



# City of Vancouver *Land Use and Development Policies and Guidelines*

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

453 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4 | tel: 3-1-1, outside Vancouver 604.873.7000 | fax: 604.873.7100  
website: vancouver.ca | email: [planning@vancouver.ca](mailto:planning@vancouver.ca) | app: VanConnect

## **RT-4, RT-4A, RT-4N, RT-4AN, RT-5, RT-5N and RT-6 GUIDELINES**

*Adopted by City Council on April 10, 1984*

*Amended June 21 and November 27, 1984, October 20 and December 15, 1987, April 12 and October 25, 1988, July 25, 1989, July 24, 1990, February 4, 1992, May 17, 1994, May 6, 1997, January 20, 1998, April 11, 2017, January 16, July 17, 2018 and July xx, 2020*



(Page left blank for double-sided printing purposes)

# Contents

|          | Page  |
|----------|---|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Application and Intent ..... 1</b>   |
| <b>2</b> | <b>General..... 1</b>   |
| 2.1      | Character House Criteria ..... 1  |
| 2.2      | Level of Character House Retention Required ..... 2   |
| 2.3      | Additions ..... 2   |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Site Design and Tree Retention..... 3</b>  |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Uses ..... 3</b>   |
| 4.1      | Multiple Conversion Dwelling ..... 3  |
| 4.2      | Infill ..... 3  |
| 4.3      | Infill Location ..... 3   |
| 4.3.1    | Floor Space Ratio (FSR)..... 4  |
| 4.3.2    | Yards, Separation and Building Width..... 4   |
| 4.3.3    | Height ..... 4  |
| 4.4      | Multiple Dwellings ..... 6  |
| 4.4.1    | Roof Form..... 6  |
| 4.4.2    | Unit Identity..... 6  |
| 4.4.3    | Massing..... 7  |
| 4.4.4    | Streetscape and Scale..... 7  |
| 4.4.5    | Materials ..... 7   |
| 4.4.6    | Outdoor Spaces..... 7   |
| 4.5      | More than One New Principal Building in RT-5, RT-5N and RT-6..... 8   |
| <b>5</b> | <b>RT-6 (West Mount Pleasant) ..... 9</b>   |
| 5.1      | Neighbourhood Character..... 9  |
| 5.2      | Street Character ..... 9  |
| 5.3      | Architectural Components..... 10  |
| 5.3.1    | Roofs..... 10   |
| 5.3.2    | Windows ..... 10  |
| 5.3.3    | Entrances, Stairs, and Porches ..... 11   |
| 5.3.4    | Exterior Walls and Finishing ..... 11   |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Guidelines Pertaining to Relaxations of Regulations of the Zoning and<br/>Development By-law..... 11</b> |
| 6.1      | Site Area ..... 11  |
| 6.2      | Height ..... 12   |
| 6.3      | Yards ..... 12  |
| 6.4      | Site Coverage..... 12   |
| 6.5      | Building Depth ..... 12   |
| 6.6      | External Design ..... 12  |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Basements..... 12</b>  |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Quality, Durability and Expression ..... 13</b>  |

|                         |  |           |
|-------------------------|--|-----------|
| <b>9</b>                | <b>Entrances and Access to Dwelling Units .....</b>                | <b>13</b> |
| 9.1                     | Multiple Conversion Dwelling .....                                 | 13        |
| 9.2                     | Infill .....   | 13        |
| <b>10</b>               | <b>Dwelling Unit Density in RT-4, RT-4A, RT-4N and RT-4AN.....</b> | <b>13</b> |
| <b>11</b>               | <b>Parking.....</b>  | <b>13</b> |
| <b>12</b>               | <b>Landscape .....</b>   | <b>14</b> |
| 12.1                    | Street Frontage.....   | 14        |
| 12.2                    | Tree Protection, Retention and Replacement.....                    | 14        |
| 12.3                    | Useable Open Space and Circulation .....                           | 14        |
| 12.4                    | Lane Frontage .....  | 14        |
| 12.5                    | Garbage and Recycling.....   | 14        |
| <b>Appendix A .....</b> | <b>.....</b>   | <b>15</b> |
| <b>Appendix B .....</b> | <b>.....</b>   | <b>17</b> |

(Page left blank for double-sided printing purposes)

## 1 Application and Intent

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the RT-4, RT-4A, RT-4N, RT-4AN, RT-5, RT-5N, or RT-6 District Schedules of the **Zoning and Development By-law** and pertain to the approval of conditional floor area for additions to a character house, the approval of the conditional uses of Infill and Multiple Conversion Dwelling, and the approval of certain development relaxations, when associated with the retention of a qualifying character house. These guidelines also pertain to the approval of the conditional uses of Multiple Dwelling and One-Family Dwelling or One-Family Dwelling with Secondary Suite on a site with more than one principal building in RT-5, RT-5N and RT-6.

The intent of the guidelines is to ensure that:

- (a) renovations, alterations and additions to existing character houses maintain a form and character sensitive to the design of the original house;
- (b) infill and conversion developments are respectful of the design of adjacent properties and provide a good fit with the overall neighbourhood;
- (c) new development is sympathetic to the scale and form of character homes and provides a good fit within the overall neighbourhood; and
- (d) site design considers and respects existing amenities, including trees and mature landscape.

The guidelines will be used to:

- (a) assist owners and applicants in designing developments; and,
- (b) provide a basis on which City staff evaluate projects for approval of conditional floor area, conditional uses, and discretionary variations in regulations. They may also be helpful in designing developments involving outright approval.

Application of these guidelines in RT-4 and RT-4N districts in the Vanness Avenue and Boundary road area will be applied with respect to additions to multiple conversion dwellings and infill. The RT-6 zoning encourages the retention of larger character buildings and the redevelopment of other sites which contain non-character buildings. Consequently, more emphasis is placed on architectural design through regulations contained in the zoning district schedule.

Although the general policy direction in these areas is to emphasize retention by providing incentives for developments which keep existing buildings, the RT-5, RT-5N, and RT-6 Schedules permit multiple dwellings subject to certain conditions.

## 2 General

### 2.1 Character House Criteria

A Character House is a building, typically a one- or two-family dwelling constructed prior to January 1, 1940, that meets the following character merit criteria as established by the Director of Planning. An assessment is required to determine if a house is considered to have character merit and a candidate for discretionary incentives in zoning, including Infill or Multiple Conversion Dwelling, and development relaxations.

The following are the minimum requirements for character merit of pre-1940 houses:

#### A. **Must have:**

- (i) *Original massing and primary roof form* - Alterations/additions that are subsidiary to the original massing and primary roof form, such as dormers, are not considered to have altered the character of the house.

