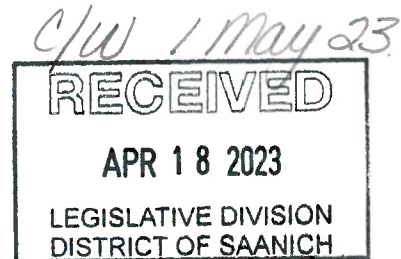




The Corporation of the District of Saanich

Report

To: Mayor and Council
From: Lindsay Chase, Director of Planning
Date: April 17, 2023
Subject: New Small Apartment Infill Zone – RA-1A Zone
 File: 1130-20 • Zoning Bylaw – Zone RA-Apartment



RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Endorse the proposed Small Apartment Zone (RA-1A), included as Attachment A.
2. Direct Staff to use the proposed RA-1A Small Apartment Zone when rezoning applications for small apartment infill are received in the future. Amend the Zoning Bylaw to include this new zone at the time of the first successful rezoning application.
3. Adopt by Council resolution the Small Apartment Infill Policy (Attachment B).
4. Direct Staff to incorporate the Small Apartment Infill Policy into the Official Community Plan (OCP), updated Design Guidelines, the “missing middle” infill project, and/or other policies and initiatives where appropriate.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Report is to:

- Provide Council with background information and analysis regarding a new Small Apartment Infill Zone;
- Provide Council with a draft Small Apartment Infill Zone and Policy to assist Council in decision-making with respect to small apartment applications;
- Seek Council’s endorsement for the proposed RA-1A Small Apartment Zone; and
- Seek Council’s support for a new Small Apartment Infill Policy.

BACKGROUND

At the September 30, 2019 meeting of the Mayor’s Standing Committee on Housing Affordability and Supply (MSCHAS), a motion was carried that the MSCHAS recommend to Council that Staff prepare a Report on the creation of a new apartment zone that could allow micro units in urban areas.

The motion from Council dated November 25, 2019 states:

“Staff be directed to bring Council a report recommending the creation of a new (or

modified RA or RS) zone that would be applied inside the Urban Containment Boundary that would permit micro units in multi-unit developments on lots that were previously single family lots provided certain criteria (i.e., setbacks, minimum lot sizes) were met.”

The Housing Strategy, adopted in 2021, identifies the need to increase housing choice by expanding opportunities for infill. Action 3.1 B states:

“Create opportunities to allow small apartments on single lots by establishing a new apartment zone.”

This Report provides an overview of small apartment infill and proposes a draft Small Apartment Zone along with a Small Apartment Infill Policy to help guide decision making for rezonings for this use.

SMALL APARTMENT INFILL

Small apartment infill refers to multi-unit residential buildings up to three storeys in height that can be built on a single residential lot. These buildings can be constructed less expensively under Part 9 of the BC Building Code without needing mechanical devices such as elevators and HVAC systems. Small apartment infill is likely the most dense “missing middle” housing solution when considering building size, total hard surfacing, density, and community impact, and as a result requires careful locational consideration.

Small apartment infill buildings are often purpose-built rental, and units are typically small studios (no separate bedroom). This is a typology that is particularly useful for students, single professionals, and short-term residency workers, especially when combined with good access to transit. The District of Saanich’s Housing Needs Report (2020) identifies studio/one-bedroom units as one of the most-needed housing types in the District of Saanich (need for 1,231 units between 2020 – 2025) and secure rental housing is in critical demand. While future rent levels for these units are difficult to estimate, increasing supply of these units is one part of addressing housing need.

The draft Zone and Policy presented in this report are modeled after recent projects in the City of Victoria (see Figure 1). Examples exist on Doncaster Drive across from Hillside Mall, and along Richmond Road. Another example has recently received approval in the Township of Esquimalt on Craigflower Road. These examples are located within transit-rich areas close to amenities and employment areas.

The Doncaster Drive small apartment infill project in Victoria contains 11 micro units and has rental tenure. Unit sizes range from 28 m² to 40 m² (300 ft² to 425 ft²) with most units at 34 m² (370 ft²). All units are studios, but the Township of Esquimalt example includes one two-bedroom unit and one three-bedroom unit.

Staff interviewed developers and City of Victoria planners, and conducted site testing and analysis in developing the Zone and Policy. Staff brought the proposed Zone/Policy to MSCHAS in 2022 for discussion and feedback.



