



POLICY REPORT

Report Date: November 26, 2018
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VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: December 4, 2018

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
SUBJECT: Reconsideration of Referral for Amendments to Zoning and Development By-law for RT-7 and RT-8 Zones (Kitsilano) and RT-10 and RT-10N (Kensington-Cedar Cottage)

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council rescind the motion adopted at the Regular Council Meeting on July 24, 2018 referring to public hearing the various by-laws, policies and guidelines referenced in the Policy Report dated July 6, 2018 entitled "Amendments to Zoning and Development By-law for RT-7 and RT-8 Zones (Kitsilano) and RT-10 and RT-10N (Kensington-Cedar Cottage) to Increase Housing Choice".

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks a decision by Council on whether or not to proceed to public hearing with proposed amendments to RT zones in Kitsilano and Kensington-Cedar Cottage. This report recommends not to proceed to public hearing with the proposed amendments to RT zones in these limited areas where housing choice already exists, and instead to focus planning resources on expanding housing choice in all low density neighbourhoods through the Making Room Housing Program as a key building block of a future City Plan.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Housing Vancouver Strategy (2018-2017) and Three Year Action Plan (2018 – 2020)

Making Room Housing Program: Overview and Quick Start Actions (June 5, 2018)

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

June and July Council Direction and Actions

On June 19th, 2018 Council considered and endorsed the creation of the Making Room Housing Program to address a key objective of the Housing Vancouver Strategy – shifting towards the “right supply” of housing which meets the needs of people who live and work in Vancouver. The focus of Making Room is to deliver a portion of the “right supply” of housing by expanding the diversity of housing options in low-density neighbourhoods. The Making Room report explained the program and the city-wide approach to exploring future options. It also identified Quick Start Actions including proposed amendments to RS zones to allow duplex as a housing option, as well as proposed amendments to RT zones in Kitsilano and Kensington-Cedar Cottage (KCC) to expand the range of housing choice that already exists in these neighbourhoods (refer to Figures 1 and 2 for the location of the RT-7, RT-8 and RT-10/10N zones). On June 19th, Council approved amendments to the RT-7 and RT-8 guidelines to allow smaller lots with character houses to qualify for rear yard infill (in line with previous approvals for character house sites for RT-5 in Mount Pleasant and Grandview Woodland and all RS zones). Subsequently, in a separate report considered on July 24, 2018 (RTS 12676) Council referred the proposed RT amendments to a public hearing. In early September staff held information meetings to explain the proposed changes in these neighbourhoods and answer questions, and enquiry nights which allowed property owners to book 30-minute appointments to discuss their sites in detail.

