

ITEM 18
MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 7
COUNCIL MEETING 89/01/23

RE: PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION FOR PHYSICALLY DISABLED PERSONS

MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the recommendation of the Director Planning & Building Inspection be adopted.

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TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER 1989 JANUARY 18
FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING INSPECTION Our File: 17.908
SUBJECT: PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION FOR PHYSICALLY DISABLED PERSONS

PURPOSE: The purpose of this report is to respond to Council's request that staff review the broad policy question governing the provision of accommodation for physically handicapped persons in apartment developments.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT approval in principle be given to a draft guideline that would see staff, through the rezoning and preliminary plan approval processes, encourage developers to voluntarily include 5 percent of their units as adaptable to meet the needs of the disabled in private multiple family developments in Metrotown, and the Brentwood, Lougheed and Edmonds Town Centers.
2. THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Urban Design Institute, the Premier's Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities, and Mr. Sam Sullivan, Project Manager, Paraplegic Foundation, for input and discussion.

SUMMARY

Staff have reviewed the policy question of the provision of housing for the disabled. Government agencies, housing agencies and advocacy groups for the disabled have been contacted regarding both the supply and demand of accessible housing in Burnaby.

On an ongoing basis, the present Federal and Provincial housing programmes are funding housing for the disabled in non-profit and co-op housing developments. The supply appears to be meeting the majority of the demand for subsidized accessible housing. The demand for units for the disabled in the private market is more limited, however the growing senior's population, and a proportion of disabled persons require independent accommodation in areas that are in close proximity to a range of services and transportation.

Staff recommend as a draft guideline, that private developers be encouraged to voluntarily provide 5 percent of units to meet the needs of the disabled in multiple family developments in Metrotown, and the Brentwood, Lougheed and Edmonds Town Centers. It is proposed that input on the draft guideline be obtained from the Urban Design Institute and the Premier's Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities. Staff do not feel that the present demand for accessible units in private developments justify a regulatory municipal policy or incentives for developers at present.

Staff intend to pursue a range of initiatives to increase the education and awareness of developers, architects, and other relevant parties regarding the housing needs of the disabled, as further outlined in this report.

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R E P O R T

1.0 BACKGROUND

At its regular meeting of 1988 August 22, Council adopted the following motion:

"THAT staff review the broad policy question governing the provision of accommodation for physically handicapped persons in apartment developments, giving consideration to compiling guidelines to be made available to developers and including a review of ways of encouraging or providing incentives to developers for providing subject facilities."

Staff have obtained input from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), B.C. Housing Management Commission (BCHMC), housing and disabled persons advocacy groups, and other municipalities regarding existing policies, and the demand for wheelchair accessible units.

2.0 EXISTING POLICIES

2.1 Federal and Provincial Housing Programmes

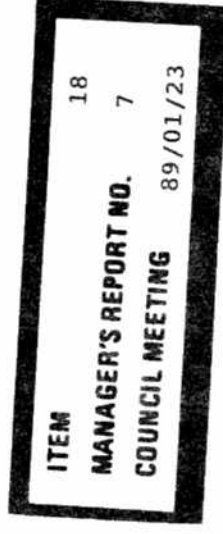
The housing programmes funded by the Federal and Provincial governments contain a policy regarding the development of wheelchair accessible units in multiple family developments. A minimum of five percent of the total annual units developed under the Non-Profit programme (administered by BCHMC) and the Co-operative programme (administered by CMHC) are to be wheelchair accessible.

Both BCHMC and CMHC are flexible on the percentage of wheelchair accessible units within a specific development, provided that an average of 5% of the annual units developed under each programme are accessible for the disabled. Factors considered in determining the accessible unit requirements include the location of the development in relation to services, amenities and transportation, as well as the area's topography. Both government agencies encourage development of units for the disabled in major urban centers.

In addition to the development of new units, the Federal government provides funding for modification of existing dwellings under the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programme (RRAP). Grants are available to both low income homeowners and landlords of low rent buildings.

2.2 Municipal Policies

A survey of local municipalities indicated that there are not any formal mechanisms to encourage the development of units for the disabled in private market developments in the GVRD. While some municipalities work informally with developers to encourage inclusion of units for the disabled, particularly in seniors' housing, no municipalities provide specific incentives in their zoning bylaw.



In Burnaby, staff work with developers of both market and non-market housing, and encourage designs and plans that will meet the needs of a range of prospective residents, including seniors and the disabled. The Zoning Bylaw does not differentiate between conventional units and accessible units, and it contains no specific initiatives to encourage the development of units for the disabled.

