Housing Choices Design Library: Program Outline

This attachment gives a general idea of how a design library would work in Burnaby. Specific details around the program and process may change as the design library is implemented.

1.0 Introduction

The City of Burnaby is setting up a design library to accompany the Housing Choices program. The intent of the library is to support the development of missing middle and infill housing by providing access to a variety of house plans. The plans selected for the library will demonstrate best design practices and comply with BC Building Code and the City of Burnaby's regulations.

In recent years, other jurisdictions have established similar programs to support homeowners and small-scale builders (the "Applicant") in developing their properties. The proposed approach for Burnaby, as outlined in this report, draws from notable examples such as the Cities of Nelson and Kelowna in British Columbia; the City of Seattle, Washington; and the Town of Collingwood, Ontario.

2.0 Design Library Benefits

Using a design from the design library does not necessarily guarantee a faster approvals process, as applications using designs from the design library will still need to be reviewed for site-specific compliance as part of the building permit process. However, there are other benefits and potential time and cost savings that make having a design library attractive.

For the Applicant, the benefits of a design library include:
- Access to a variety of designs that will work within the context of Burnaby;
- Access to reputable designers who have been vetted by the City;
- Potential time savings in the design phase; and
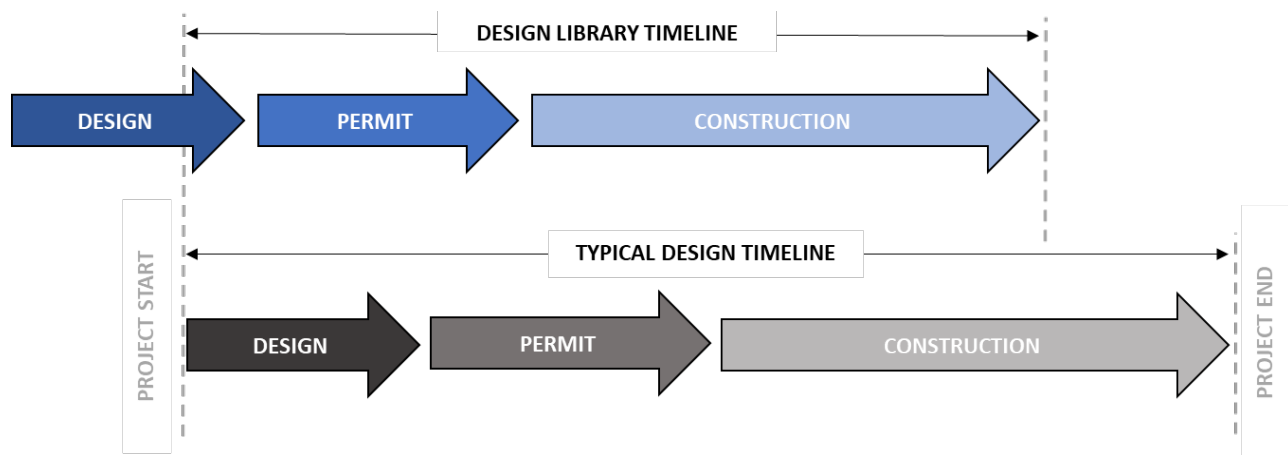- Potential cost savings on the purchase or use of a design.

Figure 1. Design Library vs. Typical Design Project Timeline

For the Designer, the benefits of having their designs in the library include:

- Exposure to more potential clients;
- One design may be sold multiple times, potentially resulting in a higher return per design depending on the number of times the design is used.

Other general benefits:

- Increase community awareness about small-scale, multi-unit housing;
- Provide assistance to small-scale homeowner-developers;
- Offer potential opportunities to visit built examples of designs in real life; and
- Familiarity for builders when dealing with the same designs more than once.

3.0 Design Submission and Selection Process

Designs for the library will be sourced and reviewed from three streams:

1. Open call for submissions to designers, architects, and builders;
2. The provincial and federal library of pre-reviewed designs; and
3. Successful designs submitted through the City's permitting process.

4.0 Design Expiry

To ensure the relevancy of designs in the library, given potential changes to regulations over time, each design will be tagged with a publication date and be removed from the library after a defined period.