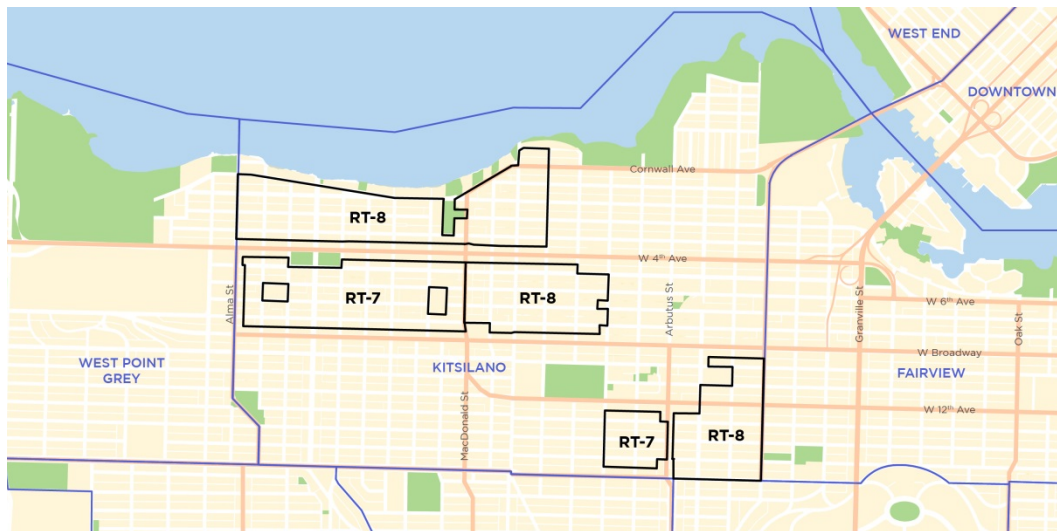


Figure 1: RT-7 and RT-8 areas in Kitsilano

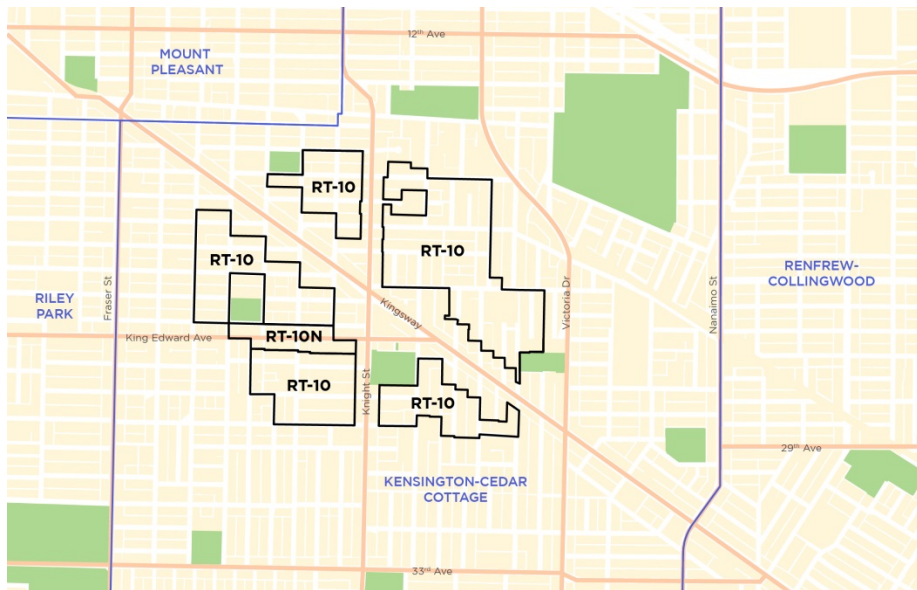


Figure 2: RT-10 and RT-10N areas in Kensington-Cedar Cottage

Resident Response to Proposed RT Amendments

Since referral of the proposed amendments, residents of Kitsilano have expressed both concern and interest about the proposed changes to the RT-7 and RT-8 district schedules, which have produced good results since first enacted in the early 1990's. Some owners are interested in increasing the housing options and view the changes as a chance for Kitsilano RT zoning to “catch up” with the enhanced character incentives and laneway options introduced in the past 10 years in RS zones and the RT-5 zone. Others are concerned that the RT-7 and RT-8 areas in Kitsilano are proposed to be rezoned to RT-5 rather than updating the existing RT zoning, and others are concerned about process and want a better opportunity to discuss and understand the changes and trade-offs.

Residents in KCC have been less responsive to the proposed amendments. Some have welcomed the opportunities for more housing, in particular laneway housing, with single-family homeowners noting they felt “left behind” from that program. Others have concerns with the design of some of the duplex housing that has been developed in the RT-11 zone, and feel that the current RT-10 area deserves more careful attention and a more nuanced consideration of options for change.

Fall 2018 - Council Actions and Motion

On September 19, 2018, following the public hearing on agenda item no.5 regarding allowing duplexes in most RS zones, Council approved in principle the amendments to the Zoning and Development Bylaw to add duplex as a housing choice in most RS zones. The by-law was subsequently enacted on October 30, 2018. At the same public hearing on September 19, following the public hearing on the RS amendments, Council passed the following resolution with respect to agenda item no. 6 regarding amendments to the RT-7, RT-8 and RT-10/RT-10N zones:

THAT Council resolves they do not have time to hear Item 6, entitled “REZONING: Amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law for RT-7 and RT-8 Zones

(Kitsilano) and RT-10 and RT-10N Zones (Kensington-Cedar Cottage) to Increase Housing Choice”, and that this item be considered at another time, after November 5, 2018.

The Council motion of September 19, 2018 postponed the public hearing on the proposed changes to RT zoning in Kitsilano and Kensington Cedar-Cottage. The postponement presents an opportunity to reconsider whether to put time and resources into advancing by-law amendments to achieve only modest increases to housing choice in limited RT zones where housing choice beyond one-family dwellings already exist, or to focus on the more significant housing opportunities that could be enabled through the broader Making Room Housing Program.

A decision by Council is needed to provide clarity for those contemplating submitting development applications in these two neighbourhoods.

Strategic Analysis/Implications

Staff considered three options on how to proceed with the proposed RT amendments.

1. Proceed to public hearing with combined by-law amendment as referred

If Council wishes to proceed to public hearing, an available date in early 2019 will be selected. While the previous report included separate recommendations for the RT areas in Kitsilano and the RT areas in KCC, the combined report and the single amending by-law unnecessarily linked these two actions. This linkage means that a single public hearing will be held to hear speakers about two distinct sets of proposed changes. This will be confusing, since the regulations for each neighbourhood are different (different housing options, FSR, etc.)

