

## District of Saanich

# Neighborhood Homes

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated: 8 January 2024

### 1. What is small-scale multi-unit or infill housing?

Small-scale multi-unit housing, missing-middle housing, and gentle density infill housing are all terms that generally describe infill housing – mostly ground-oriented buildings with multiple units that fit well into existing single-family neighbourhoods. Infill housing typically relates to adding additional units onto lots that previously had one single-family home.

### 2. What type of homes will be built?

Infill housing types typically include houseplexes and townhouses. These forms of housing provide options for young families, couples, older adults and others who want to live in Saanich neighbourhoods but struggle to find single-detached homes that meet their needs and incomes. These forms fit well on a single lot, in existing neighbourhoods.

### 3. What is the Province requiring Saanich to do with regards to infill housing?

In 2023 the Province created legislation that requires all BC municipalities to update their zoning bylaws to allow infill housing on single-family lots, without requiring a rezoning. The Province has set the number of units that must be allowed on each lot, and has recommended regulations including the height, setbacks, parking requirements, and other requirements. The District of Saanich must update their zoning bylaw to comply with the legislative requirements.

### 4. How many units will be allowed on each lot?

The legislation and regulations outline that:

- Small lots (under 280 m<sup>2</sup>) will be allowed 3 units
- Regular lots (larger than 280 m<sup>2</sup>) will be allowed 4 units
- Regular lots near transit (within 400 m of a frequent transit stop) will be allowed 6 units.

It is important to note that there are a number of criteria and exemptions which will determine more precisely which lots are eligible for the new zoning.

## **5. Are there any exemptions?**

The legislation provides a list of characteristics that local governments may use to provide exemptions to certain properties or zones such as heritage properties, properties with minimal servicing, or properties within areas identified for transit-oriented growth. The study will determine whether any of these potential exemptions will be applied in Saanich.

## **6. I live in a bareland strata. Will my property be rezoned?**

The new zoning will apply to all eligible lots regardless of the type of subdivision that created the parcels in the zone. Strata corporations may make bylaws regarding the type of building that may be constructed on a bare land strata lot, and owners would need to comply with all strata bylaws.

## **7. How tall will infill housing buildings be?**

Three storeys is recommended by the Province. This is consistent with the Saanich OCP policy which currently supports 3 storey forms in Neighbourhoods.

## **8. What about lot requirements? How much open space will be required on each lot? What will the setbacks be?**

Lot requirements will be determined through the study and taking in the Saanich context following regulations and guidance provided by the Province, building on existing neighbourhood form, and taking into account best practices in urban planning and housing policy.

## **9. Will services, like sewer and water, be able to handle increased density?**

Saanich Engineering Department is undertaking a municipal servicing assessment as part of the Neighbourhood Homes study, to determine available capacity, and plan for future upgrades. There may be parts of Saanich where the municipal system (sewer and water) would need to be upgraded to support infill housing. Infrastructure requirements may be identified and resolved during development permit or building permit approval processes.

## **10. How will this work consider biodiversity/climate goals?**

Creating more housing in neighbourhoods and near neighbourhood amenities can support climate goals by reducing emissions due to single occupancy vehicle use, as more people can walk, take transit, and ride their bike. Building more housing in existing, serviced neighbourhoods helps protect the Urban Containment Boundary and green space in Saanich and throughout the region. The study will take into consideration efforts to retain and add to the urban forest while meeting the Provincial objectives.

### **11. Why is the study being reduced to 6 months?**

The legislation requires local governments to amend their zoning bylaws by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The Neighbourhood Homes study has been reduced to 6 months in order to comply with the legislation.

### **12. Will there be a public hearing? Will there be any engagement?**

The legislation requires that a local government not hold a public hearing in regards to a bylaw required to comply with legislation. Due to the short timeline, that requires implementation by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and because Saanich is acting on a legislative requirement, Saanich will conduct “inform” level engagement.

Please visit the [project webpage](#) for regular updates, or [sign up](#) to receive email updates.

Engagement findings related to infill housing from other recent Saanich initiatives, such as the Official Community Plan update, will also help inform this work.

### **13. How many units can I build on my property?**

At this time, Saanich staff cannot advise property owners on the specific zoning regulations that will apply to their property. When the zoning bylaw is complete (June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024) property owners can determine the zoning regulations that apply to their property.

### **14. I think my lot will be included in the zoning amendments. When can I start construction on a four-plex?**

Until the zoning changes are adopted by Council, the process to build a houseplex is status quo which means a rezoning is required. Those interested in implementing zoning changes are advised to wait until the zoning changes are in place.

Although a rezoning may not be required in the future, property owners wanting to construct additional units will still require the necessary permits (e.g. development permit, building permit, etc.)

### **15. Will property values increase?**

Experience in [other jurisdictions](#) suggests that broad zoning changes do not have a discernable impact on land value. For example, when one single property is zoned to allow for four units, the value may increase, as it is the only property with this permission. But when many properties are zoned to allow for four units, the value increase is minimal, as there are many properties who have the same permission (eliminates scarcity, thereby minimizing the added value).

**16. If my property is now allowed 4 or 6 units, will my property taxes increase?**

It is ultimately up to BC Assessment to confirm assessment values, on which property taxes are based. BC assessment has suggested that the impact on land value from these types of zoning changes could be minimal.

**17. Will this housing be affordable? What about affordability?**

These units are expected to produce relative affordability, as smaller unit sizes and attached/semi-detached forms generally cost less than the single-detached homes that up until now have been dominating in Neighbourhoods. Adding more supply to the market over time can also improve housing prices.

It is also well understood that adding housing in areas close to transit, workplaces and schools, improve overall affordability, as households can spend less on transportation costs.

**18. How many lots are eligible for these zoning changes? How much housing will be built?**

There are approximately 26,000 eligible lots in Saanich.

A part of the study will be determining how many new homes are expected to be created as a result of the new zoning permissions. There are many factors that will impact how many homes may be built, including the age of existing properties, the willingness of property owners to redevelop, etc.