

# RS-5 AND RS-6 MONITORING SURVEY REPORT

August 1999



**RS-5 AND RS-6 MONITORING SURVEY REPORT  
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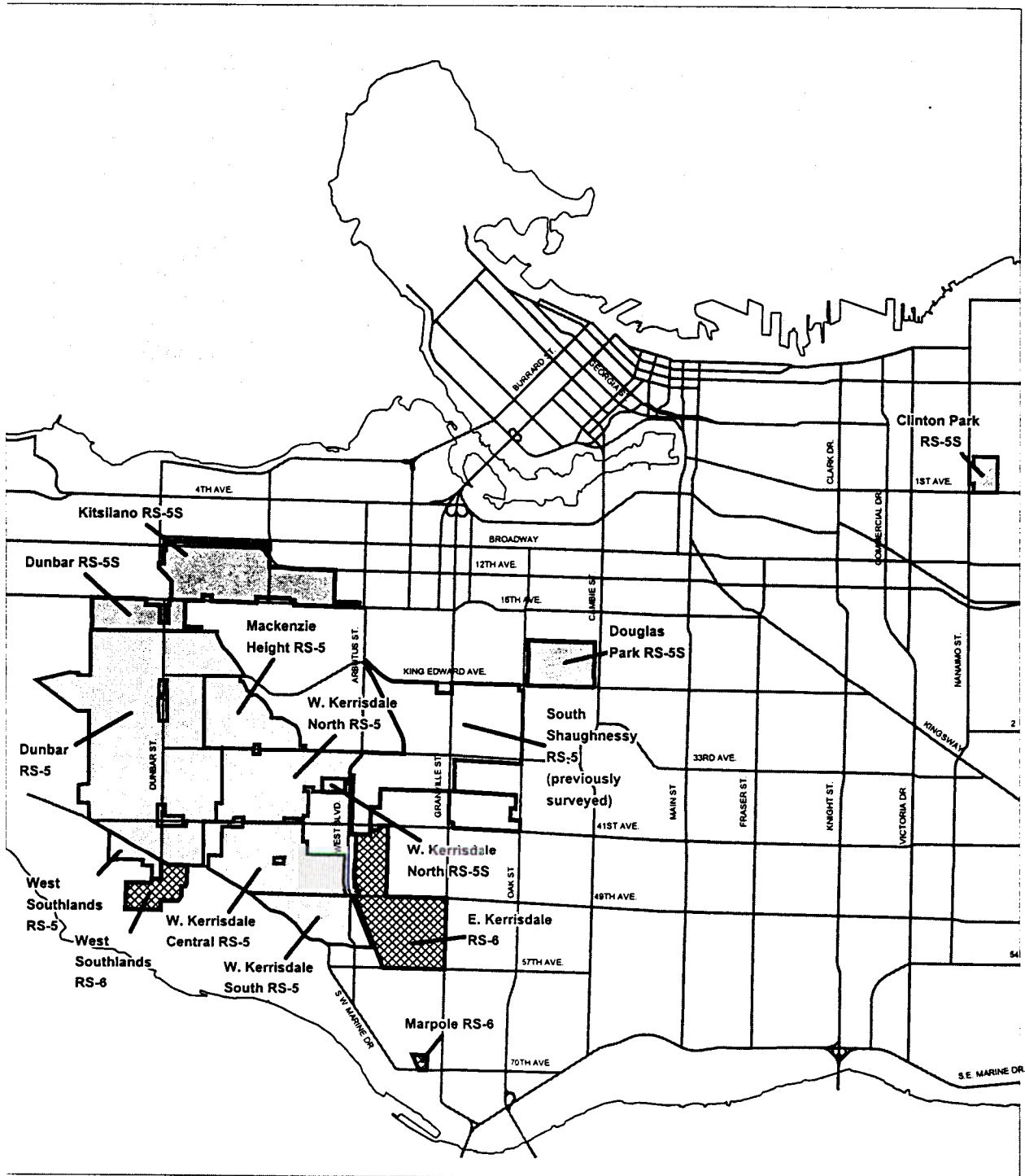
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# RS-5 AND RS-6 MONITORING SURVEY REPORT

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Figure 1: Map of RS-5/5S and RS-6 Areas



## SURVEY METHOD

This survey monitored RS-5/5S and RS-6 zoned areas that adopted the zoning as part of the RS-Interim Zoning program. The area of South Shaughnessy where the RS-5 zoning was originally developed was not surveyed as this area was the subject of a monitoring program in 1995. The area of East Kerrisdale in which RS-6 was developed, and the areas of West Southlands and a one block area of West Marpole that later adopted RS-6 zoning were monitored (refer to figure 1).

The areas which adopted RS-5/RS-5S and RS-6 zoning as part of the Interim Zoning Program are listed below. West Southlands RS-5 and Clinton Park RS-5 were not surveyed as there had not been any new home construction completed under the new zoning at the time this survey was conducted.

NEIGHBOURHOOD	RS-5/5S	RS-6	NUMBER OF HOUSES SURVEYED
Clinton Park	■		none
Douglas Park	■		1
Dunbar	■		8
West Kerrisdale (north, central, and south)	■		7
East Kerrisdale (original RS-6 area)		■	30
Kitsilano	■		1
Mackenzie Heights	■		5
West Marpole		■	1
West Southlands	■	■	no RS-5, 3 RS-6
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>56</b>

To ensure a comprehensive review, only those houses which were complete with installed landscaping at the time of the survey were included. Only newly constructed houses were included in the survey to enable greater clarity in the results regarding compatibility and quality (most renovations did not significantly affect the street facade of the existing house).

The survey time period included new houses and landscape completed from the time of adoption of the zoning to February 1999. Survey forms were sent out in March and April. A total of 22 houses were surveyed in the RS-5/5S zoned areas, and 34 houses in the RS-6 zoned areas.

The monitoring program was conducted to evaluate new houses and landscaping against the criteria and intent of the zoning. The intent of the RS-5/5S guidelines is to encourage the design of renovations and new developments to be compatible with neighbouring houses and landscaping and to emulate the design quality exemplified by nearby existing houses. Houses built under the RS-5/5S zoning may be granted additional floor space if the owner/applicant wishes to design within the RS-5/5S guidelines. An application that seeks this additional floor area is referred to as a 'discretionary' or 'conditional' application, and processing the application involves a design review by city staff. If an owner/applicant does not want the extra floor area, the application is considered an 'outright' application and is not subject to design review, although applicants are encouraged to use the guidelines.

In RS-5/5S, neighbours of each new house that were notified during the original development permit process were sent surveys that sought their opinions and comments regarding the new house and landscape, and regarding the development permit process and the zoning in general. The typical notification area included neighbours within a block radius, across the lane, across the street, and adjacent. Residents associations in the relevant areas were also surveyed for their response to the new houses constructed under the recently adopted zoning. 'Outright' RS-5/5S applications were not included in the monitoring surveys sent to neighbours as they did not involve design review or discretionary approval and as such were not required to meet any design criteria regarding compatibility with neighbouring houses.

Owners of houses built under both 'outright' and 'conditional' options were surveyed to determine why they chose the option they did, and to get feedback regarding the permit process and, in the 'conditional' guideline permit stream, whether they were able to build the type of house they wished under the applicable guidelines and zoning. Architects and designers were surveyed regarding the basis and application of the zoning and guidelines, the ability to produce the house design desired by their clients within the zoning and guidelines, the development permit process, and the advantages and disadvantages of the zoning relative to other zones.

The intent of the 'regulation-based' RS-6 zoning is to encourage a good standard of building design, materials, and landscape development while allowing design diversity. The RS-6 zoning was structured to accomplish its intent through regulations (not discretionary design guideline review) to enable a faster, less involved process than the contextual design review basis of RS-5. All new houses in RS-6 are required to meet the design regulations, and a

modest floor space ratio increase can be granted for following the landscape design guidelines.

In RS-6, neighbours within a few doors, across the lane and across the street were surveyed regarding the standard of building design and landscape, the contribution of the house to the character of the neighbourhood, and the zoning and permit process. The working group that participated in the development of RS-6, and the West Southlands Ratepayers Association were also surveyed regarding the above. Owners were surveyed to determine whether they were able to build the architectural style of house they wanted with the RS-6 regulations, and to gain their input regarding the zoning and permit process. Architects and designers were surveyed regarding the zoning and development permit process, and the advantages and disadvantages of the zoning relative to other zones.

Figure 2: RS-5/5S 'CONDITIONAL' HOUSES

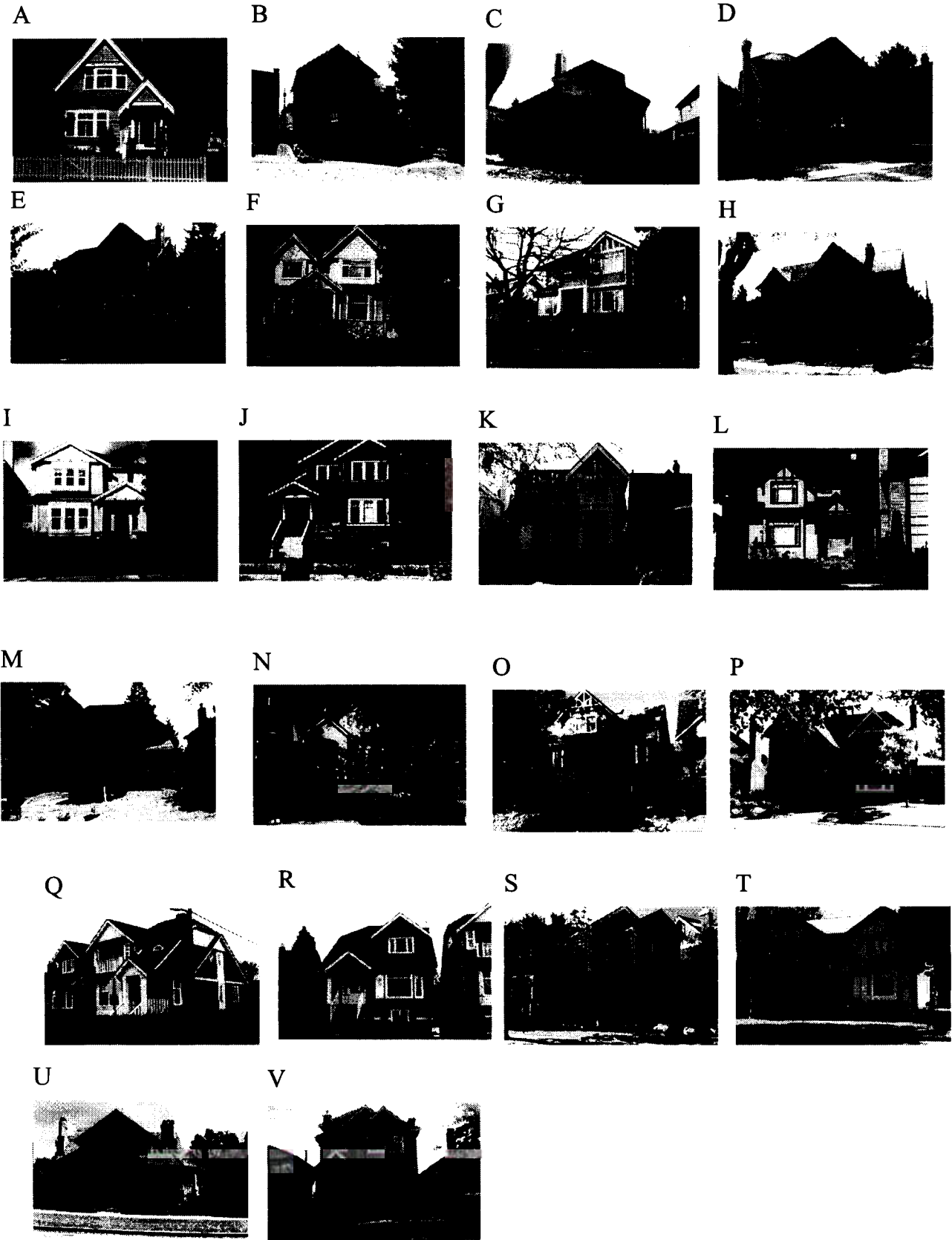




Figure 3: RS-5/5S 'OUTRIGHT' HOUSES



Figure 4: RS-6 HOUSES



Figure 4: RS-6 Houses (cont'd)



## RS-5/5S SURVEY RESULTS

Twenty-two RS-5/5S zoned houses in the Douglas Park, Dunbar, Kerrisdale, Kitsilano, and MacKenzie Heights neighbourhoods were surveyed. 936 surveys were mailed to neighbouring residents and 236 were returned giving an overall response rate of 25%. The table below shows the number of surveys mailed and returned and the response rate for each neighbourhood.

