



# 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

# MICRO DWELLING POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

*Adopted by City Council on March 15, 2014  
Amended October 31, 2017 and XX, 2020*

## 1 Intent

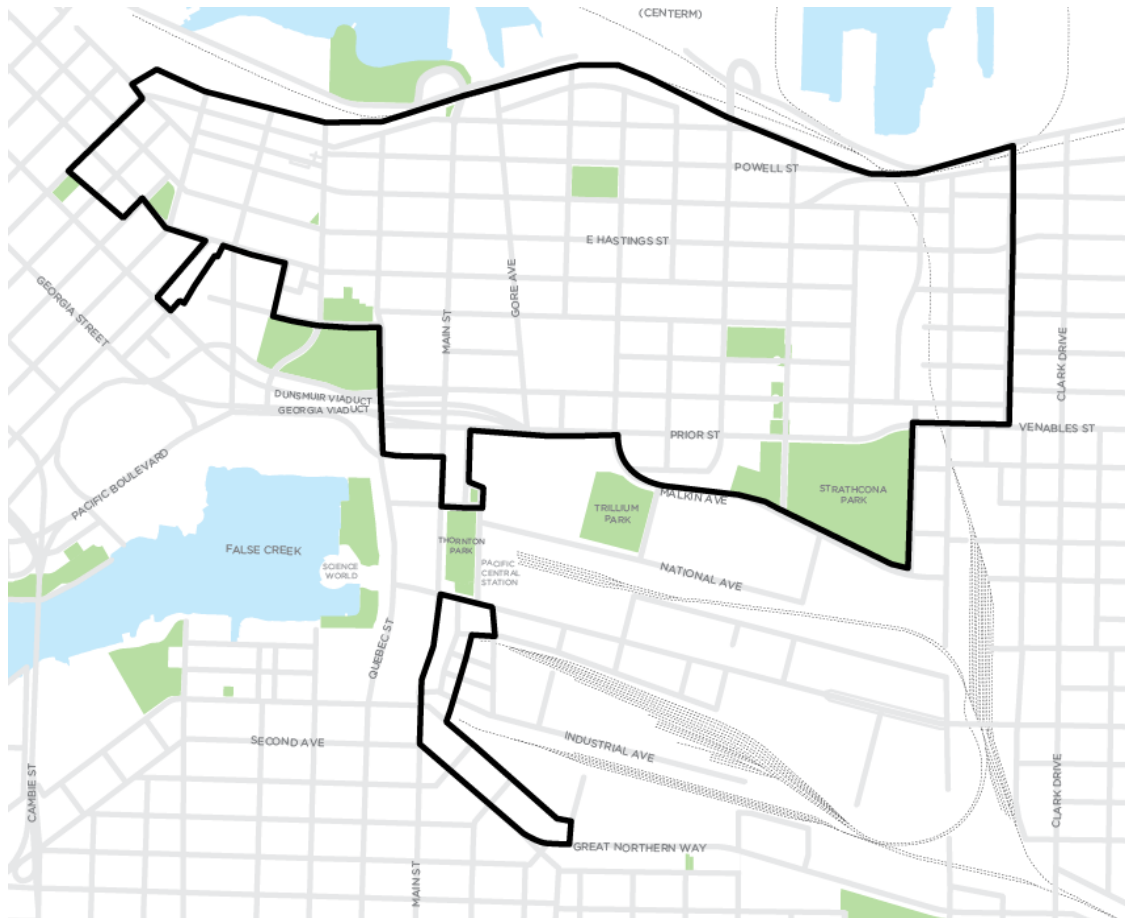
The intent of these guidelines is to encourage the creation of new livable, affordable micro dwelling rental units in the Downtown Eastside and the False Creek Flats areas. Micro dwellings will preferably be located in buildings with a variety of unit sizes and located in close proximity to open green space, commercial, and community and recreational facilities. The aim of these policies and guidelines are to provide flexibility to achieve the City's affordable housing objectives for replacement housing for low-income singles and affordable housing for moderate income renters in the Downtown Eastside, and for low-income singles and moderate income renters as outlined in the False Creek Flats Plan.

## 2 Application

These policies and guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the Zoning and Development By-law, the Downtown Official Development Plan (Victory Square or C2) or a CD-1 By-law, the Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District Official Development Plan (Victory Square), the HA-1 and HA-1A (Chinatown), HA-2 (Gastown), FC-1 (the area North of National Avenue), FC-2 (False Creek Flats), IC-3 and the Rezoning Policy for the Downtown Eastside which permit a Micro Dwelling Unit as illustrated in the map below. These policies and guidelines should be consulted in seeking approval for this conditional use.

The Micro Dwelling Unit policies and guidelines are only applicable for development permit applications and applicants should also refer to the Vancouver Building By-law and depending on type of rental, applicants should also refer to the Social Housing Design Guidelines and the Rental 100 program. Micro dwelling unit will be secured through a Housing Agreement which must be registered against the title of the property prior to issuance of the Development Permit. The covenant is to ensure that the units are secured as either non-market or market rental units for 60 years or the life of the building (or whichever is greater).

Micro Dwelling Units are new self-contained units (with private bathrooms and kitchens) which are smaller than 320 square feet and may be relaxed down to 250 square feet and are intended for single occupancy.