#### B. **Plus any four of the following:**

- (i) *Entry* - Original open front porch or verandah, or only partially filled in, or other original entry feature.
- (ii) *Cladding* - Original cladding or replacement cladding consistent with pre-1940.
- (iii) *Window Openings* - Original location, size and shape (50% or more). The windows themselves may not be original.

- (iv) *Period Details* - Two or more period details such as fascia, window casing or trim, eave brackets, soffits, exposed beam or joist ends, half-timbering, decorative shingling, porch columns, original wood doors, entry transom/sidelights, decorative or feature windows (special shapes, bay windows, crafted/leaded glass), brick or stone chimneys, piers or foundations, secondary porch, turrets, etc.
- (v) *Streetscape Context* - The house is part of a context of 2 or more character houses (including the subject house). In assessing the streetscape, at least 2 houses on either side of the subject house should be included.

Pre-1940s buildings which have been too altered to qualify as character houses may be considered for infill and/or conversion if character elements are restored as part of a development proposal.

In special cases, a house built in or after 1940 that has particular architectural merit and retains original and distinctive character features may be considered a character house. In these cases, retention incentives in zoning, including infill and/or conversion, may be supported on a case by case basis at the discretion of the Director of Planning.

## 2.2 Level of Character House Retention Required

To be considered for incentives, including conditional floor area, infill or conversion, the existing character house must be retained and restored in-keeping with its original character as viewed from the street. At the pre-application stage, an assessment of the existing condition of the house will be undertaken by Planning staff to inform the amount of restoration required. This may include restoration of character elements such as traditional window styles or opening up of entry porches that have been enclosed. Minimum expectations regarding the level of structural retention required in a character house undergoing major renovations and seeking conditional benefits in zoning are outlined in the Zoning By-Law Administrative Bulletin: *Retention and Renovation of Character Merit Buildings – Scope and Documentation* (<http://bylaws.vancouver.ca/bulletin/R021.pdf>).

## 2.3 Additions

Additions should appear secondary in visual prominence to the retained character house, as seen from the street. In general, additions should be located at the rear. Additions may occur at the side, noting that side additions should be set back from the line of the front façade in order to create a clear distinction between old and new. Additions to the existing front façade are not desirable.

Figure 1: Addition set back from front façade



Additions are not required to replicate the period or style of the original building. However, a high degree of design sensitivity should be brought to additions seeking an architectural expression distinct from the original building.

Additions should be subordinate to the original house form and massing. Very large additions may be seen to ‘overwhelm’ the original house and compromise its character value. Therefore,

the maximum floor space ratio may not be fully achievable through addition when the existing character house is quite small. In those cases, infill may be a more suitable approach.

Flexibility is provided with regards to the building depth for additions (Section 6.5) noting that additions should be responsive to the configuration of neighbouring buildings and open space. The best massing solution may vary, depending on the particulars of the existing character house and adjacent buildings.

### **3 Site Design and Tree Retention**

Existing trees and mature landscape are an important aspect of many character house sites, contributing to the character and amenity of the site and neighbourhood. Tree retention strategies should be explored at an early stage in the site design. Character house projects and associated infill, laneway houses or garages should be located and designed to preserve existing trees, where possible. Existing landscape features (such as stone walls) should also be retained, where possible. To retain significant trees, the Director of Planning may relax the regulations regarding the siting of buildings, and the required number of parking stalls. Alternately, some sites may not be considered suitable for infill if significant tree removal is required. Utility connections and new landscape work such as driveways, walkways, patios, privacy fences and intensive plantings should be located to avoid disturbance of tree protection zones. Generally, site grading should respect the existing topography and provide compatibility with adjacent sites.

### **4 Uses**

(Note: The additional guidelines in Section 4 apply only to infill, multiple conversion dwellings, multiple dwellings, and more than one principal building in RT 5, RT-5N and RT-6).

#### **4.1 Multiple Conversion Dwelling**

Multiple Conversion Dwelling is the conversion of an existing character house to contain more than one dwelling unit.

In considering development permit applications for multiple conversion dwellings, the following factors will be taken into account:

- (a) quality and livability of the resulting units;
- (b) suitability of the building for conversion in terms of age and size;
- (c) effect of the conversion on adjacent properties; and
- (d) effect of the conversion on the form and character of the existing house.

Additions may be permitted in accordance with these guidelines.

#### **4.2 Infill**

Infill may be permitted as an incentive to retain an existing character house by allowing the construction of a second residential building, typically in the rear yard on sites with a developed lane.

In general, infill buildings should be subordinate to the existing character house, and respectful of adjacent properties. The following guidelines are intended to ensure a modest, neighbourly scale for infill buildings. Numerical values are not intended to be prescriptive, but to provide appropriate benchmarks to assist with the evaluation of proposed designs.

#### **4.3 Infill Location**

Infill will typically be located in the rear yard of sites with a developed lane.

On large sites where there is no lane access, a rear yard infill may be considered, provided there is a consistent pattern on the block of vehicular access from the street and new driveways can be located to avoid existing trees.



Front or side yard infill buildings may be considered on large sites where doing so would not unduly detract from the character and pattern of development of the neighbourhood.

Relocation of a character house may be considered to provide an access path to the infill building, or required separation between the buildings, with due regard to the zoning regulations for yards, and provided significant features such as stone foundations and pillars can be retained and existing trees preserved, where possible.

#### 4.3.1 Floor Space Ratio (FSR)

The infill should not exceed 0.25 FSR.

#### 4.3.2 Yards, Separation and Building Width

The minimum side yard should be 1.0 m (3.3 feet).

The minimum rear yard setback should be 0.9 m (3 feet).

The minimum separation between the existing character house and the infill building should be 4.9 metres (16 feet) to provide sufficient open space on site and in relation to neighbouring sites.

The maximum width of rear yard infill and accessory buildings should not exceed 80 percent of site width.

#### 4.3.3 Height

Infill height is limited to one and a partial upper storey. Designs that approach the appearance or impact of a full two-storey expression should be avoided.