NEIGHBOURHOOD	NUMBER OF SURVEYS SENT	NUMBER OF SURVEYS RETURNED	RESPONSE RATE
Douglas Park	59	8	14%
Dunbar	287	75	26%
West Kerrisdale (north, central, and south)	331	93	28%
Kitsilano	30	9	30%
Mackenzie Heights	229	51	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>25%</b>

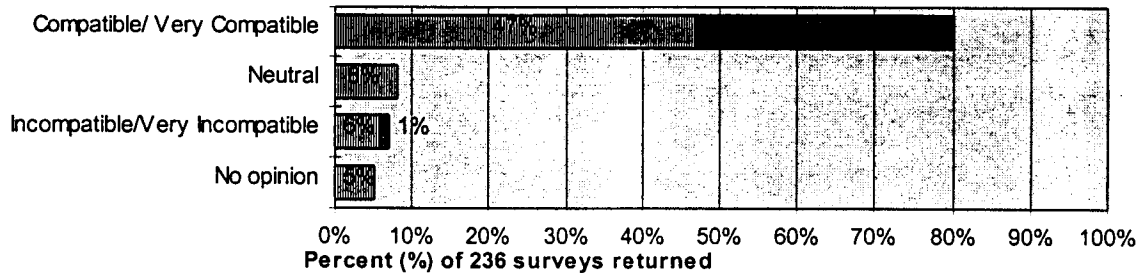
### Neighbourhood

Analysis of neighbours' replies to the survey questions shows a clearly favourable response to the 'conditional' houses built under the RS-5 zoning. Overall, the results indicate a high level of satisfaction with about 80% of the surveys responding positively to questions regarding the compatibility, design quality and landscaping of the houses. The results to survey questions are illustrated in Figure 5 and are based on all 22 houses in all of the surveyed RS-5 zoned neighbourhoods.

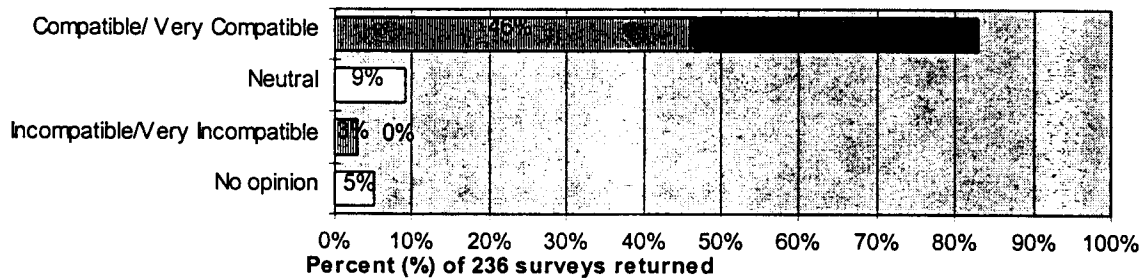
Approximately one third of the survey returns made additional positive comments regarding the character, quality, and/or compatibility of the house being surveyed. Many commented that the house was a good 'fit' with the neighbourhood, and was an appropriate complement to existing houses and the streetscape. Some suggested that the surveyed house was as good or better than many in the neighbourhood or in the immediate context. Others expressed satisfaction with the quality of building materials and details.

**Figure 5: RS-5/5S Neighbourhood Survey Results - all neighbourhoods**

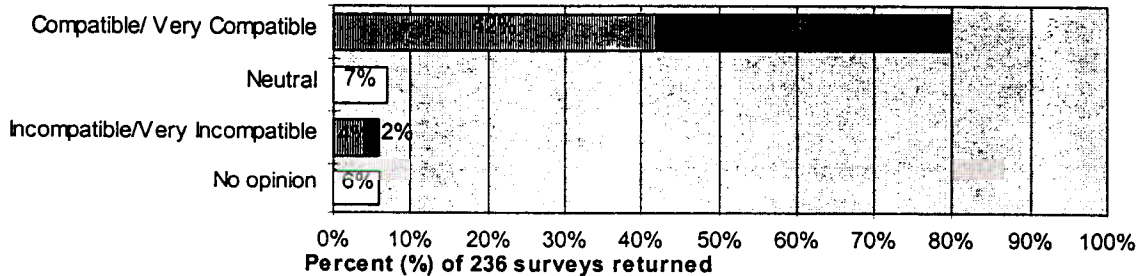
**RS-5/5S Survey Question 1: Is the design of the house compatible with the design of adjacent houses?**



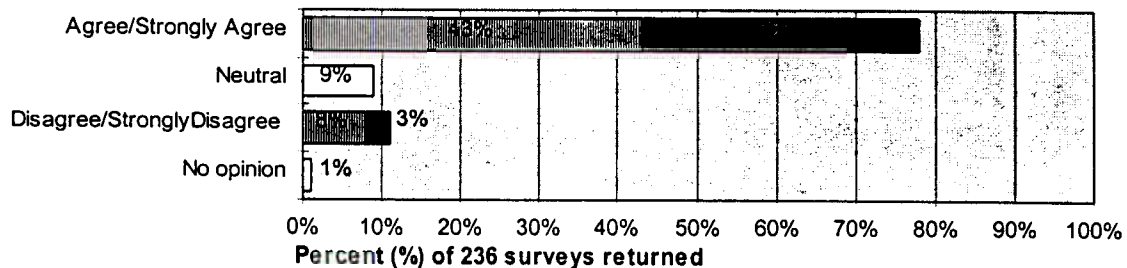
**RS-5/5S Survey Question 2: Is the landscaping in the front yard compatible with the landscaping in the front yards of the adjacent houses?**



**RS-5/5S Survey Question 3: Is the general design quality of the house comparable to the design quality of the existing houses in your neighbourhood?**



**RS-5/5S Survey Question 4: Response to the statement 'The house contributes positively to the character of the neighbourhood.'**



The primary negative comment made with respect to compatibility was building size/bulk. Approximately 22% of the survey returns commented negatively regarding the size of the house being surveyed and/or recommended that the zoning should be changed to decrease the allowable size. About one third of the negative comments regarding building size cited only building height as a concern, while one third thought that both height and square footage were excessive. The remaining third of the negative comments regarding building size didn't clarify which aspect of building size they thought was inappropriate to the neighbourhood ('too big' was a typical comment). It should be recognized that in many of the neighbourhoods, the existing surrounding housing stock consists largely of pre-1945 one and a half storey homes that are well under what the allowable maximum floor space in any of the cities' RS-zoned areas.

There was considerable variation between neighbourhoods regarding the level of concern expressed about building size. In Dunbar, 13% of the surveys commented negatively on the size of the houses, in Kerrisdale it was 20%, while in Mackenzie Heights 38% of the surveys expressed this concern. View blockage in relation to building height and massing was generally not mentioned except for in the Mackenzie Heights neighbourhood, where 12% of the survey returns mentioned view loss. (More specific information on a neighbourhood basis follows in the section on survey results by neighbourhood.)

The survey results to question 2 show the landscaping of the new houses was very well received and the comments made further support this. 20% of the surveys gave further positive comment regarding the landscaping, with many indicating that the standard meets or exceeds that of the neighbourhood. Retention of existing landscaping including trees, shrubs, rockeries, and retaining walls, was frequently mentioned in a favourable way. 8% of the surveys made additional comments expressing concern with the landscaping of the surveyed house. There were some instances where neighbours felt the landscaping was insufficient, or where grade changes were unnecessary or accomplished in an inappropriate way. In a few cases it was thought that trees had been unnecessarily removed, or were compromised by excessive pruning or root damage due to construction, and suggested greater tree retention and enforcement was needed. A few surveys expressed a need for further addressing of impermeability and coverage of sites with hard surfacing (RS-5/5S includes a 60% maximum impermeable materials site coverage regulation).

15% of the surveys provided comments that expressed support for the RS-5/5S zoning, and recommended that no change was needed to the zoning, guidelines, or process. 3% of the surveys said that while the resulting houses were acceptable, the zoning and design guidelines should nonetheless allow for more variety in housing style and design. Included in this figure are a few surveys that remarked that the houses and/or the zoning was retrogressive.

Approximately 6% of the surveys expressed concern about liveability and privacy issues with neighbours or recommended that RS-5 should address these issues. Liveability issues expressed included shadowing, massing/appearance of the rear of the house, privacy concerns from adjacencies, overlook, and aligned windows, and noise from mechanical equipment venting.

Question 5 sought information about notification of neighbours for conditional (design guideline) applications. 36% of the people notified provided comments to the city regarding the proposed house as part of the notification and approval process. Of these, 58% thought that the design of the house responded to the comments they made at notification, while 34% thought it did not. The primary comment at notification was regarding the size or height of the house. Other notification issues were view loss, liveability with neighbouring properties including shadowing, windows and overlook, and retention of existing trees.

The survey responses from neighbours revealed some interesting correlations and attributes of houses that tended to gain more favourable responses. In general, houses with one and a half storey expressions (the second storey is within a sloping roof with gables and dormers) were favoured over those with full two storey expression (although there were notable exceptions to both cases). There was also a correlation between the context of the house surveyed and its ranking. Houses that were designed to fit what could be considered a strong and relatively consistent context were generally better received than those which had a mixed context of houses of various ages, types, and styles. This could indicate several things including greater difficulty in designing to suit a mixed context, decreased ability of staff to insist upon a more desirable approach during review, and possibly also a greater variety of expectations among neighbours (ie - residents that buy and live in highly varied houses might similarly have highly varied expectations of what constitutes an appropriate addition to the neighbourhood, or prefer only the style of their own individual house).

There were several common elements among houses that received the most negative comments about size in general. Houses with two full storeys plus sloped roof tended to receive more negative comments about size, particularly in those instances where the grade level rose between the street and the house and the house sat at a higher elevation relative to the street. There was also some correlation between negative comments regarding size and houses located at corners. This would likely be a reflection of the more visible massing of the house along two exposures. There were also negative comments about the size and height of houses that compromised the views of neighbouring properties.

There was no apparent correlation between how favourably a house was received and whether it was designed by a registered architect or by a designer.

## Residents' Associations

Refer to 'Survey Results by Neighbourhood' for survey responses and input from residents associations.

## Owners

### 'Conditional' (design guideline option) Houses

Seven of the 22 owners sent surveys of houses built under the 'conditional' option replied to the survey. The objective of the owners' survey was to determine whether owners were satisfied with their homes as built according to the guidelines and regulations, to determine why they had opted to build under the 'conditional' design guideline option, and to gain input regarding the zoning, design guidelines and development permit process from an owners' perspective.

The primary reason given for building under the 'conditional' option was to gain the additional floor space that it offers. Several owners also said that they wished to build a house that fit into the neighbourhood. When asked to respond to a statement that they were able to build the kind of house that they wanted under the zoning and guidelines, the response was mixed. Three of the seven strongly agreed with the statement; the remaining four responded agree, neutral, disagree, and no opinion. No owners strongly disagreed.

With respect to changes or improvements that owners would recommend, several suggested that the zoning and guidelines should be applied more flexibly to accommodate changing lifestyles, neighbourhood change over time, greater variety, and necessary changes during the construction process. It was also suggested that a faster process would be beneficial to owners.

Other comments made were that the RS-5 zoning protects the value and character of the neighbourhood, allows better roof forms, and that houses that do not follow the guidelines should not be allowed. Others commented positively on the RS5/5S zones' adjustment of front setbacks to accommodate existing houses, and of the retention of existing landscape materials.

### 'Outright' (no design guideline option) Houses

Eight of the 18 owners of houses built under the 'outright' option replied to the survey. The objective of the survey was to determine why they had opted to build under the 'outright' option, and to gain input regarding the zoning and development permit process.



The primary reason given for choosing not to build under the 'conditional' option was that they didn't want to wait the extra time required for the design review and conditional permit process. The secondary reason given was that owners either didn't need or didn't want the extra floorspace, or that the allowable 'outright' floorspace was appropriate to their needs and budget. One owner chose the 'outright' option because they didn't want to follow the guidelines.

Several 'outright' owners recommended a faster process. A suggestion was made that the regulations should be more flexibly applied, while another suggested that there was inconsistency in the application of the regulations. One owner noted that RS-5/5S allows better roof forms than RS-1. Another regretted the decrease in allowable above grade floor space of 'outright' RS-5 relative to RS-1.

### **Architects and Designers**

Seven of the thirteen architects and designers surveyed responded to the RS-5/5S survey. The purpose of the survey was to gain their input regarding the intent and application of the zoning regulations and design guidelines, and regarding the permitting process.

