



STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA FOR WEDNESDAY JANUARY 14, 2026

We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which we gather and work is on the Unceded Traditional Territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

Meeting Location: Council Chambers, 1801B Beaufort Avenue, Comox

Call to Order: 4:00 p.m.

Adoption of the Agenda

1. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REPORT:

- (2) a. [Strategic Plan Scorecard](#)

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- (7) a. [Step-backs in the Draft Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2054](#)

ADJOURNMENT



CORPORATE OFFICER

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE	AREA OF FOCUS	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	TASKS	YEAR	* STATUS
	Asset Management	Develop and implement an asset funding strategy to close the infrastructure deficit			2023
	Continue to consider electrification of the Town's fleet and equipment where practical and appropriate				In Progress
	Future proof infrastructure to prepare for climate change and events				In progress. Discussions with electrical contractor on generator installation for the Community Centre.
Staff Retention	Develop Standards of Conduct Policy to promote a positive workplace	Develop Policy		2023	Completed and adopted spring of 2025
		Develop/Update accompanying policies - Respectful Workplace, Purchasing, Use of Technology		2023	Respectful work place, IT, and use of technology policies completed and adopted by Council.
		Council adoption of policies		2024	Complete
	Pursue structural alignment through organizational Strategic Plan updates			2022-26	In progress
	Bylaw Enforcement Officer Safety	Safety inventory and assessment		2024	Complete
		Personal protective equipment		2024	Complete
	TOP PROJECT: Streamline development application process**	Implement e-permitting for development applications		2024	Complete
		Implement outcomes of development application review process		2024	Complete
	Cross-train casual employees in different departments	Community Centre casual trained in Corporate		2023	Complete.
		Corporate casual trained in Finance		2023	Complete
	Digitize requests for information - looking at using online forms for submission of certain requests.	Banner Station - online application		2023	Complete
		Bylaw Complaint - online application		2024	Complete
		Business Licence - online application		2024	Complete
	Complete Climate Change Risk Assessment and Action Plan	Deliver Climate Change Risk Assessment and Action Plan		2024	Complete
	Council Policy Development and Renewals	Council Conference and Travel Policy		2024	Approved at Feb 21 RCM
		Video Surveillance Policy		2024	Not started
Internal Processes	Establish Accessibility Committee			2024	Comox Valley Accessibility Committee established as a regional committee for all Comox Valley local governments. Council adopted Accessibility Plan in spring 2025.
	Complete accessibility audit of Town facilities, services and communications			2024	Complete
	Develop an Accessibility Plan			2025	Plan adopted Feb 2025
	Complete accessibility SparcBC grant projects (website map layer, accessibility button, photo gallery)			2025	Final report sent to SparcBC Nov 18, 2025 to initiate final payment to the Town.
	Marine Service Building Leases			2025	Complete
	Marina Food Vendor Lease Renewals			2024	Complete
	Solid Waste Commercial Contract Renewal			2024	In progress
	Facility Use Agreement Renewals			2025	In progress
	New Solid Waste Management Bylaw			2023	Complete
	Updated Fees and Charges Bylaw			2024	Complete
	Adopt new Business Improvement Area Bylaw			2025	Complete
	Filing System Review and Archive	Administration files review and archive		2024	In progress
Customer Service	Move toward macro-focussed customer service model			2024	In progress. Example requirement to shovel sidewalks, requirement to mow boulevards, decreased support for development application construction.
	Develop an organizational growth plan			2024	Council approved 50% non-market growth in 2024 budget towards additional Parks seasonal. Council approved growth in Community Center revenue towards additional part time clerk and increased Ask-a-Trainer hours

* Status Colours:
** Strategic initiative reworded

Completed:

On Hold:

In Progress:

