Pamela Martin

From: Tracey Johnson [redacted] >
Sent: September 29, 2020 7:01 PM
To: Public Hearings
Subject: Fwd: House Conversion

Begin forwarded message:

From: Tracey Johnson [redacted]
Subject: Fwd: House Conversion
Date: September 29, 2020 at 6:56:34 PM PDT
To: tracey Johnson [redacted]

Begin forwarded message:

From: Tracey Johnson [redacted]
Subject: House Conversion
Date: September 12, 2020 at 2:20:11 PM PDT
To: mayor@victoria.ca

Dear Mayor Helps,

I asked about House Conversion at your Mayor meeting (I've sent a separate email for missing Middle as they are two different bylaws).
Again I have a couple of ideas, thoughts, please forward to appropriate department. Thanks for holding the Mayors Meeting.

House Conversion…
These are the toughest of the tough to do … in my experience...

a. They are a hazmat nightmare. They are filled with lead, mold, asbestos, pcb and they always have hidden rat damage.
The insulation is from 1945 and usually consists of old socks, jeans, newspapers. They are energy "vampires" as they haven't been up to building code
Since 1956. They've been renovated at least a couple of times which leads to even more hidden asbestos. So the original fir flooring doesn't have
Asbestos but the five vinyl floors over top of it does…

b. The foundations were poured before rebar was invented so this makes them especially unstable for lifting. The procedure for a house lift is to: lift the house, rip out the foundation while the building sits
On building pads, reframe the foundation with concrete, and then lower the entire

building on to the new building concrete footings. All chimneys, electrical and water have to be disconnected.
The building is not habitable during this construction.

The building requires HPO Warranty as they are considered to be substantially reconstructed. In order to get this warranty the foundation needs to be replaced (requiring the house lift). One of the Council members noted that this
Was expensive… his estimate $100000… he was close the actual cost is over $200000. The lift itself isn't expensive (30K) its everything else… electrical, plumbing, roof, exterior siding.

Another suggestion was digging down… digging out the basement in COV is not an option. Then you have 3 pumps operating as the building sits below grade. Below grade homes are a water damage nightmare. Here the below grade (BG) are
Brutal because the water vapour pressure is very high (literally the vapour is pushing through the concrete creating mold problems), the pumps fail (they get plugged or overheat, power failure). BG homes are also problematic if there is widespread flooding… the BG home is usually the lowest house in the neighbourhood… so all the ground water pools in it. I've told my clients BG houses are like digging a swimming pool and putting a house in it. Its difficult to keep the water out during storm season. We are having monster atmospheric storms. The last one (Feb 2020, I took 14 flood calls in 4 minutes… a record, the entire northwest was out of drying equipment in under an hour). We had a client whose entire street flooded… every house but one… the only house
That did NOT flood was the home built slab on grade. The slab on grade house had no water damage. The water sat in the yard, pooled but did not enter the house. Every house on the street with a basement flooded.

Some of the interior walls have to be removed due to asbestos plus rewiring and replumbing is virtually impossible if the existing walls are in place. Plus the floor plan changes drastically when a large house is split in to four or five units.

c. The exterior cladding has to be replaced due to building code and HPO. You need to take off all the old siding and install the required rain and bug screen, then replace it with Hardiplank.
Ideally, you take the conversion house and virtually rebuild it so it looks very similar to the existing. Its all new construction but would fit in to the neighbourhood from a design perspective.

d. The buildings pre 1931(and later) don't have the structural framing required for bc building code (many of these buildings were constructed by handsawn timbers that aren't even remotely to code). The building spans are too large and the
Lumber is too small (its a simplified version of engineering deficiencies). Plus if we want to meet step code 5 (and we do) all the exterior walls have to be 8 -12 inches thick.

In a conversion, everything gets taken apart, the substructure exterior stays and is brought up to code so the finished product is 4 units (all energy efficient, bc building code compliant with HPo warranty). It looks like an old lovely building but its
All new. The challenge is to make the new look old so if you drove down the street you wouldn't be able to tell which one is the conversion and which one is original.

Another council person suggested that this is a homeowner project… absolutely,

respectfully could not disagree more. The conversions are out of the scope of most builders never mind the homeowners. Its easier for the builders to dumpster the existing and
Start over. The problem with this approach is that these conversions are gorgeous cornerstones of the City. These "grande ladies and gentlemen character homes " need to be restored not demolished.

Plus the homeowner would have to relocate/rent a home somewhere else as its impossible to convert a home while living there. There's no water, power, etc. So the homeowner would have to have the capital to finance the conversion PLUS pay for additional
Rental accommodations for a year while the home is being converted. Pretty tough to do if you have a family, kids, pets etc.

To make the conversions work please consider the following:

Problem:
1. Most conversions today, don't work… simply because lot size is too narrow (R1 B) OR the existing house does not have the necessary sf. You need at least 4 units for a conversion to be profitable (without profit no one will finance them,
They are tough to finance as they require a vast amount of building knowledge and experience). Simply put the houses are too small. The units need to be flexible in sizes ie 3 bed/2 bath or you run the risk of having a conversion full of micro units. Micro units Are not family friendly. We are missing the family units 3b/2b.

Solution:
Add sf to conversion contingent on Step code 5 or passive house standards (or close to passive house standard). If the builder/developer can meet passive house standard or close then add 500-600 sf to conversion. A small addition at the back
Of the existing house will not affect the street view (ie wreck the neighbourhood) but it would make the conversion a possibility.

2. Parking… Parking in the rear yards is wrecking the landscape of the yard. There is literally nothing back there except yards of asphalt. This is contributing to excessive runoffs in these conversions. Side parking is not an option as the lots are too narrow.

Solution:
Reduce parking requirements, supplement with modo, bike parking,(covered! So bikes don't get wet).

3, Below grade (as referred to as above)
If the builder/developed is salvaging the existing structure and not demolishing it we need to be able to build slab on grade. It may keep the building from flooding in the future.
The problem with this is that we will be over the height restrictions.

Solution:
Salvaging the structure - allow us to be over the height requirements. I'm not talking skyscraper but allow the building to be 3 stories without a basement. Slab on grade and then 2 additional above. This needs to be done as bylaw is written because
It could fall within a variance permit(this becomes problematic) because you can vary

for some items ie height but if it affects density then the variance isn't allowed. Simply put, if this isn't in the bylaw the height change would trigger a rezoning.

4. Lot size - lot widths are prohibitive
Solution:
Go over lot widths for existing zones… and reduce the lot width requirement for conversions.
There are a tonne of pre 1931 home that could be duplexes today… Why aren't they being converted? The lot widths are too narrow so then the project is no longer R1B conversions but a rezoning. If the project triggers a rezoning it is unlikely that anyone would salvage an older stock home. Most builders/developers rezone for new builds.

I know this is a long email, thanks for your time. Conversions are worth the effort and can supply much needed new, safe, restored housing that will preserve and restore our existing housing stock.
Lastly, email is an effective way to communicate but it lacks the inflections, all the above is meant to facilitate the new conversion rules. House conversions can preserve the character and integrity of the neighbourhood while
Providing safe affordable homes for individuals and families.

Respectfully

Tracey Johnson

Pamela Martin

From: Public Hearings
Subject: FW: House Conversion Regulations

From: David Berry [redacted]
Sent: October 6, 2020 9:32 AM
To: Public Hearings <PublicHearings@victoria.ca>
Subject: House Conversion Regulations

Hi Mayor and Council,

Reading through the proposed changes for Housing Conversion Regulations, I have a few questions.

Why is this limited to buildings built prior to 1984? Why would we stop someone from turning a mansion built in the 1990's/2000's into multiple dwellings? If it is required to bring these buildings up to code, this could be more feasible in a newer build than an old one.

If we are allowing older buildings to be turned into a 4/6 plex, why not allow someone to build a new one on a lot that will inevitably be turned into a single-family mansion (as required in our zoning code) rather than multiple dwellings?

There are beautiful character homes throughout Fairfield that have been turned into several suites for families, creating alternative, affordable living options. This has only enhanced the character of the neighbourhood and it should be a standard in all current single-family homes. I have attached a photo of a new build along Fairfield road that wouldn't be considered under this plan. Why would you stop someone from buying it and turning it into housing for multiple families?

Thank you
David Berry

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