



September 26, 2025

Mayor Mike Hurley and Members of Council

City of Burnaby

Via email

RE: PROPOSED CHANGES TO R1 SMALL-SCALE MULTI-HOUSING REGULATIONS

Dear Mayor Hurley and Members of Council,

For decades, the City of Burnaby has been recognized as a leader in smart growth – striking a careful balance between greenfield development and thoughtful infill densification. This leadership has made Burnaby one of Canada’s most successful, attractive, and livable communities, admired by municipalities across the province and beyond.

The Independent Contractors and Businesses Association (ICBA), Canada’s largest construction association, represents thousands of contractors and more than 250,000 men and women who work in construction. We are deeply invested in supporting the policies and initiatives that enable our industry to meet British Columbia’s growing housing and infrastructure needs.

We understand that Council is reviewing its R1 zoning rules and will be holding a public hearing on October 6. As you consider changes, we urge you to ensure that R1 zoning remains friendly to small-scale multi-unit housing (SSMUH) – the very type of housing that is giving families, young professionals, and downsizing seniors a chance to stay in the communities they love.

Burnaby’s original (and current) R1 SSMUH zoning was a bold and forward-thinking step. By consolidating twelve previous zoning designations into a single, streamlined approach, Council cut through decades of red tape and provided clarity for homeowners, designers, and builders alike. It has been a model of efficiency and good governance, exactly the kind of leadership needed to tackle Metro Vancouver’s housing affordability crisis.

Unfortunately, there are always voices who want to turn back the clock. NIMBY opposition to density is not new, but time and again, we’ve seen that the same people who resist new housing ultimately benefit from the higher property values, vibrant streets, and thriving communities that follow. Burnaby cannot afford to let this review be driven by those who simply want to say “no” to growth.

That said, there is an opportunity for some measured adjustments to ensure that R1/SSMUH development continues to thrive while balancing neighborhood character. Based on the experience of builders and homeowners since the program’s launch, we recommend:

- Reducing the current four-storey limit to three storeys to align with provincial legislation.
- Lowering the maximum building height from 12 metres to 11 metres, again to align with provincial legislation.
- Doubling the parking requirement from 0.5 stalls per unit to 1 stall per unit, which answers one of the most common complaints from neighbours.
- Adjusting the lot coverage range from the current 45-50% to 50-55% to give designers and builders the flexibility to respond to these changes.

These modest changes will strengthen the program while ensuring that it remains a viable pathway for new housing.

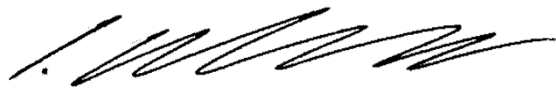
The stakes could not be higher. In today's challenging economic environment, small-scale multi-unit housing is virtually the only type of residential development still financially feasible in much of the Lower Mainland. These homes can be built at prices that are attainable for buyers, while still allowing builders to earn a modest return. They create badly needed housing choices for families while sustaining hundreds of construction jobs at a time when our industry — and the economy as a whole — desperately needs both.

We understand there are currently more than 400 active applications for these projects, almost all from small, local builders, with another 150 in preparation. This overwhelming response shows there is both a strong market demand for these types of homes and a deep pool of builders ready to deliver them — if the policy framework remains supportive.

Burnaby has been a pioneer in embracing this kind of innovative zoning. Now is the time to build on that success, not retreat from it. By protecting and refining the R1 SSMUH framework, Council can ensure Burnaby remains a provincial and national leader in housing innovation, economic opportunity, and livable communities.

On behalf of ICBA's members and the hundreds of thousands of workers they employ, we urge you to keep Burnaby on the path of progress and ensure that small-scale multi-unit housing continues to be a cornerstone of your city's future.

Sincerely,



Chris Gardner
President & CEO
Independent Contractors and Businesses Association

CC
Burnaby Planning planning@burnaby.ca
Burnaby Legislative Services legislativeservices@burnaby.ca
Various homebuilding stakeholders