2.3 Building Code Regulations

Section 3.7 of the B.C. Building Code (Building Requirements for Persons with Disabilities) provides general accessibility criteria for private housing developments. In new multiple family developments, access must be provided from:

- a) the street to the main entrance;
- b) a private parking area to an entrance;
- c) the main entrance or the private parking area, to an elevator, if one is provided. The elevator must meet specific design guidelines to accommodate the disabled.

The remaining common areas and living areas of private multiple family developments do not need to comply with the regulations of Section 3.7 if there are no accessible units in the development.

For multiple family buildings which have accessible units, Planning & Building Inspection staff endeavor to ensure that the needs of the disabled are addressed in the entire development. The accessible units must meet the regulations of Section 3.7.

2.4 Standards and Guidelines for Housing for the Disabled

There are numerous sets of standards and guidelines available to developers of units for disabled persons. In addition to Section 3.7 of the B.C. Building Code, CMHC and BCHMC have developed guidelines and checklists which address both safety and convenience aspects of housing for the disabled. A non-profit housing advocacy group for the disabled has also developed a set of supplementary standards, to be applied in conjunction with CMHC standards in housing sponsored by their agency.

Council has requested that staff give consideration to compiling a set of guidelines specific to units for the disabled, to be made available to developers. The standards set out in Section 3.7 of the B.C. Building Code and publications produced by CMHC have been developed by experts in the field, in consultation with disabled groups. Staff therefore feel that the existing guidelines are the most appropriate to guide the development of housing for the disabled.

In order to provide easy access to the guidelines and standards, staff have ordered additional copies of the relevant publications to be made available to those Planning & Building Inspection staff who deal directly with the public and developers of multiple family housing. Copies of the guidelines and standards are available in the Planning & Building Inspection Department for viewing.

3.0 SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR HOUSING FOR THE DISABLED

3.1 Types of Units for the Disabled

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Housing Disabled Persons, a publication distributed by CMHC, identifies four types of units for the disabled:

- 1) Accessible unit: One which can be entered by a person using a wheelchair, and in which some or all of the rooms can be entered. The unit has not been specially designed, however, to accommodate the needs of a disabled person.
- 2) Mobility unit: one in which space is provided to manoeuvre a wheelchair. Electrical receptacles, switches and controls in these units are mounted at the appropriate height for wheelchair users. The unit is free of barriers for most disabled persons. The unit has been designed for installation of additional customized devices and fixtures for disabled persons in the future.
- 3) Wheelchair unit: a unit in which all areas and all fixtures are specially designed to be used by a person in a wheelchair.
- 4) Especially designed unit for a disabled person: one in which all fixtures are specially designed for independent use by persons in a wheelchair or who have visual, hearing or mobility impairments. The unit is free of architectural barriers for all users.

CMHC recommends that the 5 percent of units provided for the disabled in multiple family developments should be mobility units, designed so that they can be adapted to the needs of special users. CMHC indicates that basic accessibility in a unit can often be provided within the same net floor area as a conventional unit. The primary concern in the development of a unit for the disabled is the layout and design of the unit; additional space is not necessarily required.

A review of units recently developed in co-ops and non-profit housing in Burnaby indicated that the units for the disabled generally required equal or less square footage than conventional units. CMHC and developers of such units suggest that there is an increased cost of approximately 10 percent for constructing a fully accessible (mobility) unit.

A recent trend in housing for the disabled in the region is the development of an adaptable unit, in which the bathroom and kitchen can easily accommodate a disabled person or an able bodied person, as well as a range in between. Adaptable units are similar in concept to the mobility unit defined by CMHC. Several units of this design have been constructed in co-ops and non-profit housing in Vancouver, and a co-op containing adaptable units is under construction in Burnaby.

Adaptable units are particularly appropriate for seniors' buildings because they are able to meet the changing needs of residents as they age. Adaptable units also provide flexibility in construction because the modifications can be developed in stages, and further adaptations can be done at a later date, provided the initial plans address basic accessibility.

Unless otherwise indicated, the term 'units for the disabled' is used in this report to refer to the range of units defined in the OMHC publication, as well as adaptable units.

3.2 Present Stock of Housing for the Disabled

BCMC maintains a registry of wheelchair accessible units in the region. In Burnaby, there are presently 43 wheelchair units (as previously defined) registered with BCMC. An additional 15-20 units are in the planning or construction stage.

Of the 43 registered units, 19 are contained in seniors' buildings, and 24 are in family developments. The additional units under construction are in co-op family developments, primarily in the area of the Edmonds Skytrain station. All of the units registered with BCMC in Burnaby are in subsidized housing developments.

In addition to the development of new units, approximately 50 units have been modified in Burnaby in the past five years, primarily in single family dwellings, through the RRAP Programme for the Disabled. Although figures are not available, it is assumed that a number of single family houses have also been modified independent of any government funding.