Figure 1: A streetscape elevation showing an example of small apartment infill, transitioning between a four-storey apartment and one- and two-storey single-detached homes.

PROPOSED SMALL APARTMENT ZONE

The Zoning Bylaw does not have an RA Zone that is suitable for small-scale apartment infill development. Therefore, a new RA-1A Small Apartment Zone is proposed. Table 1 below outlines the zoning requirements of the proposed Zone, with a comparison with Saanich’s RS-6 Zone and the City of Victoria’s example at 2732 Doncaster Drive.

Table 1: Comparison of lot requirements for proposed Small Apartment Zone

Lot requirements	Proposed RA-1A	2732 Doncaster	RS-6	Comment/Rationale
Density (FSR)	0.8	0.79	0.5	Falls between RS and denser RA/RT zones
Lot size (minimum)	650 m ²	639 m ²	560 m ²	Slightly larger lot than RS-6 lot, in order to have adequate open space for landscaping, driveway access, and setbacks
Lot width (minimum)	18 m	16.8 m	16 m	Adequate transition and consistent with urban pattern
Height	11 m	10.7 m	7.5 m	Provides higher ceiling heights for improved livability
Front yard setback	5.0 m	4.5 m	6.0 m	Generally consistent with residential zoning requirements (RS, RT, RA zones)
Side yard setback	3.0 m	4.0 m	3.0 m	Consistent with RS and RT zoning
Side yard setback	1.5 m	1.7 m	1.5 m	Consistent with RS and RT zoning
Rear yard setback	9.0 m	16.0 m	7.5 m	Buffers building from adjacent properties; parking in rear yard
Exterior side yard setback	3.0 m	n/a	3.5 m	Consistent with RT and RS zoning
Open space (minimum)	10%	n/a	n/a	Adequate open space for landscaping and avoids hard surfacing entire lot

The proposed Zone is recommended to have a minimum lot size of 650 m², slightly larger than the RS-6 Zone minimum lot size of 560 m². This lot size provides sufficient usable floor space for a small apartment, while providing adequate setbacks to adjacent properties, area for

landscaping, and outdoor amenity space in the rear yard. Many of Saanich's RS lots meet this minimum size threshold.

The proposed RA-1A Zone requirements, including minimum lot size, setbacks, building height, and open space requirements, enable this building form to work within the context of most RS-zoned parcels. Depending on parking provided, a significant portion of the rear yard is likely to be hard surfaced for parking and manoeuvring. The proposed Zone and Policy work together to encourage the preservation of some open space in the rear yard for amenity space, shade tree planting, and stormwater absorption.

The *Local Government Act* allows a Zoning Bylaw to only contain zones which are in use (that is, applied to an existing parcel of land). As a result, a new Small Apartment Zone cannot be added to the Zoning Bylaw until an application has been successfully rezoned for this use. As a result, Staff are seeking Council's endorsement of the proposed Small Apartment Zone for use at the time of the first small apartment rezoning application.

PROPOSED SMALL APARTMENT INFILL POLICY

A proposed Small Apartment Infill Policy has been developed to set out expectations for developers interested in small apartment infill, and to provide guidance to Council when considering rezoning applications for this use. The draft Policy (Attachment B) addresses considerations including:

- Suitable locations for small apartment infill;
- Accessibility and affordability;
- Tenure and unit size;
- Parking ratios and transportation amenities;
- Building design and site layout for neighbourhood fit; and
- Livability elements for small/micro apartments.

Supported Locations

Within some area plans such as the Shelbourne Valley Action Plan, Uptown-Douglas Plan, and Cordova Bay Local Area Plan, there exists Policy support for the "small apartment" building form within certain land use designations (such as Village Attached Residential in the Cordova Bay Village). Through continued Centre, Corridor and Village (CCV) planning and the Neighbourhood Homes planning, more areas will be identified for small apartment infill.

Where no explicit Policy support exists, the Small Apartment Infill Policy provides locational considerations for this type of use. Given the reduced parking ratios, small apartment infill is appropriate in areas with low vehicle ownership rates, frequent transit, and within walking distance to shops, services, and employment areas. Small apartment infill can be suitable in "edge" locations and can serve as a transition between large multi-unit residential buildings and adjacent lower density forms (such as single detached houses).

