



## Committee of the Whole Report

### For the Meeting of March 5, 2020

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** February 20, 2020

**From:** Karen Hoese, Director of Sustainable Planning and Community Development

**Subject:** Next Generation Conversion Regulations – Update Report

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### RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council direct staff to prepare bylaws to amend Schedule G - House Conversion Regulations and Schedule C - Off Street Parking Regulations of the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw*, consistent with this report, in order to:
  - a. change the qualifying year of construction;
  - b. reduce restrictions on exterior changes;
  - c. clarify and expand opportunities to utilize under-height basements;
  - d. allow attic spaces to be developed;
  - e. allow vehicle car parking in front yard (for non-heritage properties);
  - f. increase and incentivize permitted number of units;
  - g. allow windows and doors on front elevations;
  - h. decrease parking requirements; and
  - i. require bicycle parking.
2. That Council direct staff to monitor the impact of the Next Generation Conversion Regulations, with particular attention paid to buildings with heritage value, and prepare an update report to Council within two to three years (once meaningful observations can be made), noting that staff would report back earlier in the event that a pattern of negative impacts to buildings with heritage value or other concerning trends are observed.
3. That as a next step, Council direct staff to undertake a further assessment of the parking requirements, including the impact of parking on the site layout and associated landscaping, as well as the possibility of delegating authority to staff for minor parking variances associated with house conversions.
4. That Council direct staff to continue to explore and bring forward items for Council's consideration that are listed in the "Sprint Option" of the Committee of the Whole Report dated December 5, 2019, as opportunities for improvements/expansion (e.g. green building incentive program) present themselves, noting that a more fulsome review and accounting of progress towards sprint goals would be included in the two to three year review report.
5. That Council direct staff to develop a design guidance document to provide advice aimed at advancing high-quality design that respects the local context and addresses potential neighbourliness impacts.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update Council regarding feedback received on the Next Generation Conversion Regulations and seek direction on the preferred approach for moving forward. Overall feedback was positive; however, in some instances there were concerns related to reducing restrictions related to exterior changes, allowing windows and doors on front elevations, and parking. Some stakeholders felt that the proposed changes related to the above-noted topics were too permissive and others felt the proposed changes were too restrictive.

This report provides an overview of the targeted consultation and provides analysis and final recommendations directing staff to prepare amendments to the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw*, in order to replace the existing house conversion regulations and amend the off-street parking regulations. The report also advances a number of actions aimed at monitoring and guarding against unintended consequences as well as paying particular attention to concerns related to potential impact to buildings with heritage value. Additionally, upon further review, staff are recommending minor adjustments to floor area requirements and the resulting number of units permitted in order to provide a more logical “step” in the proposed incentives and to better align with other existing bylaw requirements.

## BACKGROUND

The purpose of this report is to provide an update regarding the feedback received on the Next Generation Conversion Regulations and seek Council direction on the preferred approach for moving forward. On December 5, 2019 (report included in Attachment A), Council passed the following motion:

That Council direct staff to:

1. Undertake consultation, as outlined in this report, on the following proposed changes to the Zoning Regulation Bylaw Schedule G – Housing Conversion Regulations and Schedule C – Off-Street Parking Regulations described as the ‘Run’ option:
  - a. Change the qualifying year of construction
  - b. Reduce restrictions on exterior changes
  - c. Clarify and expand opportunities to utilize under-height basements
  - d. Allow attic spaces to be developed
  - e. Allow vehicle car parking in front yard (for non-heritage properties)
  - f. Increase and incentivize permitted number of units
  - g. Allow windows and doors on front elevations
  - h. Decrease parking requirements
  - i. Require bicycle parking
  - j. Allow exemptions for required bicycle parking.
2. Report back to Council with feedback from consultation and final recommendations for amendments to the Zoning Regulation Bylaw.

Overall feedback was positive; however, in some instances there were concerns related to reducing restrictions related to exterior changes, allowing windows and doors on front elevations, and parking regulations. Some stakeholders felt that the proposed changes related to the above-noted topics were too permissive, while others felt the proposed changes were too restrictive.

The following sections provide an overview of the targeted consultation as well as analysis and recommendations related to:

- reducing restrictions on exterior changes and allowing new windows and doors on the front elevation
- creating a voluntary design guidance document
- fine-tuning the number of units permitted in relation to maximum floor area.

## Consultation

The following engagement with the public and key stakeholders has been undertaken:

Website and Social Media: The Next Generation Conversion Regulations webpage was updated with links to the staff report and opportunities to provide feedback were identified. The project was also shared through the City of Victoria Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Key Stakeholders: Information on the proposed changes along with a request for feedback was provided to:

- Heritage Advisory Panel
- Victoria Residential Builders Association (VRBA)
- Renters' Advisory Committee
- Community Land Use Committees (CALUCs)
- Urban Development Institute

The feedback received was largely positive in nature; copies of all written feedback can be found in Attachment B. In addition to written feedback from individuals, the Fernwood and Rockland CALUCs provided written comments and the VRBA printed information and comments on the proposed changes in the January 21<sup>st</sup> edition of the Times Colonist.

In addition to sharing the project information with the groups listed above, staff attended the following meetings:

Urban Development Institute (UDI), January 21, 2020: Staff met with members of the UDI to share information and receive verbal feedback on the proposed changes.

Heritage Advisory Panel January 13, 2020: While the Panel was generally supportive of the proposed changes, they expressed concern over the potential for negative impacts on buildings that have heritage value but are not protected with a heritage designation status. Based on these concerns, the Panel passed the following motion:

*That the Heritage Advisory Panel oppose item b (reduce restrictions on exterior changes) and item g (allow windows and doors on front elevations) in the staff report.*

A copy of the minutes from the Heritage Advisory Panel meeting are attached.

Renters' Advisory Committee, January 22, 2020: Staff gave a presentation to the Renter's Advisory Committee to share information and receive feedback. A copy of the Renters Advisory Committee minutes is attached.

## Feedback Themes

The following sections discuss the key feedback themes:

### Parking

Almost all the feedback included comments on reduced vehicle parking minimums. Many of these comments were in support of the proposed vehicle parking reductions and new bicycle parking requirements, with some comments calling to further reduce or completely eliminate vehicle parking minimums and to delegate parking variances to staff. Conversely, there was also some feedback expressing concern over the additional pressure that both lower parking minimums and a greater number of house conversions may have on street parking demand.

Staff recommend continuing with the proposed changes to the minimum parking requirements; however, a more detailed review would provide further opportunities to refine the parking requirements, including the impact of parking on the site layout and associated landscaping, as well as the possibility of delegating authority to staff for minor parking variances associated with house conversions. The recommended motion includes direction to undertake this assessment as a next step.

### Tenant Displacement

Another common theme was the concern that these updates could result in tenants being displaced. For example, existing rental conversions may become more attractive to renovate and potentially add units, displacing the existing tenants in the process.

While there is the potential for tenant displacement in any redevelopment, there are some additional supports available where the building is being converted to a strata. In the cases where a residential building is changing from rental to strata, the Residential Strata Titling Policy would apply. This policy states that while the vacancy rate for Metro Victoria is below 4% no applications to convert residential rental buildings with more than four rental units will be accepted and must be appealed to Council. Regardless of the number of units, a Tenant Plan must be completed for any application that involves a strata conversion of active rental dwelling units. For clarity, this is a separate process from the Tenant Assistance Plan required through a Rezoning application. The Tenant Plan is negotiated with staff and may include an option to purchase, alternative rental options, rental assistance or secured rental tenancy in the unit for a fixed term. (Residential Strata Titling Policy and Tenant Plan included in Attachment C).

Although the possibility does exist for tenants of buildings that are currently rental to be displaced as owners advance projects to upgrade and realize additional units, staff still recommend that on balance, the potential for additional units would far exceed the number lost through the redevelopment. Additionally, there may be opportunities to further support tenants through future Housing Strategy initiatives.

### Exterior Changes / New Windows and Doors on Front Elevations

As noted earlier, the Heritage Advisory Panel expressed concern that the updated regulations could result in more exterior alterations to houses that are not formally protected with a heritage designation but that do have heritage value. Of particular concern is the potential that changes would not respect existing architectural detailing, materials or historical context. However, other respondents noted that allowing this degree of flexibility was important to unit layouts and overall project feasibility. Staff note that allowing doors to be added to front elevations expands the possibility to create accessible units.

While the proposed changes would create a greater potential for exterior changes to buildings with heritage value, on balance, staff consider that the benefits outweigh the risks associated with relaxing the restrictions. While there is potential for more exterior changes, the updated regulations also make it more viable for existing houses to be saved and restored rather than demolished in favour of new development. Additionally, conversion and the associated reinvestment in a property presents an opportunity to restore architectural detailing that may have been covered or altered through previous renovations and does not necessarily lead to a negative outcome. Staff recommend the creation of a voluntary design guidance document to assist applicants and design professionals pursuing conversion projects.



For houses that are already formally protected with a heritage designation, exterior changes would continue to require a Heritage Alteration Permit to ensure consistency with the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (Standards and Guidelines)*. For houses not yet formally protected with a designation, but where applicants are hoping to realize the incentive for obtaining heritage designation, alterations would need to be in keeping with the *Standards and Guidelines* in order to achieve heritage designation, which is a pre-condition to receiving the incentive of extra units.

To guard against the possibility of a trend of conversion applications making detrimental changes to buildings with heritage value, staff have included direction in the recommendation that would ensure that each application would receive a visual assessment of publicly-visible elevations comparing the existing condition with the proposed changes. If a pattern of detrimental alterations is identified, staff would report back to Council to seek direction to refine the bylaws. This approach would not be able to stop a specific proposal but would ensure that if a challenging pattern is observed, there is an avenue available for Council to “course correct.”

If Council feels that the preferred path forward should exclude the possibilities of making exterior changes and adding new windows and doors on front elevations, then Alternate Motion One would provide the appropriate direction.

Another approach, if Council would like to proceed more cautiously, is to only allow these changes to houses built after 1931. This would reduce the risk of unsympathetic exterior changes to much of the City’s older houses, but it would also limit options and in some cases be detrimental to the feasibility of pre-1931 houses that do not have significant heritage value. Alternate Motion Two provides the appropriate direction to advance this option.

The Options Section of this report details the advantages and disadvantages of these two options as well as the staff recommendation.

### **Voluntary Design Guidance Document for House Conversions**

One of the feedback themes was that some form of guidance to encourage high quality design would be beneficial. To address this and to support applicants through the house conversion process, it is recommended that staff create a voluntary design guidance document. The intention of the document would be to help ensure that house conversions are done in a way that maximizes the liveability of units, respects character of existing buildings and the street context, and ultimately enhances Victoria’s neighbourhoods.

Much of the material for the design document can be adapted from the existing voluntary *Secondary Suite Design Guidelines*, which would minimize the staff time required to create the document. Should Council choose to proceed with the bylaw update, staff would begin developing the design guidelines, which would be made available as an advisory publication shortly after the bylaw updates are approved.

### **Number of Units Permitted**

As a result of further analysis, staff are recommending a slight adjustment to the table outlining the number of units permitted based on the total building floor area. Specifically, at the first incentive level the floor area required for four units is recommended to be reduced from 260m<sup>2</sup> to 250m<sup>2</sup> and the floor area required for five units be reduced from 310m<sup>2</sup> to 300m<sup>2</sup>.

The reason for the first adjustment from 260m<sup>2</sup> to 250m<sup>2</sup> is to ensure that there is an incentive of an additional unit compared to the non-incentive level of three units for 250m<sup>2</sup>. This would potentially encourage more applicant uptake on the provision of heritage designation, rental or below market ownership. The reasoning for the second adjustment from 310m<sup>2</sup> to 300m<sup>2</sup> for five units is that this number is consistent with the 300m<sup>2</sup> maximum house size used in many single-family zones and is therefore likely include more houses. Both of these changes are relatively minor and still leave room for livable units at a range of sizes.

The chart below shows the new thresholds for the number of units permitted based on the total building floor area. The numbers proposed in the previous staff report are included and crossed out for reference. The description of the second incentive level has also been adjusted for clarity.

Number of units achieved:	Current regulations require X m <sup>2</sup> of floor area:	Proposed regulations would require X m <sup>2</sup> of floor area IF: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• heritage designated</li> <li>• rental</li> <li>• below market home ownership</li> </ul>	Proposed regulations would require X m <sup>2</sup> of floor area IF: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• affordable rental</li> <li>• heritage designated AND one of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ rental OR</li> <li>○ below market home ownership</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2	150m <sup>2</sup>	100m <sup>2</sup>	80m <sup>2</sup>
3	250m <sup>2</sup>	200m <sup>2</sup>	175m <sup>2</sup>
4	350m <sup>2</sup>	<del>260m<sup>2</sup></del> 250m <sup>2</sup>	240m <sup>2</sup>
5	450m <sup>2</sup>	<del>310m<sup>2</sup></del> 300m <sup>2</sup>	280m <sup>2</sup>
46m <sup>2</sup> for each additional unit (currently 115m <sup>2</sup> )			

## OPTIONS & IMPACTS

The following sections outline three potential options, related to the topics of allowing exterior changes and permitting new windows and doors on front elevations, that Council may wish to consider in order to advance the preparation of proposed bylaw amendments. The first option pertains to the staff recommendation while the other two options represent alternate motions that are included at the end of the report.

