

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights from the City of
Nelson Council Meeting

April 8, 2019



New Sign Bylaw Approved

Council approved a new Sign Bylaw regulating signage within the City. This new Bylaw replaces the out of date Sign Bylaw that dated back to 1983. The Development Services department has worked with the community over the past 9 months on writing this new Bylaw. As part of the Bylaw review process, significant consultation was done with the business community, sign industry as well as the Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce. The [new bylaw](#) is user friendly and includes illustrations to clearly identify how a user can meet the regulations.

New Sidewalk Café Bylaw Adopted

Council adopted a [new Sidewalk Café Bylaw](#). This Bylaw replaces the existing policy and spells out the regulations of all patios that are located on City property (typically streets and sidewalks). Outdoor patios are a key amenity that adds to the vibrancy of our downtown. It is important that the City provide comprehensive direction in the design and operation of sidewalk cafés so the local economy and businesses can thrive. It is also important that our downtown is pedestrian friendly and accessible by all. The proposed Bylaw outlines specific pedestrian clearance requirements (unobstructed space for people to walk) and design guidance in order to achieve this end. The Bylaw also allows for extended hours of operation following the request from many of the businesses that currently have outdoor patios.

Laneway Housing Design Competition Approved

Council approved a [laneway house design competition](#) that will commence later this year to generate high-quality, pre-reviewed laneway house building plans for Nelson homeowners. The ultimate goal is increase our building stock and improve affordability to homeowners and renters. Pre-reviewed designs will be made available to the community at a reduced cost and are intended to reduce the complexity and cost of developing laneway houses. The objective is to provide easy access to high-quality designs and code-compliant plans that strike the right balance between affordable construction and ecologically-sound design. They will be plans designed for Nelson, offering exceptional value-for-money for homeowners and making it easier for them to build a laneway house on their property. The contest evaluation criteria emphasise adaptability to various lots and topographies.

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The competition will consist of two rounds. The first round will include a call for prototypes. The second round will be an invite-only competition of up to five participants to produce design plans, selected from the top entries from the first round. Three designs will be selected and cash prizes for the top three will be awarded. A “people’s choice” vote will also be held to involve all residents. Designers will receive a royalty of \$1,000 each time the plan is purchased by a homeowner. The tentative timeline would see these plans available as early as February or March of 2020.

Staff have assembled a tentative ‘Design Review Panel’ that includes local professionals, two of the best known laneway house design-build firms from Vancouver and Calgary, and Ross Chapin, the architect who founded the “pocket neighbourhood” concept.

Competitions provide the community an opportunity to celebrate good design, are inexpensive to run, generate new ideas, can recruit both professionals and emerging talent (such as university teams), and can serve as a platform to promote laneway housing and local design talent. The program also incentivises laneway houses achieving Step 3 of the new BC Step Code for energy efficiency. Step 3 represents 20% greater efficiency than conventional building techniques.

The Official Community Plan calls for diverse and affordable housing opportunities in denser, complete communities that do not increase the city’s or the region’s footprint. It directs the City to focus residential densification near existing infrastructure and services and to preserve existing homes and their heritage value. Laneway housing is an approach that can positively contribute to all of these objectives.

More information will be posted in the near future at www.nelson.ca/designcompetition.