Generally, rezoning applications for small apartments can be supported, subject to site analysis, in the following locations within the Urban Containment Boundary:

- Areas designated within plans (Local Area Plans, Village plans, Centre plans, Corridor plans, and Action plans) that support three-storey attached housing and multi-unit residential buildings;

- On Major Roads within Centres, Villages, and Corridors (see Attachment C); and
- On Major Roads that are frequent transit routes (see Attachment D).

Small apartment infill should be discouraged on larger parcels and on potential lot assemblies where Policy supports taller buildings, higher density, and more efficient building forms and these forms can be practically achieved. It is well suited to parcels that have been orphaned by surrounding re-development projects and where higher density development is supported by Policy. Approximately, 1,200 parcels meet the locational criteria providing adequate opportunity for the use of this zone.

Support for Parking Variances

Siting small apartments in areas that are well served by transit and active transportation infrastructure and close to amenities justifies lower parking requirements. Reduced on-site parking provides more space for landscaping, trees, and outdoor amenity areas which improves livability.

The Zoning Bylaw requires 1.5 spaces per unit plus visitor parking for apartment use. Parking ratios as low as 0.5:1 could be supported where frequent transit, car share, bike storage, and locational criteria (see above) are met and justified through a transportation demand management plan. In cases where there are exceptional locational and transportation options, parking ratios could be lower. A review of parking standards in the Zoning Bylaw is due to be undertaken soon and is expected to result in lower infill parking requirements, especially for smaller units.

Neighbourhood Fit and Livability

Neighbourhood fit and livability are important and are addressed through policies in the proposed Policy. The Policy includes building design and site layout considerations such as orientation/access to the street, limiting parking to the rear yard, landscaping setback areas, and providing a common amenity space in the rear yard that includes at least one tall shade tree.

Livability policies include accessibility of ground floor units, adequate natural light/ventilation, and taller ceiling heights. Full-sized kitchen appliances, separated bathrooms, in-suite laundry, Juliette balconies, and storage within the building are encouraged. Well-designed units with built in furniture are encouraged for small or micro units.

The District of Saanich's updated Development Permit Area design guidelines will include guidelines for micro units and livability. Small apartment infill rezonings will be subject to a Development Permit.

CONCLUSION

A new Small Apartment Zone and Small Apartment Infill Policy are proposed for multi-unit residential buildings of up to three storeys that can be built on a single residential lot. Small apartment infill is at the high end of the "missing middle" infill spectrum considering building size, density, and community impact. Staff recommend that Council endorse the proposed Zone and Policy, and direct Staff to use the Zone at the time that an application is received.

The proposed RA-1A Zone is designed to accommodate a building on a RS lot, without lot assembly. Under the parameters of the Zone, buildings will be able to meet Part 9 of the BC Building Code, which will save construction and operating costs. The proposed new Zone supports a range of unit sizes including, but not limited to, micro units.

To help Council make rezoning decisions, a Small Apartment Infill Policy is proposed. The Policy provides guidance on locations within Saanich where small apartment infill is supportable, as well as considerations for parking ratios, tenure, building design, site layout, and livability features/amenities. The Policy and the proposed Zone work together to get the best outcome given individual contexts for neighbourhood fit and minimizing hard surfacing on lots.


Currently, there is Policy support for small apartment infill within some of the newer Area Plans. The upcoming Neighbourhood Homes infill housing planning and continued CCV planning will continue to expand the planning Policy framework for infill housing. Other new infill zones are anticipated to be coming to Council as part of this work.

Small apartment infill buildings are often purpose-built rental, and units are typically small studios (no separate bedroom). This typology is suitable for some types of households, especially when combined with good access to transit. The Housing Needs Report (2020) forecasts studio/one-bedroom units as one of the most-needed housing types in the District of Saanich and there is high demand for secure rental. Increasing supply of these units is one part of addressing housing needs.


The proposed Small Apartment Zone adds a new tool for the District of Saanich in support of expanding the diversity of housing types. Staff recommend Council endorse the proposed RA-1A Zone and adopt the attached Small Apartment Infill Policy to guide rezoning decisions.

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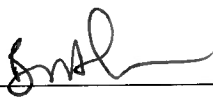
Lindsay Chase
Director of Planning

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- Attachments: Appendix A: Proposed RA-1A Zone
Appendix B: Small Apartment Infill Policy
Appendix C: District of Saanich Road Network Map
Appendix D: Transit Routes

ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS:

I endorse the recommendation from the Director of Planning.



Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer

XXXX.1 Uses Permitted

Uses Permitted:

- (a) Attached Housing
- (b) Apartment
- (c) Congregate Care Home
- (d) Home Occupation
- (e) Accessory Buildings and Structures

XXXX.2 Lot Coverage

Lot Coverage:

The maximum coverage of all buildings and structures shall be 35% of the lot area.

XXXX.3 Density

Density:

- (a) Buildings and structures for an apartment use or a congregate housing use shall not exceed a Floor Space Ratio of 0.8.

XXXX.4 Open Site Space Requirement

Open Site Space Requirement:

A minimum Open Site Space Requirement shall be provided as follows:

- (a) Open space area equal to 10% of the total site area shall be provided and located:
 - (i) Outside the required front yard setback area;
 - (ii) Outside the required parking and manoeuvring area.

XXXX.5 Building and Structures for Apartment or Congregate Housing

Building and Structures for Apartment or Congregate Housing:

- (a) Shall be sited not less than:
 - (i) 5.0 m (16.4 ft) from a front lot line.
 - (ii) 1.5 m (4.9 ft) from an interior side lot line, provided the sum of both sideyards is not less than 4.5 m (14.8 ft).

(iii) 3.0 m (9.8 ft) from an exterior side lot line.

(iv) 9.0 m (29.5 ft) from a rear lot line.

- (b) Shall not exceed a height of 11.0 m (36.1 ft).

XXXX.6 Accessory Buildings and Structures

Accessory Buildings and Structures:

- (a) Shall be sited not less than:
 - (i) 7.5 m (24.6 ft) from any lot line which abuts a street.
 - (ii) 1.5 m (4.9 ft) from an interior side lot line and a rear lot line which does not abut a street.
 - (iii) Exempts arbors or other structures as part of outdoor amenity areas.
- (b) Shall not exceed a height of 3.75 m (12.3 ft).
- (c) Together shall not exceed a lot coverage of 10%.

XXXX.7 Minimum Lot Size

Minimum Lot Size:

No land shall be subdivided into lots having a width or an area less than:

- (a) Standard Lot
 - width 18 m (59.1 ft)
 - area 650 m² (6,997 ft²)
- (b) Panhandle Lot
 - not permitted

XXXX.8 General

General:

The relevant provisions of Sections 5, 6, 7, and Schedule B and F of this bylaw shall apply.

SMALL APARTMENT INFILL POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to assist in the evaluation of rezoning applications using the Small Apartment Zone (RA-1A). Specifically, the policy outlines objectives for this type of infill, and identifies considerations for elements such as location, accessibility, tenure, parking, amenity space, building design, and site layout.

OBJECTIVES

1. Expand housing choice to meet a broader range of community need.
2. Support housing innovation, affordability, and accessibility.
3. Provide guidance for a housing form that is part of “missing middle” infill options.
4. Provide a multi-unit residential housing form that is a suitable option for a single residential lot without need for lot assembly in locations where increased density is supportable.
5. Provide guidance for a parking ratio for small apartment infill.
6. Ensure that small apartment infill buildings with micro units are designed to be livable.

POLICIES

1. Locational Considerations

- 1.1 Encourage small apartment infill developments in areas that are well served by frequent transit and pedestrian/cycling infrastructure and are within walking distance to shops, services, and employment areas such that living with low rates of car ownership is practical.
- 1.2 Discourage small apartment infill on larger parcels and on potential lot assemblies where policy supports taller buildings, higher density, and more efficient building forms and where these denser forms of housing can practically be achieved.
- 1.3 Support small apartment infill in “edge” locations where they can serve as a transition between larger multi-unit residential building forms and adjacent areas that are designated for lower-density residential uses.
- 1.4 Support small apartment infill in high-growth areas on parcels that have been orphaned by surrounding re-development projects and where higher density development is supported by policy.
- 1.5 Generally, support rezoning applications for small apartment infill subject to policies 1.1 to 1.4 in the following locations within the Urban Containment Boundary:

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- Areas designated within plans (e.g., Local Area Plans, Village plans, Centre plans, Corridor plans, and Action plans) that support three-storey attached housing and multi-unit residential buildings;
- On Major Roads within Centres and Villages; and
- On Major Roads that are frequent transit routes.