### Option: Staff Recommendation

Implement full range of 'Run' level proposed changes, monitor impact and pay special attention to potential impact on buildings with heritage value that are not heritage-designated.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Greatest degree of flexibility and facilitates the greatest number of candidate properties.	May place houses that are not heritage-designated at risk of unsympathetic renovations.
In addition to overall program monitoring, establishes method of visual assessment so if a negative trend is observed, further Council direction can be sought.	

### Option: Alternate Motion One

Do not relax exterior change restrictions and do not allow addition of new windows and doors on front façade and monitor impact.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Reduces risk of unsympathetic renovations to houses with heritage value that are not already heritage designated nor intending to designate.	Many houses without heritage value would also be impacted by this restriction.
	Is less flexible and may create challenges in terms of lay out and access to units.

### Option: Alternate Motion Two

For buildings constructed before 1931, do not relax exterior change restrictions and do not allow addition of new windows and doors on front façade and monitor impact.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Reduces risk of unsympathetic renovations to pre-1931 houses with heritage value that are not already heritage designated nor intending to designate.	Many houses without heritage value would still be impacted by this restriction (although fewer than the previous option)
	Is less flexible and may create challenges in terms of lay out and access to units.

## CONCLUSION

The feedback received regarding the Next Generation House Conversion Regulations was generally very supportive and indicated strong support for the rental and heritage preservation opportunities presented by expanding the potential for house conversions. Although there was some concern expressed related to exterior changes and the ability to add windows and doors to front facades, staff recommend advancing the full range of proposed amendments and embarking on a course of monitoring and review to ensure that the proposed changes do not have negative unintended consequences.

### ALTERNATE MOTION ONE (no exterior changes or new window/doors on front elevation)

1. That Council direct staff to prepare bylaws to amend Schedule G - House Conversion Regulations and Schedule C - Off Street Parking Regulations of the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw*, consistent with this report, in order to:
  - a. change the qualifying year of construction;
  - b. clarify and expand opportunities to utilize under-height basements;
  - c. allow attic spaces to be developed;
  - d. allow vehicle car parking in front yard (for non-heritage properties);
  - e. increase and incentivize permitted number of units;
  - f. decrease parking requirements; and
  - g. require bicycle parking.

2. That Council direct staff to monitor the impact of the Next Generation Conversion Regulations and prepare an update report to Council within two to three years (once meaningful observations can be made.)
3. That as a next step after implementation of this phase, Council direct staff to undertake a further assessment of the parking requirements, including the impact of parking on the site layout and associated landscaping, as well as the possibility of delegating authority to staff for minor parking variances associated with house conversions.
4. That Council direct staff to continue to explore and bring forward items for Council's consideration that are listed in the "Sprint Option" of the Committee of the Whole Report dated December 5, 2019, as opportunities for improvements/expansion (e.g. green building incentive program) present themselves, noting that a more fulsome review and accounting of progress towards sprint goals would be included in the two to three year review report.
5. That Council direct staff to develop a voluntary design guidance document to provide advice aimed at advancing high-quality design that respects the local context and addresses potential neighbourliness impacts.

**ALTERNATE MOTION TWO** (exterior changes and new window/doors on front elevations allowed only on houses built after 1931)

1. That Council direct staff to prepare bylaws to amend Schedule G - House Conversion Regulations and Schedule C - Off Street Parking Regulations of the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw*, consistent with this report, in order to:
  - a. change the qualifying year of construction;
  - b. reduce restrictions on exterior changes to houses built after 1931;
  - c. clarify and expand opportunities to utilize under-height basements;
  - d. allow attic spaces to be developed;
  - e. allow vehicle car parking in front yard (for non-heritage properties);
  - f. increase and incentivize permitted number of units;
  - g. allow windows and doors on front elevations on houses built after 1931;
  - h. decrease parking requirements; and
  - i. require bicycle parking.
2. That Council direct staff to monitor the impact of the Next Generation Conversion Regulations and prepare an update report to Council within two to three years (once meaningful observations can be made.)
3. That as a next step after implementation of this phase, Council direct staff to undertake a further assessment of the parking requirements, including the impact of parking on the site layout and associated landscaping, as well as the possibility of delegating authority to staff for minor parking variances associated with house conversions.
4. That Council direct staff to continue to explore and bring forward items for Council's consideration that are listed in the "Sprint Option" of the Committee of the Whole Report dated December 5, 2019, as opportunities for improvements/expansion (e.g. green building incentive program) present themselves, noting that a more fulsome review and accounting of progress towards sprint goals would be included in the two to three year review report.
5. That Council direct staff to develop a voluntary design guidance document to provide advice aimed at advancing high-quality design that respects the local context and addresses potential neighbourliness impacts.

Respectfully submitted,



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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



Date:

Feb 27, 2020

#### List of Attachments

- Attachment A: December 5, 2019 Council Report – Next Generation House Conversion Regulations
- Attachment B: Consultation Feedback
- Attachment C: Residential Strata Titling Policy and Strata Title Tenant Plan.





## Committee of the Whole Report

### For the Meeting of December 5, 2019

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** November 20, 2019

**From:** Andrea Hudson, Acting Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development

**Subject:** Next Generation Conversion Regulations – Proposed Changes

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### RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to:

1. Undertake consultation, as outlined in this report, on the following proposed changes to the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* Schedule G – Housing Conversion Regulations and Schedule C – Off-Street Parking Regulations described as the 'Run' option:
  - a. Change the qualifying year of construction
  - b. Reduce restrictions on exterior changes
  - c. Clarify and expand opportunities to utilize under-height basements
  - d. Allow attic spaces to be developed
  - e. Allow vehicle car parking in front yard (for non-heritage properties)
  - f. Increase and incentivize permitted number of units
  - g. Allow windows and doors on front elevations
  - h. Decrease parking requirements
  - i. Require bicycle parking
  - j. Allow exemptions for required bicycle parking
2. Report back to Council with feedback from consultation and final recommendations for amendments to the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw*.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last several decades, the Conversion Regulations have facilitated the creation of a significant number of residential units and housing choice by repurposing large, existing single-family houses into smaller residential units. This has been accomplished in a manner that has had the side benefit of preserving the existing character of many of Victoria's neighbourhoods, adding to the stock of heritage-designated and registered properties and diverting demolition waste from landfills. While the current regulations are considered to be very successful, the "Next Generation Conversion Regulations" are required to ensure the ongoing health and vitality of the program.

The proposed changes represent an opportunity to "refresh" the program in order to reflect evolving community values and to yield additional opportunities for houses to be converted to suites, in order to ultimately increase the number and range of housing units available.

The report presents three options for Council's consideration, which are characterized as "Walk," "Run" and "Sprint." While staff recommend the middle "Run" option, it should be noted that this approach provides an ambitious and robust list of benefits, that would:

- make it easier to convert a house to multiple units
- facilitate the creation of more units
- incentivize heritage designation as well as the creation of rental, affordable rental and affordable home ownership units.

Although during the strategic planning sessions Council discussed the benefits of having staff simply bring forward the bylaw amendments that would update the Conversion Regulations to accelerate the creation of additional housing, the degree of change presented in the "Run" option would benefit from focused community consultation, as outlined in this report.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to outline a series of potential changes to the House Conversion Regulations and seek Council's direction regarding the preferred approach for moving forward.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Description of Proposed Changes**

Although the report outlines three potential approaches, categorized as "Walk," "Run" and "Sprint," staff recommend taking the middle "Run" option, which would:

- make it easier to convert a house to multiple units
- facilitate the creation of more units
- incentivize heritage designation as well as the creation of rental, affordable rental and affordable home ownership units.

Proposed changes include:

- allowing additional conversions by changing the qualifying year of construction
- expanding opportunities to incorporate under-utilized basement and attic space
- increasing and incentivizing the permitted number of units
- relaxing restrictions related to the degree of exterior change that is permitted
- revising parking and bike parking requirements.

While the "Run" approach is ambitious in terms of its aim to facilitate additional housing, it is balanced with a number of regulations aimed at minimizing negative impacts to neighbourhood character, context and privacy to help ensure that house conversions continue to be welcome additions within neighbourhoods.

## **Relevant History**

The House Conversion Regulations, contained in Schedule G of the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw*, were first established in the 1950's. The intent was to offer a viable option for re-purposing larger, older houses, as it was recognized that there was a significant stock of houses built at the turn-of-the-century which were designed to accommodate large families and/or staff and that no longer served their intended purpose and could be redesigned to accommodate a number of smaller suites. The conversion regulations were structured to allow property owners to convert qualifying

single family dwellings to a set number of self-contained dwelling units, based on the overall floor area of the building, with larger buildings allowing a greater number of units and smaller buildings allowing fewer.

These regulations have had the intended effect of facilitating many conversions throughout the City, resulting in what could be described as small multiple dwelling buildings nested within existing homes in low density neighbourhoods, with little disruption to the immediate neighbours or the existing character of the area. These regulations also assisted in the diversion of a significant amount of building waste from the landfill and preserving existing housing stock, including many character homes.

Many heritage-registered and heritage-designated homes are conversions; however, there is currently no incentive to heritage designate a home unless the conversion requires rezoning. Staff's assessment is that the program has been a great success; however, many of the buildings that could easily be converted have been, resulting in a reduced number of building permit applications to convert houses in recent years.

For the most part, conversions are handled through a simple Building Permit process. Occasionally, but more frequently in recent years as the most viable candidate properties have already been converted, some small variances to the regulations have been approved either through a Board of Variance or Council process. In some other instances, rezoning applications have been supported by Council to facilitate conversions where the density or use restriction could not be met. When applications go through these additional processes, more staff time is required and there is a higher level of risk and costs for applicants.

In addition to allowing conversion of single-family dwellings to multiple units, the Conversion Regulations also allow kindergartens (daycares and pre-schools), light-housekeeping units, boarding houses and rooming houses. Despite these other permitted uses, this report focuses on the conversion of buildings to multiple residential units only.

A direction contained in the City of Victoria Strategic Plan, 2019 – 2022, identifies that staff should accelerate implementation of the Victoria Housing Strategy by developing a “city-wide strategy for additional house conversion opportunities” and “incentivize and mandate the creation of family-appropriate two and three bedroom rental units.” As part of the Council deliberations during the 2019 budgeting process at the February 5, 2019 Special Committee of the Whole meeting, Council suggested that one approach that would reduce the amount of staff time needed to revamp the Conversion Regulations was for staff, based on their knowledge and experience, to bring forward proposed bylaw changes. To that end, specific regulatory details of the conversion regulations are discussed in the Analysis section of this report, describing both the current regulations and how they could be modified to improve the program and/or facilitate additional conversions. A focused phase of consultation is, however, still recommended in order to communicate the details of the intended changes and to help “proof” the proposed regulations against unintended consequences.

## **ANALYSIS**

This section provides a discussion of key factors that should be considered in relation to potential changes to the Conversion Regulations:

- housing affordability and choice
- heritage conservation

- neighbourhood character
- impact on the urban forest
- climate action
- transportation - parking
- site servicing and construction
- community consultation
- proposed zoning changes:
  - change the qualifying year of construction
  - reduce restrictions on exterior changes
  - clarify and expand opportunities to utilize under-height basements
  - allow attic spaces to be developed
  - allow vehicle parking in front yard
  - increase and incentivize permitted number of units
  - allow new windows and doors on front elevation
  - decrease parking requirement
  - require bicycle parking
  - allow floor area exemption for required bicycle parking
- potential future work.

## **Housing Affordability and Choice**

House Conversions increase the supply of ground-oriented housing within neighbourhoods, which has a positive impact on overall housing prices as well as on individual units within conversions, which will generally be less expensive than a single family or duplex unit on the same property. Additionally, house conversions often provide rental housing stock. One of the proposed changes would incentivize applications that offer secure rental housing and/or affordable rental or home ownership by allowing a greater number of units per floor area and requiring a lower level of parking. This provision is discussed in more detail below.

In 2018, an Infill Analysis Report prepared for the City by Urbanics Consultants as part of the Local Area Planning process, found that in the Fairfield and Gonzales neighbourhoods, out of a range of infill rental options, conversions were the most likely to be financially viable. Further, the report found that in these neighbourhoods, conversions were likely to be particularly attractive redevelopment option for homeowners as compared to developers. Staff observations would suggest many applicants are prospective homeowners or existing homeowners looking to stay on site and add rental units that would increase the affordability of their own housing costs.

Another advantage of House Conversions is that, in part because of need to adapt to an existing floor plan, they typically result in a range of unit types including multiple bedroom units, usually within each building that is converted. This creates a healthy mix of unit types available for future residents.

It is worth noting that new opportunities for conversions may make it more attractive to redevelop existing rental properties and, as with any redevelopment, this could result in the existing tenants being displaced. Existing rental units that may be redeveloped for a house conversion include both approved and non-approved units within conversions or secondary suites within single family houses. House conversions containing housekeeping or rooming houses – which are rooms or units that are not self-contained and share some level of shared washroom or cooking facilities – may also become viable to redevelop into self-contained rental or strata units. However, on balance staff recommend that the potential for additional units created via the proposed changes

would far exceed the number lost through the redevelopment of properties that already have more than one unit.

