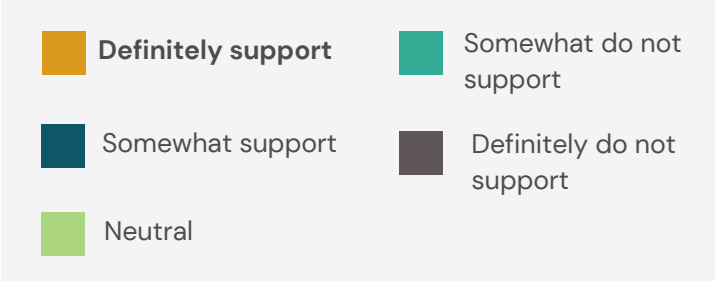
FINANCIAL

23% of all comments received on expanding secondary suites identified financial reasons as both an advantage and a concern. Many felt more changes are needed to help with the affordability crisis.

40% 😐 36% 😔 24% 😁

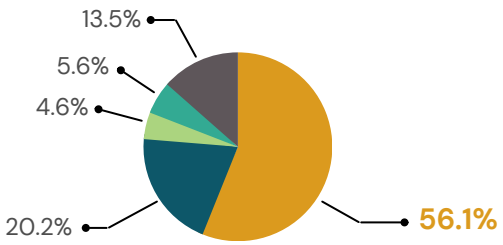
"More suites doesn't necessary mean *more affordable* suites..."

Adding Infill
IN EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOODS

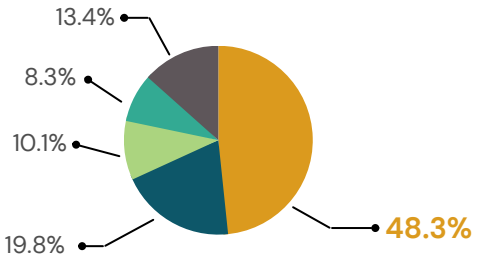


When asked whether or not they supported...

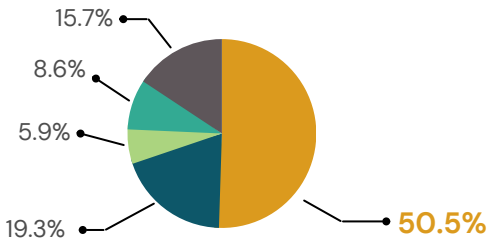
Pre-zoning existing single family (R1/R1b) and duplex (R4) lots within 1km buffer from downtown, and in the 'Neighbourhood' designated areas in *City Plan*, to the R5 (Three- & Four-Unit Residential zone).



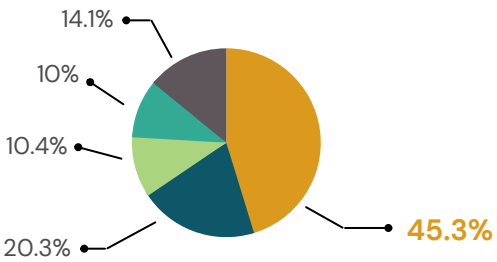
Reducing the R6 minimum lot size from 1,500 m² to 1,200 m², and the front yard setbacks from 4.5 m to 3 m.



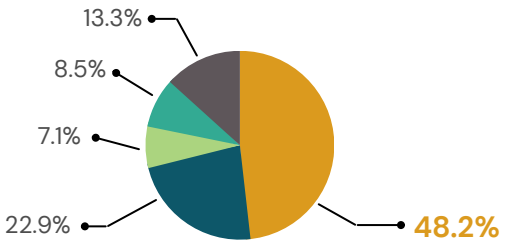
Reducing the R5 minimum lot size from 1,200 m² to 800 m², in order to expand the eligibility of lots that can build a fourth unit.



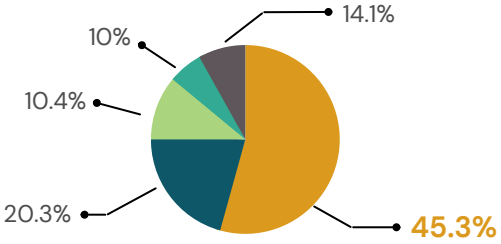
Reducing the R13, R14, and R15 minimum front yard setbacks from 4.5 m and 6 m to 3 m.



