

# COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights from the  
City of Nelson Council  
Meeting

September 4, 2018



## 205 Hall Street

Council has approved the re-zoning and Official Community Plan (OCP) amendment for 205 Hall Street to allow for the private development of a new 4-storey mixed-used building. This mix of commercial and residential will include 3 storeys of residential above the commercial space. The proceeds of the sale of \$960,000 will go into the City's Land Sale Reserve which is available to fund capital improvements (e.g. to City buildings) or acquisition of capital assets (e.g. land).

Both the OCP and the Sustainable Waterfront and Downtown Master Plan encourage the infill development of vacant downtown lands with mixed-use residential/commercial projects to create more vibrancy and housing in the downtown. Specifically, this vacant site was identified as contributing to a significant gap in the street wall and poor connectivity for pedestrians. The policy encourages the strengthening of Hall Street's role as one of the key linkages between Nelson's two most important areas, the downtown and the waterfront through the development of mixed-use commercial/residential development including a strong street wall, sidewalk widening and street trees, similar to Baker Street. The long-term vision for Hall Street is to have retail spaces at street level that encourage the movement of people from the downtown to the waterfront and vice-versa.

As a condition of sale, the City will be registering a covenant on title that will allow it to re-acquire the lands back at the original purchase price if the lands have not been developed within 5 years from the date of registration.

## Short-Term Rentals

When the original Short-Term Rental regulations were adopted, Council built in a review process to make amendments to the bylaws. One of the primary goals of Council was to mitigate the impact of short-term rentals (STR) on the long term rental market while recognizing that STRs are part of the new reality. Council also wanted to reduce the costs and administration where possible, while ensuring a high level of compliance with the regulations. After public consultation and a workshop with Council, bylaws were amended and were adopted tonight.

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Some of the key bylaw changes include:

1. Cost reductions including: removing the \$30 inspection fee; the \$500 deposit and the Nelson Kootenay Lake Tourism membership requirement in light of the upcoming application of the 2% “tourism tax” (MRDT); and reducing the business license fees by 50% when the licensed is acquired after July 31<sup>st</sup>.
2. Replace summer-only licences with four-month licences:
  - a. This more flexible licence is accompanied by a stricter residency requirement: the dwelling unit must be occupied 50% or more of the year by the owner or long-term tenants.
3. Staff may waive parking requirement under extenuating circumstances.
4. Guest Home may not be advertised for more than 182 days/year.
5. Allow up to two 31-day licences per year (current maximum is one).

## Affordable Housing

Housing affordability in Nelson, as across Canada, continues to be a serious concern for communities. The City has undertaken significant action over the last 10 years towards the support of affordable housing, including:

1. Completed the *City of Nelson Affordable Housing Report 2018* which provides a status update on the 20 strategies in the *Housing Strategies Update - October 2014*; a best practices review of affordable housing programs in other municipalities; an updated Affordable Housing Policy which includes guiding principles to further clarify the use of the Affordable Housing Reserve fund as well as slight modifications to the amount of funds that can be utilized and what funds can be used for; and recommendations for further opportunities for City support of affordable housing.
2. Completed an *Affordable Housing Strategy* which includes an initial strategy undertaken in 2010 and an update in 2014.
3. Implemented an Affordable Housing Policy in 2012 which:
  - i. established an Affordable Housing Reserve Fund;
  - ii. provided direction for staff to encourage developers to contribute on a per door basis to the Fund; and
  - iii. provided staff with direction to encourage developers to provide affordable housing within their developments (for developments of 20+ units).

4. Established a Housing Committee.
5. Negotiated with developers to achieve voluntary contributions to the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund (the City has received between \$250 per door to \$1200 per door as part of multi-unit rezone applications; currently there is \$74,629 in the Fund).
6. Provided permissive tax exemptions for affordable housing providers (these exemptions are approved by Council on a four-year cycle).
7. Supported development that achieved supportive housing classification from the Province. Providers of affordable housing have the option of applying to the Province for a supportive housing classification which effectively reduces the property taxes paid to the City to nil. There are a number of buildings in the City that have this designation. This policy helps the housing provider in its long-term operational costs, however it impacts City tax revenue and transfers costs to the remaining tax-payers.
8. Revised regulatory bylaws to encourage increased density and intensification in built-up areas and provide more affordable housing options:
  - i. increased density in residential areas;
  - ii. reduced minimum lot sizes;
  - iii. required mandatory suite-ready development in the R3 zone; and
  - iv. provided for a reduction in annual water and sanitary fees by 75% for long-term rentals.
9. Developed short-term rental regulations in order to preserve long-term rental housing stock.
10. Revised regulations and are developing pre-approved designs to encourage more laneway housing.
11. Completed Phase One of a vacant land study with the goal of providing Council with options for affordable housing sites.