## **Heritage Conservation**

As noted earlier, many conversions have been heritage-designated while others have been added to the Heritage Register, which provides valuable heritage resources that add to the urban fabric and remain available as an asset for future generations to enjoy. Additionally, even if a building associated with a house conversion is not heritage-designated or heritage-registered, the overall structure and often the architectural details are retained, allowing for consideration of heritage designation or listing on the Heritage Register at a later date.

One of the proposed changes would incentivize applications that offer to heritage designate their property by allowing a greater number of units per floor area. This provision would be applicable where it is determined that the property has heritage value and a Heritage Designation Bylaw is adopted for the property through the normal City process. This incentive would also be applicable for houses that are currently heritage-designated, to support their ongoing use. Any resulting exterior changes would continue to require a heritage alteration permit to ensure consistency with heritage standards and guidelines.

## **Neighbourhood Character**

For the most part, conversions can be accommodated within existing neighbourhoods with little disruption to the immediate neighbours and in a manner that maintains the look and feel of the local area. In this way, conversions are usually seen as a positive influence within neighbourhoods as investment and upgrades of these existing buildings are encouraged.

## **Impact on Urban Forest**

Converting existing houses to multiple units has a significantly lower impact on the urban forest than most other forms of development because it reuses an existing building within an existing building footprint. The current conversion regulations do not allow additions outside the existing building envelope.

The process of conversion usually results in adding hard surfaces to the rear yard for vehicle parking, which can impact existing trees and limit the space available to accommodate new trees. Reducing the parking requirement would allow for greater tree retention and provide additional space to plant new trees. Potential changes related to parking requirements are further discussed below.

## **Climate Action**

Buildings account for 51% of the City's total greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency retrofits present the largest opportunity to reduce these emissions. The Climate Leadership Plan sets targets whereby all existing buildings will be highly energy efficient and will all be powered with renewable energy by 2050. Victoria's building stock is aging, with 70% of the existing units built prior to 1970. For many of these buildings, aging conditions make for poor energy performance and many still use fossil fuel heating systems. Expanding the number of potential house conversions may give the City additional opportunities to intervene through touchpoints where low carbon heating systems and energy efficiency measures can be encouraged as part of the conversion process. New Provincial building retrofit standards as well as a number of



reward programs are anticipated to be announced in the coming months. Once this information is available, staff will be in a better position to assess and make recommendations about expanding the proposed incentive program to include energy efficient/passive renovations; this opportunity has been included below in the section outlining Potential Future Work.

### **Transportation – Parking**

The recommended changes include a reduction in parking requirements for conversions in heritage-designated houses, affordable rental, and secured below-market home ownership. During the recent update of the Off-Street Parking Regulations, an analysis of parking demand found that average vehicle ownership rates are lower in rental units compared to condominiums, and that average vehicle ownership for non-market affordable housing is much lower than the average. For heritage-designated houses, a lower parking requirement would help to retain the character of the property by preserving more of the existing landscaped areas.

While a full analysis and consultation has not been conducted for these proposed reductions, the recommendations also include more stringent long-term bicycle parking requirements which could potentially offset a portion of the additional vehicle parking demand. These recommended changes are described further in the Proposed Zoning Changes section.

While reducing minimum parking requirements is recommended, applicants could still choose to provide a number of parking stalls that exceeds the Zoning Bylaw requirement in order to meet market demand.

### **Site Servicing and Construction**

Because existing buildings that were originally designed for larger families are being repurposed, the impact on site servicing such as storm drain, sanitary sewer or water connections can sometimes result in significant project costs. It is also important to note that the types of appliances people expect in their homes (dishwashers, washing machines, multiple bathrooms) has changed, and if a single family house is reconfigured to accommodate multiple units, each with a demand for its own appliances, additional burden is placed on City services.

Depending on the scale of the conversion, site servicing upgrades may be required to accommodate the additional demand as many of the older homes are not up to current City Standards or current building and plumbing codes. Therefore, this can also be an opportunity to upgrade services that do not meet today's standards. The drawback would be that upgrades can add quite a bit of cost to a conversion project, and digging up existing services and/or trenching for new services can be disruptive to existing trees and can at times limit locations available for planting new trees.

### **Community Consultation**

As noted earlier in this report, on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019 as part of Council's discussion in conjunction with establishing the Victoria Strategic Plan, it was suggested that one way to limit the staff resources required to update the Conversion Regulations in order to enable action on other housing initiatives was to have staff bring forward proposed amendments, based on staff's experience with the regulations. This report does that; however, it seeks direction on the extent of change Council is hoping to achieve. Additionally, staff do recommend that some targeted consultation occur with key stakeholders once Council selects a preferred approach, which would involve:

- referral to the Heritage Advisory Panel
- referral to Renters' Advisory Committee
- referral to each Community Association Land Use Committee with a request for feedback (if any) within 45 days
- referral to the Urban Development Institute and the Home Builders Association with a request for feedback (if any) within 45 days
- posting notice on the City's website and at the Development Services counter inviting feedback.

This level of consultation can be accommodated within the existing staff resources. Staff would review and consolidate the feedback and if appropriate recommend revisions for Council's consideration. These steps above are in addition to the normal notification and consultation requirements associated with Public Hearings that are required for rezoning initiatives.

### **Proposed Zoning Changes**

The following sections detail proposed changes to Schedule G – House Conversions Regulations and Schedule C – Off-Street Parking Regulations, both contained in the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw*. A benefit of the proposed changes, in addition to increasing the number of units yielded through conversion, is that the process of conversion would be easier and even where an application could not meet the reduced zoning standards, more applications could be handled as a variance application (simpler process) rather than triggering a rezoning application. In summary, benefits of the proposed changes include:

- making it easier to convert a house to multiple units
- facilitating the creation of more residential units
- incentivizing:
  - heritage designation
  - the creation of rental and affordable rental units
  - the creation of affordable home ownership units.

#### a.) Change the Qualifying Year of Construction

Under the current regulations, generally, a house must have been constructed prior to 1931 in order to be converted to multiple units, with limited conversions permitted for houses built prior to 1969. The proposal is to allow any house constructed in 1984 or earlier to be converted to a multiple dwelling. The reason for choosing 1984 is that it coincides with the year that the R1-B Zone, Single Family Dwelling District, was significantly modified to greatly reduce the permitted maximum floor area. The modified year-of-construction date simplifies the regulation, expands the conversion options for older houses and captures houses that are more likely to have larger floor area therefore facilitating an increased number of House Conversions.

#### b.) Reduce Restrictions on Exterior Changes

Minor exterior changes, such as new porches and decks and above ground-level entries and stairs, are not currently permitted. The exception to this is where these changes are required for fire exiting, provided they are not on an elevation facing a street. This restriction may limit the options for unit configuration, which can have a negative impact on unit size and privacy within the conversion. Further to this, the restriction limits the potential for individual outdoor space for each unit. Staff recommended removing this restriction for portions of the building not facing the street. While there may be some privacy impacts on neighbouring properties, these exterior changes are all things that a non-conversion house on the same site are permitted to do. This change would also not impact the zoning restriction on roof decks, which are decks located above the second storey of the building.

Related to these restrictions is the lack of clarity in the regulations regarding fire exiting. Staff further recommend clarifying the regulations to clearly exempt fire escapes that are required by the BC Building Code or the Fire Code to be permitted on all storeys and exempt from height definitions.

Any exterior changes to a heritage-designated building would be subject to heritage considerations and may require a heritage alteration permit to ensure that the form, materials and detailing are compatible with the architectural style of the designated home.

#### c.) Clarify and Expand Opportunities to Utilize Under-Height Basements

One of the current challenges associated with house conversions is the way floor area is calculated; the floor area must be existing and it must be habitable as per the BC Building Code. This means that under-height basements do not count toward the total floor area eligible for conversion, even though the current regulations allow the area to be made habitable by increasing the floor to ceiling height by up to 0.6 metres. It is therefore recommended that the regulations increase the opportunities to utilize newly created habitable space in an existing basement or lower storey if the height is increased (up to 0.6m) so that it qualifies as habitable, within overall building height limits. This change would facilitate the potential for more units in a way that would not impact the outward appearance of the building beyond what is already permitted in the current regulations.

#### d.) Allow Attic Spaces to be Developed

Developing attic space offers another opportunity to create more floor area with potentially minimal exterior changes to a house conversion. Allowing dormers in this space, or similar spaces, is recommended in order to allow for more liveable floor area without expanding beyond the existing building footprint. To help preserve the character and massing of a home, the amount of dormered area could be limited by restricting this attic space to a half storey.

Undeveloped attic space does not count as a storey, so when this space is developed into floor area, it also adds to the number of storeys. Currently, for houses already at the maximum number of storeys, this would add a half storey beyond what is permitted in the zoning, even though the outward appearance of the house, in the majority of cases, would hardly change. This additional half storey would be limited in massing by virtue of the half storey definition, which can be a maximum of 70% of the floor area of the ground floor. The maximum building height, as measured in metres from average grade to midpoint of the roof, would remain unchanged and still apply; thereby limiting the potential amount of change. The following table compares the existing and proposed regulations, with the two cells highlighted grey identifying the changes.

<b>Zone</b>	<b><u>Current</u> max. building height (no change)</b>	<b><u>Current</u> maximum number of storeys</b>	<b><u>Proposed</u> maximum number of storeys for conversions</b>
R1-A - Rockland Single Family Dwelling District	7.6m	2 ½ storeys	2 ½ storeys (no change)
R1-B - Single Family Dwelling District	7.6m	2 storeys	2 ½ storeys
R1-G - Gonzales Single Family Dwelling District	7.6m	2 storeys without basement 1 ½ storeys with basement	2 ½ storeys without basement 2 storeys with basement

Staff recommend that these changes are consistent with the Official Community Plan (2012), and based on staff observation and experience, developing attic space into floor area is likely to increase the potential viability for many conversions in a manner that would have no impact on the building footprint and limited impact on the view of the building from the street, while allowing for greater use of what is typically underutilized attic space.

e.) Allow Vehicle Parking in Front Yard (non-heritage)

Front yard parking is not permitted in house conversions. This proposed change would bring house conversions in line to the current standard for similar single-family and two-family houses by allowing up to two vehicle parking stalls in the front yard. Front yard parking for heritage-designated buildings is not included in this proposed change. While this could have some impacts on the streetscape, front yard parking could also lower the amount of surface area required for parking in the rear yard. This would help to maintain the urban forest and maximize the useable back yard space for residents.

f.) Increase and Incentivize Permitted Number of Units

Currently, the number of units permitted in a house conversion depends on the amount of existing *habitable* floor area. This measure can be quite restrictive and limits the potential for conversions. It is worth noting that the changes described in “a,” “c” and “d” alone will release additional candidate properties eligible for conversion and will enable a greater number of units within qualifying buildings. However, lowering the total floor area required per unit would further increase the potential number of units within a building, which would increase both the financial viability of a conversion and the potential number of units that can be achieved. Staff recommend establishing a system that incentivizes heritage designation, rental housing, affordable rental housing and below market home ownership by allowing more units in these circumstances. The incentives for secured rental would include a provision to allow one unit to be used by the property owner to allow for the redevelopment of properties by homeowners who wish to continue to reside in the building.

The following table compares the current and proposed total building floor area required in relation to the number of units that can be achieved under varying circumstances. The areas of proposed change are highlighted in grey.

Number of units achieved:	Current regulations require X m <sup>2</sup> of floor area:	Proposed regulations would require X m <sup>2</sup> of floor area <u>IF</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>heritage designated</li> <li>rental</li> <li>below market ownership</li> </ul>	Proposed regulations would require X m <sup>2</sup> of floor area <u>IF</u> affordable rental OR two of the following are secured: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>heritage designated</li> <li>rental</li> <li>below mkt ownership</li> </ul>
2	150m <sup>2</sup>	100m <sup>2</sup>	80m <sup>2</sup>
3	250m <sup>2</sup>	200m <sup>2</sup>	175m <sup>2</sup>
4	350m <sup>2</sup>	260m <sup>2</sup>	240m <sup>2</sup>
5	450m <sup>2</sup>	310m <sup>2</sup>	280m <sup>2</sup>
46m <sup>2</sup> for each additional unit (currently 115m <sup>2</sup> )			



Another advantage of house conversions is that any building typically yields a mix of unit types because of the need to design around an existing floor plate. So, while the minimum required floor area per unit is proposed to change, there would still be opportunities for a mix of unit sizes depending on the building layout. The minimum unit size per unit would remain at 33m<sup>2</sup>, which is consistent with typical minimum unit sizes outside the downtown core.

g.) Allow Windows and Doors on Front Elevation

New windows and doors at the street front are not currently permitted as part of a house conversions. Windows and some doors along the street front would support street-oriented units and allow more flexibility in floor layouts. The current restriction on new stairs at the front of the building would prevent this proposed change from having major impacts to the character and massing of houses. For these reasons, allowing new windows and doors on the front elevation of non-heritage designated houses is recommended. For heritage-designated houses, this change could be limited by heritage considerations.

h.) Decrease Parking Requirement

The current zoning bylaw parking requirements, contained in Schedule C – Off-Street Parking Regulations, typically require between 0.2 to 1.45 parking stalls per residential unit, depending on:

- tenure (there is a higher parking requirement for strata units, lower for rental and affordable units)
- size of the unit (there is a higher parking requirement for larger units)
- location of the property (there are lower requirements for properties within the Core and Village Centres).