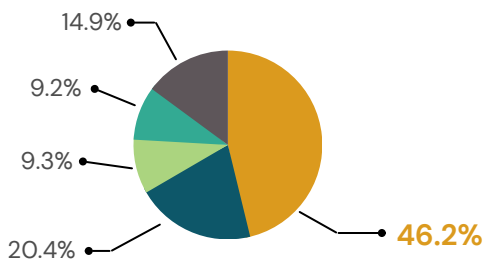
Reducing the R4 minimum lot size from 700 m² to 600 m², and the front yard setback from 4.5 m to 3m.



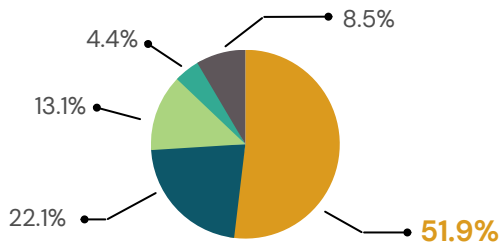
Changes to the R13, R14, and R15 zones to permit additional units and floor area on a lot where a house in a dwelling built before 1975 is preserved.



Reducing the R5 minimum lot size from 800 m² to 600 m² and the front yard setback from 4.5 m to 3 m.

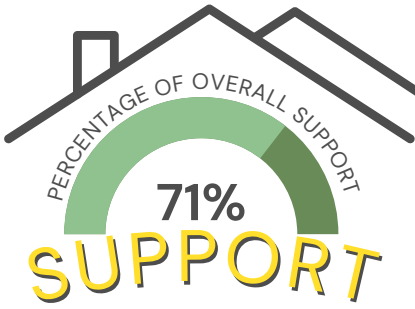


Changes to the Row House Residential (R7) zone to allow both fee-simple rowhouses and townhouses.



Adding Infill

IN EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOODS



When asked if they had any comments...

The majority of respondents touched on three major themes. The following is a general sense of how people felt toward the recommendations based on comments received.

DESIGN

53% 30% 17%

36% of all comments received on adding infill in existing neighbourhoods, mentioned design considerations like parking, green space, and setbacks. Of them, more than half had mixed opinions about infill. Although they agreed infill was important, they urged that it happen in tandem with design features like having adequate green space. 17% of respondents felt adding infill in existing neighbourhoods would be positive for the look and feel of the neighbourhood. Even going as far to say reducing setbacks could reduce water consumption. 30% felt negatively about increasing density in existing neighbourhoods, as it would likely decrease available green space and limit areas for parking.

"While doing all this, we must ensure that lots aren't totally hardscaped but have shade trees, hedges, space for vegetable gardens, and signficant amounts of native plants. Green roofs a plus."

DENSITY & TYPE OF HOUSING

45% 32% 23%

26% of all comments received on adding infill in existing neighbourhoods mentioned density and/or type of housing. Of them, 45% felt it should happen, but throughout the whole city and not only focused in the downtown area. 23% felt added density would increase the incidence of crime and poor quality of life. 32% felt increasing density was a great thing, and that the recommendations didn't go far enough to help with the ongoing crisis.

"In looking at this map, it appears the City is continually focussing on adding density to the downtown core and the Southend while making few changes to the north end. If you're going to encourage triplexes and fourplexes via pre-zoning, broaden the map to encompass more areas of the city."

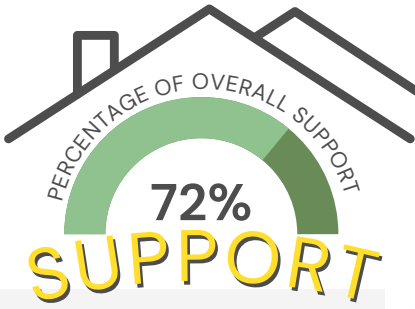
PARKING & TRAFFIC

56% 33% 11%

23% of all comments received on adding infill in existing neighbourhoods mentioned parking and traffic. The majority of which had mixed feelings toward the recommendations because of concerns over parking spaces and the additional traffic that it may cause. 12% of respondents saw parking regulations as an impediment to housing, and suggested reducing requirements, or even removing them all together. 33% felt increasing density in these areas would only exacerbate parking issues.

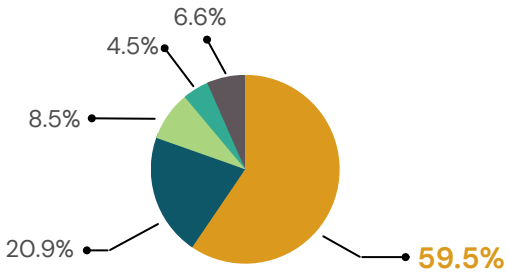
"My only concern with Infill Initiatives is ensuring that there is ample parking for renters/owners in multi-family dwellings and their existing neighbors."