Consistent with the survey of owners, the design professionals said that most of the clients who chose to build under the 'conditional' option did so because they wished to take advantage of the additional floor space. Some respondents noted that they have seen an increasing trend of people that do not want or need the additional floor space and therefore choose to build under the 'outright' option. Also, that many clients avoid the 'conditional' option because they don't want to be delayed by the extra permit processing time involved.

When asked whether they were able to design the architectural style of house that their client wanted under the RS-5 design guidelines the response was mixed, and ranged from strongly agree to disagree. One client had wanted to build a 'typical spec house' and was unable to do so; another had wished for a Georgian style of house which was precluded by the context. One designer commented that a contextual style of house is currently popular in the market, and therefore the design guidelines doesn't usually compromise the client's wishes.

Architects and designers were asked whether they thought it was reasonable to use the 4 or 5 adjacent houses to establish the design context for the design guidelines. All the respondents had concerns regarding this premise. Most thought that the broader neighbourhood context and area characteristics should form the basis of the guidelines. Several expressed concerns about forcing houses to be of similar proportion next to each other and that the 'waves' this creates in the streetscape are not necessarily a desirable thing. Several of the architects and

designers commented that flexibility of the city development planners was essential in making the context basis of RS-5/5S work.

All the respondents were supportive of the higher roof ridge height and less restrictive envelope of RS-5/5S as they thought this allowed greater design freedom, better roof forms, and better use of attic space. Support was also expressed for the increased building depth and the flexibility it offers.

With respect to the permitting process, all respondents thought that the process should be faster, and the comment was made that the length of time discourages people from pursuing the conditional option. Suggestions were made that the time frame could be reduced by dealing with the lag time between development permit and building permit (an issue being addressed by the concurrent permitting being offered in Development Services), and by compressing the time frame allowed for neighbourhood notification and response. The pre-application meetings with staff were thought to be beneficial, and several commented that the meetings with staff were a positive process that actually led to improved designs. It was suggested that more discretion be given to development planners, and that talented, qualified staff are critical to a successful process and product. One respondent said that the development planners exerted too much 'personal preference' beyond the guidelines.

With respect to the design guidelines it was suggested that the process and the products would benefit from a focus on design principles, a broader neighbourhood context, and greater flexibility written into the guidelines and applied by staff. The concern was also expressed that over time, interpretations of guidelines seem to become inflexible policies. It was further commented that although RS-5/5S may save neighbourhoods from patently undesirable houses, it does not guarantee good design, and the 'cookie-cutter' Tudor house has unfortunately become seen as a ticket to approval. The hope was expressed that in the future we might see greater design freedom, and fresher unconventional details and massing that are still compatible with the neighbourhood design character.

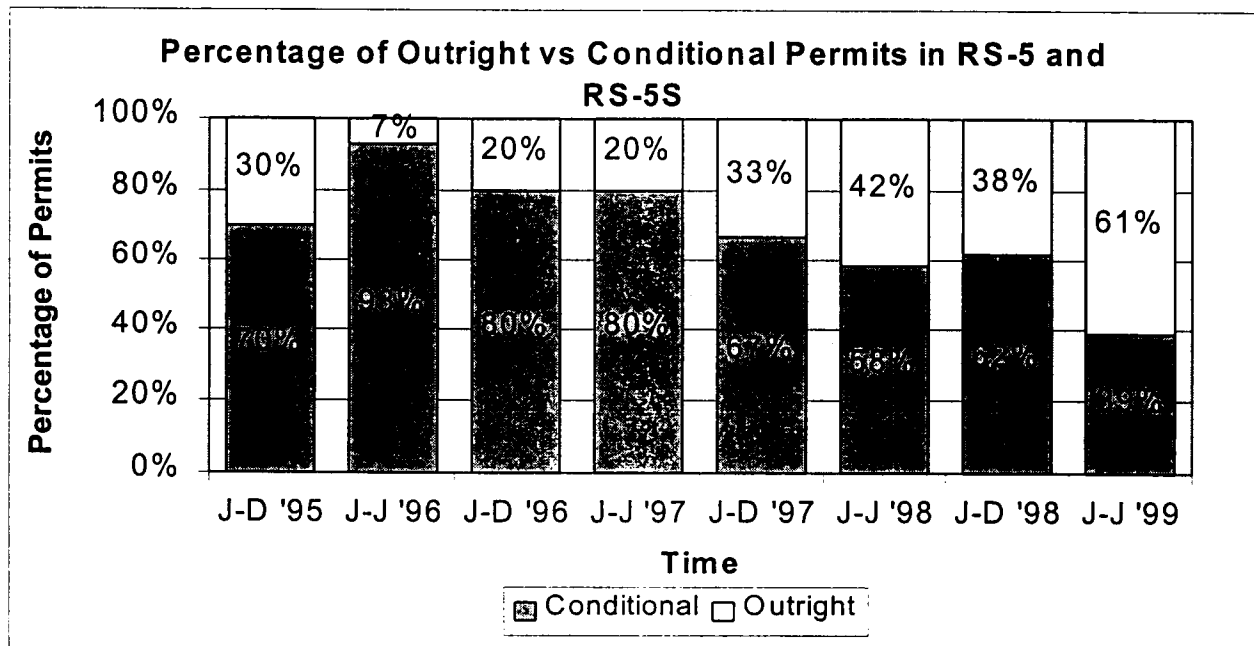
### **Evolving Trends**

Development statistics show that the relative proportion of 'outright' applications is increasing and now represents over 60% of the applications received in RS-5 (in the first years of RS-5, 'outright' applications comprised about 25% of RS-5 applications) (refer to figure 6). Survey responses from owners and designers indicated two main reasons for declining to apply for additional floor space in return for following the design guidelines:

- the 'conditional' process takes too long;
- owners either do not want or cannot afford to build the extra floor space offered in the 'conditional' stream.

Typically, 'conditional' applications take eight to twelve weeks to process, whereas 'outright' applications take two to three weeks. There are current and upcoming programs within the city that are aimed at reducing processing time. In the new process initiated by Development Services, combining the development and building permit application is estimated to reduce overall permitting time of 'conditional' applications by two to three weeks.

Figure 6: Percentage of Outright vs Conditional Permits in RS-5



The recent trend toward 'outright' applications likely reflects an observed shift in the market towards custom built homes designed and built for a specific family versus 'speculative' home construction for resale. Several respondents commented that there has been less demand for accomplishing the maximum floor space possible and a greater emphasis on building to suit needs and/or budget. Although this shift from 75% to 40% design guideline 'conditional' applications might be of concern, staff have not as yet noted any increase in complaints by neighbours about new 'outright' houses that are being built. Though this situation will require ongoing monitoring by staff, it may be that the market conditions (built for owners, non-maximum FSR houses) will result in the design of new houses ('outright' or 'conditional') that are seen as acceptable by residents of RS-5 zoned neighbourhood.

Planning will continue to monitor application processing and development activity over time,

and if warranted will report back to Council on potential adjustments to the relative attractiveness of 'conditional' and 'outright' options in RS-5 zoning.

Based on the response of architects and designers, the comments of some residents, and the input of city development planners, it may be desirable to expand the context on which RS-5 is based. The objective would be to allow for greater, yet compatible variety, and a clearer basis with which to approach and evaluate the design of houses within a context that may not be particularly desirable or representative of the neighbourhood. The RS Rethink program, if approved for funding from the 2000 Contingency Reserve, proposes to look at this issue area, and may lead to some proposals for change.

## RS-6 SURVEY RESULTS

A total of thirty-four RS-6 zoned houses were surveyed in the East Kerrisdale and West Southlands and West Marpole neighbourhoods. Thirty of these were in the East Kerrisdale area originally zoned RS-6, 3 houses were in West Southlands, and 1 house was in the one block area of West Marpole that adopted RS-6. A total of 464 surveys were sent to neighbouring residents with 94 surveys returned for a response rate of 20%.

NEIGHBOURHOOD	NUMBER OF SURVEYS SENT	NUMBER OF SURVEYS RETURNED	RESPONSE RATE
East Kerrisdale (original RS-6 area)	413	83	20%
West Southlands	40	10	25%
West Marpole	11	1	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>20%</b>

### Neighbourhood

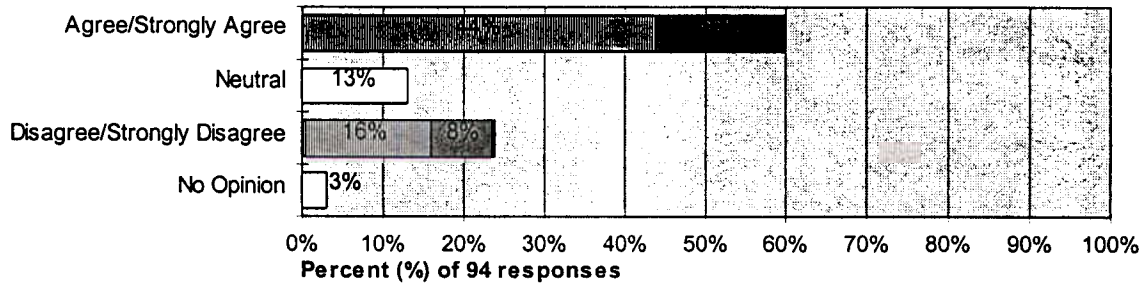
In general the neighbourhood response to houses built under the RS-6 zoning was positive, although the houses built under RS-6 were clearly not as well received as houses built under RS-5. With regard to the standard of building design and landscape, and contribution to the neighbourhood, 50% to 60% of the neighbours responded positively. Approximately one quarter of the respondents replied negatively to these questions, with most of the rest responding neutrally to what had been built. The neighbourhood response to the survey questions is illustrated in figure 7.

79% of the surveys provided comments in addition to the responses to the survey questions. The primary concern expressed in the comments was the size of new houses built under the RS-6 zoning. Approximately 33% of the surveys either commented negatively regarding the size or height of the houses built under RS-6, or recommended that the zoning be changed to reduce the allowable size or height, or to increase the required yards.

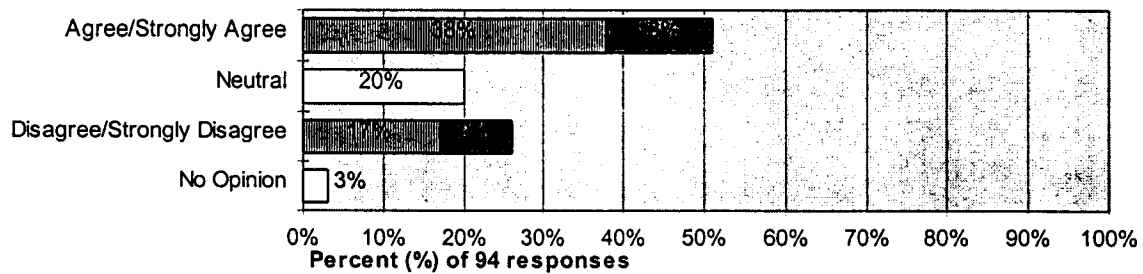
Approximately 34% of the survey returns made positive comments about the design and compatibility of the house being surveyed or about houses in general being built under the RS-6 zoning. This was most commonly expressed as appropriateness to the neighbourhood and as an improvement over previous houses.

**Figure 7: RS-6 Neighbourhood Survey Results - All Neighbourhoods**

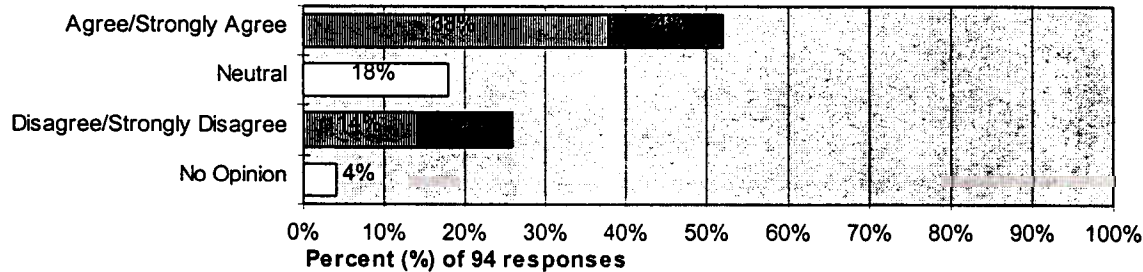
**RS-6 Survey Question 1: Response to the statement 'The house reflects a good standard of building design.'**



**RS-6 Survey Question 2: Response to the statement 'The development reflects a good standard of site landscaping.'**



**RS-6 Survey Question 3: Response to the statement 'In general, the house has contributed positively to the character of the neighbourhood.'**



Conversely, 25% of the survey returns made negative comments about the design of the house being surveyed or about houses in general being built under the RS-6 zoning. A commonly held concern (10%) was that the houses currently being built were essentially a new 'type', and that further variation from this should be sought. Other comments regarded an inappropriate level or type of detail and awkward massing. Some respondents seemed to think that the new houses were subject to a level of design review that is not mandated by RS-6, and were concerned that the planning department thought the approved houses were good designs.