The permitted height will be related to the proposed roof form as follows:

##### (a) Pitched roofs

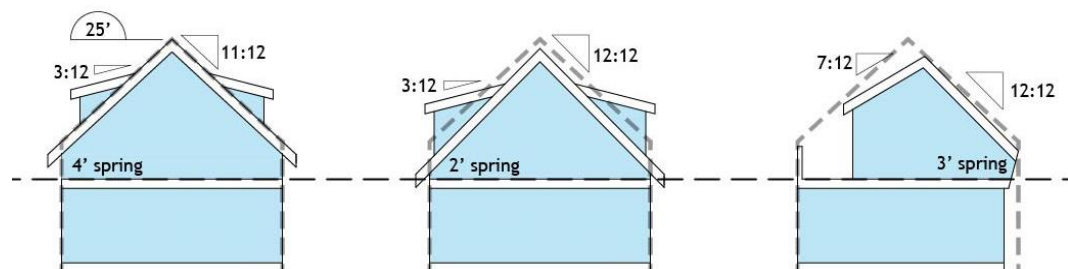
The partial upper storey should be contained within a simple, steeply pitched primary roof form of a minimum pitch of 7:12, although secondary roof forms may be provided as outlined below (Dormers).

The height is limited to 7.7 m (25 feet) to the ridge of a roof with a minimum pitch of 7:12.

The spring height for the primary roof should be no more than 1.2 m (4 feet) above the 2nd floor level.

A lower spring height may be suitable for some roof designs to facilitate the provision of windows at a standard sill height.

**Figure 2: Height and partial second storey for pitched roofs 7:12 or greater**



**(b) Dormers**

Dormer roof slopes should generally not be less than 3:12.

Dormer walls should be set in a minimum of two feet from the wall below and from adjacent walls (end gables) where possible.

The eave height of dormer roofs should be as low as practical to reduce the perceived scale of the partial upper storey.

On a roof where the ridge runs across the property:

- The largest dormer(s) should face the lane, and should not exceed 75% of the width of the partial upper storey.
- Dormers facing the character house should not exceed 50% of the width of the partial upper storey.

On a roof with gable ends facing the lane:

- Dormers facing a required side-yard should not exceed 60% of the building length.

**(c) Flat roofs, shed roofs and roof pitches less than 7:12**

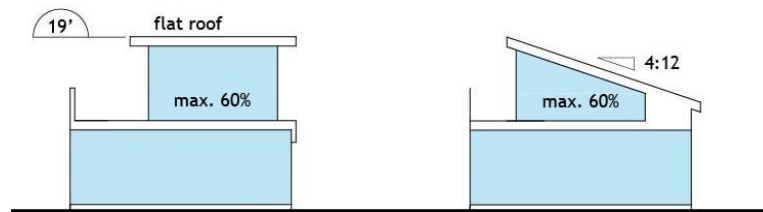
For flat, shed, or shallow pitched roofs, more design care is necessary to minimize the appearance of a two-storey building.

The floor area of the partial second storey should be approximately 60 percent of the floor area of the first storey, with setbacks to reduce its prominence.

The maximum overall height should not exceed 5.8 metres (19 feet).

Increases in height may be considered due to topography, or to assist in the provision of required assemblies for a green roof. Increases in height may also be considered to accommodate discrete clerestory elements above the primary roof line, noting such elements improve livability, daylighting and ventilation, and add architectural interest through variation in the roof profile.

**Figure 3: Height and partial second storey for roofs less than 7:12**



**(d) Solar Panels**

Solar Panels are excluded from height in accordance with the Planning Administration Bulletin: Solar Hot Water and Photovoltaic Panels – Installation Guidelines for Residential Zones.

**(e) Green Roofs**

Green roofs on infill buildings are encouraged to improve environmental performance and to provide an amenable outlook from upper levels of neighbouring houses.

**(f) Balconies and Decks**

Balconies and decks should be in-keeping with the roof design. Balconies may be located at the partial second storey of the infill building and should face the lane, or a flanking street at corner sites. Balconies or decks facing the interior of the site, or roof decks above the partial second storey, are not permitted for infill buildings

## 4.4 Multiple Dwellings

Multiple dwelling proposals which comply with the RT-5, RT-5N and RT-6 District Schedules and having a minimum lot size of 511m<sup>2</sup> may be considered. Corner lots present a unique design opportunity and sites which are less than 511m<sup>2</sup> but have adequate lot size to yield 3 units on a 74 units per hectare basis (minimum of 405 m<sup>2</sup>) can be considered for a triplex.

In considering development permit applications for multiple dwellings, the following factors will be taken into account:

### 4.4.1 Roof Form

Most of the original housing forms in Vancouver have pitched roofs with eaves that descend far enough to fully or partially envelop the top floor. Bringing the eaves closer to grade reduces the apparent mass of a building as viewed from the street and can assist with a compatible transition to smaller existing homes on the street. Further, a substantial pitch is excellent for shedding rainwater and decreases shadowing onto neighbouring properties.

- (a) The use of a pitched roof form is encouraged for both traditional and contemporary style buildings. If a flat roof design is chosen it should perform as well as a pitched roof form with regard to shadowing by setting back the top storey, preferably from the front and rear of the building. Overlook to neighbouring yards from roof decks must be minimized.
- (b) The maximum allowable roof height as defined in the regulations may only be attained as a local point within the development rather than as a continuous height around the perimeter of the building.
- (c) In buildings where additional floor area is located in a partial third storey the floor area will be substantially contained within a steeply pitched roof. The main roof should spring from the upper floor level.
- (d) Secondary roof forms and dormers should be clearly subordinate to the main form in size and number. If a secondary roof or gable interrupts the eave line of the main roof, it should do so to mark or cover a significant element such as an entry, a porch, or a substantial projection. Smaller secondary roof elements and dormers may vary from the pitch of the main roof and may include flat roofs and shallow pitches.

### 4.4.2 Unit Identity

Doors and Entrances should be designed with the following considerations:

- (a) Whenever possible each principal dwelling unit should have one clearly expressed entrance facing the street. Other doors may be located on the front façade as long as clarity is maintained with respect to which is the main entrance. These secondary doors may include french doors and sliding glass doors.
- (b) The number of unit entries located side by side should be limited to two.
- (c) Where entries to units are not clearly visible from a street (e.g. units at the rear of the site, secondary suites or lock-off units), the presence and location should be announced through architectural or landscape gateway elements.
- (e) When a main entrance to a dwelling unit is from a side yard, a larger side yard setback should be considered for the portion of travel between the front property line and the front entrance. This would enable space for a sense of arrival as well as the opportunity for some landscape edge planting.
- (e) Most developments will include entries for more than two dwelling units. Care must be taken to create clear paths and identities for each unit, including secondary suites and lock-off units to assist with wayfinding.
- (f) The lane will become a focus of development, and in effect, an exposure that is as important as the streetscape. The lanescape should be visually interesting, while at the same time accommodating parking, garbage and recycling areas.