Recently, 0.1 stall per unit of visit parking is also required, which results in an additional stall required for conversions with 5 or more units. Current parking requirements generally reflect the measured parking demand for the various types of units,. Some exceptions where parking demand may be higher than the requirements are for single family dwellings, units in Village Centres and affordable units. Required parking rates in these categories are lower to reflect lower density development areas in the case of single family homes or to encourage development and additional density in Village Centres.

The previous Schedule C, which was in place until 2018, had a lower parking requirement, which was:

- 1 stall per unit for buildings with three or fewer units
- 0.8 stall per unit for buildings containing more than three units.

To encourage house conversions and minimize impacts to the affected property, staff recommend the following parking rates for house conversions:

- 1.0 stalls per unit for units larger than 70m<sup>2</sup>
- 0.7 stalls per unit for units between 45m<sup>2</sup> and 70m<sup>2</sup>
- 0.5 stalls per unit for units less than 45m<sup>2</sup>.
- 0.2 stalls per unit for affordable rental and affordable home ownership units, and units within a heritage designated building.

These parking rates, which are more akin to the old Schedule C, would, in most instances:

- accommodate the majority of parking demand



- help reduce the extent of hard surfacing required to accommodate required parking, thereby potentially reducing the impact on the urban forest, supporting green stormwater management and allowing for more outdoor amenity space in general
- make the process of conversion more attainable for more buildings.

Embedded in the previous Schedule C rates was a requirement that 10% of the parking stalls be reserved for visitor parking. Consistent with the current Schedule C, staff instead recommend adding the 0.1 stall per unit for visitor parking on top of the residential requirement.

It should be noted that while neither a full analysis nor consultation of the potential impacts of reducing the parking requirements has been conducted, given the benefits of incentivizing this form of development while encouraging heritage conservation, the creation of affordable units and supporting urban forest health, combined with the newly proposed bike parking requirements (below) it is anticipated that while there may be some additional pressure placed on on-street parking, the proposed rates strike an appropriate balance.

#### i.) Require Bicycle Parking

Bike parking is currently only required for new buildings or additions. Given the proposed lower vehicle parking rates and active transportation objectives, staff recommend including long-term bicycle parking as a requirement for house conversions. While this would be an extra burden, the number of required stalls is relatively low, and there are a number of options for locating the bike parking within the building or an accessory building. Additionally, a floor area exemption (below) is proposed to help facilitate the provision of bike parking.

#### j.) Allow Floor Area Exemption for Required Bicycle Parking

Allowing an addition that is the equivalent size of the required parking area would reduce the burden of this requirement on a house conversion project. It would also allow for the flexibility of adding the bike parking where it is most convenient. This proposed change would have a relatively minor impact on the building character and facilitates high quality bicycle parking facilities in both new and existing conversions. It may, however, place greater pressure on increasing the building footprint by a small degree or introducing a new accessory building to accommodate the bike parking which in turn could impact the urban forest. Staff would work with applicants through the normal process to try to alleviate negative pressures on trees while providing opportunities to include functional bike parking.

### **Potential Future Work**

In undertaking this work, staff noted that there are a number of other opportunities to potentially expand and improve the Conversion Regulations that are not recommended for further exploration, at this time, due to limited staff resources and a series of associated known and unknown risks. Identified as a continuation of the list above, these changes include:

- k) consider establishing an incentive for achieving passive/energy efficient standard
- l) consider revising other zones to allow conversions in zones that currently restrict them
- m) allow garden suites with conversions
- n) allow additions that create new floor area
- o) consider allowing the creation of floor area beyond zoning limitations for heritage, rental and affordable housing
- p) explore further options for legalizing unlawful units
- q) review landscaping requirements to ensure they align with the updated tree preservation bylaw, integrate rainwater management standards, and balance usable yard space with privacy for neighbours

- r) explore establishing a system of delegated authority so staff can review, and in some instances, approve parking variances.

Although included and identified as the “Sprint” approach, these actions are not recommended for advancement as part of this initiative. They are primarily included in this report to share ideas and begin a collective exploration of other possible improvements to be explored in a future phase. These changes may also be advanced as part of other Victoria Housing Strategy actions as well as part of the Missing Middle Housing Strategy.

## OPTIONS & IMPACTS

The following section outlines three potential options that Council may wish to consider in order to advance further work on this topic, they are described as:

- Walk
- Run (recommended)
- Sprint

The following table provides a summary of which regulatory changes are included within each approach. The discussion related to the impacts, is structured so that each of the “Walk,” “Run” and “Sprint” options are briefly described, a summary of resource implications is provided and potential advantages and disadvantages are explored. The “Sprint” approach, while included in this table, would take a significant amount of additional staff resources to advance and represents a number of associated known and unknown risks.

<b>Proposed Zoning Change</b>	<b>Walk</b>	<b>Run (Recommended)</b>	<b>Sprint</b>
a.) Change the qualifying year of construction	X	X	X
b.) Reduce restrictions on exterior changes	X	X	X
c.) Clarify and expand opportunities to utilize under-height basements	X	X	X
d.) Allow attic spaces to be developed	X	X	X
e.) Allow vehicle car parking in front yard (non-heritage)	X	X	X
f.) Increase and incentivize permitted number of units		X	X
g.) Allow windows and doors on front elevation		X	X
h.) Decrease parking requirement		X	X
i.) Require bike parking		X	X
j.) Allow exemption for required bicycle parking		X	X
k.) Establish incentive for achieving passive / energy efficient retrofit standard			X

Proposed Zoning Change	Walk	Run (Recommended)	Sprint
l.) Allow conversions in zones that currently restrict them			X
m.) Allow garden suites with conversions			X
n.) Allow additions that create new floor area			X
o.) Allow the creation of floor area beyond zoning limitations for heritage, rental and affordable housing			X
p.) Explore further options for legalizing unlawful units			X
q.) Review landscaping requirements to ensure they align with the updated tree preservation bylaw, integrate rainwater management standards, and balance usable yard space with privacy for neighbours			X
r.) Explore establishing a system of delegated authority for parking variances			X

### Option 1: Walk

#### Description

This approach recommends a series of small steps that will likely facilitate some additional conversions and simplify the process for legalizing existing, non-approved conversions.

#### Resource Impacts

There will be few resource implications associated with this approach, however could be some resource impacts related to the potential increase in building permits for house conversions. These projects tend to be slightly more complicated than new-build projects and can require comparatively more staff time in the review process.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Clarifies / simplifies existing regulations	Relatively low risk, with some potential unknowns
Opportunity for more units to be created	Exterior changes, while limited, may be visible to neighbouring properties
Allows small exterior changes that can improve liveability/lay out options	May change appearance of a building from road to some degree
Allows for development of currently underutilized basement and attic space	Does not incentivize heritage designation, rental or non-market housing forms
Potential for more homes to be converted, preserving existing neighbourhood character	Not clear how effective the changes will be in terms of making more conversion projects financially feasible

## Option 2: Run (Recommended)

### Description

This approach recommends large steps that will likely facilitate many additional conversions along with secured rental, affordable rental, affordable home ownership and heritage designations.

### Resource Impacts

There will be resource implications associated with this approach resulting from the need for staff to manage applications through the Housing Agreements and Heritage Designation Bylaws through the Council approval process. There may also be an increased number of neighbourhood parking issues that need to be managed by staff. This will need to be monitored and if additional staff resources are required it would be factored into future financial planning cycles.

Advantages	Disadvantages
All the advantages of the “Walk” approach	Higher risk, particularly related to potential unknowns of decrease in parking and potential impacts of redevelopment in existing conversions
Offers incentives for heritage designation, rental, affordable rental and affordable home ownership	Not clear how effective the incentives will be in securing heritage designation, rental, affordable rental or affordable home ownership
Ensures secure bike parking is provided in all conversions	Would put additional pressure on on-street parking and adds additional costs for the applicant associated with creating long-term bike parking facilities.
Incentive for heritage designation helps secure heritage assets and helps maintain neighbourhood character	Exterior changes, while limited, may be visible to neighbouring properties. This includes changes to the roof massing
Allows for more flexibility in “legalizing” existing unapproved conversions	Incentives can add time and complexity to the approvals process

## Option 3: Sprint

### Description

This approach includes the same large steps recommended in the “Run” approach and also includes a number of potential next steps that have not been fully analyzed and would likely be fairly labour intensive for staff to take to the next level of analysis in order to present well-considered recommendations for Council’s review. In some instances, some identified options are linked to or would benefit from being advanced subsequent to, or in tandem with other initiatives.

Given the greater potential impacts and unknown risks associated with this option, staff recommend that the “Sprint” level changes be explored after the potential “Run” options have been implemented and staff have a chance to monitor the outcomes. Staff also recommend

further public consultation on these changes. Undertaking this work in a future phase would allow staff to take a closer look at the potential risks and would provide an opportunity for 'fine tuning' of the first phase of changes.

#### Resource Impacts

In addition to the resource impacts of the "Run" option, this option will take additional staff resources for comprehensive review and recommended additional consultation. Additional resources would need to be factored into future financial planning in order to undertake this work.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Creates a 'check in' for the outcomes of initial changes (if implemented as a second phase after the first phase of changes)	High risk, particularly related to potential impact on neighbouring properties, pressure for redevelopment in existing houses and conversions
	Would require additional staff resources to fully understand implications
	Would not have the benefit of learning and refinement based on implementation of "Walk"/ "Run" changes

#### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

The British Columbia Building Code regulates accessibility as it pertains to buildings.

#### *2019 -2022 Strategic Plan*

The City of Victoria Strategic Plan includes an action to accelerate implementation of the Victoria Housing Strategy by developing a strategy for additional house conversion opportunities. These recommended changes are an important step in supporting a greater number of conversions.

#### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

At this time there are no impacts to the Financial Plan. Future reports would identify any budgetary needs, for instance, additional dedicated staff. These would be referred to future financial planning processes.

#### *Official Community Plan Consistency Statement*

This initiative advances the following broad objectives contained in the Official Community Plan:

- 13(a) – That housing development responds to future demand and is facilitated through land use policies and practices
- 13(c) - The existing supply of rental housing is expanded through regeneration
- 13(d) – A wide range of housing choice is available within neighbourhoods to support diverse, inclusive and multi generational community.



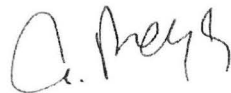
## CONCLUSIONS

The current Conversion Regulations have facilitated the creation of a significant amount of residential units and housing choice by repurposing existing houses over the last several decades. This has been accomplished in a manner that has had the side benefit of preserving the existing character of many of Victoria's neighbourhoods, adding to the stock of heritage designated and registered properties and diverting building materials from entering the landfill. The proposed changes represent an opportunity to "refresh" the program by advancing the City's "Next Generation Conversion Regulations." The proposed changes will better reflect evolving community values and yield additional opportunities for houses to be converted to suites in order to ultimately increase the number and range of housing units available, while incentivizing heritage designation, the provision of rental housing, affordable rental and affordable home ownership.

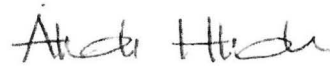
Respectfully submitted,



Chloe Tunis, Planner  
Development Services



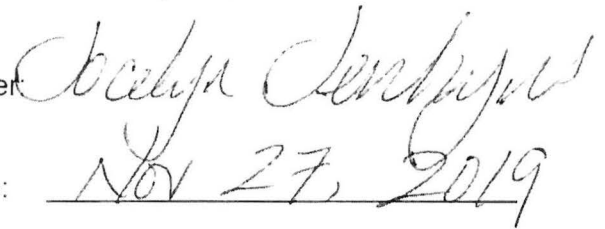
Alison Meyer, Assistant Director  
Development Services



Andrea Hudson, Acting Director  
Sustainable Planning and  
Community Development  
Department

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

Date:

  
Nov 27, 2019

### List of Attachments

- Attachment A: Schedule G – House Conversion Regulations
- Attachment B: Schedule C – Parking Regulations

### 3. House Conversion Update Project

Presenters: Chloe Tunis, Planner, Development Services  
Alison Meyer, Assistant Director, Development Services