Council adopted the updated Affordable Housing Policy and referred the recommendations included in the City of Nelson Affordable Housing Report 2018 to the 2019 Council Strategic Planning session.

### **Emergency Management Program Bylaw**

In 2016 City Council identified Emergency Management as a key priority in their strategic planning, set out in Council Priority 6.1, *“Complete full assessment of the Emergency Management Plan including review of current delivery model, recommend and implement changes”*. Council has since received an emergency management assessment and a Community Wildfire Protection plan where both recommend that the City establish an Emergency

Management Program to meet the needs of Nelson. In addition, wildfire expert Bruce Blackwell recently stated that for communities with a population of 10,000 or more, Nelson is one of the most at risk cities in BC to experience a wildfire.

Council has directed staff to develop an 'all hazards' Emergency Management Program that focuses on preparing for, responding to and recovering from an emergency or disaster. This bylaw establishes Council's commitment to an Emergency Management Program including creating an emergency management organization, appointing a Director of Emergency Management, delegation of authorities and establishing an Emergency Operations Centre. The Emergency Management Program will focus on the four pillars of emergency management: - *preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery*. The Program will take a 'whole community' approach that recognizes it takes local government, the business community, non-government agencies and residents to work together to build a truly resilient community.

Although Council has given notice to the RDCK that the City will be withdrawing from the full regional service at the end of 2018, Council has directed staff to identify the areas that will continue to make sense to deliver regionally and to ensure that Nelson's program works hand in hand with both the RDCK and City of Castlegar programs. Council is confident that the whole region will be stronger as Nelson develops a robust emergency management program.

### **Wildfire Mitigation Service**

Consistent with some of the other municipalities in our region, including the Villages of New Denver and Salmo, the City of Nelson opted out of joining the wildfire mitigation service as proposed by the Regional District of Central Kootenay at this time. Under the proposed bylaw, the City would have contributed more than 20% of the funding for the coordinator who would be responsible for delivering this program throughout the 10 electoral areas and 7 municipalities. Instead, Council directed staff to work in collaboration with the RDCK in the delivery of this important work.

Nelson was identified as a high risk community in the 2008 and 2015 Community Wildfire Protection Plans. The City, under the leadership of the Nelson Fire & Rescue, has completed over 107 ha of fuel treatment in and around Nelson, including around the Nelson cemetery, Art Gibbon Memorial Park and various pieces of City property along the Great Northern Burlington Rail Trail; mitigation work to protect the City's drinking water infrastructure in West Arm Park was also addressed.

Nelson has critical infrastructure in the rural area including its water supplies and Nelson Hydro assets. It is important that all local governments work closely together based on the best information available to reduce fuel loads.

## Nelson International Mural Festival

Nelson and District Arts Council (NDAC) hosted the Nelson International Mural Festival in 2018 and is endeavoring to hold another festival in 2019. NDAC is hoping to have the majority of the funding for the 2019 festival provided by a grant from Canadian Heritage, Building Communities through Arts and Heritage (Local Festivals). The application to Canadian Heritage is strengthened if the applicant has secured funding through the local government. Based on the success of the inaugural festival and to meet the timelines in the grant program, Council approved a grant of \$25,000 to the 2019 Nelson International Mural Festival.

NDAC is passionate about continuing to support the City of Nelson's Lanes Alive Program, as were 85% of the Urban Design Survey Participants who felt that the laneways are in need of improvement. By increasing public art, murals and lighting in the laneways, the Arts Council is not only improving laneway safety, but is also building capacity through the hiring of local artists, which, in turn reduces city maintenance costs and vandalism on public property. Additionally, beautification of the downtown alleys will lead to increased economic development opportunities as smaller businesses (including 'pop-up' shops) could utilize spaces that until then have never had access to a steady stream of customers.