2. Affordability

- 2.1 Support construction approaches that enable buildings to remain classified as Part 9 buildings under the BC Building Code that can result in reduced operating costs and lower construction costs/timelines.
- 2.2 Smaller/micro units offered at more affordable costs should be designed with livability and the health/well-being of tenants in mind.

3. Accessibility

- 3.1 All ground floor units should be wheelchair accessible from the street.

4. Unit Size

- 4.1 A mix of unit sizes is encouraged.

5. Preference to Rental Housing

- 5.1 Prefer secure rental projects over strata-titled projects as a means to address the need for expanding the primary rental market with secure rental housing, as identified in the Saanich Housing Needs Report.
- 5.2 Strongly encourage housing agreements that support rental tenure with terms of 60 years or the life of the building in order to provide a long-term secure supply of rental units.
- 5.3 Support other forms of affordable and supportive tenures such as co-op and co-housing.

6. Parking and Transportation Demand Management

- 6.1 Support small apartment infill in areas with low vehicle ownership rates and where lower vehicle parking ratios can be supported due to a broad range of transportation options.

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- 6.2 Require a transportation demand management plan to support decreased parking ratios. Consideration should be given to access to frequent transit, car sharing, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and bicycle parking.
- 6.3 Parking ratios as low as 0.5:1 may be supported when justified by a transportation demand management plan and where access to frequent transit and car share, bike storage facilities, and proximity to services and employment areas are clearly demonstrated. With reduced parking requirements, landscaping and outdoor amenity spaces must be expanded.
- 6.4 Direct pedestrian and cycling connections shall be provided from the street and directly through the site to bicycle parking and storage areas.
- 6.5 Indoor bicycle storage should be easily and directly accessed from the exterior of the building. Amenities such as e-charging capabilities, bike repair area, work bench, and accommodation for larger cargo bikes are strongly encouraged in bike storage areas.
- 6.6 All vehicle parking shall be located in the rear yard and/or under building.

7. Amenity Space

- 7.1 The provision of an outdoor common amenity space for use by residents to gather and enjoy for social use is required and must be located in the rear yard, separate from all parking areas. The amenity space must include at least one tall shade tree with more trees encouraged where larger amenity areas are possible. Landscaping and outdoor furniture is encouraged.
- 7.2 Private amenity space of 6 m² per unit minimum is encouraged but shall not be provided at the expense of a rear yard common amenity area.
- 7.3 Common outdoor amenity space in the rear yard should be provided for the use of all residents.
- 7.4 The safety, comfort, and quality of amenity space should be enhanced by the provision of landscaping, shade trees, seating, and lighting.
- 7.5 Reduced parking requirements should result in an increase in the amount and quality of amenity space.

8. Building Design and Site Layout

- 8.1 Small apartment infill projects should be designed to be compatible with surrounding neighbourhoods and intended future land uses through features such as building setbacks, height, massing, orientation, and site landscaping. In instances where the adjacency is a single-detached home, the goal is not to mimic this condition, but to provide a sensitive and interesting contrast.

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- 8.2 Buildings shall be oriented to the street. Front ground floor units should be visible and accessible from the sidewalk. For corner lot buildings, both fronting elevations should be oriented to the street and offer unit entry to ground-floor units from the street.
- 8.3 Consider setback variances that support tree retention, enhanced greenspace, and the provision of quality and usable outdoor amenity areas.
- 8.4 A deeper front yard setback may be requested based on the street context and adjacencies.
- 8.5 Landscaping should be provided to buffer adjacent properties, screen parking areas, provide amenity value, enhance the street frontage, and minimize impermeable surfaces.

9. Livability and Micro Units

- 9.1 Access to maximum natural light and natural ventilation through an adequate number of operable windows shall be provided.
- 9.2 Higher ceiling heights (e.g., 2.90 m or more) are encouraged to maximize livability.
- 9.3 Full kitchens shall be provided with adequate space for food preparation, containing apartment-size stove/oven and fridge/freezer (hot plates and bar fridges are not supportable).
- 9.4 Laundry facilities shall be provided within the building, preferably in suite.
- 9.5 Storage for residents must be provided, either in suite or in a common area. Storage areas for tenants should be at least 1.5 m³ or 1 m by 1 m by 1.5 m for each unit.
- 9.6 Bathrooms shall be self-contained within the unit and contain a sink, toilet, bath/shower.
- 9.7 For units where the principal living area also serves as the sleeping area, built-in, fold-down furniture that allows residents to manipulate the space for both day use and night use is strongly encouraged.