### 3 General Design Considerations

An application for a Micro Dwelling Unit is a conditional use and requires approval by the Director of Planning or Development Permit Board. In the consideration to allow this use, livability and affordability will be primary goals. These policies and guidelines delineate a set of principles for livability, which include light and ventilation, privacy, and amenity and outdoor space, as well as affordability.

#### 3.1 Light and Ventilation

Natural day light and well ventilated spaces are essential to occupant comfort and well-being. The provision of good day lighting and proper ventilation is an especially important design consideration for Micro Dwelling Units, due to their small size and limited window area. Maximum exposure to daylight and ventilation and fresh air for all small units is encouraged. The Horizontal Angle of Daylight provisions should be considered.

- (a) A minimum of two operable vents should be placed as far apart as possible, to facilitate good air flow.
- (b) Opportunities for higher ceilings (minimum of 9'6") and reflective light shelves that allow light further into the unit should be considered. When the principal living area, including the kitchen space, is more than 7.6 m deep, a strategy to provide natural light to the rear portion of the area must be demonstrated.
- (c) The provision for open residential balconies or decks should be considered.

### **3.2 Noise**

Good sound separation between units is a key aspect of livability.

- (a) The placement of balconies, windows and their operable vents and their adjacencies must be considered to minimize noise.
- (b) Where casement windows are used, the windows must open in opposite direction to each other to lessen sound transfer between units.

## **4 Guidelines Pertaining to Regulations**

### **4.1 Internal Design and Facilities**

#### 4.1.1 Living/Sleeping Space

Due to small unit size, the principal living area of a Micro Dwelling Unit may also serve as the main sleeping area. As a result, consideration should be given to ensure the thoughtful design of this area so that it may accommodate a multitude of different functions.

- (a) The minimum dimension of the main living/sleeping space should be 3 metres; enough to accommodate a fold down bed and circulation space and day lighted by a large window.
- (b) The sleeping area may be located in a wall recess away from the main living area, but the space must remain contiguous with the main living area and not be enclosed.
- (c) A sleeping area located in the main living area must include built-in hide-a-beds and fold-down kitchen tables that consider day and night uses of the space.

#### 4.1.2 Bathroom

Consideration should be given to the overall design of the unit with regard to privacy, unit identity, sight lines and the direction of the door swing.

- (a) A complete bathroom must be provided which is equipped with a wash-basin, toilet, and a shower and/or bath.
- (b) Bathrooms must be physically separated from the remainder of the unit by partitions and a door to ensure privacy and to isolate noise and odours.

#### 4.1.3 Kitchen

The ability to cook is an essential component of livability. Each Micro Dwelling must include kitchen that is properly ventilated and includes a sink, ample counter space for food preparation, a stove/oven and a modestly-sized refrigerator with freezer.

- (a) Kitchens must include a fridge and freezer combination with a minimum 12 cubic foot unit with a footprint of 24" x 24" and bulk food storage options.
- (b) The kitchen and dining area should include room for two people to stand or sit side-by-side.

#### 4.1.4 Flexibility for Future Unit Reconfiguration

Considerations should be given to the consolidation of building services (i.e. electrical, plumbing, etc.) in order to allow the potential combining of units (conversion to one or two bedrooms) to address future housing need in the area.

### **4.2 Storage, Outdoor and Amenity Space**

#### 4.2.1 In Suite Storage Space

Considerations should be given to storage space for micro dwelling units, with preference for in-suite open and closed shelving units and loft areas in addition to the consideration of accessible and secure storage lockers located outside of the unit. Bulk storage is still required (see Administrative Bulletin Bulk Storage – Residential Developments 1997).

#### 4.2.2 Outdoor Space

Access to outdoor space and fresh air are important to health and well-being and will improve the livability of smaller units. The provision of outdoor space, either in the form of private or shared space, based on an aggregate of 4.52 m<sup>2</sup> per unit is required for all Micro Dwelling Units. If physical limitations impact the quality of the outdoor space, less may be required.

Privacy for residents should be considered.

- (a) Usable private outdoor space should be provided for each micro dwelling unit in the form of balconies, decks or patios.
- (b) Usable shared open space should include be provided in the form of shared courtyards, and common roof decks.
- (c) The private open space should have a minimum single horizontal dimension of 1.8 m and a minimum area of 4.5 m<sup>2</sup> and should be designed to capture sun and views where possible, as well as to avoid noise and to take account of visual privacy and security.
- (d) Alternatively, a micro dwelling unit that is designed to provide a strong open relationship with the exterior in the form of large operable windows and/or “Juliet” balconies may also be considered. Such operable doors and windows should allow a large amount of area to be open to the exterior, such as casements, sliders, double or single hung types. The amount of openness to the exterior should be large enough to accommodate two adults side-by-side.

#### 4.2.3 Amenity Space

Micro Dwelling Units should include amenity space throughout the building that is accessible to all tenants and includes things such as lounge space, common meeting rooms, etc.

### **5 Unit Type and Distribution**

A mix of Micro Dwelling Units and larger studio, 1-bedroom and 2-3 bedroom units in a building is encouraged. Flexibility may be given to achieve determined housing objectives for the neighbourhood, such as the need for low-income single housing to replace Single Room Occupancy hotels or flexibility to support project design and viability to allow more 3-bedroom family units within a development.

### **6 Affordability**

Rents must be below average market rents for studio apartments in the local area, in accordance with the annual Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation Rental Housing Market Survey. It should be noted that other targets for affordability may be applied. Rental amounts are to be secured in the Housing Agreement.