#### Panel Questions and Comments

- In the current regulations, under-height basements do not count towards the total floor area that is eligible for conversion. Two ways to deal with under-height basements are to lower the floor level by digging down or raise the upper floors. Is either one acceptable? Chloe: Applicants are encouraged to dig down. Currently you can dig down or if you have a full-height basement, it can be raised by 2 ft. If the basement is under height, the house cannot be raised. The proposed changes would remove this restriction.
- It is a good idea to open up the possibility of changes to building form (e.g. addition of dormers) or the addition of doors and windows on the front façade of heritage houses. These changes would be in keeping with the style (i.e. Craftsman or Arts and Crafts) of many heritage-designated houses. However, new doors and windows on the front façade should be a last resort as there are other ways to access different units without these exterior changes. The onus is on staff to ensure that the changes are appropriate and sympathetic.
- Reducing parking restrictions on site provides owners with the freedom to decide how many spaces to provide. Parking in the front yard is not appropriate for heritage-designated houses as it negatively impacts the appearance of the house and the neighbourhood. The restrictions would also prevent the paving of rear yards.
- Providing an incentive for energy conservation is worthwhile. As an encouragement, it was suggested that building permit applications could be expedited for projects that are net 0 or better than the step code standards.
- What housing stock, heritage or non-heritage, is impacted by the changes? Alison Meyer: The incentive for permitted number of units is for heritage-designated buildings only; the proposed changes to the conversion regulations apply to non-heritage, heritage-registered and heritage-designated buildings.
- The current conversion regulations regarding exterior changes have negatively impacted heritage-registered and non-heritage-registered (character) buildings. The structure of the original building is lost in the conversion. The regulation changes would permit more units; however, the proposed relaxation of exterior changes would allow new cladding materials, windows (including vinyl) and doors on the front elevation, potentially destroying heritage value.
- Alison Meyer: One of the challenges with existing non-heritage-designated housing is that it is more lucrative for developers to have the building demolished. With the proposed regulations and incentives, the City is trying to address this. Sometimes buildings have already been stripped of their architectural detailing and the applicant must decide whether to demolish the building, strip the interior and acquire three units, or heritage designate and acquire two extra units.
- Which restrictions would be relaxed? Chloe Tunis: Changes to the following parts of Schedule G, Section 6, are proposed:
  - a. addition to the side of a building would not be allowed, but a new dormer would be possible
  - b. addition of an unenclosed floor space (sundeck, balcony, porch) would be allowed, but not facing the street
  - d. developing an under-height basement by raising the building would be allowed

- e. changes to the front façade of a building would be allowed, including new cladding, windows and doors
- Alison Meyer: Exterior changes to non-heritage-designated buildings would be reviewed by the Panel only if the applicant is applying for an incentive by designating the building.
- What is a bicycle parking space? Bicycle parking has become a considerable regulation that requires accommodation. Chloe Tunis: The space must be weather protected with minimum dimensions and ground or wall-mounted equipment to which to lock the bike. Allowing a small rear addition or accessory building provides flexibility to meet the bicycle parking regulations.
- 
- It was suggested that staff consult with the Victoria Heritage Foundation and the Hallmark Heritage Society regarding the changes.

**Moved**

**Seconded**

That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend that staff clarify the wording in Schedule G.

**Carried (unanimous)**

**Moved**

**Seconded**

That the Heritage Advisory Panel oppose item b (reduce restrictions on exterior changes) and item g (allow windows and doors on front elevations) in the staff report.

**Carried (5 in favour, 2 opposed)**

## 5. HOUSE CONVERSION REGULATIONS UPDATE – CHECK-IN

Chloe Tunis, Development Services Planner, presented an overview of the proposed updates to the House Conversion Regulations.

The Committee discussed:

- How do the proposed changes interact with the Fairfield neighbourhood plan?
  - Typically only a building permit would be required for a house conversion; this is not changing with the proposed updates to the House Conversion Regulations.
  - House conversions are a component of missing middle housing, by creating spaces within existing houses.
- The need to preserve a neighbourhood's form and character is restrictive, and prevents more supply to be developed.
  - Conversion regulations would provide a way of preserving neighbourhood character while adding more housing supply within existing houses.
- How often would house conversions displace tenants, and would they be eligible for compensation?
  - It is challenging to predict the uptake of the new regulations, and unknown how many of those converted houses are rented.
  - No Tenant Assistance Policy is required through the building permit process; this is only required through rezoning applications.
- To how many houses would the new regulations apply?
  - It is hard to say exactly; many more houses would be eligible, but it is challenging to predict the uptake.
- Would the regulations apply to both rental and strata housing?
  - Yes.
- There is no guarantee that these units would be rented; how can we ensure that this update increases the number of available rental units?
  - Even if the units are not secured as rentals, this arrangement is attractive for owners who wish to rent a couple units within a house. Compared to a new build, these units are more likely to be rented.
- How could these newly-created units be secured as rentals?
  - A housing agreement would be registered on title to secure the units as rentals, and this would require Council approval.
- The regulations would allow relatively small units; how is diversity and accessibility in rental stock promoted through these updated regulations?
  - More units could be possible per total floor area. However, the minimum floor areas still allow for unit sizes that are larger than many of the typical unit sizes in multi-family developments in the City.
  - House conversions tend to be quite varied, depending on existing configuration, creating some studio units and some larger units.
- Is there any way to encourage shared resources (e.g. washing machines) to free up unit space?
  - Changes to the requirements around decks and entryways would allow for more usable indoor space within units, rather than multiple indoor entries.

The Committee provided the following feedback:

- support for the opportunities created by the updated regulations
- the need to balance the preservation of neighbourhood character with the need to increase the number of units within the City
- concern that many old houses could be converted
- support for increasing the supply of affordable rental housing
- concern that these regulations would incentive the displacement of existing tenants (similar to demoviction)
- the need for protections for existing tenants
- concern that family homes would be broken up into multiple units, each renting for the original price of the whole house
- housing is more important than the appearance of a neighbourhood.

Staff will follow up with the Committee on ways to provide additional feedback on the proposed updates to the House Conversion Regulations.





**Kyle Ryan**  
President, VRBA

## New Home Conversion Proposal Assists Supply, Affordability

The City of Victoria is considering an important home conversion policy that may improve supply, vacancy rate and affordability.

CMHC reports vacancies in Victoria have dropped to 1%, adding to our housing challenges.

Canada's strong population growth of over half a million annually is driving demand.

About 60% are newcomers to Canada and we need to welcome them with affordable housing

They are a significant part of our strong economy – people bringing their skills and expertise.

However, CMHC also reports new housing in Greater Victoria declined by 18% last year.

New supply remains a challenge due to the cost of land, labour, materials and getting approvals.

One way to boost supply is converting older, single detached homes into multi-unit housing.

According to the city's report, the new conversion policy will:

- make it easier to convert a house to multiple units
- facilitate the creation of more units
- incentivize heritage designation as well as the creation of rental, affordable rental and affordable home ownership units

Proposed changes include:

- allowing additional conversions by changing the qualifying year of construction
- expanding opportunities to incorporate under-utilized basement and attic space
- increasing and incentivizing the permitted number of units
- relaxing restrictions related to the degree of exterior change
- revising parking and bike parking requirements.

There are several options for how quickly these proposals may be enacted.

An aggressive timeline would be appropriate considering the extent of our housing challenges.

The city's proposal appears to represent a more flexible approach to housing by assisting more supply and affordability – clear benefits to the community.

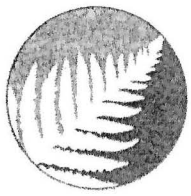
You can offer your support and provide feedback to the city, no later than February 10, by visiting <https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/planning-development/development-services/house-conversions.html>

Visit us at [vrba.ca](http://vrba.ca)  
and  
[careawards.ca](http://careawards.ca)

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**VICTORIA**  
**RESIDENTIAL BUILDERS**



# FERNWOOD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Andrea Hudson, Acting Director  
Sustainable Planning and Community Development Department  
City of Victoria  
Victoria, BC

RE: Proposed Changes to House Conversion Regulations

Dear Ms. Hudson,

The Fernwood Land Use Committee, with the approval of the Board of Directors of the Fernwood Community Association, are pleased to submit the following comments concerning the proposed changes to the City's regulations permitting house conversions as presented in the Committee of the Whole Report dated November 20, 2019.

On a rainy February night 16 neighbours attended Fernwood's regularly scheduled land use meeting to discuss changes the City is considering to the regulations governing house conversions. A notice of the meeting, including a copy of the Report, was sent out through our email distribution list.

In general no significant issues were raised concerning the following proposed changes: a. Qualifying year of construction; b. Reduced restrictions on exterior changes; c. Expanding opportunities to utilize under-height basements; d. Allowing attic spaces to be developed; f. Increasing and incentivizing permitted number of units; g. Allowing windows and doors on front elevations; i. Requiring bicycle parking and j. Allowing exemptions for required bicycle parking.

It is important to note there were disagreements over some of the details, particularly with regard to parking. Please note this letter is not an 'endorsement' because there are varying concerns about the impact of the parking-specific proposals. The group summarized their feelings as: "Our vision is that we can have community in the midst of densification. We agree more density is needed but disagree on what level and how to accomplish this." Those in attendance agreed that house conversions must be done in a way that preserves the character and feel of the neighbourhood and minimizes impacts on existing green space.

Rather than endorse or object, our focus is to raise questions and concerns that we believe were not addressed in the Report that we all agreed should be raised and discussed, regardless of our individual opinions.

We recognize that many of our neighbours, including some people in the room that night, live in precarious housing. We therefore urge the City to consider a number of unanticipated consequences of the new conversion proposals. In most circumstances existing tenants will be reno-victed during a house conversion and in some cases family housing could be lost if a larger unit is broken up into smaller ones. Additionally, since conversions will be expensive, there could be a loss of affordable rental housing and a proliferation of lucrative short term holiday rentals. Prior to changes being made to the Conversion Regulations we think it would be prudent of the City to review the effectiveness of the City's existing Tenant Assistance Plan to confirm that existing renters are being adequately protected.

In a similar vein, we are concerned about the proposal to incentivize the number of units by reducing minimum floor areas required. We worry this could lead to owners/ developers maximizing the number of small units in a conversion, which does not address the need in Fernwood for family rental housing. To encourage the development of family housing we encourage the City to consider incentivizing the number of bedrooms within units rather than only just the number of units (e.g. through a subsidy for multi-bedroom units).

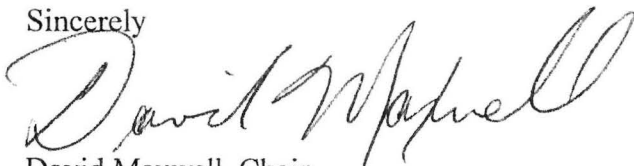
With regard to vehicle parking in front yards it was suggested that the City require permeable parking surfaces and limit how much of the front yard can be turned into parking. Additionally, some attendees were concerned that allowing front-yard parking could threaten the character and feel of the neighbourhood, since currently there are many gardens, mature trees and lawns that the community enjoys.

With regard to decreasing the parking requirements, attendees would like the City to consider creating an exemption for houses that currently do not have driveway access. There are a number of houses in Fernwood that currently have street parking only. If such a house was converted into suites, it is possible that only one off-street parking space would be required, and the creation of a driveway to accommodate that would eliminate the existing street parking space, resulting in no net gain of parking, but a loss of green space and an additional expense.

Finally, we are not commenting on the eight items listed in the Committee of the Whole Report under the heading 'Potential Future Work' as they are not recommended for further exploration at this time. We certainly expect that when these significant changes are explored the process will include a robust consultation process.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Maxwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Maxwell" clearly legible.

David Maxwell, Chair  
Fernwood Land Use Committee

February 10, 2020

Mayor and Council  
City of Victoria

Re: Next Generation Conversion Regulations – Proposed Changes

Dear Mayor and Council:

The Rockland Neighborhood Association Land Use Committee has reviewed the proposed changes to the current Conversion Regulation and is generally very supportive of the changes to drive increased density utilizing existing structures while being sensitive to the existing character of residential neighborhoods. The recommended “Run” option would hopefully facilitate the required greater housing options in a speedy manner.

We support the drive to incentivize Heritage Conversion and understand it will work to maintain the look and feel of Rockland, and the city, as the previous rounds of conversion did so well. We would recommend that articulation of the range of change to heritage structures and how those changes align with accepted heritage restoration standards be made very clear during public consultation in order to enable informed feedback.

As the report acknowledges, a full analysis of parking has not been conducted there will need to be further discussion around the parking requirements. The reduction of onsite parking and the potential to push unknown volumes onto our streets with this and other recent policy decisions (e.g. bike lanes) are likely to have a cumulative impact on neighborhood parking issues. This will continue to be a source of tension in neighbourhoods as overall density increases, and will require further analysis in the context of these proposed changes to Conversion Regulations.

Regards,

Rockland Neighbourhood Association Land Use Committee



COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL  
**research·insights·solutions**

Mayor and Council  
City of Victoria  
City Hall  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC  
V8W 1P6

February 10, 2020

Dear Mayor and Council,

**Re: Next Generation Conversion Regulations.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input on the Next Generation Conversion Regulations.

The Community Social Planning Council (CSPC) is an independent, non-partisan, and knowledgeable voice on social issues in BC's capital region. By fostering social innovation and integrated action on social, cultural, economic and environmental conditions the Council supports the creation of sustainable communities.

Two of our four priority work areas are housing affordability and sustainability. Both housing affordability and sustainability will be assisted by the proposed changes to the Next Generation Conversion Regulations.

In relation to the three options in the staff proposal - walk, run, or sprint - we note that both housing scarcity in Victoria and climate change are crisis-level problems, and we need to quickly mobilize a range of effective policies to address both. While there are no magic-bullet policy solutions, updating the conversion regulations would enable more and different types of housing to be available in the core urban area of the region, reducing automobile traffic and greenhouse gas emissions.

Thus the CSPC supports the adoption of the "Run" option in the staff proposal, but we urge the City to immediately launch preparations for the remainder of policies in the "Sprint" option.

We thank you again for the opportunity and for your consideration of this submission.

