



New housing options needed



In its 2015 strategic planning process, Council made a deliberate decision to take the lead role in driving a comprehensive housing strategy for Quesnel. The City's housing strategy had seen little progress, as there was no clearly defined lead agency with the resources and accountability mechanisms to make something happen. With Council taking on the lead role, things are now happening.

This week's housing announcements were, in part, enabled as a result of the City's new housing incentive bylaw that provides housing proponents with significant cost reductions for both the construction and the ongoing operating costs of these housing projects. This new bylaw provided a positive framework and incentives for the project proponents and our MLA to successfully lobby for the significant provincial investments that were announced this week.

With these two new housing projects underway Council has enabled the development of housing projects aimed at all demographics including young professionals, active seniors, and others who want more varied housing options. Council will continue to work on improving the existing rental housing stock in the City and will explore ways to incent private sector developers to build housing that continues building of more varied housing options than Quesnel currently provides.

In an effort to improve the quality of the existing rental housing stock in the City, Council has created a new business license that requires individuals to register any properties that have two or more rental units in them. In the New Year, Council will explore the possibility of implementing a bylaw (technically known as a "Maintenance Bylaw") that will set out the minimum standards for housing in the City. The combination of the new business license and a new housing standards bylaw will establish clear benchmarks for property owners to maintain their rental units to and will give tenants a clear reference point for any disputes with landlords about the quality and safety of their rental housing.

As part of our Official Community Plan process, Council is also asking the community for feedback on the possibility of establishing bylaws to enable secondary suites, laneway houses, and carriage houses. These are housing options that maximize the existing land base and housing stock that can also enable seniors to stay in their homes longer, or new home buyers to afford owning their own home.

New housing units, clear standards for rental units, and more options for creating new high-quality rental opportunities are all part of Council's overall housing strategy. The City needs to continue to see new, modern, housing options built in the near future to support our changing demographics who are looking for smaller less maintenance options (e.g. high quality multiplexes, town houses, smaller homes, condo complexes, etc.). Council is actively exploring options and best practices in this area so we can provide the kind of housing that our seniors can retire into and new residents are looking for (especially young professionals and technicians).

Safe, quality, diverse housing options are critical to ensure we thrive during this transition period, that's why Council's decided to take the lead on this strategic initiative.

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