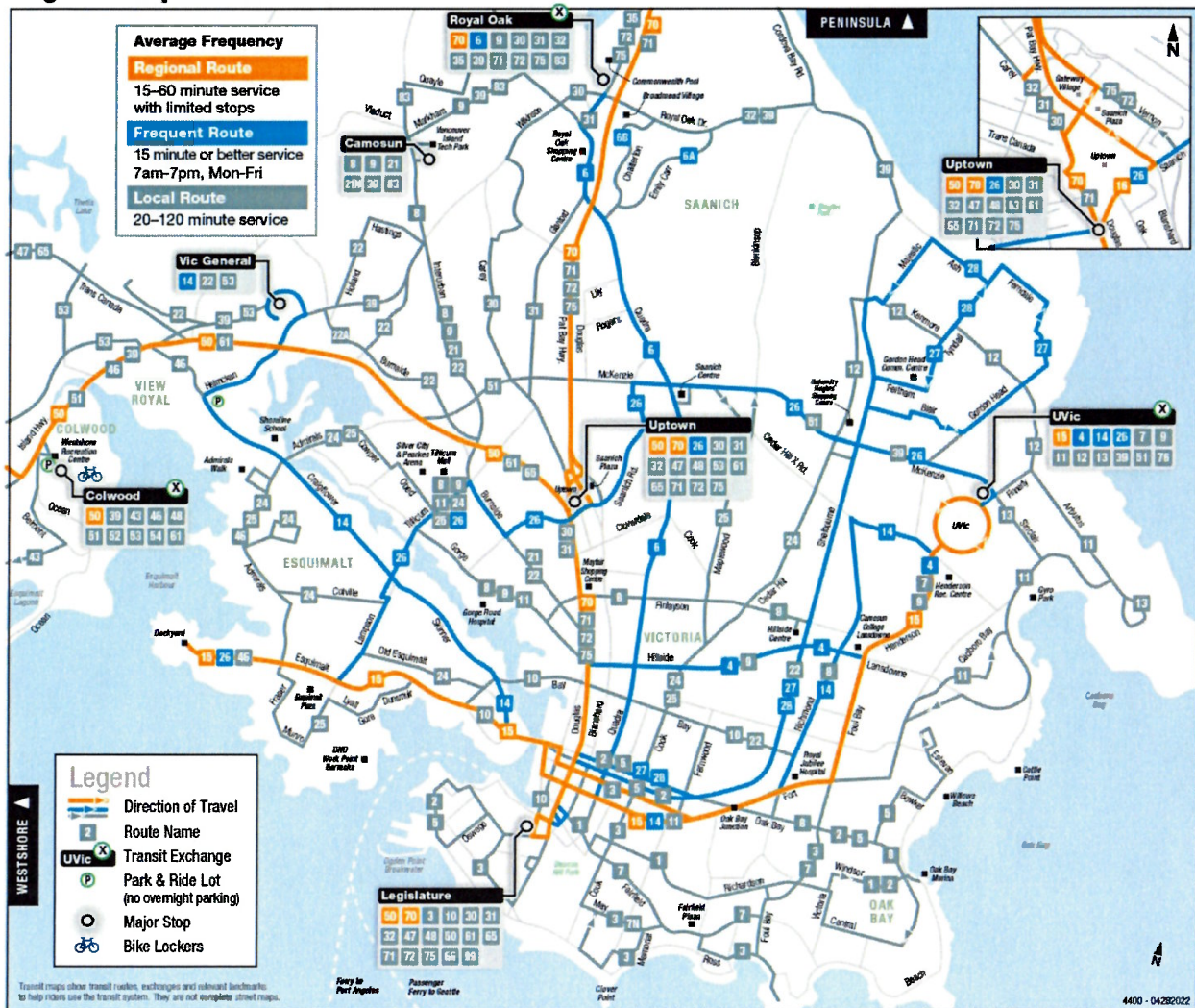
Appendix C

District of Saanich Road Network Map



Transit Routes

Regional Map of Greater Victoria



Source: BC Transit, 2023