The most frequently mentioned landscape concern was fencing, gates, and retaining walls and grade changes in the front yard (10%). Many respondents thought that such definition of the property boundary was not in keeping with the character of the neighbourhood. 7% commented on unnecessary tree loss, inappropriate pruning and siting in relation to significant trees, and damage to root systems on the subject or adjacent properties. Other landscape concerns included adequacy of the landscaping and maintenance and survival of what had been planted.

A significant level of concern was expressed (10%) about several of the new houses that were vacant or unoccupied for long periods of time, and this was a factor in people's judgements as to whether the surveyed house contributed positively to the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood residents thought that unoccupied houses were a negative not only in physical terms re landscape maintenance and repair, but that socially they had a negative impact on the life of the neighbourhood.

9% of the survey returns commented on aspects of liveability including loss of sunlight, compromised privacy from raised outdoor areas, and noise from airconditioning and water features.

With respect to the retention of existing buildings, 7% of the survey returns lamented the loss of older character buildings or recommended that incentives (such as code relaxations) be created to encourage building retention.

5% of the survey returns commented negatively on the size of garages or recommended that the allowable garage size be reduced.

5% of the surveys suggested that RS-6 did not go far enough, while 4% of the survey returns suggested that RS-6 went too far, was retrogressive, did not allow enough design freedom, or was unnecessary.

There were few comments and no common themes regarding process. Suggested improvements included more rigorous evaluation of applications, and neighbourhood panels. Some respondents thought that the criteria of the zoning was not being met, and expressed disappointment in what they saw as being the judgement of the planning department in assessing applications. Some residents stated a preference for what they saw being built under RS-5 zoning. Concerns were expressed regarding length and timing of construction with respect to neighbourhood disruption, noise, and damage to lanes.

The survey results indicate some general attributes of houses that were more or less favourably received by neighbours with respect to design of the building. As in RS-5, generally houses that had a complete or partial one and a half storey expression (the second storey is within a

sloping roof with gables and dormers) were preferred over those that had a full two storey expression. Symmetrical gable ends on either side of the entry, larger more dominant entry expressions, and extensive or 'heavy' detailing were typical of houses that were less well received. Generally, as reflected in the comments made by neighbours, houses that were thought to be 'custom built', and did not display typical 'spec' house details, received better responses.

There was no clear correlation between how well a house was received by neighbours and whether it was designed by a registered architect or a designer, although notably none of the 25% least well received was designed by a registered architect.

### **Residents' Associations**

Refer to 'Survey Results by Neighbourhood' for the survey results and input of residents' associations.

### **Owners**

Out of 34 surveys sent to RS-6 owners, 10 surveys were returned. Question 1 asked owners to respond to a statement that they were able to build the architectural style of house they wanted under the RS-6 zoning regulations. 80% agreed with the statement (30%strongly agree, 50%agree); 10% were neutral; and 10% had no opinion.

Question 2 asked whether the owner had built houses in the RS-1, RS-1S, RS-3, RS-3A, RS-5, or RS-5S zones, and if so, what comparative advantages or disadvantages did they find in the RS-6 zone. 40% of the owners had built in other zones including RS-1, RS-1S and RS-5. Several owners cited the additional floor area as an advantage. One owner commented that the 3rd floor was advantageous, especially with the flood plain considerations in Southland. Another owner commented that the 3rd floor was not advantageous as it was expensive to construct and difficult to access. Other disadvantages mentioned included increased construction costs and longer permitting time.

In response to a question asking owners what changes or improvements to the RS-6 zoning and the development permit process they would recommend, there was no clear consensus or theme among the replies. Several owners said they were satisfied with the RS-6 zoning as it is. Suggestions for change included faster permit processing, simplified exterior design and landscape requirements, more freedom in design, and more choice in materials. One respondent said they preferred RS-5 to RS-6.



## **Architects and Designers**

Six of the 21 architects and designers responded to the RS-6 survey. All but one respondent thought that RS-6 provided reasonable regulations that encourage a good standard of building design. One designer thought that the strict application of regulations with respect to roof forms actually undermined the intent of the zoning, and that a regulatory approach to achieving desirable roof forms does not work well. Although the designers thought that generally the RS-6 landscape design guidelines were reasonable, two respondents did comment that the density of planting required was excessive and that plants soon needed to be removed as they grew.

All designers thought they were able to design the architectural style of house their client wanted under the RS-6 zoning regulations.

Most designers did not take advantage of the option under the zoning that allows additional floor space in the basement equal to double any reduction of the allowable floor space on the main and upper floors, and observed that it is the main and second floor space that is really wanted. One designer commented that all houses should be allowed a full basement under the footprint of the building in any circumstance.

Five of the six designers had designed houses in RS-1, RS-1S, RS-3, and/or RS-5. Most expressed a preference for RS-6 over RS-1 as they find the height and envelopes of RS-1 are too restrictive. Other comments were that the direct, quicker, and non-conflictual nature of the RS-6 permitting process made it preferable to RS-5. Another commented that RS-6 and RS-5 were moving in the right direction.

## COMPARISON OF RS-5 AND RS-6 RESULTS

The survey results indicate that, in general, the houses built under the 'guideline-based' RS-5/5S zoning were better received by neighbours than those built under the 'regulation-based' RS-6 zoning (approximately 80% positive responses vs. 50 - 60%). In addition to the effect of market forces, the difference in response may in part reflect the different approach of the two zones. The regulatory approach of RS-6 was intended to address only selected key issues, whereas the design guideline and review approach of RS-5 specifically requires that houses be designed to respond to their context. Not surprisingly therefore, the survey results suggest that RS-6 has been less effective than RS-5 in establishing a minimum level of design quality and compatibility with the neighbourhood.

It is also interesting that although technically the 'regulation-based' RS-6 houses are a smaller floor space ratio than the 'guideline-based' RS-5/5S houses, there were more negative comments made by RS-6 neighbours about the size of the new houses (22% vs 33%). This may indicate that the contextual 'guideline-based' approach of RS-5 is being somewhat successful in reducing apparent building mass.

While the survey results indicate a neighbourhood preference for houses built under the 'guideline-based' RS-5 zoning, by contrast, owners and architects seemed to prefer the 'regulation-based' RS-6 as they were more able to design the style of house they wanted and were able to complete permit processing in a faster and less involved manner.

The outcomes and implications of the 'guideline-based' vs 'regulation-based' approaches to design control need to be carefully weighed in any future program work on controls regarding the character and compatibility of new houses in single family areas. Given the recent market trend toward selecting the simpler, faster process over increased floor space incentives, a better balance of neighbourhood and applicant interests may be accomplished by combining the two approaches in one zone: an 'outright' option with external design regulations that address key issues, and a 'conditional' design guideline and review option with an increased floor space incentive that more specifically addresses compatibility and context. The proposed RS-Rethink program, if approved for funding from the 2000 Contingency Reserve, may be an appropriate program through which to further develop this potential approach.

Based on the survey results, it may be anticipated that there will be requests from area residents to revisit the RS-6 zoning. Although at this time Planning is not recommending any changes to the RS-6 zoning, Council may wish to consider offering a change from RS-6 to RS-5 zoning where appropriate and supported by area residents.

## SURVEY RESULTS BY NEIGHBOURHOOD

### Dunbar Neighbourhood Results

The survey response rate from Dunbar neighbours was the highest of the neighbourhoods surveyed, with 245 surveys mailed and 75 returned for a response rate of 31%. Of the 22 'conditional' RS-/5S houses surveyed, 8 were in Dunbar.

The houses built within the Dunbar RS-5/5S zoned neighbourhood were the most well received by neighbours of all the RS-5/5S houses surveyed, with highly positive results (92 to 93% supportive) to all of the survey questions regarding compatibility, general design quality, landscape, and contribution to the neighbourhood. The results in Dunbar are illustrated in Figure 8.

About 60% of the survey returns provided additional comments. The following discussion summarizes the comments and recommendations made by Dunbar neighbours.

Approximately 36% of the Dunbar neighbourhood survey returns provided supportive comments regarding the compatibility, character, and/or design quality of the house.

23% of the survey returns recommended that no change was required to the RS-5/5S zoning and/or expressed appreciation or approval of the change to RS-5/5S zoning.

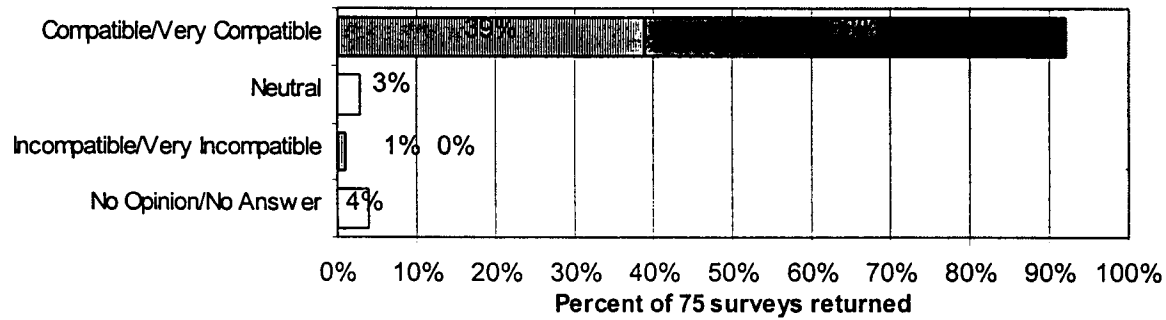
13% of the Dunbar neighbour survey returns commented negatively about the size of the subject new house. Of these comments, most specified both square footage and height, while only one survey mentioned height alone as a factor.

7% commented on a variety of issues relating to the rear, side and lane of the house. These are issues that were generally not addressed by RS-5/5S zoning and guidelines which places emphasis on designing to meet the context of the streetscape. The comments include concerns regarding the design and impact of the rear of the house on the lane and adjacent houses, privacy concerns with respect to side yards and overlook, shadowing and access to sunlight, and the size of garages. There was one mention of a concern with respect to view loss.

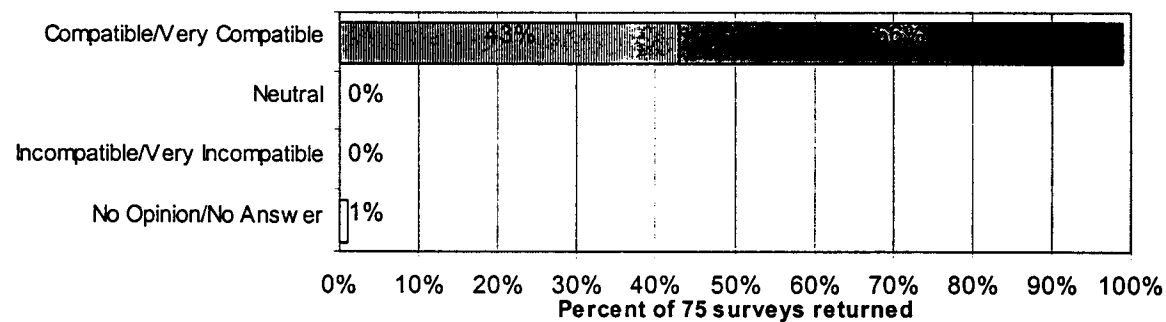
5% of the surveys, while generally supportive of what had been built, suggested that more diversity in design would be desirable. 3% thought that the zoning and guidelines and the houses they produced were retrogressive.