Yours truly,

Diana Gibson  
Executive Director





**Cities for Everyone** supports more affordable housing and transportation, in order to provide security, freedom and opportunity for people with all incomes and abilities

[www.citiesforeveryone.org](http://www.citiesforeveryone.org)

Victoria City Council  
Victoria City Hall  
10 February 2020  
Re: **Next Generation House Conversion Regulations**

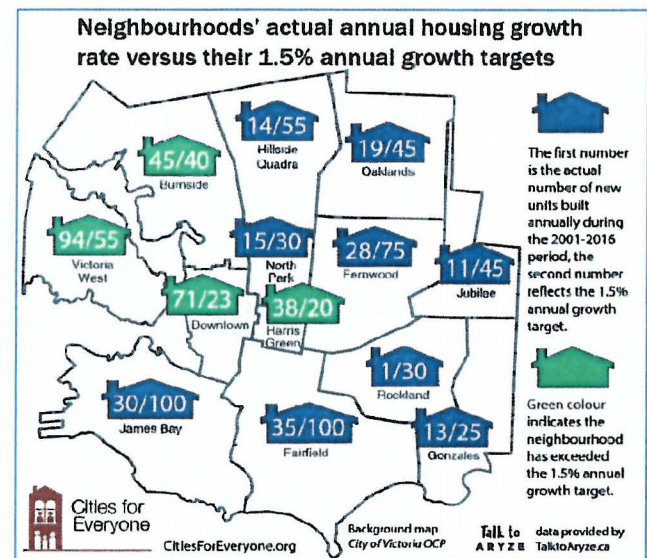
Dear Mayor and Councillors,

*Cities for Everyone* advocates for more affordable and inclusive housing and transportation options in our region. We are glad that Victoria is developing [New Generation of House Conversion Regulations](#) designed to allow more infill housing to be built in our residential neighborhoods. This is an important and timely initiative. Abundant research indicates that residents of compact urban neighborhoods [drive less](#), [save on transportation costs](#), are [safer and healthier](#), produce [less pollution](#), [consume less land](#), and have better [economic mobility](#) (chance that a child born in poverty becomes economically successful as an adult) than they would living in automobile-oriented areas. As a result, residential infill helps achieve our community's economic, social and environmental goals.

Cities for Everyone advocates the "[1.5% Solution](#)" which means that residential neighborhood housing supply should increase by approximately 1.5% annually to match regional population growth rates, in order to accommodate growing demand, increase affordability and achieve other community goals. According to analysis of Victoria's building approvals, most neighborhoods are adding far fewer homes than needed to achieve this target, as shown to the right.

The proposed Next Generation House Conversion Regulations can help achieve neighborhood growth targets by reducing the costs and impediments to property owners of adding more housing units. We therefore support the proposal and encourage the city to adopt the "sprint" (strongest) option because it would allow:

- Conversions in zones that currently restrict them.
- Garden suites with conversions.
- Additions that create new floor area.
- Delegated authority for parking variations.



*Next Generation House Conversion Regulations*  
**Cities For Everyone**

Below are some specific comments and suggestions about this proposal.

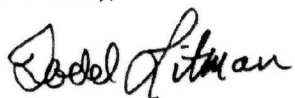
- We see little justification to limit conversions to houses built before 1985, since some newer houses are suitable for expansion. Many newer houses are large and were designed for easy conversion, using adaptable housing guidelines such as CMHC's [FlexHousing](#) standard, which allows houses to be upgraded, expanded, divided into extra units, and adapted to new uses.
- The proposed maximum heights (7.6 metre and 2.5 stories) are likely to prevent some potential house conversions. We recommend that this be increased, particularly for corner lots and larger lots where there are fewer impacts on neighbors.
- The proposal only marginally reduces off-street parking minimums. For example, it still requires 0.7 spaces for a small 450 square foot unit 1.0 spaces for a 700 sf unit, although many of the households that will occupy such housing are car-free, and the city wants to discourage car use and increase housing affordability. Many jurisdictions are [eliminating parking requirements](#), or requiring [unbundling](#) (parking rented separately from apartments) so car-free households are no longer required to pay for parking spaces they don't need. Note, eliminating parking requirements does not eliminate parking, it simply allows property owners to decide how many off-street parking spaces to provide based on their specific needs.

In many situations, off-street parking requirements actually reduce the number of parking spaces available to residents because each driveway displaces one on-street space. Most residential driveways only serve one vehicle and are only occupied part-time. As a result, adding an off-street space reduces the number of parking spaces available to neighbors. Off-street parking significantly increases development costs, increases impervious surface area and stormwater management costs, and driveways create obstacles to pedestrian, particularly wheelchair users. We therefore recommend eliminating parking minimums altogether, or be significantly reduced, and eliminated where a new driveway would serve just one vehicle.

- We would also like to ensure that residential garage spaces can be converted to living space, as many newer houses have ground-level garages that are not used to store motor vehicles and are well suited for suites with wheelchair/ disabled access.
- The proposal emphasizes the importance of preserving heritage buildings. This is desirable but should be balanced with other community goals. As the proud owner of a 1905 designated heritage home I can report from personal experience that such housing is costly to maintain and operate, and can never be as energy efficient as new housing. Not every older house deserves preservation, and to achieve our affordability and environmental goals heritage preservation should be matched with higher allowable densities on other properties. For example, if 20% of houses in an area are preserved for their heritage value, this constraint on infill development should be offset by increasing allowable densities by 20% on other properties, for example, raising maximum building heights from 2.5 to 3.0 stories.
- To reduce development costs and delays, particularly for smaller infill projects, we encourage the City to delegate project approval decisions, such as reduced parking requirements, to qualified staff.
- On a related issue, we note that many areas designated for multi-family housing in Victoria's Official Community Plan (OCP) have not be upzoned to allow the density and height required for such housing. We therefore ask the city to upzone all areas designated in the OCP for multi-family housing to accommodate those targets.

*Next Generation House Conversion Regulations*  
**Cities For Everyone**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd Litman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Todd Litman  
*Cities for Everyone*



## Katie Lauriston

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**From:** David Thompson [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** February 10, 2020 12:37 PM  
**To:** Victoria Mayor and Council; Development Services email inquiries  
**Subject:** Submission - Next Generation Conversion Regulations

February 10, 2020

Mayor and Council  
City of Victoria  
City Hall  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC  
V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor and Council,

### **Re: Submission on Next Generation Conversion Regulations.**

We thank you for undertaking this public consultation on the Next Generation Conversion Regulations.

PolicyLink is an independent research and consulting firm with clients in government, business and the non-profit sector across Canada. Our public policy focus areas include climate, energy, employment, economic and fiscal policy.

We make the following observations for your consideration:

1. **Policy-goal alignment.** Good public policy aligns regulation, incentives and other tools with government goals in order to achieve those goals.
2. **Greater affordability of housing and reducing greenhouse gas emissions** are stated key goal for the City of Victoria.
3. **Existing zoning bylaws in Victoria are not aligned with, and significantly undermine,** the above-noted City goals.
4. **Increasing the supply of housing** in Victoria will improve affordability compared to baseline levels, and will enable more regional residents to live closer to employment, shopping, cultural and other destinations, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation.
5. **The overall thrust of the Next Generation Conversion Regulations "Run" proposal** would increase the supply of housing, thus aligning with and supporting the above City of Victoria key goals.
6. **The "Walk" proposal would delay and undermine** achieving progress on the goals.
7. **The "Sprint" proposal would provide greater support** to the above City of Victoria key goals. The City staff report of November 20, 2019 recommends "that the 'Sprint' level changes be explored after the potential "Run" options have been implemented and staff have a chance to monitor the outcomes." Good public policy would set clear targets here, i.e. instructing staff to commence monitoring and preparation of all Sprint options immediately, and to report back to Council within clear timeframes, e.g. six months for the majority of Sprint options, and 12 months for the remainder.
8. **A range of further measures should be explored** in order to provide better policy alignment and support to the above goals, including:
  1. reducing non-safety related setback requirements, which restrict the supply of housing;
  2. relaxing floor space ratios and site coverage ratios, which restrict the supply of housing; and,
  3. eliminating off-street parking requirements, which restrict the supply of housing.

We thank you again for this consultation and for consideration of our submission.

With respect,

David Thompson

\*\*\*\*\*

**David Thompson**

PolicyLink Research and Consulting

[www.plrc.ca](http://www.plrc.ca)



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**From:** Robin Bayley [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** January 12, 2020 2:11 PM  
**To:** Chloe Tunis <ctunis@victoria.ca>  
**Subject:** Re: Next Generation Conversion Regulations

Dear Chloe Tunis

I had read the staff report and listened to the COTW presentation and I was struck by various aspects relating to accessibility.

Firstly, anything to do w. parking is pertinent to accessibility, especially since there are no accessible parking rules or minimum in place in the City and have not been for over a year. If accessible parking is not supplied, it is likely that the additional units will not be available to PWD. It is a common misconception that people with disabilities do not drive. In fact, even people who use wheelchairs do, and others who are not able to partake in active transportation do so.

It is also considering incentives. Previously, there was an item in the strategic plan about incenting accessible suites in house conversions. If accessibility is not in the mix, then the incentives developed may not be sufficient to cover costs for additional needs of people with mobility impairments.

When I raise issues of accessibility, I am often told it is out of scope because the project has been conceived without an accessibility lens. And then when I raise such issues later, it is too late.

---

Robin Bayley  
39 Linden Avenue  
Victoria, BC, V8V4C9  
Phone: ([REDACTED])  
Mobile: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**From:** Sean Janzer [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** January 15, 2020 3:43 PM  
**To:** Chloe Tunis <[ctunis@victoria.ca](mailto:ctunis@victoria.ca)>  
**Subject:** Feedback on Proposed Conversion Changes

Hi Chloe,

I think the staff report is well thought out and will result in the creation of new units. Some feedback:

- Allowing changes to windows and doors to the front will be critical for unit layout
- Further to above, increasing under-height basements creates much needed livable floor space, but will likely require some exterior changes for functionality
- Given the fact that many conversions will require remediation of asbestos, houses may be "gutted" quite often. This is the perfect time to increase energy performance over the bare minimum. I think an incentive based program is important given our community's zeal for combatting climate change.
- Once implemented, if there was a guide to the house conversion process made available it would be helpful.

I sincerely hope the "run" strategy gets implemented, it will result in more rentals and ground based strata units in our community!

Thanks,

Sean Janzer  
[REDACTED]  
110-4460 Chatterton Way  
Victoria, BC

  
**ROYAL LEPAGE**  
Coast Capital Realty

## Katie Lauriston

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**From:** Jim Knock [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** January 22, 2020 2:50 PM  
**To:** Chloe Tunis  
**Subject:** Conversions

Hi Chloe.

As promised, here are my 'free' observations on your updated conversion plans. These are based on a multi-decade period in Provincial Government (UVic MPA Grad) and a lifetime of experience in design, construction, finance and change management.

The attached specific comments about Conversions are based on the following basic credos:

1. Renters and rental property owners are partners who can only succeed and prosper if the other party is successful and prosperous.
2. Renters and rental property owners are bound by long standing civil laws that have been recently complicated by statute law, economic, social and political intervention.
3. Society generally accepts that all citizens have a right to receive suitable accommodation without clarifying what that means.
4. The current operating structures for providing accommodation have not stabilized.
5. The demand for rental accommodation exceeds the capacity of governments to even come close meeting without causing huge funding/taxation backlash and politically terminal backlash (i.e. major NIMBY responses and tax revolt).
6. Governments are implementing policies that are intended to create a huge wealth transfer from all rental property owners to renters; the historic idea that proportional taxation treats all investment equally is being distorted so much that it has become a major impediment to wise investment decisions.
7. The complexity of new government policy has destroyed the traditional contractual relations between renters and rental property owners; it has shifted to a renter/government and rental property owner/government triangle.
8. Like all contracts, contractual negotiations are like a chess game; each party will only sign on if they see a personal advantage for doing so.
9. Only a small minority of renters and rental property owners are problems (jerks); they only exist because government policies prevent them from being identified, exposed and thus excluded from the rental marketplace.
10. There is a huge power imbalance in the rental marketplace; renters have 1/2 months rental at risk, owners have hundreds of thousands of dollars at risk with each and every transaction.