AREA OF FOCUS	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	TASKS	YEAR	* STATUS
Recreation	Focus on providing equitable access to community recreation through the LEAP and TRIP programs.	Provide Council Report: make permanent LEAP Adults	2024	Council approved LEAP adults at RCM June 5, 2024.
	Deliver youth recreation opportunities and continue to support the Comox Youth Council.		2024	CYC attended March 12th 2025. Mayor Minoins to serve as liaison.
	Youth Recreation	Hire Programmer	2024	Complete
	TOP PROJECT: Further enhance youth recreation opportunities through the construction of a pump track and development of skate park plans.	Determine location for pump track	2023	Council provided direction to seek grant support for pump track. Site considerations will be included in Parks and Trails Master Plan process. The Modular Pump Track report was presented to Council in October 2025. Staff will report back at a future RCM.
		Seek and submit grant funding proposals	2024	Contractor hired to assist with search for grants.
	Update Recreation Marketing Plan	Add Council Strategic Plan vision, lenses and values to plan and create schedule of monthly communication tactics.	2025	Summer Camp branding and 2025 marketing and communication plan complete.
	Build schedule of Community Centre capital replacement	Source quotes for replacement Gym floor and wall	2024	Quotes received and consideration for replacement timing taking place. Water issue in floor believed to be resolved.
	Sport Field Strategy	Work with Courtenay and the CVRD to implement recommendations from the 2023 Comox Valley Sport Fields Strategy report	2024-25	Report provided to Council February 2025. Work beginning on regional sports field allocation and fee policy (see 'Good Governance' - relationships)
	Recreation Master Plan		2025-26	
	Parks	Complete Brooklyn Creek greenway south of Noel Avenue.		
Acquire further parks and nature space within town boundaries.				In progress
Complete an ocean front walkway connection west of Marina Park to Ellis Street.				Complete, Council directed to not move forward with this project
Explore acquiring a bee friendly designation				Completed. The Town is officially a bee friendly community.
TOP PROJECT: Develop an Urban Forest Management Strategy to catalogue current needs and map future growth of the Town's parks systems.				In progress. Draft plan was available for community review in November/December 2025. Final plan to be presented to Council in March 2026.
Arts and Culture	Continue to support Nautical Days and Filberg Festival.	Renew management and maintenance agreement with Filberg Heritage Lodge and Park Association.	2024	In progress
		Develop Nautical Days Policy	2024	Complete
		Establish Nautical Days Advisory Committee	2024	Council Committee established, Terms of Reference on March 20 RCM, committee members appointed. Complete
		Dissolve Nautical Days Society	2025	Complete, society will not be dissolved as per Council direction December 4th 2024
	Provide support for community Halloween and Christmas Market events.		2024	Complete. Council resolved to provide funding to the BIA for these events.
	Continue to provide space for Pearl Ellis Art Gallery and Comox Archives and Museum		2024	Complete
	Construct Mack Laing viewing platform.		2024	Arch permit issued. Proceeding with design. Design complete, engaging with construction contractor to review potential cost-saving measures to ensure project remains within budget.
Public Safety	Hold annual forums, such as an annual Economic Development and Tourism forum and a Developer's Forum, with key Stakeholders			Developers Forum held in January of 2025.
	Continue provision of health and safety support including smoke detectors, AED's, Fire Smart support and wildfire mitigation, extreme weather event centers, and supporting outreach during extreme weather events.	Direct communications and assistance with citizens on improving their fire safety.	All	Over 60 AED's have been installed across Comox. Extreme weather event policy adopted by Council and Town staff committed to outreach support in conjunction with other valley municipalities during extreme weather events.
	Focus on life saving protection through the timely response to fire rescue and medical emergency situations.	Maintain good response times to emergencies.	All	Service delivery times meet current needs. Current daytime response of less than 2 minutes out of the station. Challenging maintaining an active group of dedicated and trained paid on call firefighters. High turnover. Update, 18 member left the department in 2025.
	Active participation in the Regional Emergency Management Program.	Maintain our partnership with other local governments to develop an effective role and response to local emergencies.	All	Staff attend regular meetings of Comox Valley Emergency Planning group and participate in training and exercises. Regional pooling of funds for indigenous engagement has been approved
	Increase public awareness of emergency evacuation routes			CVRD has a grant to update emergency evacuation routes information. Comox Fire Rescue has added links to web site with information about Evacuation routes. Difficult to designate evacuation routes within a small town as the routes are likely to change based on the type and location of an emergency. In a local emergency citizens would be directed by first responders as to which route to use to evacuate town.
Fire Station Replacement		2026	Council provided direction to develop architectural drawings in March 2025. Contract awarded to local company for design(May 2025). Capital Infrastructure grant applied for (June 2025). Plans are 75% complete. Construction manager hired in December and cost Class C estimates will be provided mid January 2026.	

* Status Colours:
 ** Strategic initiative reworded

Completed:

On Hold:


In Progress:

AREA OF FOCUS	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	TASKS	YEAR	* STATUS	
ECONOMIC HEALTH	Downtown Vitality	TOP PROJECT: Complete a Downtown Action Plan to guide future development and balance the need for growth vs. desire to maintain a small-		Complete with Council consideration of projects on September 11th	
		Support downtown beautification through flower beds and routine maintenance.		Continuing	
		Provide enhanced development approvals support for downtown projects.		Continuing	
		Explore and incentivize retail zoning in the downtown		policy support included in new OCP, to be completed by end of 2025.	
		Explore establishing a Town of Comox Tourism Commission		Invitation for BIA to attend Council meeting has been extended	
	Balancing Vibrancy &	Promote and support local commercial into residential areas.	Complete communities	2024	In Progress
			Rezoning application processing	2024	Council removed mixed use from North Pritchard Corridor
			Update home occupation regulations	2025	will be completed in new zoning bylaw, by end of 2025.
		Support the BIA in their renewal and potential boundary expansion process	Support the Renewal of the Downtown BIA	2025	Complete. Regular meetings with BIA initiated.
			Examine the feasibility of expanding the BIA	2025	Complete. BIA has decided to not expand for their next term.
TOP PROJECT: Complete an Economic Development Strategy and Downtown Enhancement Action Plan.			Complete		
Comox Marina	Complete and provide occupancy to the Marine Services Building.	Building Complete July 2023	2023	Included in OCP discussion, to be complete by end of 2025. Official opening Sep 7, 2023	
		Request for Proposals (RFP) for lease of Units 102 & 105, effective Aug 1, 2023	2023	Leases to Big Animal Encounters and Compass Adventure	
	Provide marina space to encourage tourism and commercial activities.	Request for Proposals (RFP) for lease of Units 104 & 105, effective Feb 1, 2024	2024	Lease of both Units to Compass Adventure	
		2024 Mobile Vendor Renewals	2024	Complete	
	Improve the pedestrian connection between the Marina and Comox Ave and explore mechanized alternatives	Mobile Vendor RFP for 2025-26	2025	Complete	
				Improved lighting and additional sidewalks on Beaufort	
	Install a floating platform off the breakwater		2024	Comox Valley Harbour Authority forwarded our proposal to Small Craft Harbours, a division of the Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans. Via CVHA, they advised the installation of a swim platform does not align with their purpose & mandate of the waterlot so the application is denied.	

* Status Colours:
 ** Strategic initiative reworded

Completed: 

On Hold: 


In Progress: 

GOOD GOVERNANCE	AREA OF FOCUS	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	TASKS	YEAR	* STATUS	
	Community Participation		Develop a pre-application policy with community input requirements to support and broaden community participation.	Develop Application Flow Charts with specific engagement requirements	2024	completed as part of new development application procedure. Consultation will be for OCP amendments only, after Council has had an initial review.
			Further enhance online information regarding proposed developments.	Include development information on website	2024	Complete but opportunities for public engagement decreased through Provincial Regulation changes.
			Continue Town's communication and social media growth to build knowledge and engagement on town projects and initiatives.	Increase website readership	2023	Website views on top five pages (Homepage, Community Centre, Employment Opportunities, Program Registration, Recreation Guide) increased by 20% YTD in Jan 2024 compared to 2023
				Increase social media engagement	2023	Facebook followers up 11% over 2023, to 5200; Instagram followers up slightly to 1140, X followers 2,657 up over 2023 rates of 2,550.
				Promote ReCollect App for solid waste information	2023	Registered users up over 10% to 1987 users. Currently at 2050 (Nov. 2024)
	Relationships	Maintain high levels of support and coordination with other local governments and K'omoks First Nation.	Consult with K'omoks First Nations on projects of shared interest	2023	Presentation made to K'omoks Chief and Council. Bi-monthly meetings between KFN Council and Mayor and CAO have been scheduled.	
			Partner with other Comox Valley local governments in the Leisure for Everyone Accessibility Program (LEAP)	2023	Regional program established in April 2023	
			Partner with other Comox Valley local governments in establishing a regional accessibility committee to meet legislative requirements	2023	Regional framework adopted November 2023	
			Partner with City of Courtenay in regional sports field allocation and centralized booking strategy	2024	Underway completion expected 2026	
Coordinate with City of Courtenay in public engagement strategy for new solid waste			2023	Complete		
Decision Making	Improve ground level data collection and continue to modernize internal processes.	Finance and Public Works Department is exploring Asset Management software to better track and improve coordination of asset management and replacement.	2024-25	In Progress through Complete Communities project. Preparing an RFP for asset management software.		
		Include full life cycle costs in all asset acquisition or expansion decisions.	2024	Full life cycle costing is included in all capital acquisition budgeting decisions		

* Status Colours:
 ** Strategic initiative reworded

Completed: 

On Hold: 

In Progress: 

BALANCED COMMUNITY PLANNING	AREA OF FOCUS	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	TASKS	YEAR	* STATUS
	Strategic Growth	Ensure appropriate amenity provisions in rezoning applications.		2024	Affordable housing contribution policy will be rescinded as per rising DCC and implementation of ACC's (October 22, 2025 RCM discussion).
		Develop an organization growth plan that supports and enhance the delivery of services as the community grows.	Work with Courtenay and the CVRD to implement recommendations from the 2023 Comox Valley Sport Fields Strategy report (staff report to Council, November 1, 2023).	2024-25	In progress
	Housing	TOP PROJECT: Update (Complete new) the OCP through community consultation to develop a vision for the future		2024	Commenced Nov 2024. First Readings on November 5th
		Apply for and complete the Complete Community grant program to support future planning decision making.		2023	Complete. Grant obtained
		Apply for and complete the CMHC Housing Accelerator grant program to accelerate the Town's modernization process and		2023	Complete. Grant obtained
		TOP PROJECT: Develop a Housing Strategy that creates conditions for a diversity of housing options		2025	Will be part of the OCP process Council received Housing Needs Assessment on September 4th RCM
	Community Addition	Require greenway and connectivity networks in new developments.		2024	will be identified in new OCP, to be completed end of 2025.
		Complete a DCC review to ensure equity and fairness in cost allocation in new developments.		2024	First three readings on October 22, 2025, to be adopted end of 2025.
		Create a community amenity policy for developments.		2024	Affordable housing contribution policy will be rescinded as per rising DCC and implementation of ACC's (October 22, 2025 RCM discussion).
Increase required bike parking and EV charging capabilities in multifamily development			will be identified in new OCP and Zoning Bylaw, to be completed end of 2025.		
Create a residential tree planting program		2026	Not started		

* Status Colours:

** Strategic initiative reworded

Completed:

On Hold:

In Progress:

To: Mayor and Council	File: PR 24-12
From: Randy Houle, Director of Development Services	Date: January 9, 2026
Subject: Step-backs in the Official Community Plan	

Report Approved:



Jordan Wall, CAO

PURPOSE

THAT as per direction received from the December 3rd Regular Council meeting, language be included in the draft OCP bylaw for January 21st that includes the requirement for 2m step backs on the 5th and 6th stories on faces of all buildings in Comox.

OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL

- 1) THAT language be included in the draft OCP bylaw for January 21st that includes the requirement for 2m step backs on the 5th and 6th floor for all building faces fronting Comox Ave (and/or Beuna Vista).
- 2) THAT language be included in the draft OCP bylaw for January 21st that includes the requirement for a 1m step back on the 5th story and a further 1m step back on the 6th story for all building faces fronting Comox Ave (and/or Beuna Vista).
- 3) THAT the draft OCP bylaw for January 21st reverts to the original draft language regarding step backs which require a 0.3m or more step back above the fourth storey OR other façade treatments to reduce visual massing in place of step backs **and includes the step backs as mandatory in the downtown area.**

- 4) THAT the draft OCP bylaw for January 21st reverts to the original draft language regarding step backs which require a 0.3m or more step back above the fourth storey OR other façade treatments to reduce visual massing in place of step backs **while also applying this flexibility in the downtown area.**

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS

- 1) Geographic applicability (e.g. Downtown or Town-wide for buildings above four storeys).
- 2) Minimum step-back depth (e.g. 0.5 metres, 1 metre, 2 metres, etc.)
- 3) Applicable building faces for step-backs (e.g. only fronting a public street versus all sides of a building).

BACKGROUND

At the December 3, 2025 Regular Council Meeting, Council passed the following motion:

THAT all Mid-Rise (6-storey) properties and all Harbour and Marina Comprehensive Development Area (6-storey) properties be required to do step-backs on the fifth and sixth storeys, where applicable.

A step-back is when the building face of an upper storey is further back from a property line than the building face of the storey(s) below it. A visual example is provided in Figure 1 below.

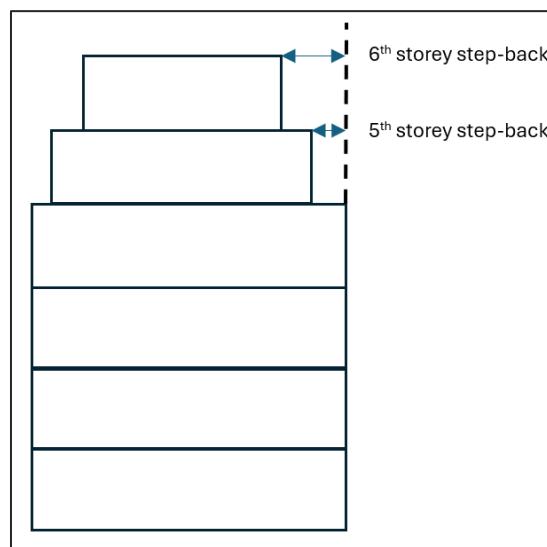


Figure 1: Simplified representation of six storey building with 5th and 6th storey step-backs – side view of building.

ANALYSIS AND ISSUES

Existing Step-back Guidelines (November Draft OCP)

The OCP version presented at the November 26, 2025 Public Hearing included Development Permit Area Guidelines for step-backs for any residential, commercial, or mixed-use buildings over four storeys as shown below:

DP Guideline 3.5.36 (Low and Mid-Rise Residential) & **DP Guideline 4.5.41** (Commercial & Mixed-Use):

- Innovative and interesting façade treatments are strongly encouraged on all buildings, to create identifiable, attractive developments. For example:
 - Stepping back or providing balcony and terrace areas on the building above the ground floor.
 - Use of a variety of colours, roof lines, architectural features and building materials. Large areas of unvaried material are strongly discouraged.

DP Guideline 3.5.37 (Low and Mid-Rise Residential) & **DP Guideline 4.5.42** (Commercial & Mixed-use):

- Floors above the fourth storey **should** be stepped back by 0.3 metres or more to minimize shadow impacts on both public and private spaces. Other architectural features to reduce the perceived height and massing of buildings taller than four storeys may be considered in place of step-backs to the satisfaction of the Director of Development Services.

For the downtown area specifically, the guidelines include more stringent regulations regarding step backs:

DP Guideline 4.5.77 (Low and Mid-Rise Mixed-Use within Downtown): Storeys above the fourth **must** integrate minimum 0.3-metre step-backs to integrate with existing character.

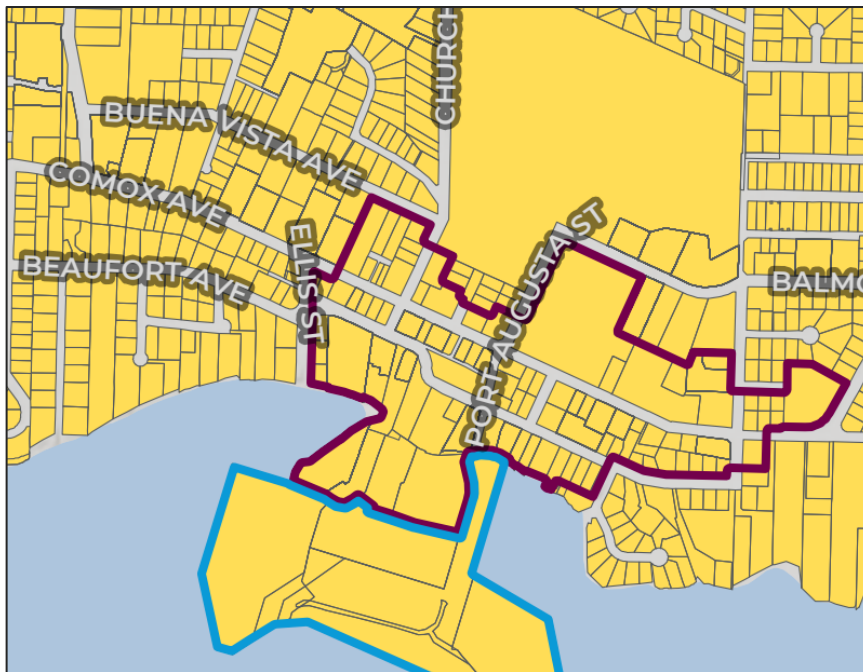


Figure 2: OCP DPA – Form and Character Map showing the downtown boundary in which step-backs above the fourth storey are required.

A photo illustrating upper-storey step-backs and other architectural details was also included in the development permit areas as figure 18, shown as figure 3 in this report. This building has an

approximately 2-metre step-back at the fifth and sixth storey. Figure 4 shows a 6-storey building that does not have any step-backs but includes architectural details that make it look as if there are step-backs, including material/colour variation, a cornice/overhang detail at the fourth storey, and tiered landscaping features and sufficient landscaping space to accommodate a large shade tree.



Figure 3: Figure 18 in Development Permit Area 4 – Commercial and Mixed Use. This is a six-storey mixed-use building with step-backs at the fifth and sixth storeys. In addition to step-backs, the building utilizes material variation, weather-protection overhangs, and cornice line details at the third and fourth storeys. All these features contribute to reducing the perceived height and massing of the building.



Figure 4: This six-storey residential building does not have step-backs but utilizes other landscaping and architectural techniques that contribute to reducing the perceived height and massing, including material / colour variation, a cornice/overhang detail at the fourth storey, and tiered landscaping features and sufficient landscaping space to accommodate a large shade tree.

Step-back Considerations

Step-back requirements are a balance between aesthetics and building costs. They can provide aesthetic benefits on the one hand, but they carry higher construction/maintenance costs and reduce energy efficiency. There may also be subjective elements to step-backs, since they conflict with some architectural styles and can place limitations on architectural creativity. There are some alternative architectural strategies to address the design objectives intended to be achieved by step-backs, though it may be arguable whether such strategies are truly as effective as step-backs in reducing perceived massing and height.

Step-backs can provide aesthetic benefits by reducing the perceived height and massing of buildings, particularly when they are adjacent to shorter or smaller buildings. They can also facilitate more direct sunlight access for lower storeys and the ground level of the surrounding area, though the difference between a six-storey building with or without step-backs will be marginal in this regard. On the upper storeys, step-backs can facilitate units with larger balconies. They may also force the design of shallower, wider units on the upper storeys, which allow for better natural light penetration to the back of double-loaded corridor units that only have windows on one or two walls.

Step-backs can increase construction and maintenance costs. A building with step backs can require an enhanced foundation due to shifting upper storey loads closer to the centre of the building, with less of

the load being carried by the exterior walls of lower storeys. More complicated seismic risk mitigation and building envelope systems are also required.

Step-back Policies

Key considerations for step-backs policies include:

- Geographic applicability
- Step-back depth
- Applicable building faces

In terms of geographic applicability, step-backs could be required in some locations but not others. The Mid-Rise and Harbour and Marina Comprehensive Development Area designations are currently limited to Downtown Comox and the Harbourview Corridor (west of Downtown along Comox Avenue). However, step-backs could be limited to parcels fronting Comox Avenue, for example.

The depth of step-backs is another key consideration. A common option is a minimum 1-metre step-back for the fifth storey, and a minimum 2-metre step-back for the sixth storey (in relation to the fourth storey). This would allow for both the fifth and sixth storeys to be stepped back by two metres if desired (as shown in figure 3 above). 2 metres is typically considered an appropriate minimum depth for a usable balcony.

The primary rationale for mandatory step-backs is the reduction of perceived building height and massing from the public realm. As a result, step-backs could be limited to building faces facing public streets as opposed to being located on all sides of buildings. This would help to limit the added construction costs and impacts to energy efficiency typically associated with step-backs.

An example that ties these considerations together would be the addition of the following guideline to the Low and Mid-Rise Residential and Low and Mid-Rise Mixed-Use Development Permit Areas with a graphic to show how measurements would be taken:

Buildings taller than four storeys shall integrate step-backs at the fifth and sixth storeys on building faces parallel to a public street or lane. The fifth storey must be stepped back a minimum of 1 metre from the fourth storey, and the sixth storey must be stepped back a minimum of 2 metres from the fourth storey. For clarity, step-backs may be integrated within a sloped roof form, and the horizontal step-back distance would be measured at the ceiling height of the upper storey and ceiling height of the lower storey.

NEXT STEPS

Following this meeting, staff will utilize Council direction to integrate policies or step-back design guidelines into the version of OCP Bylaw No. 2054 that is anticipated for Council's consideration at the January 21, Regular Council Meeting.