**Figure 8: Dunbar Neighbourhood Results (RS-5 and RS-5S)**

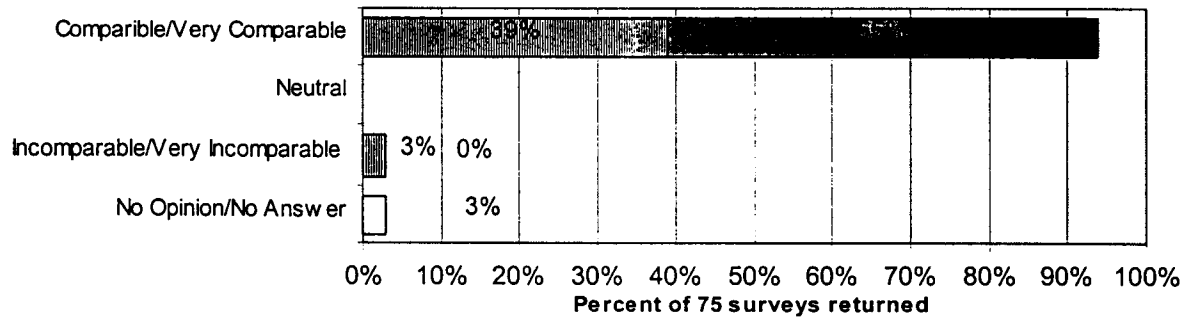
**1. Is the design of the house compatible with the design of adjacent houses?**



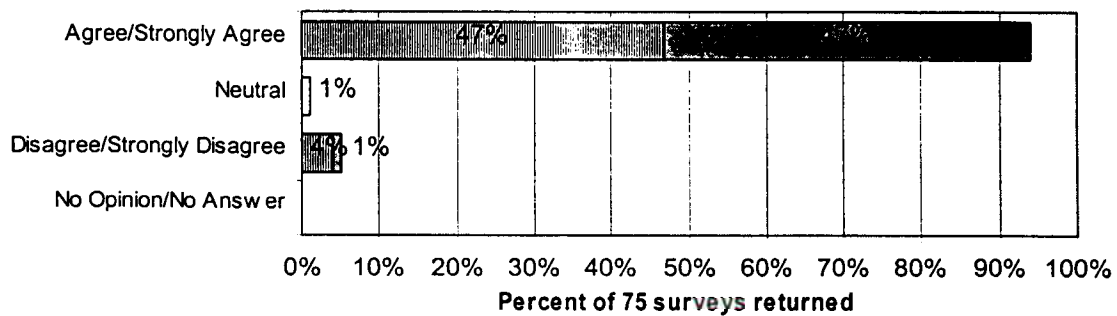
**2. Is the landscaping in the front yard compatible with the landscaping in the front yards of adjacent houses?**



**3. Is the general design quality of the house comparable to the design quality of the existing houses in your neighbourhood?**



**4. The house contributes positively to the character of the neighbourhood.**



## **Dunbar Residents' Association**

The Dunbar Residents' Association provided feedback to the survey in several forms. Several members of the DRA gave responses for each new house on an individual basis to the survey questions that were asked of neighbours (refer to figure 9). Additionally, the DRA sent a letter to the City with general observations regarding the houses that have been built in the neighbourhood since RS-5/5S was introduced. In response to this letter, some members participated in further e-mail discussions responding on an individual basis to the observations made in the letter.

The DRA Board sent a letter dated April 6, 1999 that presents observations discussed at their March 23 meeting (refer to Appendix 'B'). The letter compares the houses built under the 'conditional' option that involved design review by the City with those built under the 'outright' option that did not involve design review. The summary of findings by the board maintains that although all of the houses (both conditional and outright) were improvements over the 'monster house' designs, the board observed no appreciable difference between houses built under the 'conditional' option and those under the 'outright'. The board draws the conclusion that some factor other than RS-5/5S zoning must have caused the desired change in housing design, and suggests that the market has responded to consumer behaviour.

The letter further suggests that the added cost and intrusiveness of processing an RS-5 'conditional' application cannot be justified.

After receiving this letter from the DRA, it was discovered by staff that 2 of houses that were thought to be 'outright' were actually 'conditional' and had in fact involved design review and discretionary approval. This mistaken identification occurred as the two houses in question were processed through the Pilot Project and had been given an identifier that is used to denote a 'joint' permit. Prior to the new process approach, this identifier was not used in conjunction with 'conditional' applications that involved design review, notification, and discretionary approval.

In early April the Planning department informed the DRA about the error, clarified which buildings were 'outright' and which were 'conditional', and sent further surveys regarding the additional 'conditional' houses. At the time the representative of the DRA thought they might wish to revisit their observations in light of the new information. Staff sent a letter to the DRA reaffirming the information and asking whether there had been discussion in this regard or any change in the observations made. At time of writing this report, staff have not received any further communication with respect to this issue.

In response to the letter from the DRA, and in light of the new information, several members of the DRA provided further comments to the City regarding their own observations in the 'outright' versus 'conditional' question. In brief, the comments suggested that in fact while all of the 'conditional' houses were extremely compatible for the Dunbar area, 3 of the 5 'outright' houses presented some serious problems in the Dunbar community context. It was

also suggested that it cannot be concluded that market forces alone have brought about the desired change in house design, but that RS-5/5S may have had a positive impact on design by summarizing neighbourhood concerns and informing design decisions as 'outright' applications are encouraged, though not required, to follow the guidelines.

A summary of the individual DRA responses to the survey questions is illustrated in figure 9. There are a significant number of 'no opinion' responses to the questions as several people preferred to give a general response to the house or zoning rather than replying specifically to the questions and statements prepared in the survey.

Of the DRA members that provided individual commentary, one third expressed support for the additional floor area offered under RS-5, and one third recommended a reduction in square footage, height, and site coverage. Other members either did not comment on size, or thought that the sample size and scope were not sufficient to make a final judgement on the issue of building size and thought therefore that RS-5 should remain as an 'interim' designation. One member thought that most of the houses in the survey did not seem to appear too bulky, but was concerned that the list reviewed did not include some controversial houses that were either under construction or in process.

Half of the members that provided individual comments expressed a concern about the impact of new development on the rear yards and lanes of the neighbourhood, and suggested that while compatibility may be well addressed in the streetscape, that the landscape is a different story. Concerns included lanes paved to the edges of the property, overly large garages, site coverage, and building depth, and the overall reduction of usability and amenity of the rear gardens this combination creates.

Some members expressed a concern regarding affordability, building size, and suitability for family use. It was suggested that increased building size should only be allowed in association with in-law suites (with the potential to perhaps become legal secondary suites). Another comment expressed a concern that the site coverage of the house and the garage combined left insufficient garden to meet the needs of a traditional family.

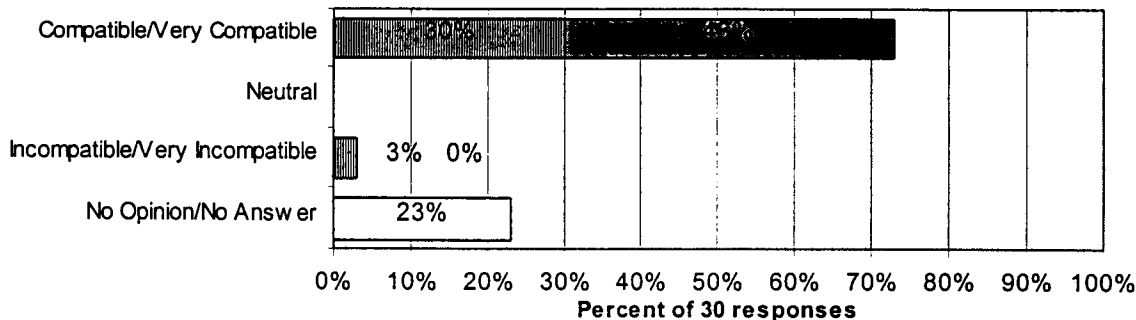
With respect to the character and appropriateness of the building designs there was a variety of opinion. One member thought the houses were disappointingly similar and was concerned that perhaps the zoning was too restrictive. It was suggested that ways to encourage and support more variety of design with the full consent of the neighbourhood should be sought. One member thought that the building designs were generally retrogressive and that a greater expression of modernity would be more appropriate to the neighbourhood. Another member was concerned about how the guidelines would be applied in cases where the 'context' houses were not desirable or representative neighbourhood models.

Other concerns included the waste from demolition and construction, and the lost opportunities for meaningful recycling programs that would reduce this impact.

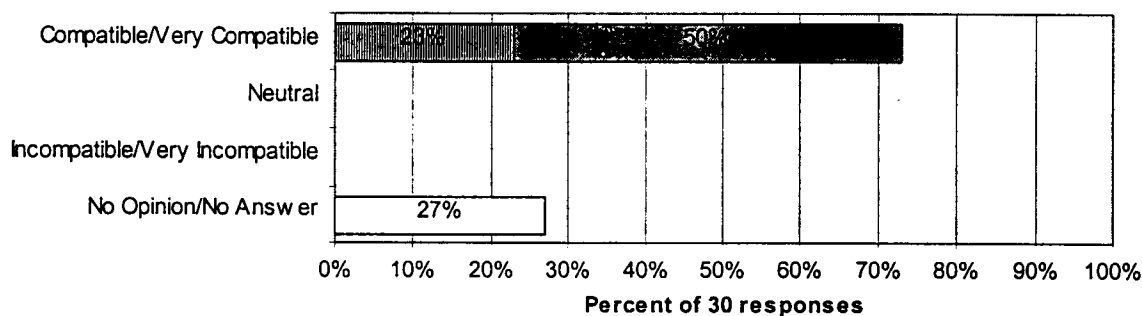
Other suggestions for change included providing more information at time of notification so that neighbours can more clearly understand what is being proposed (dimensions from property lines, grades, perspectives and images that more effectively convey the building in relation to its neighbours).

**Figure 9: Dunbar Residents Association Survey Results (RS-5 and RS-5S)**

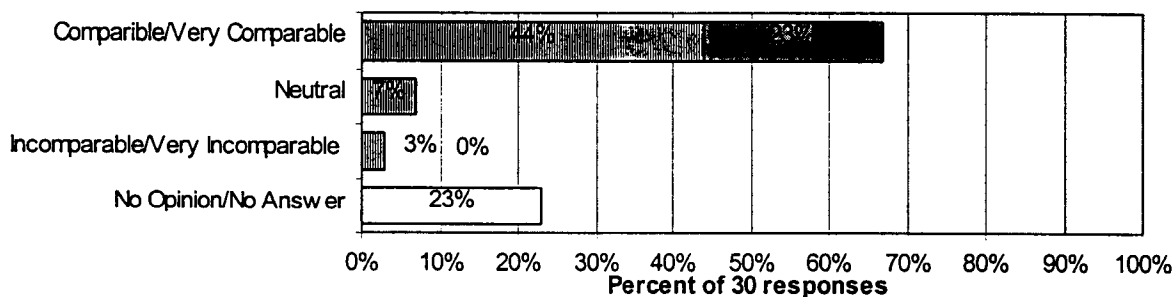
**1. Is the design of the house compatible with the design of adjacent houses?**



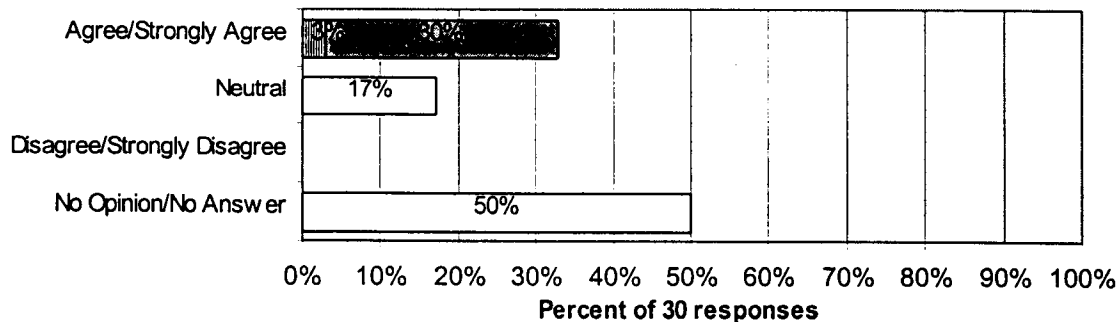
**2. Is the landscaping in the front yard compatible with the landscaping in the front yards of adjacent houses?**



**3. Is the general design quality of the house comparable to the design quality of the existing houses in your neighbourhood?**



**4. The house contributes positively to the character of the neighbourhood.**





## Kerrisdale Neighbourhood Results

The survey response rate from Kerrisdale neighbours was 28%, with 331 surveys mailed and 93 returned. Seven houses were completed under the conditional RS-5/5S in Kerrisdale during the course of the survey. The survey results indicate that the houses were well received, although not as positively as the results in Dunbar indicate. Generally, between 75 and 80% of the survey responses were positive with respect to the compatibility of the house and landscaping, the design quality of the houses, and the contribution of the house to the character of the neighbourhood. The results in Kerrisdale are illustrated in figure 10.

About two thirds of the survey returns from Kerrisdale neighbours gave comments in addition to responding to the survey question. The following summarizes the commentary received.

Approximately 29% of the surveys made supportive comments about the compatibility, character and design quality of the surveyed house. Many surveys commented that the new house was better than many houses in the neighbourhood, or better than the house it replaced. Others expressed appreciation for the quality of materials and detail, and the appropriateness of the house to the neighbourhood.