If one accepts the validity of the above (I would propose that recent history and available data makes it difficult to deny them); then the following proposals concerning conversions should be considered:

- Do not revise existing standards without data on existing registered and illegal conversions in the target community; all UVic profs stressed the need to set desired targets and probable outcomes to enable the program to determine if it was a success
- Ensure Political acceptance is in place, not just with council but in the affected communities and throughout Municipal Inspection and Engineering Departments; NIMBY exists internally as well as in the community
- Many inexpensive rentals fly below the radar and efforts to regulate them often reduce their numbers and/or increase their rents (see recent Globe stories in Vancouver)
- Most conversions will require renovations to meet required Residential Tenancy standards, increasing renovations and tenant churning
- Without documented current numbers (informal visitation sampling would be easy and effective combined with some Assessment Corp information and city data analysis to create reasonably accurate numbers), everything will be a guess (as you admitted that during your talk). How will you or anyone else know if the city good a good return on it's investment on this housing initiative
- Over the years many other programs identified and implemented to increase available affordable rental accommodation have stalled or failed; we need to know why before we create new initiatives that may be no more successful than these earlier efforts
- The criteria for approving the changes should be simplified for easier implementation; make sure reasons for rejections are minimized and depoliticized
- Why tie heritage and other criteria into the conversions; the only purpose would be to provide hidden cross subsidization (isn't the program about increasing more affordable rentals, not to subsidize other programs)
- Why put barriers in place that increase complexity and provide more opportunities for citizens to resist increases in affordable rentals in their area (enabling NIMBY)
- The whole approval process introduces a 1-3 year delay between inception and conclusion whereas the existing informal underground process considerably shortens that process and costs less allowing for more affordable rentals; the only loser in the informal underground process is the city revenue department
- By clearly identifying and quantifying the variables associated with a new Conversion process and the planning process that must be met to obtain the necessary approvals to proceed, and then putting it on line, rental owners could work through the process on their own, learning as they go and obtain immediate approval to proceed, fast tracking the creation of additional affordable rentals
- Like automated bank loans, current technology could be easily put in place that would capture all the variables and decision trees would be thought through in advance, the approval process would be depersonalized and it would ensure all applicants were treated identically (reducing front desk time and processing delays)
- The current conversion process does not encourage the creation of affordable rental units; if that is the prime objective than the process needs rethinking

If the Planning Dept has the latitude to modify the Conversion Process and their desired outcome is an increase in affordable rentals whose capital and operating costs are not

paid for by the city, then I would suggest that there may be better ways to go about it than I saw with your presentation.

If you wish to discuss further, I would enjoy doing so at your convenience.

--

***Jim Knock***

1370 Dallas Road  
Victoria, BC, Canada  
V8S 1A1  
Cel [REDACTED]



**From:** John Luton [REDACTED]

**Sent:** January 26, 2020 5:39 PM

**To:** Development Services email inquiries <[DevelopmentServices@victoria.ca](mailto:DevelopmentServices@victoria.ca)>

**Subject:** House conversion policy

I'm not thrilled with the idea of waiving bicycle parking requirements. Rather, the city should commit to assisting those who want to increase housing units with programs that would design creative solutions to deliver additional bicycle parking, both for any increase in numbers of residents allowed and to help retrofit existing stock to meet a growing attraction to cycling as a transportation and lifestyle choice.

Making affordable units more attractive demands that they dovetail with the emerging transportation choices of many, who are reducing their costs for transportation by cycling and walking more often. Reducing requirements for bicycle parking suppresses demand and will incent people to convert more of their property for vehicle parking.

I understand the intent of allowing front yard parking, but first choice should be developing bike parking solutions. Front yard parking adds more blacktop and attendant impacts (drainage issues, heat island effect), and reduces greenspace that is the added value of any yard. Front yard parking should be the variance of last resort.

John Luton,  
Home: 22 Philippa Place  
Victoria, BC V8S 1S6

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## Katie Lauriston

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**From:** Development Services email inquiries  
**Sent:** January 28, 2020 10:06 AM  
**To:** Chloe Tunis  
**Subject:** FW: House Conversion Regulations Feedback

Thanks!

**From:** L H [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** January 26, 2020 10:03 PM  
**To:** Development Services email inquiries <DevelopmentServices@victoria.ca>  
**Subject:** House Conversion Regulations Feedback

Hi,

I saw information online about the city looking for feedback on house conversion regulations: <https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/planning-development/development-services/house-conversions.html>

First off, I think it's wonderful that the city is wishing to retain old homes (especially character ones) and to encourage homeowners/developers to convert them into multiple family units. This ensures some of our beautiful character/heritage buildings remain and provides more affordable housing. This is also positive for the environment, rather than sending good material to the landfill. It also keeps some of this amazing architecture around, which is one of the reasons why Victoria is so special, the character buildings also are so important to our tourism industry.

The only concern I have is parking. I live in James Bay in a lane style street. We have a few older homes that have been converted into suites. We have limited parking on one side of the road. One of the homeowners provides parking for all of her tenants, which is great. The other homeowner rents out six units and doesn't provide any parking. This can be a real problem. You have homeowners who pay big bucks in property taxes etc. and they or their guests can't park on the street at times. People get frustrated with a landlord making big profit off of tenants and not being courteous to others. It's an issue. Most tenants still have vehicles so it is important that parking is provided. I would say at the back of the home though and not at the front. When all you see is a yard full of cars it starts to make the neighbourhood look pretty unsightly. I don't see that many tenants using backyards. I think the priority should be aesthetics. Please also consider that many of these buildings will be non-smoking. It's a good idea to require landlords to provide a smoking area on the property. I have an apartment building across the way where smoking is not allowed. Until late at night people come out on the street to smoke in front of people's houses. In the summer they can be quite loud and the smell of marijuana infiltrates into homes with open windows.. As the city densifies, this is something that should be regulated.

Sincerely,

Lara Hurrell  
James Bay homeowner/resident

## Katie Lauriston

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**From:** amy white [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** January 29, 2020 11:35 AM  
**To:** Chloe Tunis  
**Subject:** RAC follow up

Hi Chloe,

This is Amy from the Renter's Advisory Committee - the one who was concerned about the displacement of tenants with this new proposal.

I really just want to reiterate I am extremely concerned for current tenants who are at risk of being evicted in order to make room for housing conversions. I would support this idea IF there are tenant protections in place, and it worries me that there aren't any at all.

I'll give you my own situation as an example. My husband and our 5 year old and myself live in a 3 bedroom house (with a basement) that has been purchased by a developer. Their initial proposal to demolish 3 family houses and make 48 luxury units was denied. If and when it is eventually approved, we will at least have the tenant assistance policy to aid us finally in moving and finding alternative housing. With what you are proposing now puts as directly as risk for being evicted at any moment, we don't have to wait for the development proposal to be approved, with zero protections or assistance. The owner could potentially easily say they are going to convert our unfinished basement into a unit and break up the upstairs while they are waiting for their approval and poof, we are gone! Additionally, the tenant assistance plan does not apply for tenants who have lived somewhere for less than a year, so the developer can essentially have them evicted before the year is up and again get out of assisting any tenants at all.

There are massive rocks in this plan from a tenant's perspective and I beg you to reconsider this from our point of view. Landlords unfortunately can be quick to exploit loopholes with zero repercussions and the objective of increasing housing may severely backfire for families and those living in 2+ bedroom units.

Thanks for your time,  
Amy White

Sent from my iPhone

## Katie Lauriston

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**From:** Development Services email inquiries  
**Sent:** January 30, 2020 8:26 AM  
**To:** Chloe Tunis  
**Subject:** FW: Feedback on proposed changes to house conversion regulations

FYI

**From:** Jack Sandor [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** January 28, 2020 9:36 PM  
**To:** Development Services email inquiries <DevelopmentServices@victoria.ca>  
**Subject:** Feedback on proposed changes to house conversion regulations

Hi there,

My name is Jack, and I'm a resident of Victoria. I live in Rockland, and I support all the proposed changes. My only piece of feedback beyond that is that I'd like to see car parking minimums removed entirely rather than reduced. There's already a massive amount of car parking available in the city compared to every other form of transportation, and given the cities goal to reduce the number of car trips by getting people to take alternative forms of transportation (a fantastic goal!) it seems silly to mandate that parking be available.

Jack Sandor

**From:** Manon Elder [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** February 6, 2020 9:40 AM  
**To:** Chloe Tunis <ctunis@victoria.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: FEEDBACK

Hello Chloe

Thank you.

Attic development- Homeowner would have to see if the cost is worth the development as the usable space may be too small for anything of significance other than an upper expansion to lower suite with bedrooms and bathroom.

Addition of windows letting in light is an upgrade to quality of life.

parking is a huge problem especially since bike lanes came in and wiped out street parking as it did to our rental property on Fort st. also allotting bikes for vehicles gives the message for less carbon footprint legal suites allows for garbage allowance to suites making the property cleaner. reducing height of basement suites to 6'3" allows for more legal suites

thank you

manon

**From:** Manon Elder [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** February 6, 2020 1:01 AM  
**To:** Development Services email inquiries <[DevelopmentServices@victoria.ca](mailto:DevelopmentServices@victoria.ca)>  
**Subject:** FEEDBACK

Hello

I saw this down below and would like to give feedback before the feb 10, 2020 deadline. where can i do this?

or on what website can i do this?

<https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/planning-development/development-services/house-conversions.html>

I would like to see bicycles offset vehicles for parking allowances.

Attic development

exterior changes to allow staircases to attic units

basement height reduction to 6 foot 3 inches

if explanations are required for these I would be happy to provide them

best

manon elder



## Katie Lauriston

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**From:** Development Services email inquiries  
**Sent:** February 7, 2020 4:28 PM  
**To:** Chloe Tunis  
**Subject:** FW: parking and house conversions

**From:** Denise Stocco [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** February 7, 2020 3:54 PM  
**To:** Development Services email inquiries <DevelopmentServices@victoria.ca>  
**Subject:** parking and house conversions

["developmentservices@victoria.ca"](mailto:developmentservices@victoria.ca) <[developmentservices@victoria.ca](mailto:developmentservices@victoria.ca)>

February 7, 2029

Hello,

NEXT GENERATION – HOUSE CONVERSIONS.

I would like to address the topic of “parking” in the proposed changes to regulations.

The effort to provide more housing in the city is laudable there is a real need. Most adults rely on cars for transportation. A recent survey of the neighborhood showed that 97% of people had a car. The young people who do not want cars and use bikes are still a very small minority. An increase in residents, will lead to an increase in cars in neighborhoods. I live in Fernwood. In my street there are many secondary suites (3 or 4) per house. As it is now there are cars parked on both sides of the streets day and night, leaving one lane for car circulation. Many residents use their garage as storage as well. With at least 300 adults moving in the new Caledonian project, Chambers Street and adjacent streets will be literally clogged.

Has the Municipality considered the impact of having more cars in the streets ? What steps are taken to accommodate the resulting increase in parked cars, traffic and congestion ? Are there plans to build underground or above ground parking to accommodate population/car increases? Most working people have to rely on cars to get to work. Public transport is still not convenient, cheap (free buses?) or frequent enough for people to make the switch. Car share companies have a potential for reducing the number of cars in the streets and should be supported.

Creating more housing for people is positive. Increasing the number of cars will not be, as more people will spend more time finding street parking, increasing traffic and traffic jams, pollution, etc.. For this reason the new regulations for house conversion should not go ahead until the municipality has put in place steps designed to alleviate - not make worse - parking and circulation problems.

Thank you for your attention.

Denise Stocco  
[REDACTED]

## Katie Lauriston

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**From:** Eric Doherty [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** February 8, 2020 12:36 PM  
**To:** Lisa Helps (Mayor); Jeremy Loveday (Councillor); Ben Isitt (Councillor); Marianne Alto (Councillor); Sharmarke Dubow (Councillor); Sarah Potts (Councillor); Charlayne Thornton-Joe (Councillor); Geoff Young (Councillor); Oaklands Board; Executive Director; Development Services email inquiries  
**Subject:** Next Generation Conversion Regulations - Proposed Changes  
**Attachments:** E Doherty ltr re Victoria Conversion Bylaw - Feb 2020.pdf

Dear Mayor Helps and Victoria City Council members,

February 8, 2020

### Re Next Generation Conversion Regulations - Proposed Changes

I would like to thank you and city staff for Victoria's forward looking proposed Next Generation Conversion Regulations.

However, I have some suggestions to strengthen these regulations, and the way they are communicated:

#### 1) Allow conversion of houses built as recently as 2019

The suggestion I would like to emphasize the most is changing the cut-off date to the end of 2019. The written and verbal reports by staff suggests that 1985 was chosen because larger houses were permitted before this date, but did not identify any negative effects of choosing a more recent date such as January 1, 2020. (Many houses built after 1985 exceed 2500 square feet, and some exceed 4000 square feet.) If the effect of updating these regulations is positive as the staff report suggests, it will be even more worthwhile if more houses are eligible.

Newer houses are more likely to be deliberately designed for easy conversion, using adaptable housing guidelines such as CMHC's FlexHousing™ standard. CMHC states that "adaptable housing can be upgraded, expanded, *divided into extra units* or used for a variety of purposes throughout its life."<sup>il1</sup>

#### 2) Garage space conversion clarity

I would also like to ensure that garage spaces within houses can be converted to living space, *and home owners are aware of this option*. Many newer houses have ground level garages at the front which is ideal for the entranceways to ground level suites. These ground level entrances are often well suited for wheelchair/disabled access.

#### 3) Clarity regarding the conversion of common sizes of houses

The proposed conversion bylaw is applicable to commonly sized houses, not just the largest houses. It seems to allow a 2-3 bedroom suite in a modest size house. (The proposed minimum size for adding one rental unit

is only 100 m2 or 1076 square feet). However, there may be barriers in the BC Building Code posing significant barrier to larger and/or multiple rental suites.

*If there are counter-productive barriers to creating rental suites in the Provincial Building Code, I would like these to be clearly identified so they can be addressed at the political level.*

I would also like to have clear information on the situation regarding the feasibility of family size rental suites in common sizes of homes in Victoria. For example:

- What are the differences from building a smaller secondary suite?
- Can the owner of a house with 1,200 square feet on each of two levels feasibly put in a 1,200 square foot basement/ground floor suite?

