

## Family Housing Jurisdictional Scan

### Executive Summary

The City of Victoria's Family Housing objectives are shared by many other municipalities: Increasing the number of 2 and 3-bedroom units in new developments; Increasing the proportion of households in family formation years in the city (30 to 50 years old); Increasing the number of households with children.

In developing the proposed *Family Housing Policy* and associated *Design Guidelines*, a total of 15 local government family-housing and child-friendly city plans were explored in addition to leading academic research. Many of the policies and documents examined were created within the past ten years, indicating this is a new and emerging issue for local governments.

### Key Findings

Three high-level approaches were recognized:

#### 1. *Family Friendly Bedroom Composition Requirements*

Requires new developments to include a certain percentage of two and three-bedroom units. Some local governments have chosen to require different percentages based on strata or rental tenure.

Examples: Vancouver, Richmond, Port Coquitlam, White Rock.

#### 2. *Family Friendly Design Guidelines*

Guidelines address the key issues and best practices of site, building and unit design related to residential livability for families with children.

Examples: Edmonton, Portland,

#### 3. *Child-Friendly Cities*

A child-friendly city is a holistic approach that looks beyond housing to identify how cities and the built environment can support children and attract families.

Examples: Toronto, London, San Francisco

### Introduction

This section offers a summary of the studies and initiatives uncovered during the jurisdictional review. The review aimed to explore various dimensions crucial for establishing family-friendly environments. It examined not only the physical aspects of housing units but also the surrounding amenities, infrastructure, and community services

contributing to a supportive and nurturing atmosphere for families. Initiatives from other cities were categorized into four types: policy, zoning, design, or other approaches. Table 1 lists the specific cities or municipalities where family-friendly initiatives were identified, along with the types of initiatives discussed in this report.

Table 1 - Family-friendly initiatives by municipality

Municipality	OCP Policy	Zoning	Design	Child Friendly City Strategy
<b>British Columbia</b>				
<a href="#">New Westminster</a> (2016)	✓	✓	✓	
<a href="#">North Vancouver</a> (2016)	✓	✓	✓	
<a href="#">Vancouver</a> (2016)	✓	✓	✓	
<a href="#">Richmond</a> (2018)	✓			
<a href="#">Port Coquitlam</a> (2018)		✓		
<a href="#">White Rock</a>	✓			
<b>Canada</b>				
<a href="#">Edmonton</a> (2017, 2021)	✓		✓	
<a href="#">Hamilton</a> (current project stage)				
<a href="#">Toronto</a> (2017, 2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>International</b>				
<a href="#">San Francisco</a> (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<a href="#">Seattle</a> (2014)	✓	✓	✓	
<a href="#">Portland</a> (2007, 2013)	✓	✓	✓	
London (2020)	✓		✓	✓

### *Bedroom Composition Requirements*

Many of the local governments explored regulating bedroom composition through zoning bylaws. Below is a summary of the minimum percentage of family units.

Table 2 – Bedroom composition requirements by municipality

	New West	North Van	Vancouver	Richmond**	Port Coquitlam	White Rock	Toronto
Strata Two Bedroom	25%	35%	35%	40%	25%	35%	25%
Strata Three Bedroom	5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	5%	10%	10%

Rental Two Bedroom	30%	35%	35%	40%	25%	35%	25
<b>Rental Three Bedroom</b>	10%	10%	10%	N/A	5%	10%	10%

\*\* Enabled through the OCP

Average	
Strata Two Bedroom	31%
Strata Three Bedroom	7.5%
Rental Two Bedroom	32%
Rental Three Bedroom	9%

*Design Guidelines*

Many local governments establish supplementary guidelines aimed at promoting family-oriented design within building interiors. These guidelines offer advice for applicants and developers to consider when designing the interiors of their buildings. However, it's important to note that under the Local Government Act, municipalities are not permitted to regulate the interior design of buildings. Therefore, the city lacks the authority to mandate specific aspects of interior design. Instead, these design guidelines are intended to be advisory and are encouraged as best practices for developers to follow.

*Unit Level Design Considerations*

There is a consensus amongst local government design guidelines that family-friendly units should be flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of families throughout all stages of their lives. Some other key themes identified include:

- Adequate unit sizes and bedroom dimensions tailored for families.
- Ensuring bedrooms have sufficient windows for natural light and ventilation.
- Incorporating ample storage space, entry areas, and other family-friendly design elements within units.
- Providing interior amenity spaces and communal areas conducive to children's activities and resident interaction, including space for pets.
- Strategically situating larger units, such as clustering them together or positioning them on lower floors of the building.
- Including specifications for flexible unit design and construction to accommodate evolving family needs.

### *Site & Neighbourhood Level Design Considerations*

Design considerations at a site and neighbourhood work to create thriving, vibrant, family-friendly communities in housing developments and often embrace a child-friendly city approach.

- Site Selection
- Transportation & Mobility
- Co-location of amenities

### *Child-Friendly City Strategies*

Some cities and local governments are exploring the concept of child-friendly cities as a strategy to attract and retain families and children. This approach extends beyond housing to encompass planning and design elements that cater to the needs of children. It acknowledges the significant role that the built environment plays in shaping a child's development and future opportunities. The underlying principle is that a city that prioritizes children's well-being is beneficial for everyone. Typically, child-friendly cities adhere to the following principles:

- Social Connectedness
- Playability
- Active Mobility
- Sense of Ownership
- Agency & Decision Making
- Access to Nature

### **Summary**

The jurisdictional scan revealed that no single approach is entirely effective in both attracting and retaining families in cities. Across the municipalities studied it became evident that a combination of tools is most successful in achieving the desired objective of enhancing the appeal of multi-family buildings to families and ensuring an adequate supply of units. The various approaches examined have provided valuable insights that have informed the development of the proposed Family Housing Policy and associated Design Guidelines.

Looking ahead, there is an opportunity to develop a broader, more comprehensive child-friendly strategy that considers families and children within the larger context of city policy and planning initiatives. Such an approach would not only prioritize the development of family-friendly housing but also encompass supporting resources and infrastructure to ensure children thrive in the urban environment. Notably, Victoria already possesses many elements of a child-friendly city, and the creation of this policy could further solidify the city's commitment to fostering a livable and vibrant environment for all residents.