20% of the returns made negative comments regarding the size of the house surveyed or recommended that the allowable size in the zoning be reduced. Most of those who commented negatively on size did not clarify whether their concern lay with square footage or height or both. Included in the 20% are 3% negative comments regarding height alone, and 3% that specifically referred to both height and square footage. 5% of the surveys were concerned about the size of garages or recommended that the allowable garage size be reduced.

11% of the survey returns from Kerrisdale neighbours commented that no change was needed to the RS-5/5S zoning and guidelines, or expressed appreciation or approval for RS-5/5S zoning.

10% of the surveys made negative comments about the compatibility, character, or design quality of the houses. Several comments were related to the massing of the house; that it was still too 'boxy', or that a full two storey mass was not appropriate. Other concerns related to massing were scale problems arising from gable ends facing the street that seem too tall and massive. Other comments were that the front of the house was okay but that the back of the house and the landscape were not acceptable. Some comments were directed at the quality of detail, including a concern that overhangs were not sufficient to ensure durability over time.

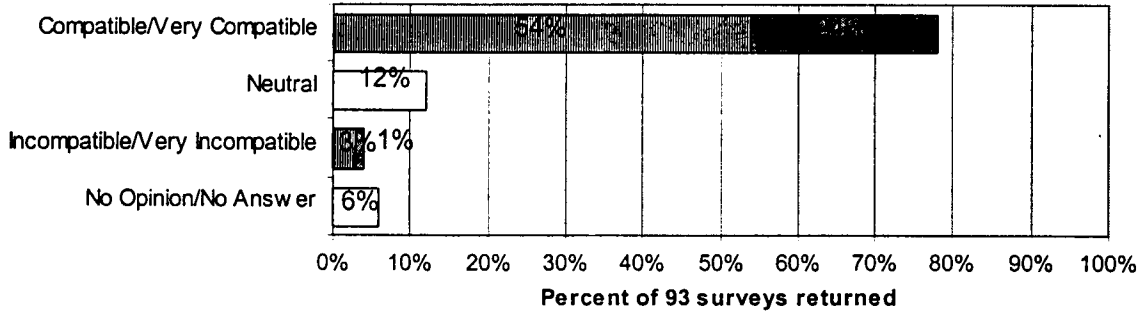
4% expressed concern about issues which RS-5/5S does not specifically address including overlook from adjacent windows, access to sunlight, views, and the design of the rear of the house.

3% of the surveys expressed a concern with the context based principle of the zoning. It was thought that in a mixed context, the designs of the new houses were not based upon the more desirable and representative neighbourhood houses, and that this allowed a perceived bias on the part of the city toward developers to be expressed in the approvals. Another concern with the context basis was that although the houses being built were appropriate, that a desirable variety would not be permitted. 2% of the surveys thought the zoning was too retrogressive.

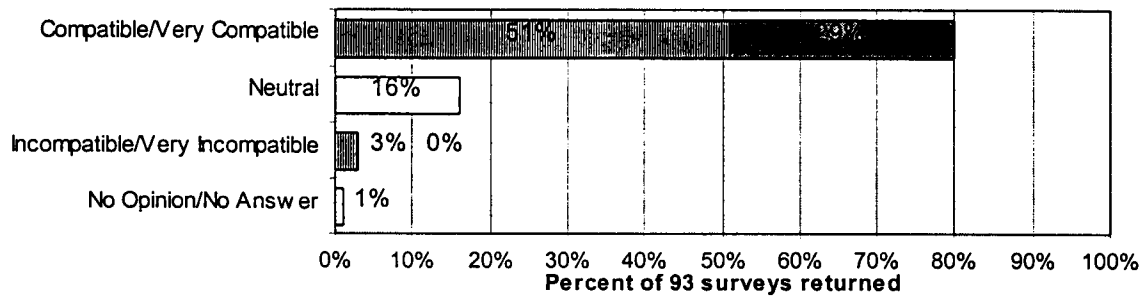
There was some commentary from Kerrisdale neighbours regarding notification and the size of houses. In response to the question about notification, most said their greatest concern was the size of house being proposed. Approximately half of those who said they had been concerned about the size of the house at notification now thought the size was compatible with or appropriate to the neighbourhood. Some qualified this with the comment that this would not be the case if too many houses in the neighbourhood were to be built to a similar size.

**Figure 10: Kerrisdale Neighbourhood Survey Results (RS-5 and RS-5S)**

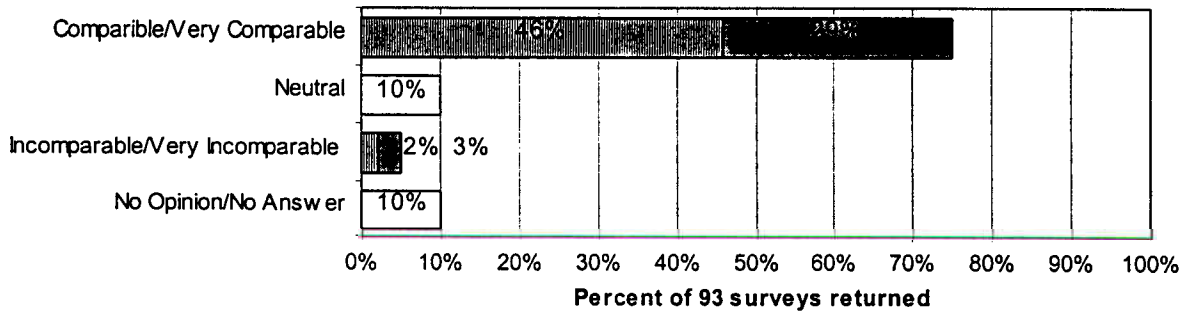
**1. Is the design of the house compatible with the design of adjacent houses?**



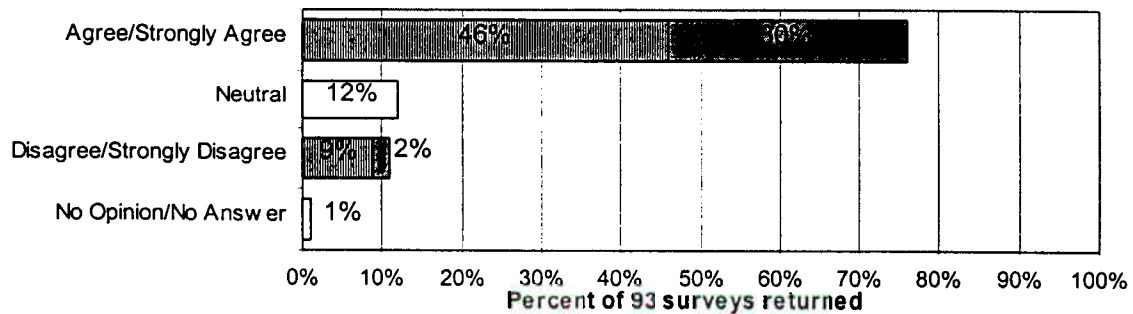
**2. Is the landscaping in the front yard compatible with the landscaping in the front yards of adjacent houses?**



**3. Is the general design quality of the house comparable to the design quality of the existing houses in your neighbourhood?**



**4. The house contributes positively to the character of the neighbourhood.**



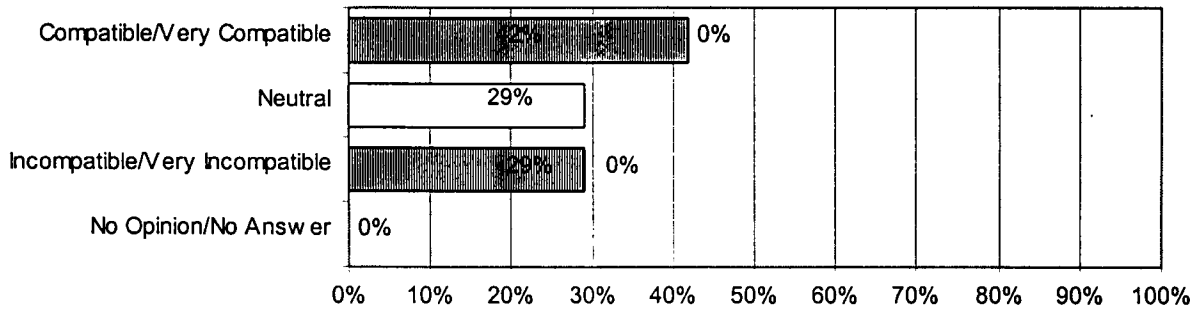
### **West Kerrisdale Residents Association**

The West Kerrisdale Residents Association provided a single survey response to each of the houses built under RS-5 in the area. The response was quite varied with some houses being well received by the association and others being poorly received. Overall, the West Kerrisdale Residents Association were the least satisfied with the houses being built under RS-5 of all neighbourhood and residents' associations. The results are summarized in figure 11.

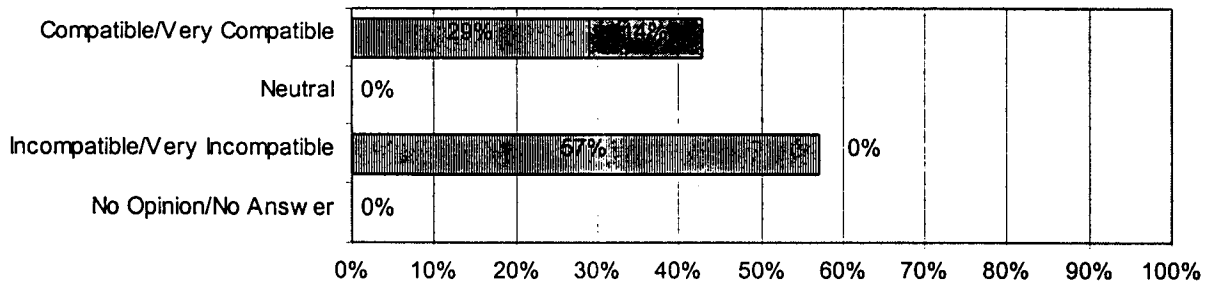
The comments provided by the association expressed disappointment with several of the houses. It was thought that these houses did not adequately reflect the character and quality of original homes in the general vicinity of the subject sites. The comments suggest the problems lie not so much in the form of the buildings but more in the materials and detailing. It was recommended that the city monitor design details such as window form and placement and quality of stucco more closely. Similarly the landscaping on several houses was thought to be unsympathetic to the context and inadequately planted. As with the house design, it was thought by the West Kerrisdale Residents Association that the landscaping required greater scrutiny of design, implementation, and inspection by the city.

Figure 11: West Kerrisdale Residents Association Survey Results (RS-5 and RS-5S)

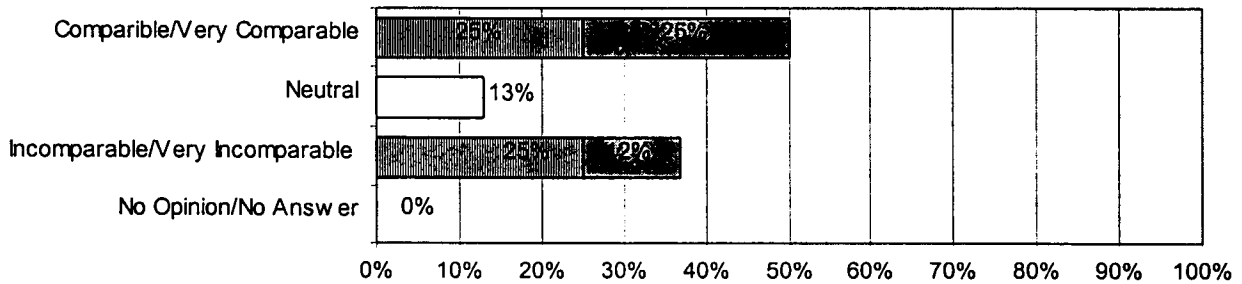
1. Is the design of the house compatible with the design of adjacent houses?



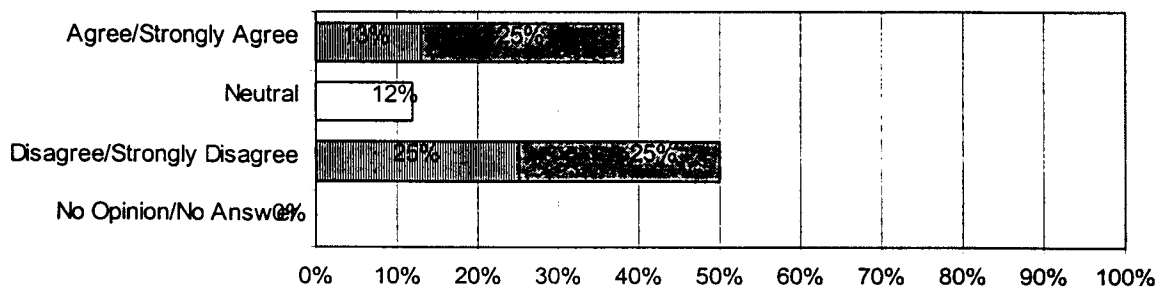
2. Is the landscaping in the front yard compatible with the landscaping in the front yards of adjacent houses?