#### **4.4.3 Massing**

Building forms should begin as a simple mass, with a clear, simple roof. The integrity and simplicity of the main building forms should be legible from the street and from the lane. The scale and form of new buildings is an important part of compatibility with an existing streetscape. In addition to roof design, discussed above, other massing and design aspects including floor to floor heights, horizontal elements, changes in material, and the proportion and placement of openings, should seek to modulate the scale of new development, to assist with a compatible fit in the streetscape.

#### **4.4.4 Streetscape and Scale**

The design of multiple dwellings must respect the streetscape, height of adjoining buildings and the rhythm of buildings along the street.

#### **4.4.5 Materials**

The finish materials of new development should be durable. High-quality materials that last longer are more sustainable and create less waste. Materials that perform well over a long period of time also increase the overall affordability of a dwelling. In addition to durability, the following should be considered when choosing exterior materials:

- (a) Use materials in a way that is true to their nature. For example, stone facing has traditionally been used as a foundation element, and as the base of columns, as its size and weight indicate a means of support.
- (b) Changes in cladding should relate to the building design, such as to express the base or foundation of the building. Transitions between materials require careful detailing to ensure durability.
- (c) In general, the same materials should be used in consistent proportions on all facades and not just on the street face. Materials should carry around corners and terminate at logical points to avoid appearing as a thin veneer or ‘false front’.
- (d) All sides of a building that extend forward of an adjacent building warrant detailed treatment appropriate to a visible location.
- (e) Large blank walls, including interior sidewalls, should be avoided whenever possible. Window openings, detailing, materials, colour, wall articulation and landscaping should be used to enliven them and reduce their scale.
- (f) Materials and detailing adjacent to areas accessible to cars should be designed with resilience and durability to stand up well over time.

#### **4.4.6 Outdoor Spaces**

Ground-orientation is an important aspect of the housing types contemplated under this zoning.

- (a) A private outdoor space should be provided immediately adjacent to and accessible from each unit;
- (b) Balconies, decks and porches with a minimum depth of 1.8 m (6 ft.) may augment, or substitute where semi-private open space is provided on site;
- (c) Small units need not be provided with private open space if access is available to a shared open space; and
- (d) Units that could accommodate families (2-bedroom and larger) should provide open space suitable for children.
- (e) Semi-private open space should be designed:
  - (i) as a focus of development and an organizing element, not as ‘leftover’ space;
  - (ii) as a primary outlook and entrance for units in the middle and rear sections of a site
  - (iii) to provide sufficient distance, screening, landscape, and outlook considerations for the mutual comfort of dwellings overlooking the space.

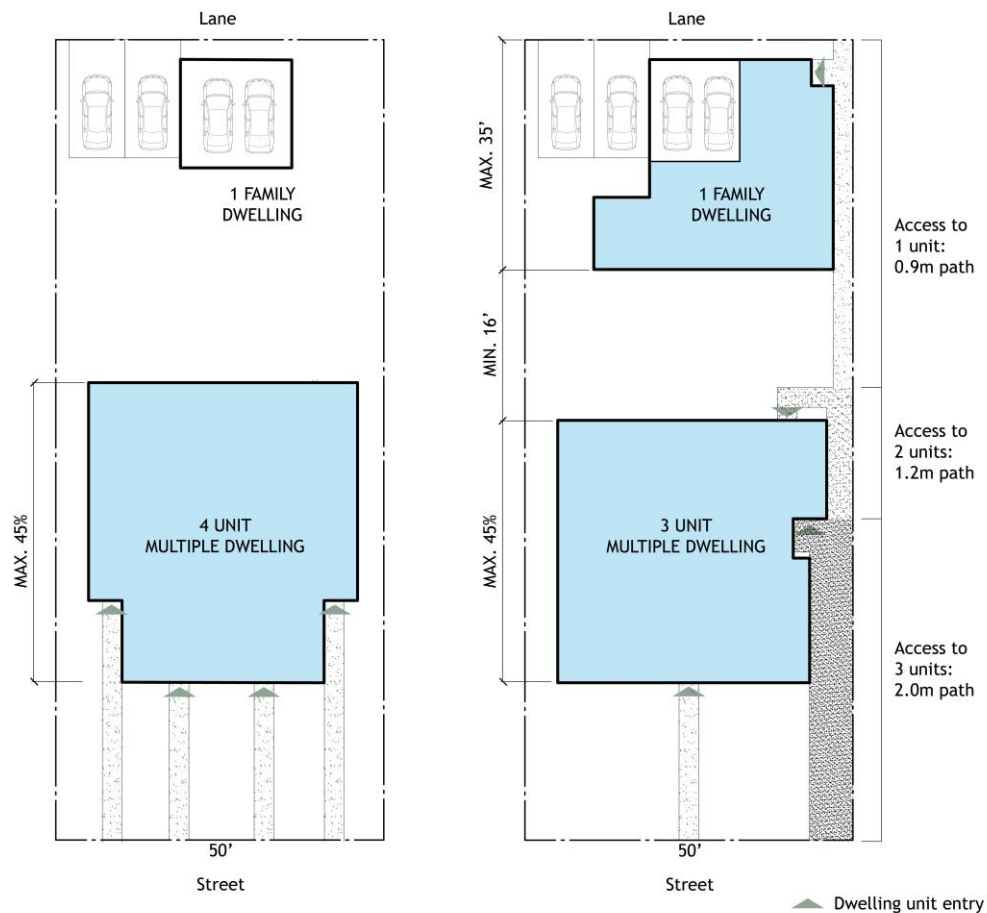
#### 4.5 More than One New Principal Building in RT-5, RT-5N and RT-6

The RT-5, RT-5N and RT-6 District Schedules permit more than one principal building on a site. This provision will allow for the consideration of a number of housing combinations and will allow the design of multiple dwellings to be designed to respect the streetscape scale, height of adjoining buildings and rhythm of buildings along the street.

In designing projects involving total redevelopment of a site and proposing more than one principal building on a site, applicants should consult sections of these guidelines relating to multiple dwellings and infill. The same criteria with respect to sites where more than one new building may be created will apply. The infill guidelines provide direction with respect to the relationship which must be established between principal buildings, dependent on their location on the site.

On smaller lots, this provision allows applicants to propose development involving two new buildings: a one-family dwelling or one-family dwelling with secondary suite at the front of the site, and a one-family dwelling at the rear of the site. The new houses are intended to be compatible in building scale and placement with existing historic buildings and infill patterns of development, particularly where a single new principal building would overwhelm an existing streetscape.

