

Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordability
Public Response to Proposed Recommendations
Summary of Activities and Findings

Date: June 18, 2015

Background

In the spring of 2015, Victoria City Council approved the creation of the Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordability. The Task Force was responsible for identifying actions that were within the City's jurisdiction that could help address affordability issues faced by households of low to moderate income. The Task Force met five times on a weekly basis starting on April 28, 2015 and through its deliberations developed with 25 recommendations for changing City policies, programs or regulations to help promote more affordability in the development of both market and non-market housing projects.

Public Engagement Methods

In order to gather input from the public on the proposed recommendations the Task Force supported three different methods through which citizens could provide feedback.

1. The Mayor and Council members on the Task Force hosted a Workshop at City Hall where the recommendations were presented on large poster boards and in print form. Participants provided written feedback and were also given the opportunity to speak directly to Task Force members and share their responses to the recommendations as well as any ideas that the Task Force may not have considered in their discussions.
2. A webpage was established on the City's website that included a link to the report of the Task Force's recommendations. Visitors to the site were encouraged to send their responses and ideas to an email address specifically set-up to gather public feedback.
3. Information on the Task Force's work and links to the recommendation report were also made available through the City's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Public Engagement Outputs

Approximately 40 people attended the workshop held on June 1, 2015 and many provided feedback, input and responses to the Task Force's recommendations. The City also received 21 emails through which citizens provided input. The social media campaign reached 1,997 individuals, received 16 likes and was shared once. There were four posts and 3 comments that provided links to articles on housing affordability and solutions to homelessness.

Findings

Overall, respondents supported the recommendations of the Task Force. One posting on Facebook suggested the City consider a program in Hawaii where retired transit buses were being converted into

shelter for people who are homeless while another provided a link to a newspaper article outlining the City of Vancouver's plan to lease large land areas for affordable housing purposes.

A matrix summarizing all email and workshop participant responses is provided in Appendix I and a summary of the social media feedback is included in Appendix II. Copies of the email responses are included in Appendix III and any attachments or documents from relevant internet links provided in the emails are included in Appendix IV.

It is worth noting that some of the recommendations did not receive unanimous support from those who attended the workshop and/or emailed responses through the City's website. The two most notable were:

- Thirteen respondents did not support the suggestion that the pre-application meeting with CALUCs be eliminated while only one responded specifically identified this recommendation as supportable.
- Four respondents did not support the recommendation that the City contribute land at no cost or reduced market value to affordable housing projects. Two identified it specifically as supportable. Three respondents suggested the City consider retaining ownership of properties and then leasing them to non-profits that were prepared to operate affordable housing programs.

Next Steps

The feedback from the public will now be reviewed by the members of the Task Force and any decisions regarding amendments or additions to the current recommendations will be made at the final meeting of the Task Force, scheduled for June 30, 2015.