3. Is the general design quality of the house comparable to the design quality of the existing houses in your neighbourhood?



4. The house contributes positively to the character of the neighbourhood.



## **Mackenzie Heights Neighbourhood Results**

The survey response rate from Mackenzie Heights neighbours was 22% with 229 surveys mailed and 50 returned. Five houses were completed under the conditional RS-5 option during the survey time frame. Although the results are generally supportive with 62% to 78% positive responses to the survey questions, the houses were the least well received of the neighbourhoods surveyed. The results in Mackenzie Heights are illustrated in figure 12.

Of the 50 surveys returned by Mackenzie Heights neighbours, 41 provided comments.

The primary concern among Mackenzie Heights neighbours was the size of the surveyed houses, and in particular height as it affects the views of neighbours. 38% of the surveys made negative comments about the size or height of the surveyed houses or recommended that the zoning be changed to reduce the size or height allowed. 20% stated only height as being an issue, and 12% indicated both size and height as being of concern. 12% specifically mentioned view loss as an issue. Concerns expressed included massing and character in relation to neighbouring buildings, orientation of roof ridge lines in relation to views, and issues relating to the yards and orientation of buildings on corner locations.

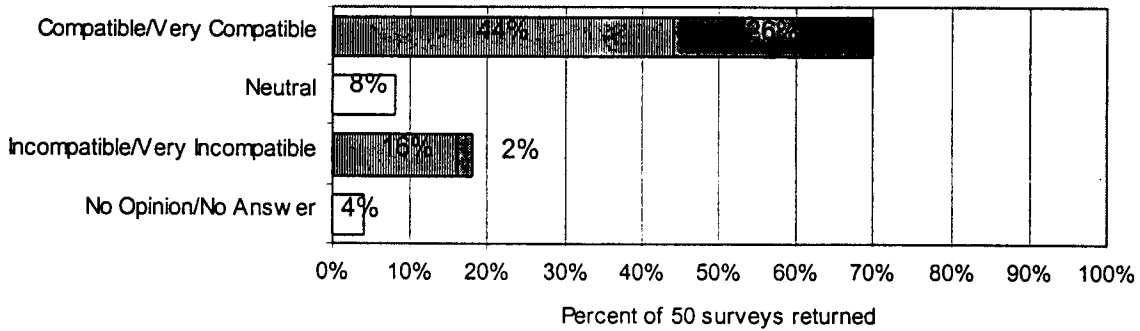
38% of the survey returns commented positively about the compatibility, character, or quality of the house. Comments included favourable comparisons to houses built before the new zoning and other existing houses in the neighbourhood. Several commented that they hoped the house surveyed was typical of the results of the RS-5 zoning.

14% of the surveys expressed support for the change to RS-5 zoning or suggested that no change was needed to the guidelines, bylaw, or process.

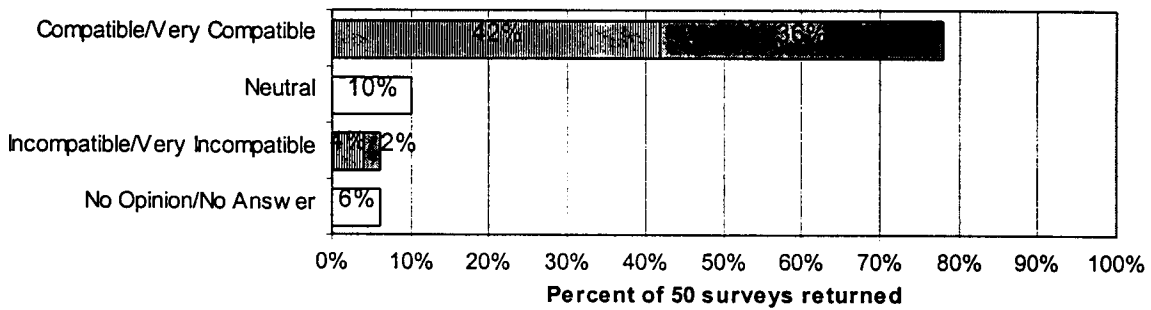
Several surveys expressed disappointment with the development permit process and thought that their comments were not taken into account as from their perspective the city and the developer had already reached agreement prior to notification. It was suggested that earlier involvement and contact with decision makers was necessary to making the process work.

**Figure 12: Mackenzie Heights Neighbourhood Survey Results (RS-5)**

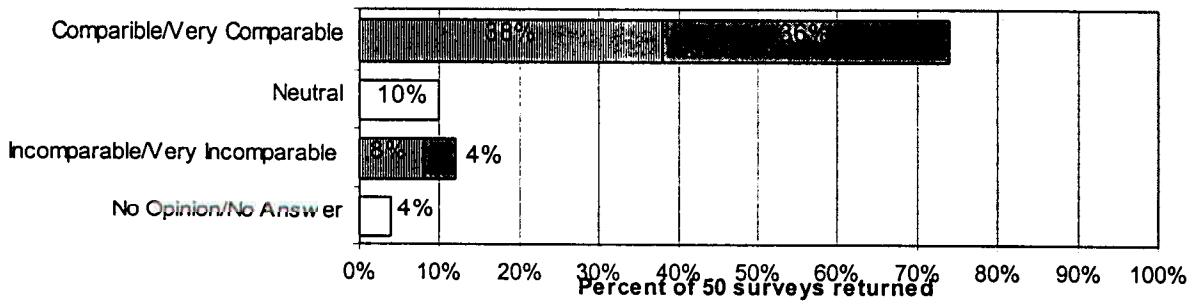
**1. Is the design of the house compatible with the design of adjacent houses?**



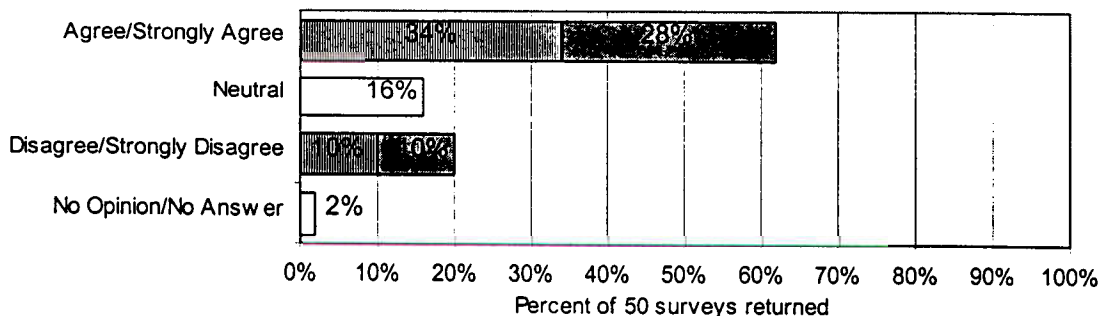
**2. Is the landscaping in the front yard compatible with the landscaping in the front yards of adjacent houses?**



**3. Is the general design quality of the house comparable to the design quality of the existing houses in your neighbourhood?**



**4. The house contributes positively to the character of the neighbourhood.**



## **Mackenzie Heights Advocacy Group**

The Mackenzie Heights Advocacy Group provided a single response to each of the surveyed houses in the neighbourhood. In general, the Advocacy Group was pleased with the houses as indicated in Figure 13.

With respect to changes or improvements to the RS-5 zoning, design guidelines and development permit process the Mackenzie Heights Advocacy Group recommended the following.

RS-5 Zoning: Consideration of special requirements for corner lots, especially 33 foot lots, to address issues arising from small side yards and orientation to the side street.

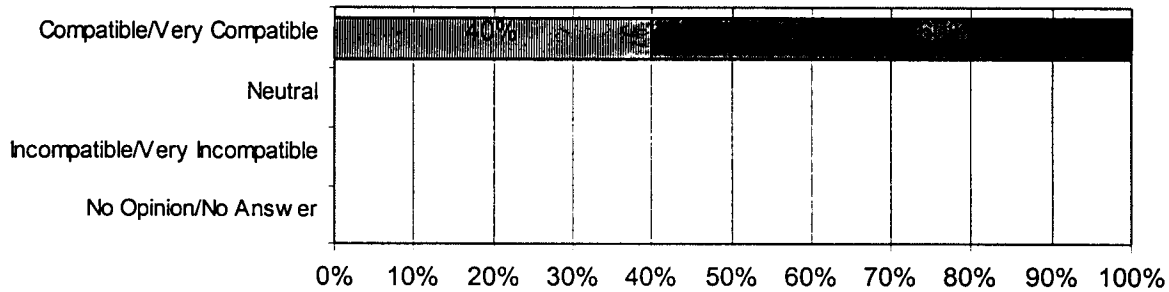
Design Guidelines: The Advocacy Group observed that there seems to be an improvement in the quality of single family homes since the RS-5 Zoning was introduced, but that there has been a dramatic change in the market resulting in very few spec houses being built. Custom houses are usually better quality. The Advocacy Group also noted that there has been an improvement in the use of materials and colour in that time period, with little stucco being used on recent examples.

Process: The Mackenzie Heights Advocacy Group thought the process seemed to be working for the neighbours and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to comment.

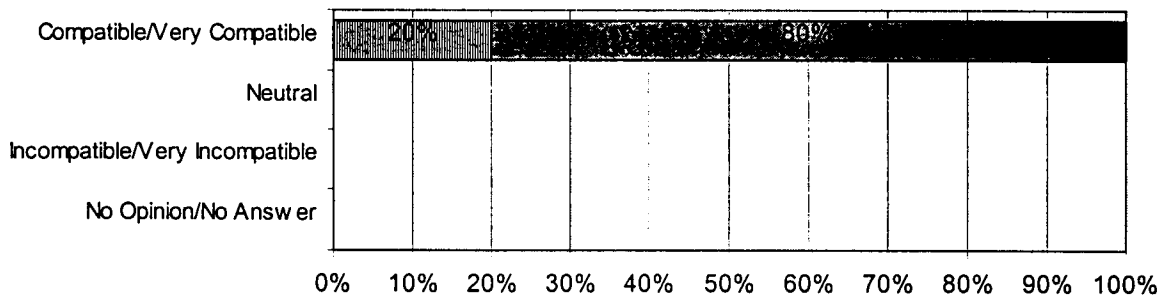


**Figure 13: MacKenzie Heights Advocacy Group Survey Results (RS-5)**

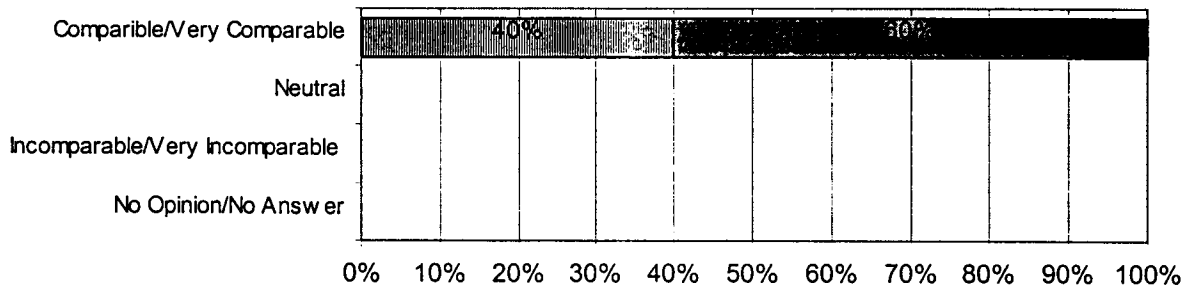
**1. Is the design of the house compatible with the design of adjacent houses?**



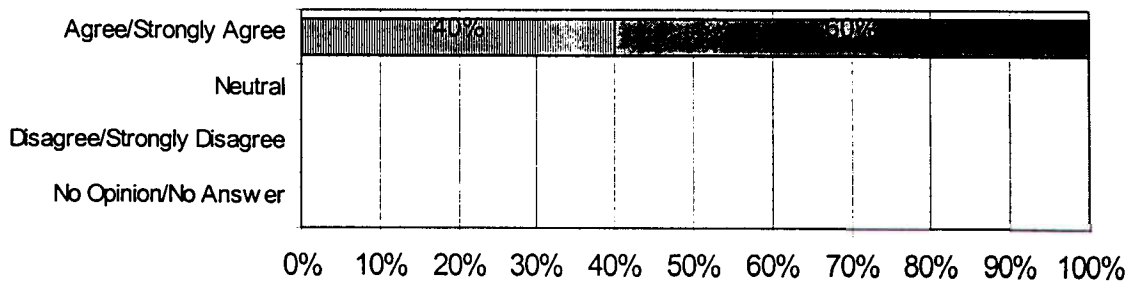
**2. Is the landscaping in the front yard compatible with the landscaping in the front yards of adjacent houses?**



**3. Is the general design quality of the house comparable to the design quality of the existing houses in your neighbourhood?**



**4. The house contributes positively to the character of the neighbourhood.**



## **Kitsilano and Douglas Park Neighbourhoods**

Each of these areas had only one house built, so in consideration of the small sample size and a desire to keep the analysis general and not specific to any individual house, the results of these neighbourhood surveys have not been analysed separately.