**Figure 4: Example of 4-unit multiple dwelling vs. the 3-unit multiple dwelling with 1-family dwelling**



On larger lots in the RT-5 and RT-5N Districts, this provision allows applicants to propose development involving two or more new buildings, particularly where a single new building would overwhelm an existing streetscape, where the lot is an irregular shape (i.e., narrow and deep) or where the smaller scale of multiple buildings is preferred to a single multiple dwelling building. In the RT-6 District, multiple dwelling proposals on larger sites must be broken into individual buildings, rather than one single building.

## **5 RT-6 (West Mount Pleasant)**

### **5.1 Neighbourhood Character**

One area has particular character merit in that its original development is of especially high quality with minimal intrusion by unsympathetic new development. Some development in this area, notably renovations and restorations, has been outstanding in quality. This area is referred to as West Mount Pleasant.

The most important principle in this area is to have development blend in with (but not necessarily mimic) the existing context. The designer should work with what is, in the majority of cases, a fairly disciplined street rhythm using primarily traditional architectural forms. The use of these traditional forms does not preclude innovation and original design solutions. A more subtle approach to individual expression is called for in order to minimize the introduction of conflicting elements into the neighbourhood.

This area contains a majority of fine old homes many predating World War I. These structures are located on large well-maintained lots framed by mature street trees. Infill is the preferred development option.

The RT-6 zoning was introduced to reinforce the building pattern of West Mount Pleasant, which has retained much of the integrity and consistency of the character of the city's first suburb. The area includes a number of clusters and consistent streetscapes containing fine Queen Anne homes of the 1890s as well as Edwardian Builder, Craftsman and Colonial Revival houses from the development boom of 1910-1913 (see Appendix A for a description of architectural styles existing in the area). In addition are a number of large and elaborate houses built on corner lots which are reminders of the area's earlier prestige as a residential locality. The heritage character is enhanced by streets lined with mature trees. Among many renovations and conversions are a number of outstanding restorations.

Within the general area of West Mount Pleasant, 12th Avenue provides a dividing line between the area to the north where considerable renovation and rehabilitation has been undertaken and the area to the south where more new development has taken place. The integrity of architecture and streetscapes has been weakened over several decades. These guidelines place emphasis, for the West Mount Pleasant RT-6 area, on both existing buildings and new development, with a clear intent to allow redevelopment of sites with existing buildings which do not have character merit.

Several architectural styles exist in the RT-6 West Mount Pleasant area. The descriptions, contained in Appendix A, are intended to provide applicants with a general idea of the principal elements which make up each style - basic building form, roof design, entrance-way emphasis, windows and materials and details. Applicants are advised to examine buildings in the area. It is not the intent to require new construction to copy these styles exactly, but more to follow the general components.

### **5.2 Street Character**

The basic premise of this component of physical character is that an individual building is seen first as part of a streetscape. Certain patterns comprising the streetscape generally exist which should be respected by new development.

Massing as it relates to the streetscape of the areas in question is primarily a function of building proportions and spacing between buildings. A variety of building proportions exist in these areas.

On most individual blocks where the subdivision pattern is uniform, a consistent building massing can be found, interrupted usually where post World War II development has taken place. The most dominant element from the streetscape point of view, no matter what the massing, is the expression of the single house on its own separate lot.

Where a pattern of massing and spacing has been established on a block or in the sequence of buildings on either side of the subject site, the proportions and spacing of development should

maintain that pattern. Development should reinforce the rhythm created by the individual house standing on its own lot.

### **5.3 Architectural Components**

(Note: The additional guidelines in Section 5.3 apply only to multiple conversion dwellings in RT-6).

The incorporation of projections and recesses (in the form of bays, dormers, turrets, room projections, porches, entry porticos and recessed balconies) to the basic geometric envelope of buildings creates visual interest and a strong play of light and shadow on their facades. This variety of projections and recesses, solid and void is what gives these facades their three-dimensionality and their depth, and it is this element which, to a great extent, makes the subject areas architecturally distinctive. The apparent complexity of these character houses is a result of the ordered and logical placement of these elements. The positions and alignments of these projections and recesses have an inescapable balance to them, if not always a symmetry.

In the conversion of a character house, it is important to maintain the same balance of solid to void as on the existing facade. For example, “flattening” the facade by filling in porches and recessed balconies should be avoided. Similarly, pulling forward a set back portion of a facade to align it with a projecting portion is also inappropriate. Adding a volume which is not compatible with the facade or an exterior staircase to the second floor on the street facade is also to be avoided.

If the existing building has questionable character merit or if it has been insensitively modified so that its character has been compromised, an attempt should be made to improve the character aspects of the building by incorporating the elements described above or restoring the elements that have been compromised through previous alterations.

The opportunity should be taken on corner sites to introduce projections and recesses on both street facades. Turrets, wrap-around verandahs or other architectural features that “turn the corner” add visual interest to these prominent sites.

#### **5.3.1 Roofs**

The steeply sloped roof is used exclusively on character buildings in the subject areas. The most common roof style is the gable, typically incorporating dormers. Hipped roofs are the next most common roof shape. Frequently a hipped dormer will spring from the ridge of such a roof. Typically, the roof “cap” of the building is the most dominant single architectural component apparent from the street.

Secondary roof elements over porches and verandahs, projecting rooms and wings, bay windows, entries, etc. are a characteristic phenomenon and contribute to the general complexity which is added on to initially simple straightforward volumes that constitute the typical house found in these areas.

Development should incorporate characteristic roof forms. All roofs should be sloped with a minimum pitch of 9 on 12. Large unbroken sloped roof areas should not face the street. A gable roof theme with gable facing the street has been noted to be the most successful solution in new construction. A specific and characteristic roof style should be chosen to cover the main body of the building and this roof should be a dominant or principal component as seen from the street. On corner sites, roofs should be designed to acknowledge both streets. Secondary roof elements are encouraged and should be compatible with the principal roof. Additions and renovations to character buildings should retain the shape of the principal roof. Added volumes (such as dormers) should be compatible in shape with main roof.

#### **5.3.2 Windows**

Characteristic houses have a solid, substantial appearance partly as a result of the limited amount of window area. Even in wrap-around bay windows, the heavy window frame and casing details give the impression of solidness. Window arrangement in original development is quite straight-forward with a simple rectangular opening usually centred on the wall area in which it is situated. The geometric pattern achieves a balance if not a symmetry.

Multiple Conversion Dwellings should respect existing solid wall-to-window area ratios and orderly window geometry. It is important to maintain the feeling of solidness that exists in characteristic houses. Views should be maximized through strategic window placement rather than wholesale use of glass. Careful window detailing and arrangement can increase the feeling of facade solidness. This issue is less critical for facades that do not face the street.

