



*Photo by Joan Pisto*

Town of Comox

# **Downtown Vitalization Program**

*June 2021*

## BACKGROUND

Comox Downtown Vitalization has been specified as one of the priorities in the Town's Strategic Plan since 2012. Increasing residential density in the Downtown was identified as a key aspect of the Downtown Vitalization. A range of incentive tools were chosen to implement the Downtown Vitalization Program, and in June 2014 Council adopted several bylaws including Downtown Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw No. 1784. On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, Council resolved to stop the tax exemption component. Available incentives encourage mixed-use commercial and residential development to support and increase not only Downtown businesses, but also the area's social and environmental vitality.

## DOWNTOWN VITALIZATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### Objectives:

The objectives of the Downtown Vitalization Program are to increase the Town's economic, social, and environmental vitality by:

- retaining and supporting existing businesses;
- attracting new community investments in the form of multi-family residential development;
- concentrating residential development within established areas with full municipal services; and,
- encouraging high quality residential development, suitable for citizens "aging in place".

**The Downtown Vitalization Program does not rezone land and does not amend Official Community Plan Bylaw 1685.**

A Development Permit is required for any new development in the Downtown Vitalization Area. Community consultation, rezoning, or development variance permit may be required for developments over 3 storeys.

### Available incentives for development applications:

- Priority processing
- Building Permit fee reduction<sup>1</sup>
- Planning Application fee rebate<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> i) 50% for buildings of 4 storeys or more.  
ii) 80% for buildings of 3 storeys.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of applications for new buildings of 3 or more storeys in height located within the Downtown Vitalization Area, 50% of an application fee paid under Comox Planning Procedures Bylaw 1780, specified in Schedule A, shall be refunded, subject to the issuance by the Town of a Building Occupancy Permit in relation to the application on the earlier of the fourth anniversary of the development approval, or October 31, 2025.



# DOWNTOWN VITALIZATION PROGRAM INFORMATION

Official Community Plan, Section 2.1.3.3, Downtown Comox Policies, supports a maximum of four storeys in height except in the case of sites with significant changes in grade. In addition, a higher height may be considered for the following, if satisfactory amenities<sup>3</sup> are provided: redevelopment of the mall site, the north-west corner of Comox Avenue and Port Augusta Street (former Lorne Hotel), and the south-west corner of Comox Avenue and Church Street (Comox Legion).

## FINANCIAL COSTS OF THE DOWNTOWN VITALIZATION PROGRAM

The following aspects of the Downtown Vitalization Program are designed to reduce the financial exposure of the Town:

- \$80,000<sup>4</sup> budget for combined Building Permit and Development application fee reduction;
- "Limited time offer" and "first come-first served" approach; and,
- Clearly meeting or exceeding all applicable Zoning and Development Permit Area regulations reduces application processing costs and time.

The Downtown Vitalization Area is shown shaded on the map below.



**For more information on the Downtown Vitalization Program, please contact the Town of Comox Planning Department at 250-339-1118 or at [planning@comox.ca](mailto:planning@comox.ca).**

<sup>3</sup> Typical community amenities sought by the Town during rezoning include contribution to the Affordable Housing Fund, meeting or exceeding BC Energy Step Code 3, provision of adaptable units, mature trees protection, and additional sound attenuation for residential units within 35 metres of arterial and major collector roads as well in close proximity or on the waterfront.

<sup>4</sup> Council has reserved the right to either terminate or extend the Program when this amount is reached.