The Douglas Park Residents Association expressed appreciation for the change to RS-5 zoning and thought the results were an improvement over the previous several years of spec houses. With respect to changes to the regulations, guidelines and process, there were no specific suggestions other than a more general concern that requirements should not get so onerous as to discourage people from entering the process, and building in Vancouver.

## East Kerrisdale Residents' RS-6 Working Group

Four members of the working group that helped develop the RS-6 zoning gave individual responses to the survey. In general the working group members thought that the houses built under RS-6 were a marked improvement over what had been built in the years preceding the zoning, but that there was still room for further improvement (refer to figure 14). Although there were several houses that some members of the working group did not think were up to the standards RS-6 aimed for, the group generally thought that the houses reflected a good standard of building design and contributed positively to the character of the neighbourhood. It was thought that although some traces of 'wedding-cake' design persist, for the most part the surveyed houses did not exhibit the typical characteristics that had concerned the neighbourhood in past construction. Although the houses show greater individuality and more care in design than in the recent past, there are still too many that are a type of 'spec' house, and greater variety is needed. One of the members thought most of the houses were too big for the neighbourhood, and suggested that this was particularly a problem on smaller lots and with the third floor. Another member thought that the RS-5 zoning was producing better results, and suggested that moving closer to RS-5 would bring improvements.

With respect to process, one member thought that several of the houses did not adequately meet the intent of the RS-6 zoning and that the City needs to be more stringent in applying the criteria. It was thought that the form, materials and details of some of the houses were inappropriate to the neighbourhood.

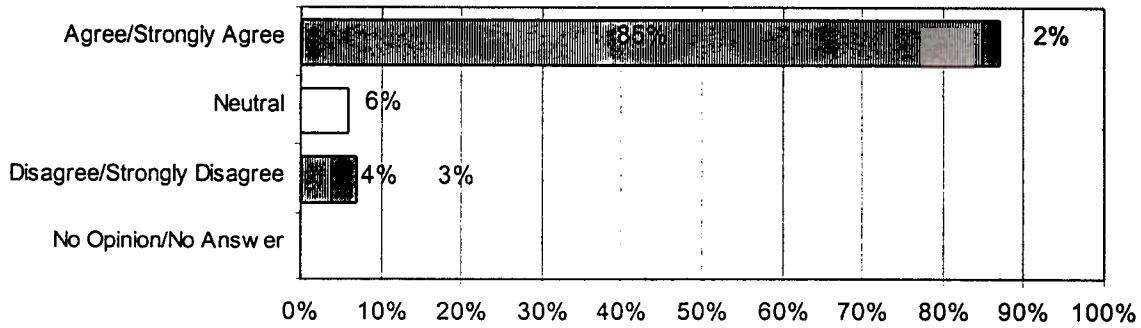
Concern was expressed regarding the quality of construction on some of the buildings and it was thought that greater assurance was required regarding the qualifications of builders and the quality of materials used (particularly stucco) to ensure durability. Comments were also made regarding the continuity of materials in that many homes did not carry materials sufficiently far back from the front face of the building. It was suggested that better follow-up was required on the installation of appropriate materials.

The working group thought that it would be desirable to see greater retention of existing houses and it was recommended that the permit process be streamlined for renovations of existing houses, or that some other kind of incentives for retention be created.

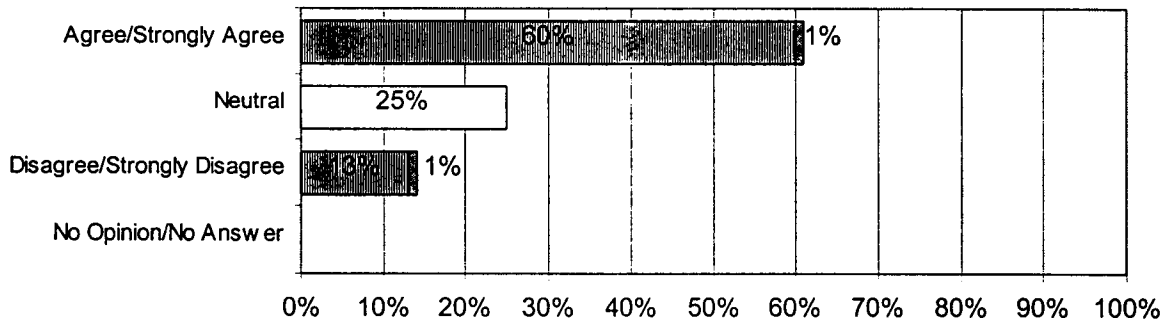
The surveyed houses were generally considered to reflect a good standard of site landscaping, although this bordered on a neutral reception from the working group members. The primary concern was the loss of significant trees and landscape and extensive, inappropriate pruning of retained trees. Also of concern was insufficient landscaping and landscaping not maintained. It was suggested that more care was required with respect to inspection at time of construction and perhaps further inspection at a later point in time. Several comments were made regarding the stone walls and rail fences that most of the surveyed homes possess. It was thought by the working group that the stone walls, fences, and gates present an unfriendly face to the neighbourhood.

**Figure 14: East Kerrisdale RS-6 Working Group Survey Results**

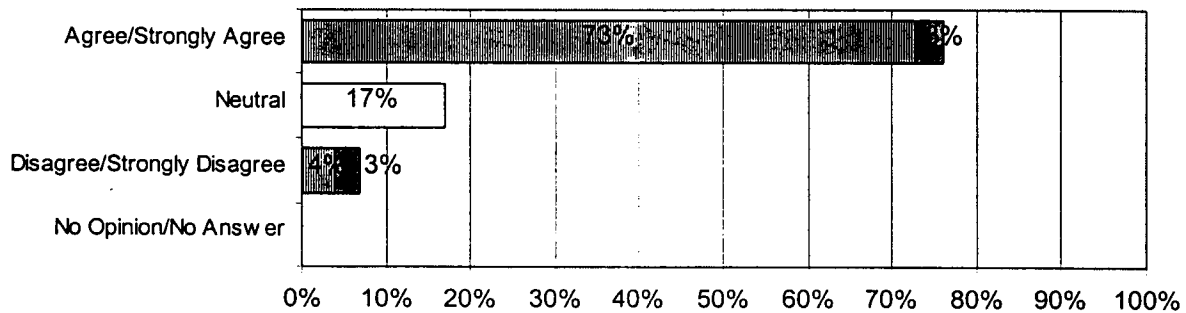
**1. Response to 'The houses generally reflect a good standard of building design.'**



**2. Response to: 'The developments generally reflect a good standard of site landscaping.'**



**3. Response to 'In general, these houses have contributed positively to the character of your neighbourhood.'**



## **West Southlands and West Marpole**

Due to the small sample size of houses in the West Southlands and West Marpole areas, the results from the survey of neighbours has not been analysed separately from the original RS-6 area of South Shaughnessy. It should be noted however, specific to the West Southlands area was a concern from several respondents about the size of new buildings in relation to the rural atmosphere of the neighbourhood.

The West Southlands Ratepayers' Association submitted a letter with their comments regarding the surveyed houses, the zoning and the process (see Appendix 'C'). The Association thought that although the houses were an acceptable design, that they did not reflect the modest, low, and diverse atmosphere of the architecture and landscaping of the neighbourhood. They expressed a concern that the bigger, higher scale that RS-6 allows has negative implications both for the character of the neighbourhood and for permeability issues and the floodplan.

The WSRA further expressed concerns about the process through which RS-6 was adopted in the area. Upon receipt of the letter, Planning responded to their query regarding the process, and explained the procedures of the Council approved interim zoning program through which RS-5 and RS-6 were offered to all single family areas of the city.

# DUNBAR RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED IN 1989 AS A FORUM FOR THE CONCERNS OF THE COMMUNITY  
 BOX 172, 3456 DUNBAR STREET, VANCOUVER, B.C. V6S 2C2 PHONE 222-9824

April 6, 1990

Peter Burch, Planner  
 Community Planning Division, Community Services  
 453 West 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
 Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1V4

FAX: 873-7898

Dear Peter:

**RE: RS-5 Monitoring Surveys**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Dunbar's experience with the new RS-5 zoning.

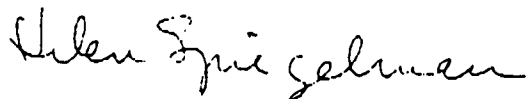
Members of our DRA Board inspected the seven houses included in the RS-5 Monitoring Survey. We also inspected nine houses which were built in the same time frame, but which were Outright Approvals built under the RS-1 rules rather than conditional approvals following the RS-5 rules. This comparison provided a "control" for the study of RS-5.

Our Board discussed our observations at our meeting on March 23. Here is a summary of our findings:

- all of the houses we looked at appear to be improvements over the "monster house" designs that had caused concern in our neighbourhood;
- however, we observed *no appreciable difference* between houses built under RS-5 rules and RS-1 rules. In all of the areas probed by the survey (fit with the neighbourhood, landscaping, quality, and contribution to the character of the neighbourhood) we found that, overall, *the RS-1 houses seemed to measure up just as well as the RS-5 houses*;
- The only reasonable conclusion is that *some factor other than RS-5 zoning* must have caused desired change in housing design (perhaps the market has responded to consumer behaviour);

Our observations seem to suggest that RS-5 cannot be considered a solution to the problem of "monster houses", and we feel that the added cost and intrusiveness of processing an RS-5 / conditional application cannot be justified.

Sincerely,



Helen Spiegelman, SECRETARY  
 Dunbar Residents' Association

cc Dunbar email list

West Southlands Ratepayers' Association

The West Southlands Ratepayers' Association held a meeting of the Directors on 12 April 1999 at which the RS-6 Monitoring Survey was discussed. Rather than complete the 3 survey sheets sent to us, we are submitting the following comments:

- 1) The three houses surveyed are in an acceptable "craftsman" design, appear to be well built (but how would we know?), and follow a reasonable but unimaginative design in their landscaping. But as 3716 W. 48th and 3719 W. 49th are part of a total of six houses built by the same developer in the same area hardly contribute to the character of the neighbourhood which generally reflects a modest, low, slightly untidy, well-tree'd and very diverse atmosphere, both in architecture and landscaping.
- 2) RS-6 has introduced even bigger and higher houses into the area, setting a precedent for future buildings. This has worrying implications, not only for the overall character of the area but for the permeability issue. This is very crucial for West Southlands which is on the floodplain. The bigger the houses and garages, the bigger such areas as roofs, patios, decks, etc. become and the less natural drainage there is.
- 3) The WSRA is very concerned that one phone call from the wife of a developer who lives in the area was sufficient to trigger the Planning Dept. into initiating the re-zoning process. No attempt was made to confirm with the Ratepayers' Association (which has existed since 1984) that it was also behind the request for re-zoning. A better way of ascertaining whether a community wishes to consider re-zoning must be found before the whole complicated (and, we assume, costly) process is put into motion.
- 4) The decision by the Planning Dept. to divide the area into two sections as far as the re-zoning is concerned was made without going back to the community. We find this totally unacceptable.
- 5) It is our understanding from the Memo prepared by the Planning Dept., dated 23 April 1997, that any re-zoning to RS-5 and RS-6 is interim "until such time as staff are able to go back into these neighbourhoods to work with them on the City Plan Neighbourhood program". We ask for confirmation from the Planning Dept. that when this time comes the West Southlands Ratepayers' Association will be immediately and fully informed. We have our own thoughts, based on long experience collected by the people who live here, about building regulations, the importance of retaining natural drainage, and the maintenance of the area's character, and we would like to share these with you.

Mike McCarthy & Gordon Weetman, Co-Chairs, W. Southlands Ratepayers Assoc.  
16 April 1999