

REPORT

Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: January 13, 2025

From: Jackie Teed, Director,
Planning and Development
File: Doc#2624469

Item #: 2025-4

Subject: **Follow-up Report on Council Motion: Strategy and Resources to Require Cooling in Existing Rental Buildings**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT staff proceed with the work to bring forward the necessary bylaws and/or policies to require cooling in existing rental buildings, for consideration by Council by end of May 2025, as outlined in the Next Steps section of the January 13, 2025 report titled “Follow-up Report on Council Motion: Strategy and Resources to Require Cooling in Existing Rental Buildings.”

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council direction to proceed with next steps regarding the Council motion to develop cooling requirements for existing rental buildings.

SUMMARY

At the July 8, 2024 Regular Meeting, Council directed staff to proceed with the Vulnerable Building Assessment, and to return with a strategy and resources to require cooling in existing rental buildings. The assessment will incorporate broad engagement with interest holders, economic analysis, and a pilot project to trial potential methods for achieving cooling in existing buildings; it is anticipated that the assessment will take six months, with a pilot being undertaken through the following one year.

In the meantime, requiring cooling opportunities in existing rental buildings is a priority, and the City wishes to have regulations in place more quickly. Given the above, staff proposes a streamlined approach to bringing forward the bylaws and/or policies necessary to require cooling in existing buildings. Staff anticipates that a streamlined

approach would enable the work to be presented to Council for consideration by end of May 2025, and would require \$40-60K for external consultants, which would be funded through the Planning and Development Department's 2025 budget.

This report provides updates on the work carried out by the City in 2024 to help the public meet their cooling needs during extreme heat events, and seeks Council direction to proceed with next steps related to the bylaw and policy work noted above.

BACKGROUND

At the August 28, 2023 meeting, the following motions were passed by Council:

BE IT RESOLVED that City Council direct staff to explore the tools available for the City to adopt a bylaw that requires rental units to have cooling equipment, or passive means, that prevents at least one room of the unit from exceeding the standard recommendation of 26 C (79 F);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City write a letter to the Minister of Housing to request clarification and confirmation that these upgrades would not trigger legal renovations or the Above Guideline Rent Increase permissible by the Province.

At the July 8, 2024 meeting, staff presented a preliminary estimate of required resources to develop, implement and enforce the bylaw noted in the motion, and sought Council's endorsement for a Vulnerable Building Stock Assessment that would identify existing rental buildings with high heat vulnerability to tenants, and implement a pilot project to explore how to make cooling upgrades. At that meeting, the following motions were passed by Council:

THAT Council direct staff to advance the Vulnerable Building Stock Assessment, and bring forward to Council recommendations that arise from that work, related to cooling existing residential buildings; and

THAT Council direct staff to write a letter to the Ministry overseeing the Existing Building Renewal Strategy advocating that this work be prioritized, and that senior government funding sources be identified to support rapid implementation of new cooling requirements, in light of the related impacts of heat waves and wildfire smoke on vulnerable residents; and

THAT staff bring forward a strategy with identified resources to move forward a bylaw for cooling in existing rental buildings.

DISCUSSION

Updates on 2024 City Actions to Support Cooling

As described in the Council reports dated May 6, 2024 (“2024 Emergency Preparedness Week and Summer Heat Response Update” [which can be viewed here](#)) and July 8, 2024 (“Report on Council Motion: Cooling Bylaw in Rental Units” [which can be viewed here](#)), staff have continued to advance work on several initiatives to help the public meet their cooling needs during extreme heat events, as updated in the following table (updates shown in green):

Task	Staff Leads
Providing Cooling Equipment	
Distributing common room air conditioner units to buildings with a high percentage of at-risk and low-income residents.	Emergency Management Office (EMO) & Fire Rescue
Exploring partnership with Praxis Spinal Cord Institute to distribute wearable cooling technologies to people with disabilities who are susceptible to extreme heat.	EMO, Social Planning
Providing support through Energy Save New West to help community members navigate and apply for incentive programs for residential cooling.	Climate Action
Delivering four do-it-yourself (DIY) Air Cleaner workshops from May to July 2024, providing heat preparedness messaging and wildfire smoke safety to seniors and newcomer, in collaboration with SFU and EmpowerMe.	Climate Action, EMO
Mapping Cooling Resources	
Establishing and mapping city-wide indoor cooling venues, and cool-off features (e.g., drinking fountains, misting stations, shaded areas, etc.)	EMO, Parks, Social Planning
Tree Planting	
To combat urban heat, the city continues to advance its goal of planting 8,500 new trees on City property by 2030 with priority given to high-risk areas– those where indicators of social vulnerability overlap with low existing tree canopy cover.	Parks and Recreation
Communications	
Expanding communication/outreach about preparation for, safety and connection during extreme heat events.	EMO, Social Planning
Preparing multilingual materials/messaging and delivering multilingual community workshops.	Climate Action, EMO

