

REPORT

Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: May 27, 2024

From: Jackie Teed, Director,
Planning and Development
File: #2477960

Item #: 2024-300

Subject: **Response to Council Motion Regarding “Supporting Child Care Development Across The City”**

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Council direct staff to explore opportunities to amend the City’s single detached residential zones to increase the permitted number of child care spaces as part of the implementation of the Province’s housing legislation.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Council motion regarding “Supporting Child Care Development Across The City,” which calls for exploring opportunities to amend the City’s single detached residential zones to increase the permitted number of child care spaces.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 26, 2024, Council endorsed a motion that staff explore opportunities to amend the City’s single detached residential zones to increase the permitted number of child care spaces and that this work be done in conjunction with the implementation of the Province’s housing legislation.

The City is considered a municipal leader in the area of child care and has implemented innovative policies and permissive zoning regulations to facilitate its creation. Based on the *2023 Survey of Licensed Child Care Spaces*, which was prepared by Metro Vancouver, New Westminster had the third highest number of child care spaces per 100 children aged 0 to 12 years of the 17 larger municipalities comprising Metro Vancouver.

The City previously reviewed amending the City's single detached residential zones to increase the permitted number of child care spaces. Based on this review, it was determined that building upgrades for existing residences to facilitate an increase in numbers was cost prohibitive and no further action was taken.

Given that the above cited review was undertaken in 2011, there would be benefit in exploring the opportunities based on the current context and report back to Council. There is also staffing capacity within the Social Planning section of Planning and Development to undertake this work given the recent addition of a Social Planner 1 position.

BACKGROUND

Council Motion

At the February 26, 2024 Regular Meeting, Council endorsed the following motion to support child care development across the city:

WHEREAS the City of New Westminster recognizes a shortage in child care spaces across the region and is committed to supporting the development of additional local child care spaces; and

WHEREAS the City will be updating current residential zoning bylaws as part of the work to reflect the Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing Provincial legislation;

BE IT RESOLVED that staff explore opportunities to amend the City's current zoning bylaws to increase the allowable maximum of child care spaces in residential areas.

Child Care Situation

Based on the 2023 Survey of Licensed Child Care Spaces, which was released by Metro Vancouver in December 2023, New Westminster had the third highest number of child care spaces (34.4) per 100 children aged 0 to 12 years of the 17 larger municipalities comprising Metro Vancouver. By comparison, the average number of child care spaces per 100 children 0 to 12 years for all municipalities in Metro Vancouver was 25.1.

Since 2010, the City has facilitated 1,224 non-profit and for-profit child care spaces. These spaces were created through City funds and City initiated Provincial grants; Rezoning applications and Heritage Revitalization Agreements, which require Council approval; Development Variance Permits, in which required off-street parking is converted to outdoor play space with Council approval; staff assistance in locating buildings with excess off-street parking that can be converted to outdoor play space; lease of City-owned lands; and direct involvement in assisting in child care lease disputes and negotiations.

Current Zoning Regulations in Support of Child Care

The City has some of the most permissive municipal bylaws and regulations to create new child care spaces. Group child care operations are permitted in most commercial, mixed use and multiple-dwelling residential zones and as an accessory use in most industrial zones. Family daycare homes and in-home multi-age care operations, with up to eight children, are permitted in most single detached residential zones.

Previous Investigations

In 2011, City staff investigated permitting group child care operations with up to 16 children in single detached residential zones. Based on the investigation, it was determined that building upgrades would be cost prohibitive and no further action was taken. More specifically, child care operations with an occupancy load exceeding 10 people (including staff) were defined as Assembly Occupancies and fell under the requirements of Part 3 of the BC Building Code. As part of these requirements, operators would be required to make a number of building upgrades, including installing fire alarms, fire separations and/or sprinkler systems.

ANALYSIS

Infill Housing Program

Staff are proposing to launch an Infill Housing Program, as outlined in another report on this agenda. In alignment with the intent of the Provincial housing legislation, this work would explore allowing up to six residential units in single detached dwelling and duplex zones. Staff has an opportunity to explore the group child care question in the context of this work plan.

DISCUSSION

Work Program and Staffing Implications

Based on the motion and reviewing the work program commitments and staffing capacity of the Social Planning section of Planning and Development, it is determined that this work can proceed with minimal disruptions to work program priorities. This is made possible by the recent addition of a Social Planner 1 position with this staff member having extensive experience in the area of child care.

Social Planning staff would work closely with the Building Division and Housing and Land Use sections of Planning and Development to explore opportunities to amend the City's single detached residential zones to increase the permitted number of child care spaces as part of the work related to implementing the Province's housing legislation.

Limiting Factors

It is anticipated that any proposed zoning amendments to increase the permitted number of child care spaces in single detached residential zones will have limited uptake and impact on the number of child care spaces given the need for building upgrades for existing residences (e.g., fire alarms, fire separations and/or sprinkler systems), which could prove to be cost prohibitive. Any proposed zoning amendments could be beneficial for new construction; however, this would be largely dependent on the permitted number of child care spaces. A larger number (e.g., 25+) would likely be required to justify the investment related to construction. As part of this work, staff would also explore the associated neighbourhood impacts related to traffic and parking.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this exploratory work as it can be accommodated within the existing work program of the Social Planning section of Planning and Development.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council's consideration:

1. That Council direct staff to explore opportunities to amend the City's single detached residential zones to increase the permitted number of child care spaces as part of the implementation of the Province's housing legislation
2. That Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommends option 1.

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
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This report was approved by:
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Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer