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Affordable-Accessible Housing Photo Essay

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This classic apartment has features that make it attractive (bay windows, welcoming entranceways, appropriate siding materials and color, and good maintenance) and yet affordable (wood construction, full lot coverage and minimal parking supply). This is one type of affordable-accessible housing.

Abstract

This photo essay illustrates various types of affordable-accessible housing (affordable housing suitable for compact development). It highlights specific design features that can make such housing more acceptable to neighbors. It is an appendix to the report, *Affordable-Accessible Housing In A Dynamic City: Why and How To Support Development of More Affordable Housing In Accessible Locations* (www.vtpi.org/aff_acc_hou.pdf).

Introduction

There are few more important planning objectives than to increase the supply of *affordable-accessible* housing, that is lower-priced homes located in areas with good transport options and accessible land use. This helps achieve numerous economic, social and environmental benefits, including consumer savings and affordability, basic accessibility for non-drivers, congestion reduction, road and parking facility cost savings, improved safety and public health, energy conservation. emission reductions, and habitat preservation.

However, such housing can be difficult to develop. Although residents often *say* that they support affordable housing, they often oppose specific projects. Affordable housing is a LULU (locally undesirable land use). Existing neighborhood residents tend to resist such development due to aesthetic concerns and fear of lower-income neighbors. Developers find such housing less profitable and more difficult to build than either higher-priced infill or inexpensive greenfield construction. The main beneficiaries – people who will live in those units – are generally unable to advocate for the construction of affordable-accessible housing that they will occupy in the future. Planners are often stuck in the middle of such conflicts.

There is often confusion about affordable-accessible housing. Many people are unaware of the many types that exist, and strategies to address specific problems.

Types of affordable-accessible housing:

- *Small-lot urban neighborhood housing.* Stand-alone houses on 3,000 to 6,000 square foot (e.g., 50 x 100 ft) lots.
- *Secondary suites and accessory units.* Additional units incorporated into single-family homes, including basements, attics, lane houses, and converted garages.
- *Duplexes and townhouses (row houses).* Houses with one or two shared walls, and ground-floor entrances (each unit has its own front door).
- *Lowrise (2-4 story) apartments and condominiums.* These can be affordable, particularly if built using simple, standard, woodframe construction, and no elevators (which add significant costs).
- *Highrise (5+ stories) apartments and condominiums.* These buildings tend to be more costly to construct but may be cost effective where land prices are high.
- *Residential-over-commercial.* It is often possible to build housing over ground-floor retail.
- *Parking lot redevelopment.* Many older buildings and shopping malls have parking lots suitable for development if managed more efficiently or replaced by parking structures.
- *Conversions of non-residential buildings.* Some older industrial or commercial buildings in an accessible location are suitable for conversion to residential.

This essay illustrates various types of affordable-accessible housing and highlights design features that can help make these buildings both attractive and affordable.

Narrow-Lot Single-Family – Shared Driveway

Two singe units each on a 30' x 80' lot = 18 units per acre.
1 off-street parking space = 1.0 spaces per unit, plus curb space to park one vehicle.
These two narrow houses on a residential street share a driveway, which allows rear parking and a small backyard on narrow lots, and maximizes curb parking. They were built about 2000.

Narrow-Lot Single-Family

Two singe units each on a 30' x 100' lot = 15 units per acre.
2 parking space (garage and driveway) = 2.0 spaces per unit. No curb parking.
These two narrow homes on a residential street have integrated garages. Their two driveways eliminate curb parking. They were built about 2005.

Heritage House Four-Plex

4 units on 60' x 100' lot = 29 units per acre.
No off-street parking spaces, but the lack of a driveway leaves curb space to park two vehicles.
This heritage house, built about 1910 on a residential street, was renovated and subdivided into four units about 2005.

Older House With Secondary Suite

2 units on 60' x 100' lot = 15 units per acre.
1 off-street parking space, plus curb space to park one vehicle.
This older house on a residential street, built about 1915, was raised and renovated about 2005 to create a basement suite.

Five-Unit Converted House

5 units on 60' x 100' lot = 36 units per acre.
2 parking spaces = 0.4 spaces per unit, plus curb space to park one vehicle.
This is an older house on a residential street that was sub-divided into five small units. The building has bay windows and landscaping.

Converted Garage

Garages are often converted into small housing units.

Laneway Housing

A small housing unit can often be added above a garage, located on a lane (alley) behind the main house, as these examples illustrate.

Subdivided Older Home

4 units on 60' x 100' lot = 30 units per acre.
4 parking spaces = 1.0 spaces per unit. No on-street parking.

This is an example of an older house on a local collector street that was sub-divided into four units. The building has attractive detailing (bay windows, inviting entrance, nice roof line) and is well-maintained, but the front lawn was paved for parking.

The Normandie

18 units on 90' x 50' lot = 160 units per acre.
0 parking spaces = 0 spaces per unit.

This is a classic three-story brick apartment building located on a sub-arterial, built early in the Twentieth Century. It has beautiful bay windows and nice detailing.

Classic Residential Over Commercial

11 units on 150' x 100' lot = 32 units per acre.
Shared-use parking.
This is a classic two-story brick building with residential over commercial, located on a major arterial, probably built early in the Twentieth Century. It has beautiful windows and nice detailing and maintenance.

The Louise

13 units on 70' x 150' lot = 54 units per acre.
6 parking spaces = 0.46 spaces per unit, plus curb space to park two vehicles.

This is a basic three-story apartment building located on a residential street, across from a park, probably built in the 1950s or 60s. It has a simple design and is well maintained.

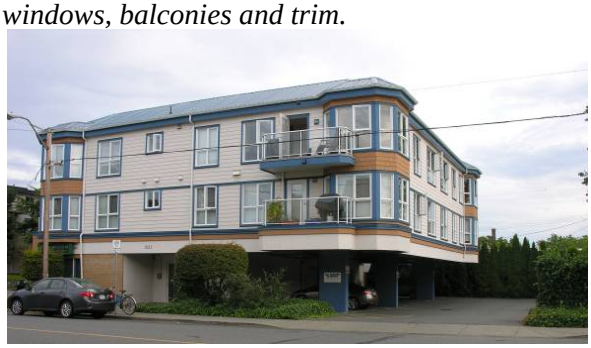
Expanded and Divided Residential

4 units on 50' x 100' lot = 12 units per acre.
4 off-street parking spaces = 1.0 spaces per unit, plus curb space to park one vehicle.
This is an example of a small, single-story house on a residential street, that was recently expanded by adding a story, and was subdivided into four smaller condominiums. This is a common strategy for incremental infill used in higher value neighborhoods.

Recent Residential Over Commercial

10 units on 100' x 150' lot = 30 units per acre. 17 shared parking spaces, partly under the building.

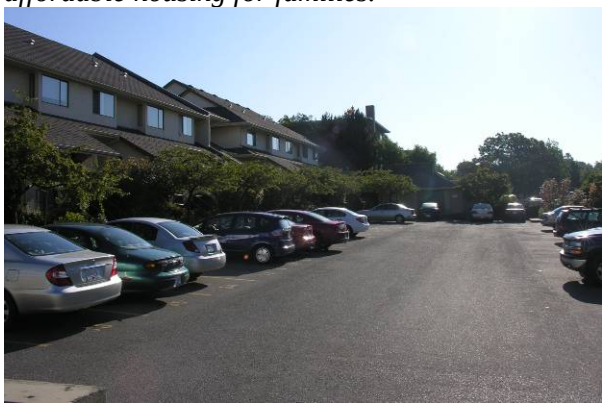
This three-story building with residential over commercial is located on a minor arterial. It was probably built in the 1990s. It has interesting windows, balconies and trim.



Village On the Green

Two-bedroom, two-level townhouse apartments are $847 per month.

These two-story wood-frame townhouses are located on a local street across from Harris Green park where probably built in the 1990s by the Capital Region Housing Corporation (www.crd.bc.ca/housing/index.htm) to provide affordable housing for families.



Wedgewood Terrace

$795 for 1-bedroom apartment.
77 units on 300' x 150' lot = 75 units per acre.
56 parking spaces = 0.73 spaces per unit.

This is a relatively large four-story wood-frame apartment located on a side street, just off an arterial, probably built in the 1970s or 80s. It has attractive brick siding and is well maintained.

Pandora Apartments

$700 for bachelor apartment.
14 units on 100' x 100' lot = 60 units per acre.
20 parking spaces = 1.4 spaces per unit.

This 3-story, wood-frame apartment building, located on a major arterial, was probably built in the 1970s. It has generous setback and landscaping for privacy, and is well maintained.

Camosun Place

Three-story, wood-frame apartment building located on a local street. It was built in the 1990s by an affordable housing development agency. Rents are based on income. It has bay windows, attractive landscaping and is well maintained.

Sun Ridge Apartments

$750 for one-bedroom apartment.
12 units on 60' x 100' lot = 80 units per acre.
8 parking spaces = 0.66 spaces per unit, plus curb parking for one or two vehicles.

This two-story wood-frame apartment located on a local street was probably built in the 1960s. It has generous setback and attractive landscaping, and is moderately-well maintained, but much of the property is paved for parking.

Braemore Manor

$725 for one-bedroom apartment
24 units on 150' x 160' lot = 44 units per acre
20 parking spaces = 0.83 spaces per unit, plus curb parking for about four vehicles.

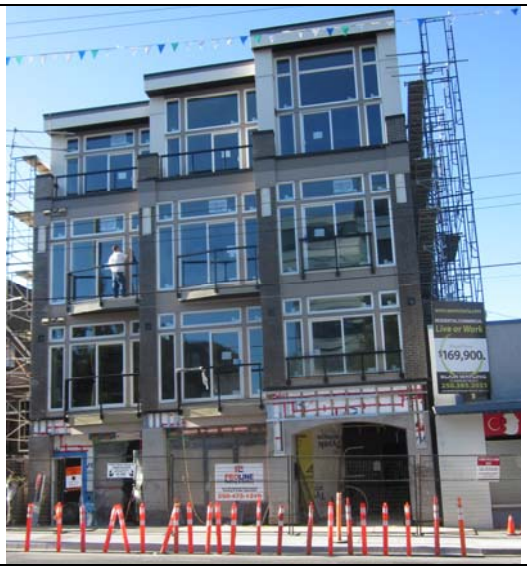
This three-story wood-frame apartment located on a local street was probably built in the 1970s. It is reasonably attractive in the front but the back is completely paved for parking.

Mid-Rise Downtown Condominiums

Typically 40-80

This is an example of a new, mid-rise (4-8 story) condominium building under construction in downtown Victoria that will include middle-priced ($180,000 to $260,000) units. This is possible because the units are small and parking is unbundled.

Many of these will be rented. Although not extrmely affordable now, they help reduce demand for cheaper apartments, and will become more affordable in a few years as they age.



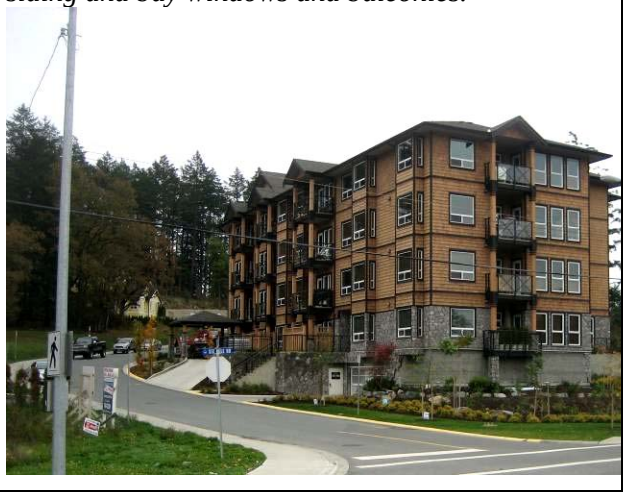
High-Rise Downtown Condominiums

Typically 80-120 units per acre.
Parking is unbundled (rented separately from housing units)

These are two of several high-rise (8 or more story) condominiums developed in downtown Victoria that include middle-priced ($200,000 to $300,000) units. This is possible because the units are small and parking is unbundled.

Suburban Multi-family

This four-story condominium was recently constructed in a suburban community, on a busy arterial near a highway on-ramp. It has attractive siding and bay windows and balconies.



Conclusions

Affordable-accessible housing can include a variety of housing types including secondary suites, small-lot single-family, town-houses, low-rise, and in some situations, higher-rise multi-family. This diversity helps meet the diverse demands for affordable-accessible housing, including families with children, people with disabilities, pet owners, and gardening enthusiasts.

Affordable-accessible housing can be made more acceptable to neighbors if it includes adequate landscaping, interesting windows and welcoming entranceways, suitable siding and trim, and good maintenance. Efficient parking management can address concerns that such development will cause conflicts over vehicle parking.

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USGBC Affordable Housing Initiative (www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=2031), US Green Building Council. Provides guidelines for creating more energy efficient affordable housing.

Vancouver EcoDensity (www.vancouver-ecodensity.ca) is an integrated program to increase urban livability, affordability and environmental performance through policy and planning reforms that encourage more compact, mixed, infill development.

www.vtpi.org/aff_acc_photo.pdf