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Vancouver City Council Advances Natural Gas Amendment to Build More Attainable Housing Faster

VANCOUVER, BC - Today, Vancouver City Council continues their commitment to build more homes faster to address the housing and affordability crisis in Vancouver. By expanding energy options for heating and hot water, Vancouverites will see more new builds come onto the market faster. A cornerstone of this Council's home building strategy is adding Missing Middle Housing, which will greatly benefit from flexibility to choose between hydro and natural gas.

This strategic move, led by Councillor Brian Montague and supported by Mayor Ken Sim, not only offers residents and home builders greater energy choices, but also enhances affordability. It leverages the latest advancements in decarbonizing natural gas, including renewable natural gas (RNG) and hydrogen blends.

"This decision removes another obstacle to building more missing middle housing in Vancouver," said Mayor Ken Sim. "By allowing more energy options, we're making it easier to build the homes we need while improving affordability for Vancouverites. This amendment complements previous work done by this Council to build more attainable housing options across our city."

Allowing natural gas as an energy source offers a cost-effective option for heating and hot water, helping lower utility bills, and contributing to overall housing affordability in Vancouver. The move also helps tackle the housing crisis by giving more tools and options to small business home builders, helping make projects, such as multiplexes, easier and more cost-effective to build.

"We're committed to building a more affordable, sustainable, and adaptable city," said Councillor Brian Montague. "This amendment strikes a careful balance, ensuring that our city is set up for future advances in the decarbonization of gas systems while providing Vancouverites with affordable and resilient energy options in the present."

Natural gas also reduces project costs and timelines for home builders, helping incentivise an increased variety of housing types built in Vancouver. By cutting expenses related to additional contractors, building permits, and utility upgrades, natural gas can help save tens of thousands of dollars per duplex project. Additionally, it offers homeowners cheaper energy bills. These combined benefits not only lower overall construction costs but also make housing more accessible and affordable for Vancouverites.

“This bold move by Vancouver City Council is a game-changer for our homebuilders,” said Wendy McNeil, acting CEO of Homebuilders Association Vancouver (HAVAN). “Providing options for all housing types is essential for our city’s future as we need more tools to make it more affordable for residents. By expanding energy options for heating, City Council is empowering our members to build more housing faster while paving the way for more attainable housing solutions.”

This amendment also enhances Vancouver’s energy resiliency by diversifying energy sources. As climate change leads to more severe weather events, having multiple energy options is crucial. This diversity not only reduces the risk of widespread outages but also supports a more robust and adaptable energy infrastructure for future generations.

“We are pleased to see Council finding balance and making this change,” said Bridgitte Anderson, President and CEO, Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. “As the costs of doing business and overall affordability challenges continue to mount, it is crucial to offer choices that support affordability for housing development, choice, and reliability as well as environmental goals.”

Today marks a pivotal moment in Vancouver’s journey towards a sustainable future, blending innovation with practicality to ensure the city remains affordable, resilient, and adaptive in a changing climate landscape.

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