Operationalizing phone messaging system to widely share information on extreme heat preparation and resources.	EMO
Partnerships	
Participating in Connect and Prepare Pilot Project, building community emergency preparedness and resilience by strengthening social connections between neighbours.	EMO, Social Planning
Working with the faith-based and non-profit sector to better address the needs of the unhoused, including those who are living with mental health and substance use issues, during extreme heat events.	EMO, Social Planning
Policy/Regulation Work	
Initiated Vulnerable Building Stock Assessment research phase. Partnering with CleanBC and BC Hydro programs, which support delivery of energy assessments and incentives to install building scale heat pumps, to accelerate the assessment project	Climate Action, Building
Preliminary research into approaches available to move forward a bylaw for cooling in existing rental buildings.	Building, Integrated Services, Licensing
Advocacy	
A Letter was sent to the Minister of Housing from the Office of the Mayor on August 20, 2024.	Mayor's Office
City staff met with BC Housing staff at UBCM September 16, 2024 advocating for support on: provincial acceleration of updates to the BC Building Code to include cooling standards; funding to be provided for rapid implementation of cooling standards in existing buildings; and that municipalities be engaged by the province in work to enact cooling standards in existing buildings	Planning and Development, Fire and Rescue, CAO

NEXT STEPS

Strategy to Move forward Necessary Regulations/Policies to Require Cooling

As noted in the table above, staff has begun the Vulnerable Building Stock Assessment, per Council's previous direction, which will include broad engagement with interest holders (tenant and landlord associations, the Province and Residential Tenancy Branch), economic analysis, and a pilot project to trial potential methods for achieving cooling in existing buildings. It is anticipated that initial research work will take approximately six months, with a pilot being undertaken through the following one year.

In the meantime, requiring cooling opportunities in existing rental buildings is a priority, and the City wishes to have regulations in place more quickly. Given this, staff proposes a streamlined approach to bringing forward the bylaws and/or policies necessary to require cooling in existing buildings, as follows:

1. Research and analysis with external consultants to establish an approach;
2. Write a letter to the Minister of Housing to request clarification and confirmation that the approach would not trigger legal renovations or the Above Guideline Rent Increase permissible by the Province;
3. Develop and bring forward bylaws, policies, and/or new enforcement resources necessary for implementation to Council for consideration of adoption/endorsement; and,
4. Review outcomes and propose amendments as necessary, based on the recommendations of the Vulnerable Building Stock Assessment.

Should Council direct staff to proceed, the work would be completed and brought forward for consideration by the end of May 2025.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Using this two stage approach, placing the bulk of consultation and analysis on the Vulnerable Building Stock Assessment project, which is currently resourced through the Climate Action Team, will reduce the requirement to reallocate resources away from other workplans, as had been previously anticipated. The work to prepare the regulatory approach will be primarily undertaken by senior staff in Planning and Development and external consultants, with some additional staff time from Economic Development (Licencing), Integrated Services, Development Planning, Social Planning, Fire and Rescue, and Climate Action.

The consultant portion of this work is estimated at \$40-60K, which would be funded through the Planning and Development Department’s 2025 operating budget.

The Vulnerable Building Stock Assessment is funded through the Energy and Climate Action Department 2024/2025 capital budget. The budget for other ongoing work to help the public remain cool during extreme heat events is funded through the related departments’ 2024/2025 budgets.

New enforcement resources identified through the work would be over-and-above the approved 2025 operating budget, and options for funding would be identified and provided to Council for use in consideration of any proposed bylaws and/or policies.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The Planning and Development Department prepared this report, with updates, review and ongoing work provided by Economic Development (Licencing), Fire and Rescue, Parks and Recreation, and Climate Action.

OPTIONS

There are 3 options for Council’s consideration:

1. That staff proceed with the work to bring forward the necessary bylaws and/or policies to require cooling in existing rental buildings, for consideration by Council by end of May 2025, as outlined in the Next Steps section of the January 13, 2025 report titled “Follow-up Report on Council Motion: Strategy and Resources to Require Cooling in Existing Rental Buildings.”
2. That staff proceed with the Vulnerable Building Stock Assessment (Assessment) and related pilot project, and pause work to make bylaw amendments and/or policy updates to require cooling in existing rental buildings, pending recommendations from the Assessment.
3. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends option 1.

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
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This report was reviewed by:
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