Expanding Family-Friendly
HOUSING OPTIONS

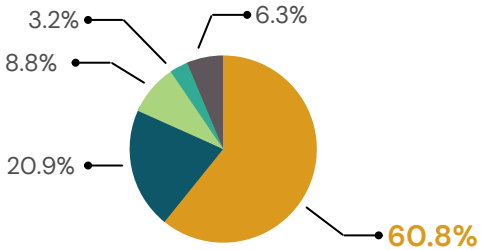


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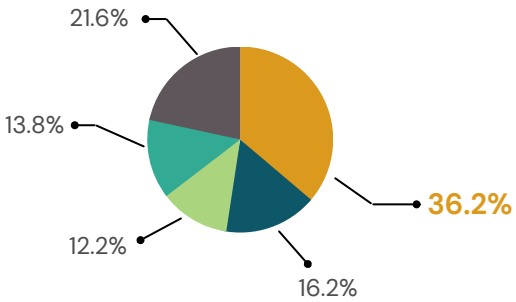
Changes to require all new, multi-unit residential developments of 10 or more units, to provide a minimum 30% of the units as 2+ bedrooms, and 10% as 3+ bedrooms.

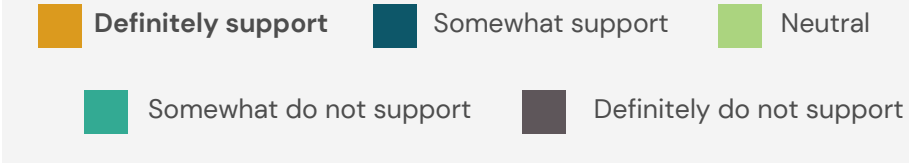


Incentivizing additional 2 and 3+ bedroom units by allowing for a density bonus on parcels zoned for multi-family if the units are within 400 m of a public school and if the units are ground oriented.



Amending the 'Consideration of a Parking Variance Policy', to include reducing parking requirements for underground parking spaces when 3-bedroom units are proposed in a multi-unit development.



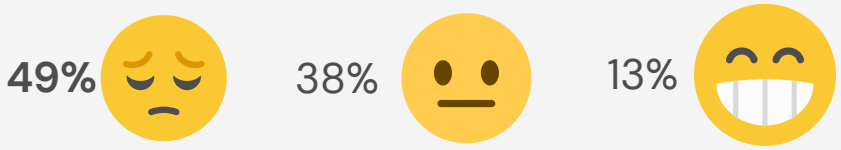


When asked if they had any comments...

The majority of respondents touched on three major themes. The following is a general sense of how people felt toward the recommendations based on comments received.

PARKING & TRAFFIC

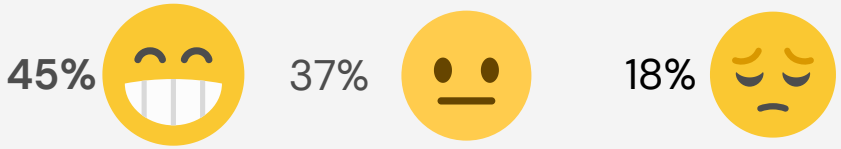
49% of respondents felt using parking as an incentive for expanding family-friendly units would only make parking problems worse.



"A 3 bedroom unit should still require multiple parking spots. The unit(s) could easily be occupied by a family with 3 drivers - they won't all be people with young children."

DENSITY & TYPE OF HOUSING

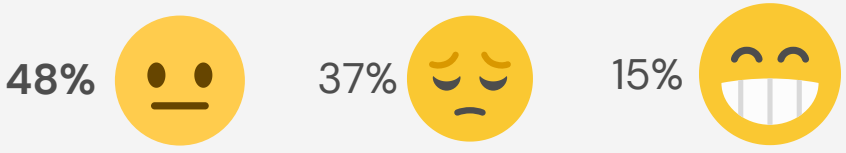
The majority of respondent supported the changes and even suggested requiring more family-friendly than what is recommended.



"Anything to increase supply of 3-bedroom units is needed!"

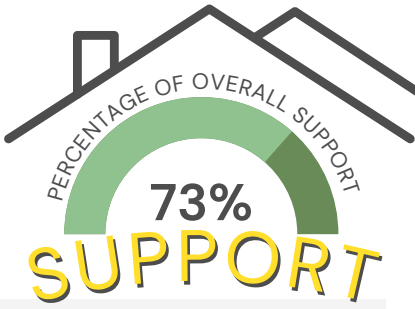
SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Many respondents commented on the lack of sufficient transit service and/or active transportation networks throughout the city.



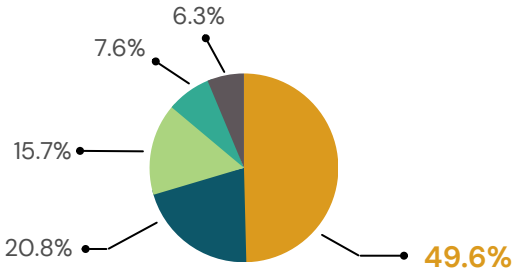
"Density increases need to be coupled with increased access to public transit, improved active transportation infrastructure and access to services (food, childcare, health care) that are walkable/bikeable to reduce single vehicle traffic..."

Creating More Adaptable
HOUSING UNITS

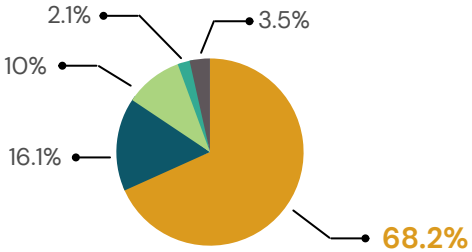


When asked whether or not they supported...

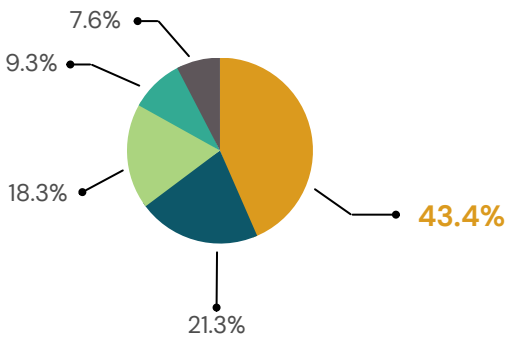
Changes that would require multi-unit developments of 10 or more units, to provide 50% of the residential units as basic adaptable units in accordance with the *BC Building Code*.



Changes to require 100% of the housing units in a Seniors Congregate Housing development meet the basic adaptable unit standards in accordance with the *BC Building Code*.



Amending the zoning bylaw Schedule D (density bonus criteria) for adaptable units from requiring a minimum of 10% adaptable units, to requiring more than 50% adaptable units in multi-unit buildings.



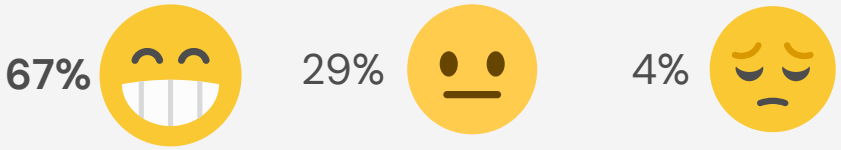


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ACCESSIBILITY & DESIGN

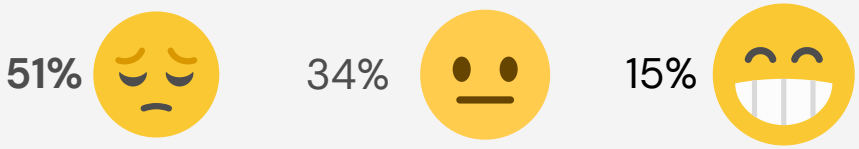
The majority of respondents were supportive of requiring adaptable units.



"There is a great misconception that adaptable or accessible units are for special *other* people. They are for all of us, as we will inevitably need them..."

FINANCIAL

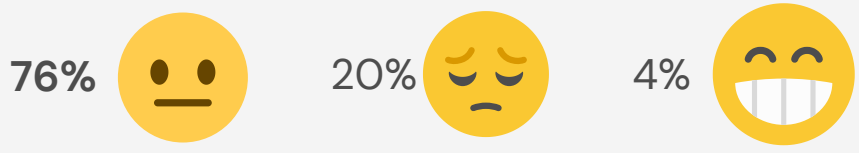
In some cases, the respondents were not against providing adaptable units but thought the cost associated with such units outweighed their benefit.



"I am not against adaptable units. I am against government dictating them. Contradicts your affordability priority as adaptable units cost more."

TARGETS

The majority of respondents felt providing adaptable units was a good thing, but thought the proposed increase was too much.



"The 50% threshold is too high. 20 - 30% is more reasonable and would not increase the cost to build as much as 50%."