### **5.3.3 Entrances, Stairs, and Porches**

#### **(a) Entrances**

No more than two entry doors should be placed side-by-side to avoid a barracks-like appearance. When more than two suite entries are located in close proximity, it may be preferable to have a single highly-articulated principal entry into a common lobby.

#### **(b) Porches**

Entry porches and verandahs are characteristic of houses in the subject areas. Physically, they form a void or negative space at the lower portion of the building which gives a comfortable balance to the individual facade as well as a distinctive repetitive form to the street.

The filling in of porches is strongly discouraged. Porches are encouraged in new construction.

### **5.3.4 Exterior Walls and Finishing**

#### **(a) Detailing**

Original development is characterized by robust detailing and ornamentation. This includes large roof overhangs accentuated by wide barge boards often supported on heavy wood brackets, wide wood window frames and casings, oversize square or round columns supporting porch or portico roofs, expressed main beams (supporting projections or porch roofs, or over recessed balconies), and decorative balustrades.

In modifying character buildings, no loss of detailing should occur. This particularly applies in a Special Character Merit Area.

#### **(b) Materials**

The predominant exterior material in these areas is horizontal wood siding in 70 or 100 mm (3 or 4 inch) width in shiplap or clapboard. Wood shingle siding is also typical. Trowelled stucco with a uniform texture is a more recent material and in character buildings has been employed as a background field for the robust detailing described in Section 5.3.1. Roofs are wood shingles or shakes or asphalt shingles. The horizontal layering of houses into basement, main body or “piano nobile” and attic is sometimes emphasized by the juxtaposition of materials. Typically a heavily rusticated granite stone base supports a clapboard main body topped by a decorative shingled or Tudor half-timbered attic. Stone also appears at entry stairs and in retaining walls.

A fundamental aspect of the quality, detailing and arrangement of characteristic materials is that they have an intrinsic structural property and do not look “pasted on”. The materials have a thickness and authenticity to them and are never imitations or substitutes.

Multiple Conversion Dwellings should generally employ traditional materials. The use of the authentic materials listed above is encouraged.

## **6 Guidelines Pertaining to Relaxations of Regulations of the Zoning and Development By-law**

The Director of Planning may relax the regulations of the Zoning and Development By-Law when a character house is retained as per Section 5 of the applicable RT District Schedule. In cases where relaxation of a regulation is proposed to facilitate retention of a character house, the Director of Planning will also consider impact on adjacent properties. Further direction is given below.

### **6.1 Site Area**

Some RS zones limit infill development to large lots and/or in association with a caretaker unit. Those limitations are not applicable to infill in conjunction with retention of a character house.



## 6.2 Height

Additions may be permitted to match the existing height of a character house in order to better relate to the existing massing and roof form.

## 6.3 Yards

Additions may be permitted to match the existing yard setbacks of a character house in order to better relate to the existing massing, or floor plans, with due regard to the requirements of the Vancouver Building By law.

## 6.4 Site Coverage

Site coverage should be responsive to the nearby building massing and open space.

The site coverage should not exceed 45% of the site area.

The area of impermeable materials, including building coverage, should not exceed 70% of the total site area.

In certain cases, impermeable coverage may be increased a modest amount due to site constraints and provided rainwater management best practices are demonstrated. Refer to the *City of Vancouver Integrated Rainwater Management Plan, Best Management Practice Toolkit, Volume 2*.

## 6.5 Building Depth

Increases in the maximum building depth may be considered with percentage limits relative to the lot depth recommended, as follows:

- (a) For the cellar or basement, and first storey, a maximum building depth of 45% may be allowed;
- (b) For the second floor and above, a maximum building depth of 40% may be allowed;
- (c) In general, the building depth should not exceed 50 percent.
- (d) Greater percentage building depth than described in (a) to (c) above may be considered in cases of: retention of existing trees or mature landscape, buildings on sites with depth less than 30.5 m, or to allow additions to better relate to the existing house massing, or that of neighbouring houses.

Additions that project into rear yards beyond neighbouring houses should be designed to minimize massing and overlook impacts on adjacent properties. New windows and balconies or decks should be carefully positioned to ensure privacy, and portions of the addition that project beyond the permitted building depth may step down in height.

## 6.6 External Design

Renovation, addition and conversion of existing character houses are exempt from the external design regulations, noting such regulations may not be applicable to the variety of original character house designs.

## 7 Basements

It is encouraged to utilize existing basement space in order to manage above grade building massing and maintain an appropriate visual scale for additions. The conversion of existing basement floor space to crawl space or parking is strongly discouraged.

Some existing houses have basements with low headroom. To improve headroom, the existing basement slab may be lowered, or the house may be raised a modest amount, or a combination of both. Raising the house should not be considered where it will compromise existing character features, such as stone or brick foundations or pillars.

When raising the house, the main floor should not be located disproportionately high above grade, the original entry porch or entry feature should be kept at the main level and the lowest level should continue to read as a 'base'. To that end, the main floor should not be raised more than 0.45 m (18 inches), and should not be located more than 2 m (6.56 feet) above grade so that the basement will continue to conform to the requirements of the basement definition in the

Zoning and Development By-law. When the renovation project includes a new basement and foundations, digging deeper to obtain the needed headroom is preferred.

## **8 Quality, Durability and Expression**

Additions, conversion and infill projects should be designed to be lasting, quality additions to neighbourhoods. Material selection and detailing should ensure performance over time.

Infill should be designed to enhance the lane. In effect, the lane becomes the public space or 'street' on which infill, and laneway houses, may be located. The lane frontage should provide a residential character with a pleasant outlook for nearby residents and a visually interesting experience for passersby. Dwelling units should have an outlook to the lane on the lower level, where possible, and primary windows and decks facing the lane on upper levels.

A variety of architectural styles may be considered for infill development, so that neighbourhoods may continue to evolve in a way that respects the character of existing streetscapes.

## **9 Entrances and Access to Dwelling Units**

### **9.1 Multiple Conversion Dwelling**

The original front entrance to a character house should be maintained. Entries will be provided for each additional dwelling unit, and should be clearly identifiable and expressed as such, while maintaining the visual prominence of the original entry.

### **9.2 Infill**

Pedestrian access to the infill building will be from the street and along a path at the side of the existing character house. The path may also provide access to dwelling units located within the existing house. The width of the path is related to the number of units served by the path and must meet Vancouver Building By-law fire fighter access requirements, with current requirements noted as follows:

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Access to one dwelling unit:            | 0.90 m (3 feet) |
| Access to two dwelling units:           | 1.2 m (4 feet)  |
| Access to more than two dwelling units: | 2 m (6.56 feet) |

For the infill building, consideration should be given to locating an entry facing the lane to enhance the residential character of the lane and create a pedestrian-friendly environment, where feasible. Where an entry door is proposed on the lane, an inset entry porch area that provides a safe and welcoming place for people to stand should be provided.