2. Rescind the previous motion, separate the RT-7 and RT-8 amendments from the RT-10/10N amendments, and report back on each item

Staff’s objectives in proposing to amend the RT zoning in both Kitsilano and Kensington Cedar Cottage as described in the staff report was “to increase housing choices in these districts, improve equity of opportunity for homeowners in similar areas and provide an immediate opportunity to increase ground-oriented housing options in these neighbourhoods.” The rationale for the expedited process was to make relatively small changes in neighbourhoods that already provide some housing choice, including ownership opportunities other than one-family dwellings and to update, align and reduce the large number of similar RT zones.

If Council wishes to advance the RT amendments and address neighbourhood concerns, more engagement is needed in both Kitsilano and KCC to discuss the issues and options for change. This further engagement along with technical work is estimated to take about 4 to 5 months for each neighbourhood. At the conclusion of the engagement and technical work, staff would prepare separate reports and by-laws to individually consider possible amendments.

3. Rescind the previous motion and focus on city-wide engagement to expand housing diversity through the Making Room Housing Program and upcoming City Plan

The Kitsilano and KCC RT zones comprise about 3,500 lots and already provide housing choice including ownership options other than one-family dwellings. It is anticipated that the months of detailed work needed to engage with residents and advance the amendments as outlined in

option 2 would result in only minor increases in housing options. The costs and scope of these efforts significantly outweigh the benefit of proceeding with this work. A much broader range of housing options in all low-density neighbourhoods (68,000 + lots, mostly RS and RT zones) will be explored through the Making Room Housing Program. Accordingly, staff recommends rescinding the previous motion on the RT amendments for Kitsilano and KCC and instead focusing staff resources and engagement on advancing the broader Making Room Housing Program.

Making Room Housing Program

Goal

The goal of Making Room is to increase the supply, affordability and variety of housing options in low-density neighbourhoods. The program is one of the key actions of the Housing Vancouver Strategy, which was the result of 14 months of engagement with over 10,000 residents and stakeholders. Making Room will explore a broad range of housing choices and new opportunities for Missing Middle Housing including townhouse, four-storey apartments and new infill opportunities, as illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 3: Missing Middle Housing Types

Program

Phase 1 of the Making Room Housing Program will engage residents across the city in a year-long process to create a framework for change in low-density areas (mostly RS and RT zones). The framework will include both the factors to be considered in determining where change occurs and the types of housing to be provided. Making Room will also explore what additional housing options can be added to the current options now available on all RS lots. Phase 2 will implement the framework in existing low-density neighbourhoods to expand housing choice and build more complete communities.

In addition to the Quick Start actions on duplexes and RT zones, the Making Room Housing Program team has started important background work and technical analysis that will inform the broader work program. Work underway includes:

- Exploring the feasibility of providing incentives for affordable homeownership in low-density neighbourhoods through a partnership with Small Housing BC.

- Evaluating and learning from the winning submissions of the Urbanarium “Missing Middle” competition.
- Learning from programs and work underway in other cities to promote “Missing Middle” housing.
- Engaging with small scale builders and developers with experience in “Missing Middle” housing types.
- Exploring feasibility for more suites in houses and conversion of existing houses into multiple units/duplexes in consideration of Vancouver Building By-law requirements.
- Participating in Development Review Branch secondary suites review to increase compliance in legalising suites and align with housing goals.
- Analysing zoning and building by-law requirements and impacts on livability of basement secondary suites and lock-off units.
- Advancing detailed mapping and analysis of existing conditions in low-density areas.
- Integrating the Making Room Housing Program with the Regulation Redesign program.
- Drafting a “How To” design guide for duplexes.
- Convening an advisory group of industry professionals and academics.

Alignment with the city-wide plan

On November 14, 2018, Council directed staff to report back in the first quarter of 2019 on the scoping and an expedited work plan for a city-wide plan. Council directed staff to consider many aspects of a city-wide plan, including the planning for low-density residential neighbourhoods. With its goal to increase housing choice in low-density neighbourhoods, the Making Room Housing Program will be a key building block of the city-wide plan. The program will engage residents across the city on what they want to make room for in neighbourhoods and will involve a year-long process to create a framework for change. The integration and alignment of Making Room and other planning programs such as the Broadway Plan and the Employment Lands and Economy Review will continue over the next few months as part of the scoping of the city-wide plan.

CONCLUSION

This report recommends that Council rescind the previous motion on the proposed amendments to the RT-7, RT-8 and RT-10/RT-10N zones. Rather than advancing amendments in limited RT zoned areas where housing choice already exists, this report recommends focussing resources on the Making Room Housing Program and taking a city-wide engagement approach to create a future framework that will guide change and increase housing diversity in neighbourhoods across the city.

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