3.3 Demand for Housing for the Disabled

Staff have contacted a number of sources to determine the need for housing units for the disabled in the Municipality and region. Discussions with OMHC, BCMC, and advocacy groups indicated that the ongoing development of units for the disabled in non-profit and co-op housing is addressing much of the needs of independent disabled persons in Burnaby for subsidized housing. The demand for housing for the disabled is evidently greatest in the downtown core of Vancouver.

The period between 1984 and 1987 resulted in a significant increase in the number of units constructed for the disabled in the region. Non-profit housing agencies indicated that they have limited waiting lists for accessible units, and sometimes have difficulty finding occupants for vacant units. BCMC also indicated that a large proportion of people registered with the wheelchair registry are presently living in accessible housing, but are looking for a change in location or amenities.

The experience of OMHC, BCMC and non-profit housing agencies has been that the two most significant factors in the occupancy of units for the disabled are the location and topography of the development site. Some agencies have decreased their development of units for the disabled in non-market developments in remote or steep areas, in consultation with OMHC or BCMC. It is anticipated that an increase in the demand for units for the disabled may occur in Metrotown and other town centers because of the access to services and transportation.

Discussions with groups representing the disabled indicate that a low percentage of the independent disabled population can afford housing in the private market. A national survey conducted by Statistics Canada of persons with all types of disabilities indicated that in B.C., less than 40 percent of disabled persons between the ages of 15 and 64 were employed. Disabled persons who are employed are often in service oriented jobs at relatively low wages, or in short term positions under job creation grants.

The advocacy groups representing the disabled stressed the continuing need for affordable housing for the disabled, particularly in Metrotown and areas that provide a range of services. They felt that the demand for non-subsidized accessible housing could be best addressed through inclusion of adaptable units in private multiple family developments.

Given the overall aging trend in the population, the need will increase for seniors' housing that is designed to address decreased mobility associated with aging, and which allows residents to 'age in place' without further change of housing. Developers are showing an interest in reaching the seniors' housing market through development of a range of housing types, such as congregate care and privately operated care facilities.

4.0 DISCUSSION

In staff's research, it appears evident that the primary demand for housing for the disabled exists in the non-market sector. A large proportion of disabled persons and seniors have limited income to spend on housing. The Federal and Provincial governments recognize this fact, and are addressing the need for subsidized housing through the Non-Profit and Co-operative Programmes.

The groups contacted felt that most of the demand for subsidized units for the disabled in Burnaby is being met through the ongoing development of units in non-profit and co-op housing. Groups which sponsor the development of housing under government programmes monitor the demand throughout the region, and adjust their development of units for the disabled in specific areas according to demand.

Discussions with both government and non-profit housing agencies, and groups representing the disabled indicated support for increased accessibility in private developments as well as in subsidized housing, to provide a choice of housing options for the disabled, and to address the needs of the growing seniors' population.

It is evident from present developments that units for the disabled can be constructed within the same floor area as conventional units. Private developers should be able to accommodate the disabled in market housing, therefore, within the same per unit space as provided for able bodied residents.

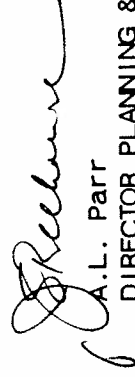
Both the Official Community Plan and the Growth Management Study recognize the Municipal commitment to providing a range of housing opportunities for persons with special needs. In order to address this objective, staff recommend as a draft guideline, that developers be encouraged through the planning process to voluntarily include 5% of their units as adaptable units in multiple family developments in Metrotown and the Brentwood, Lougheed and Edmonds Town Centers. Development of adaptable units in the town centers will provide housing options in proximity to services and transportation for mobility impaired persons.

Staff propose that input be obtained on the proposed guideline from the Urban Design Institute and the Premier's Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities. Staff will discuss this issue with representatives of the Urban Design Institute at the Burnaby/UDI Liaison Committee meeting scheduled for 1989 March 09. Staff also intend to make copies available to non-profit housing agencies and groups representing the disabled.

Developers have shown their response to changing market needs in development of innovative housing for seniors, and should be encouraged to respond to the needs of the disabled in the same manner. Staff do not feel, however, that it is presently necessary to provide incentives for development of units for the disabled in private multiple family housing. Staff will monitor the housing situation for the disabled, and will re-evaluate the need for a formal Municipal policy if there is an unmet demand for accessible units in the future.

Staff propose that initiatives to increase awareness of the needs of the disabled in the development community also be pursued. Initiatives could include better public access to standards and guidelines, distribution of relevant information through the Planning Information Programme (PIP), and placement of articles in Information Burnaby on programmes such as RRAP for the Disabled.

Staff propose that the draft guideline be distributed to the relevant groups for comment. Staff will report back to Council in approximately 3 months, when input has been obtained.



A.L. Parr
DIRECTOR PLANNING &
BUILDING INSPECTION

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