#### **4) Stronger incentives / protections for rental conversions**

The staff report states that “new opportunities for conversions may make it more attractive to redevelop existing rental properties and, as with any redevelopment, this could result in the existing tenants being displaced.”

I believe that existing rental conversions should NOT be eligible for conversion to strata (ownership) units under this bylaw. These existing conversions, many of which provide relatively affordable rental housing, should remain as rental accommodation unless City Council is satisfied that conversion to strata is in the public interest.

I believe that the City should be ‘sprinting’ to create rental units in formerly single family houses (some of which will be homeowner created and relatively affordable).

#### **5) Communicate intention to phase out fossil fuel heating**

The staff report notes that many building suitable for conversion “still use fossil fuel heating systems [and] house conversions may give the City additional opportunities to intervene through touchpoints where low carbon heating systems and energy efficiency measures can be encouraged”

*I would like to the City to immediately and clearly express its intent to require and/or incentivise non-fossil fuel heating and hot water systems in conversions in the near future.* This will allow people investigating conversion possibilities to consider systems such as air source heat pumps as part of their planning, rather than getting caught unprepared by changes that may only be months away.

#### **6) Reduce parking requirements given the climate emergency**

I am also concerned that the reductions in parking requirements are so modest. Responding to the climate emergency requires cities to quickly reduce the number of private vehicles and the distances traveled by vehicles (in addition to rapid electrification of the automobile fleet). *I would like to see deeper reductions in parking requirements, especially for rental conversions.*

Please note that leading cities are eliminating parking minimums and instituting parking maximums as part of their climate emergency responses.

Thank you,

Eric Doherty

1555 Oakland Avenue

Victoria BC V8T 2L1

[REDACTED]

Cc Oakland Community Association

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Eric Doherty, Registered Professional Planner, MCIP - Ecopath Planning

Victoria, BC Canada

NEW PHONE NUMBER [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[www.ecoplanning.ca](http://www.ecoplanning.ca)

Twitter @Eric\_Doherty

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<sup>i(1)</sup> <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/accessible-adaptable-housing/universal-design-adaptable-housing-models>

## Katie Lauriston

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**From:** Jack Meredith [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** February 8, 2020 11:50 PM  
**To:** Development Services email inquiries; Chloe Tunis; Jeremy Loveday (Councillor); Lisa Helps (Mayor); ben@isitt.ca  
**Subject:** Next Generation House Conversions Regulations - FEEDBACK

To all involved,

I would like to say how delighted I am that the City is moving ahead with updating the House Conversion Regulations.

I would also like to complement the people involved in their thoughtfulness about the many issues and for moving the update along so quickly. I think it will be a very useful tool to enable many home owners and developers to bring more housing units into the Victoria market.

For context, I am an architectural engineer specializing in Green Buildings and currently advising several clients on retrofitting existing homes to enable them to age in place and share their homes with caregivers and/or tenants.

I have the following comments and suggestions on the recommendations.

My comments are organized using the alphabetic labels in the section "Proposed Zoning Changes":

a.) Change the Qualifying Year of Construction: The recommendation is to change the qualifying year from 1931 to 1984. I am supportive of enabling more buildings to be included in the House Conversation Regulations but I fail to understand the logic of setting a new date of 1984. I can imagine many houses built after 1984 in which aging owners have more space than they need or want or are able to keep up. A house once full of family or guests or hobbies is now too large for their needs but they still want to remain in their home on the street close to their friends and neighbours. For this reason, I RECOMMEND that the Next Generation House Conversion Regulations apply to all houses in Victoria, regardless of age.

b.) Reduce Restrictions on Exterior Changes: I am totally supportive of the recommendation to allow exterior changes to the exterior of existing houses. As noted in the recommendations this should enable designs to be better configured and have units able to access outdoor space. This is highly desirable to avoid developing more substandard units. However, I RECOMMEND that this be taken further to allow exterior changes to all portions of the building INCLUDING portions of the building facing the street. I think this will not have negative esthetic impacts but rather have positive esthetic impacts by correcting poor initial designs. (Heritage Houses should obviously be required to maintain their exterior appearance.)

c.) Clarify and Expand Opportunities to Utilize Under-Height Basements:  
I agree with this recommendation

d.) Allow Attic Spaces to be Developed: I agree with this recommendation to add a half story in beyond what is permitted in zoning (e.g. R1-B 2.5 storeys).

e.) Allow Vehicle Parking in Front Yard (non-heritage): I totally agree with the recommendation to allow parking in front yards. In many cases, parking is the major barrier for owners considering house conversions since access to the backyard is not possible. Further I RECOMMEND that the amount of parking not be limited to two vehicles but rather be determined by size and function. By this I mean if the front yard is large enough to accommodate the parking in a safe and aesthetically pleasing fashion then allow it.



f.) Increase and Incentivize Permitted Number of Units: I do not understand the logic of this recommendation. The recommendation is to allow the number of units based on size of building. I think I understand the need to limit the number of units is to avoid increasing the population density in the neighbourhood beyond a certain amount. What I don't understand is the logic of allowing higher population density if the units are 1. heritage or 2. rental or 3. below market ownership.) I RECOMMEND all houses are allowed to use the right column (i.e. 2 units for 80m<sup>2</sup>; 3 units for 175m<sup>2</sup>; 4 units for 240 m<sup>2</sup>; 5 units for 280 m<sup>2</sup>).

g.) Allow Windows and Doors on Front Elevation: I agree with the recommendation to allow windows and doors on the front elevation of non-heritage designated houses. In addition, I RECOMMEND that stairs also be allowed to be added in non-heritage designated houses. This would further support street oriented units; access to outdoors and allow more flexibility in floor layouts and improving poorly design houses.

h.) Decrease Parking Requirement: I am so glad the off street parking issue is being raised as it is arguably the single biggest barrier for people considering sharing their homes with caregivers and tenants. I understand the concept of basing the parking requirement on the size of units. However, I think the recommended requirements are too onerous both now and into the future as we evolve away from the single occupant vehicle paradigm. I understand this is a controversial issue but in order to increase the amount of RENTAL units in the City of Victoria I RECOMMEND that the parking requirement for RENTAL units be 1.0 stalls for units over 100m<sup>2</sup>; .5 stalls for units from 45m<sup>2</sup> to 100m<sup>2</sup> and .2 stalls for units less than 45m<sup>2</sup>.

i.) Require Bicycle Parking: I totally agree with the recommendation to provide proper secured bike parking. Most people considering house conversions understand and support the need to provide this amenity.

j.) Allow Floor Area Exemption for Required Bicycle Parking. I support the recommendation to allow creation of additions or new accessory buildings to accommodate high quality bike parking.

POTENTIAL FUTURE WORK: I understand the need to limit the scope of changes in order to speed up the process but I encourage you to consider the following comments on future work.

k.) Passive House/Energy Efficiency Standards: House Conversions completed as a result of these changes will likely result in these houses remaining viable and using energy for many years to come. Consequently, I feel strongly that when these conversions are being done that energy efficiency measures be integrated into the projects. Energy retrofit technologies and techniques are well know and easily implemented, particularly during major renovations. Therefore, I RECOMMEND that it be mandatory for any house conversion have an Energuide Energy Evaluation completed so that home owners can learn about common sense energy efficiency measures and associated energy retrofit incentives that can be easily incorporated and have reasonable payback.

l.) Considering Other Zones: No comment

m.) Allow Garden Suites with Conversions: This seems like a no brainer to me. If a home owner has sufficient space for a garden suite why would it not be allowed in addition to any suites within the house. I RECOMMEND allowing Garden Suites and considering them as a "unit" within the House Conversion Regulations.

n.) Allow Additions that Create New Space: Similar to the Garden Suites comment above. If the site is appropriate why not allow minor additions as part of the House Conversion? In many cases a minor addition, may be able to improve the aesthetics of a house while adding new units. I RECOMMEND allowing home owners to undertake minor additions as part of House Conversions.

o.) Creation of floor area beyond zoning: No comment.

p.) Legalizing Unlawful Suites: No comment.

q.) Landscaping/Tree Preservation: No comment.

r.) Delegated Authority: No comment.

Thank you for encouraging feedback on the proposed House Conversion Regulations.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Jack Meredith, P.Eng. LEED Fellow Emeritus

President, HGBC Healthy Green Buildings Consultants Ltd.

[REDACTED]

## Katie Lauriston

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**From:** Ryan Jabs [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** February 10, 2020 9:51 AM  
**To:** Development Services email inquiries  
**Subject:** House conversions feedback

Hi folks,

Thank you for receiving feedback around updating the city's house conversion policies. I'm at 1560 Oakland Ave and am fully supportive of loosening the regulations around house conversions, and feel that the "sprint" option is the best way to go, particularly as we fall deeper into the climate crisis we are facing.

I am a small developer, but conversions aren't my specialty and generally aren't projects I often consider. However, anything we can do to make it easier and quicker to build more housing will help with our housing crisis. More importantly, good densification of all types is key to reducing our local contribution to climate change.

And we really need to speed these processes up.

In addition, I'm very much in favour of reducing even further or eliminating all together the requirements around parking – particularly when amenities in a conversion are added to support alternative transportation. If we're serious about the climate challenges we face, we need to give people more opportunities to get out of their car and cater less to those who believe parking and car ownership is a right and a necessity. How can we really expect people to change if we continually entertain discussions around parking in one of the most walkable municipalities in Canada?

Reducing the number of parking spaces will also help with affordability for those who make the decision to go without a vehicle. And it gives owners an opportunity to plant more trees and provide more green space for residents and to help with storm water management.

Again, I appreciate you taking feedback as you consider this important policy change.

Take care,

Ryan Jabs | President, Community Builder  
Lapis Homes | [REDACTED] | [www.lapishomes.com](http://www.lapishomes.com)  
[REDACTED]



CITY OF VICTORIA ENGINEERING POLICIES	
POLICY: Residential Strata Titling	
Prepared By: Land Development	Date: 1997
Authorized By: Victoria City Council	Date: 1997

1. A preliminary approval obtained from City Council or the Approving Officer is valid for a period of one year from the date Council's resolution to approve is adopted.
2. When the rental apartment vacancy rate as provided by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation falls below 4% for Metro Victoria, no applications to convert existing residential rental buildings containing more than four rental dwelling units shall be accepted.
3. Any owner/developer denied the privilege to apply to convert existing residential buildings to strata lots for the reason outlined in Paragraph (2) has the right to appeal to City Council and a successful appeal is required before the City Engineer will accept a formal application to convert.
4. The vacancy rate applicable to an application shall be the rate that prevails in the rental statistics provided by C.M.H.C. on the date the preliminary application is received at City Hall.
5. Tenant Plan - Rental Residential Strata Conversions

Any preliminary application to convert a building containing active rental dwelling units shall be accompanied with a Tenant Plan which will set out:

- a. Certification that the owner/developer has notified the tenants of the building of the proposal to convert the building into strata units.
- b. A complete list of the tenants in the building.
- c. The type of choices such as a continued fixed-term tenancy, option to purchase rental unit, etc. offered to the tenants that would allow them to continue to occupy their units after the strata conversion has been completed.
- d. Any monetary assistance to be offered, such as rental-free period, moving expenses, etc.
- e. Formal notification that tenants have been advised of other agencies that may be of assistance, such as Pacifica Housing, the Capital Regional District, etc.

The Tenant Plan shall be submitted to Council for review at the preliminary application stage and the owner/developer shall certify that the Tenant Plan, as adopted by Council, has been carried out prior to final approval. The Tenant Plan shall be signed by all the tenants.



**Corporation of the City of Victoria**  
Engineering Department, Land Development Section

Application No. \_\_\_\_\_

**TENANT PLAN – STRATA TITLING**

☐ Preliminary Application

☐ Final Application

APPLICANTS NAME (PRINT)	ADDRESS	PHONE # / FAX #
PROJECT ADDRESS	# EXISTING UNITS RENTED _____, OWNER OCCUPIED _____, VACANT _____	
# NEW UNITS IN PROJECT	# TOTAL PROPOSED STRATA UNITS	

EXPLAIN NATURE OF PROJECT AND REASON FOR STRATA TITLING:


EXPLAIN TYPES OF ASSISTANCE / OFFERED TO TENANTS:

<input type="checkbox"/> - Fixed Term Tenancy -
<input type="checkbox"/> - Option to Purchase -
<input type="checkbox"/> - Rental Assistance -
<input type="checkbox"/> - Alternative Rental -
<input type="checkbox"/> - Other -

TENANT INFORMATION (Please Print)				
TENANT'S SIGNATURE	PHONE #	UNIT #	DATE ACCEPTED	DATE COMPLETED

NOTE: If the above space is insufficient use back of form.

APPLICANT'S CERTIFICATION	
FINAL / PRELIMINARY	I _____ confirm that the information contained in this form is correct to the best of my knowledge and certify to the City of Victoria that I will provide the tenant (s) with the assistance as accepted by the tenant as outlined on this TENANT PLAN.
	Applicant's Signature (Confirming Offer Accepted) _____ Date _____
	Applicant's Signature (Confirming Offer Completed) _____ Date _____

NOTE: THIS TENANT PLAN CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE IN OTHER LANGUAGES UPON REQUEST.