For both conversion and infill, where entries to units are not clearly visible from a street (e.g. units at the rear of the site), their presence and location may be announced through architectural and landscape features.

## **10 Dwelling Unit Density in RT-4, RT-4A, RT-4N and RT-4AN**

The dwelling unit density in RT-4, RT-4A, RT-4N and RT-4AN should not exceed 62 units per hectare.

## **11 Parking**

For multiple conversion dwelling, no more than two parking spaces shall be enclosed. The number of garage doors directly facing the lane should be minimized.

For infill, the following is applicable:

On 33 foot wide lots, a maximum of two spaces may be provided: one internal and one external space, to facilitate infill designs with living space at the ground floor oriented to the lane.

On wider lots, a maximum of two parking spaces may be contained within an infill building and excluded from floor area.

Surface parking should have permeable paving. Surface parking should be screened where possible, and buffered by a landscape planting bed where adjacent to a property line. Parking space materials should be gravel, permeable pavers or wheel strips. Standard unit pavers are not considered as permeable.

## **12 Landscape**

The landscape design should enhance presentation to the street and the experience of the lane, improve the environmental performance of the property, provide sufficient outdoor amenity space for dwelling units on the site, and assist with the creation of privacy for the dwelling units on site and for neighbours.

### **12.1 Street Frontage**

Front yards should create friendly and visually open semi-public spaces.

### **12.2 Tree Protection, Retention and Replacement**

The Protection of Trees By-law applies to all trees on private property, and includes requirements for the retention and replacement of trees on the development site, protection of trees nearby on neighbouring sites and on City property. In accordance with the provisions of this by-law, applicants will be required to submit an arborist's report.

For sites which could accommodate additional trees, the Director of Planning may require trees to be planted on the development site in coordination with a Landscape Plan/Tree Plan.

### **12.3 Useable Open Space and Circulation**

Private, semi-private or shared outdoor areas should be provided at grade, adjacent to and convenient for each dwelling unit. Walkways should be sensitive to overlook onto private patios. Planting beds should screen common walkways using planting, rather than fencing, where possible. The amount of open space provided should be functional and should relate to the size of the dwelling unit. Where the rear yard is limited in size, a usable upper level deck with a minimum clear depth of 1.5 m (5.0 ft.) may meet the intent of the guidelines for private outdoor space.

### **12.4 Lane Frontage**

The 0.9 m (3.0 ft.) minimum setback between an infill building and the lane should be permeable and landscaped where not required for vehicle or pedestrian access. Planted areas that face the lane are intended to expand the public realm and should not be blocked from view by private fencing. Fencing, where desired, should be set back from the property line to enhance the prominence of the planting. Where possible, plants should be located at grade in contiguous soil, i.e. avoiding planter boxes. Planting should consist of woody, evergreen and hardy plant material for year-round presence and structure. Hose bibs should be located near lane edge planting. A 6" curb should be provided to protect planting beds at lane edge. Vehicular gates, including sliding types, are discouraged.

### **12.5 Garbage and Recycling**

Garbage and recycling should be provided onsite in a designated storage area that is accessible to all units on the lot and screened from outdoor amenity space and the lane frontage.

**Architectural Styles: West Mount Pleasant**

The following architectural styles are prevalent in the West Mount Pleasant area.

**Pioneer**

These are unassuming houses usually 1½ (but sometimes 2 or 2½) storeys high with a front gabled roof facing the street and containing the entrance door and perhaps a simple porch or verandah. A bay window may be situated beside the door or on the second floor, but the windows are usually plain. Proportions are tall and narrow. The houses are faced with shiplap or narrow clapboard siding, the latter becoming prevalent around 1900. Corner boards and window trim are usually plain 25 mm x 150 mm (1 x 6 inch) boards, and windows are double-hung with two or four panes in each sash. A shed-roofed kitchen is common at the rear. Basements are rare.

**Decorated Pioneer**

Houses of this kind are very similar to Pioneer houses, but are more ostentatious because of the addition of wood ornamentation at the gable ends, on porches, and for door and window detail. The fretwork - often called “gingerbread” — was created with the fret saw or the jig saw (also called a scroll saw). It was the development of carpentry and sawing techniques during the later years of the nineteenth century that made wooden decoration popular and affordable. Porch posts were turned with the lathe and chamfered. Decorated Pioneer buildings often use contrasting patterns of wood siding and shingles, and scalloped and lozenge-shaped shingles appear frequently.

**Pioneer Cottage**

The Pioneer Cottage is a small dwelling, usually one storey high on a raised roof, and sometimes having a dormer window illuminating a bedroom in the attic space. The cottages provided inexpensive, standardized housing for people of the working class. They were frequently built in groups, and intact clusters have a row of them closely sited along the street. More elaborate versions may have a porch with classical columns and eaves brackets, but simpler ones have little ornament. Some were marketed as prefabricated “ready-made” dwellings.

**Classic Box**

The Classic Box is a foursquare 2 or 2½ storey house covered by a hipped roof, often one of low pitch. The second storey is a full floor high, and if there is an attic floor, the roof is pierced by a dormer. Earlier versions are undecorated, like the Pioneer house. Later examples (after 1900) may have the ornamentation associated with the Decorated Pioneer, including bay windows and decorative window openings. Classical detail may also be found. Porches are common, and the bay windows may interrupt the simple lines of the hipped roof. The front door is usually located on one side of the facade.

**Classic Frame**

This is the most common Vancouver dwelling house for the middle class in the early years of the present century. It is a timber-frame building between 1½ and 2½ storeys high, with the gable end of the roof presented to the street. Facade features usually include a porch and one or more bay windows. The door is located to one side. Ornamental variety in the wood and shingle siding is common. The house is similar to the Pioneer and Decorated Pioneer, but it has broader proportions and more interior space. A number of Classic Frames often appear side by side along the street, usually with minor variants in window shape, porches and decorative detailing.

**Queen Anne**

Queen Anne buildings (most of them houses) are varied and decorative, with asymmetrical compositions, steeply pitched roofs, a dominant front-facing gable (often with central hipped roof), and numerous projecting features such as bay windows, turrets and verandahs. Textures and colours often run rampant: shingles, siding, fretwork, gingerbread, stained glass and other features, to produce a lively design.

### **Eastern Shingle**

The predominance of wood shingles as an exterior cladding characterizes this style — shingles always appear on the second storey, and often on the ground floor as well. The composition is likely more horizontal than vertical, with some restraint shown in decorative effects. In its eastern American prototypes, the style usually had complex massing, cross-gables or other complex roof forms, small windows often grouped in pairs, continuous shingles without corner boards, and broad verandahs. Vancouver versions may deviate less from the Classic Box or the Classic Frame, and some have a relatively simple front-facing gabled roof, but they nevertheless retain their distinctiveness because of their shingle finish.

### **Stick**

The stick style is a variant of previously described house forms - the simpler ones such as the Classic Frame and Classic Box and also the more complex Queen Anne - and is characterized by decorative “stick work” of 25 mm x 50 mm (1 x 2 inch) boards which are applied over the wood siding and shingles. Diagonal or curved eaves brackets and braces may also be present. Stick Style houses are vertical in their proportions, usually with a front-facing gable which may contain fretwork or decorative trusses, and which may project from a hipped or complex roof.

### **Bungalow or Craftsman**

The Bungalow and its variants dominated Vancouver domestic building in the years after 1910, supplanting the Classic Frame as the most popular house type. The features common to the many variants of Bungalows are low-pitched gabled roofs with broad overhangs, and the profuse use of wood detail: exposed rafters and beams, eaves brackets and braces, and textured wood clapboard or shingles. The most prevalent Bungalow type in Vancouver is an expansive house 1 or 1½ storeys high, with the gable facing the street and often having a smaller, secondary gable over the projecting entrance porch. The porch supports are usually short with sloping sides and their bases may be made of rough “clinker” bricks. The principal window beneath the main gable is often composed of three sashes.

### **Bungaloid**

The term Bungaloid describes buildings in which features characteristic of Bungalows are seen in houses too large or different in form from that style. The most common Bungaloid type in Vancouver is a 2½ storey house with a front-facing gable, too tall to be a Bungalow but sharing its profuse use of brackets, beam ends, stubby porch supports and other decorative wood features. Another version has side-facing gables, with dormers or other vertical features piercing the eaves.

### **Colonial Revival Style**

The Colonial Revival style housing involves the consistent use of decorative elements of classical origin. The typical example has a bell-cast or low-pitched hipped roof over 2 storeys on a symmetrical plan, with a full-width front porch. A central attic dormer and bay windows are further embellishments. Typical cladding is of a narrow, bevelled siding similar to American Colonial clapboard. Wood shingles are also common and are usually present on only one floor or in the gable end. The use of decorative shingles in fishscale, staggered or diagonal pattern is a holdover from the Queen Anne style. Decorative elements include eaves brackets, classical inspired mouldings and porch columns, multi-paned windows, and a round window or Palladian window.

# RT-5 & RT-6 Development Options illustrations

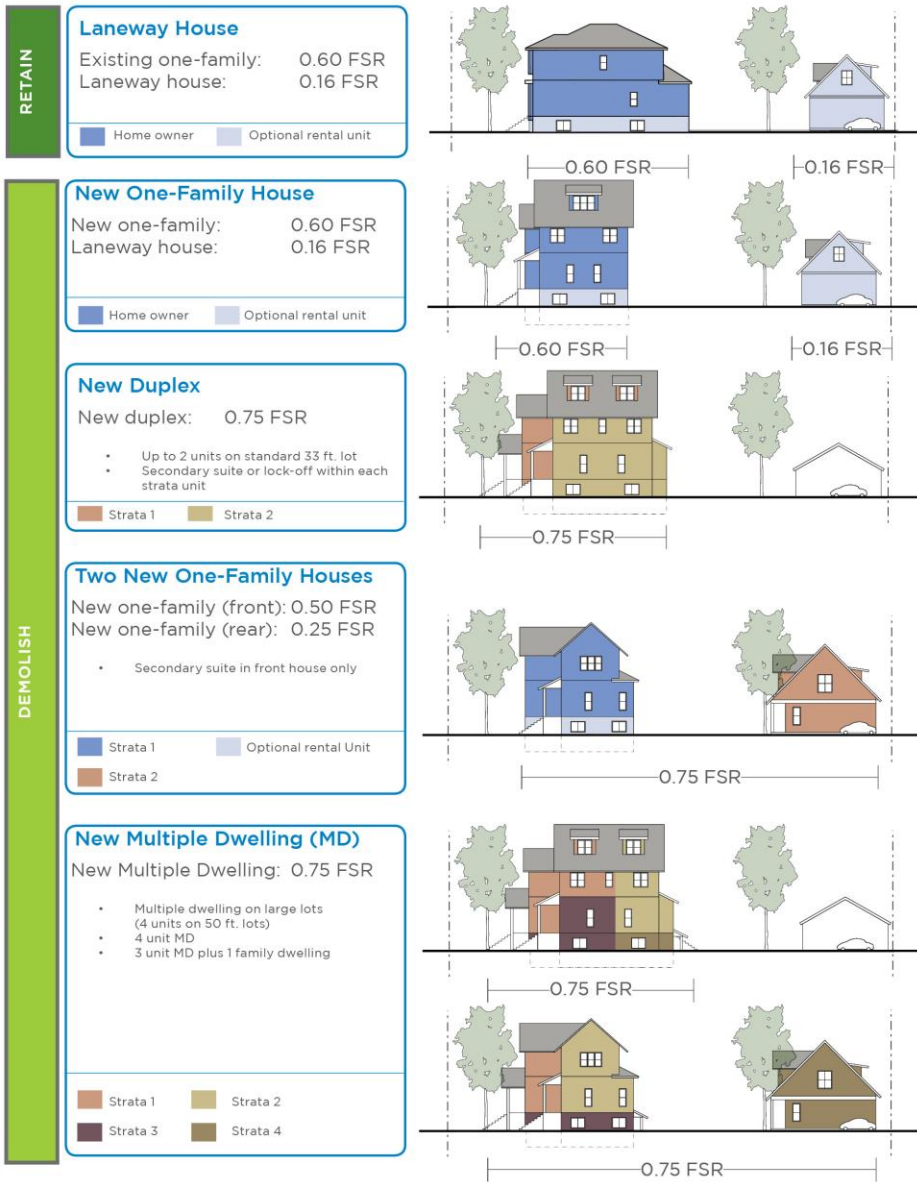




Character Evaluation using Character Merit Checklist

NO

Development Options



Sites Built to Less than 0.45 FSR

If an existing one-family house is small, it may be demolished and replaced with: