



POLICY REPORT  
DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

Report Date: July 14, 2017  
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Meeting Date: July 25, 2017

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Introducing Character Home Retention Incentives and New Housing Choices in RS Zones (Single-family) - Proposed Amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law

**RECOMMENDATION**

- A. THAT the General Manager of Planning, Sustainability and Urban Design be instructed to make application to bring forward a by-law to amend the Zoning and Development By-law, generally as outlined in Appendix A, in order to introduce optional incentives for the retention of character homes and to add new housing choices into all RS district schedules, and that the application be referred to a public hearing. The proposed amendments are to:
- i. Add a definition for 'character house' and provide the Director of Planning with the authority to determine whether or not a building is a character house, and add additional regulations that will apply to 'character house' retention projects in all zones;
  - ii. Amend existing intent statements of all RS district schedules to refer to infill dwelling and multiple conversion dwelling in conjunction with retention of a character house;
  - iii. Add new conditional approval uses to all RS district schedules for infill dwelling and multiple conversion dwelling in conjunction with the retention of a character house;
  - iv. Add regulations to all RS district schedules to allow additional floor area for the retention of a character house; and,

- v. Add a new relaxation provision to all RS district schedules giving the Director of Planning the ability to relax certain regulations when a character house is retained;

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to prepare the necessary by-laws for consideration at the Public Hearing.

- B. THAT subject to enactment of the proposed by-law amendments as generally outlined in Appendix A, that Council adopt the *Guidelines for Additions, Infill and Multiple Conversion Dwelling in Association with the Retention of a Character House in an RS Zone*, generally as attached in Appendix B.
- C. THAT subject to the introduction of the character home retention incentives and new housing choices described in this report, that staff be instructed to report back to Council after one year with monitoring details and recommendations for improvement. In addition, staff will report back on the current interim procedure in place in discretionary zones, and ways to improve the design review process and outcomes for discretionary and outright applications for new house construction in all RS zones.

### ***REPORT SUMMARY***

This report proposes amendments to all RS district schedules to the Zoning and Development By-law to incorporate optional incentives for the retention of character homes. The incentives include the addition of conditional approval uses: infill dwelling and multiple conversion dwelling, which could be rental or strata-titled units; additional floor area; and general relaxation provisions. Steps will be taken to ensure broad public awareness of the incentives and efficient permit processing. Staff will monitor interest in the incentives and will report back in one year with possible improvements.

Changes to the balance of the RS zoning district schedules are not proposed at this time, meaning changes stemming from this report will not impact new house construction opportunities under outright provisions in zoning. In the discretionary zones (RS-3/3A and RS-5) the interim procedure currently in place, which limits redevelopment of a demolished character home to the outright floor area in zoning, will continue for one additional year. This will enable effective implementation of new zoning incentives and allow further study and public consultation on improvements to neighbourhood design outcomes and processing times for design review permits (for both new home construction and character house retention projects).

### ***COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS***

Heritage Action Plan (December 2013)

Heritage or Character Buildings Review - Interim Procedure (June 2014)

Construction and Demolition Waste Diversion Strategy (June 2014, updated December 2015)

Character Home Zoning Review - Public Consultation Update Presentation (March 2017)

Housing Vancouver Emerging Directions (March 2017)

## ***CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS***

The General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability recommends approval of the foregoing. On March 28, 2017 Council received the report *Vancouver Housing and Homelessness Strategy Reset - Housing Vancouver Emerging Directions* that included immediate actions to address the escalating housing affordability crisis. To help maintain Vancouver's social diversity and economic competitiveness, the report recommended current planning and policy work reconsider the extension and evolution of planning tools to further address housing affordability and diversity. The proposed zoning amendments in this report will help to expand housing choice in single-family neighbourhoods across the city by introducing new housing types and tenure options. These will assist families, renters, and seniors by encouraging multiple conversion dwellings and infill projects on individual lots, while supporting the retention of existing character homes. The success of the proposed changes across single-family neighbourhoods can inform future opportunities to create the right housing supply to meet the needs of Vancouverites across the city.

## ***REPORT***

### ***Background/Context***

The Character Home Zoning Review was requested by Council as part of the Heritage Action Plan (see Medium-to Long-term Action #6 in the December 2013 report entitled *Heritage Action Plan to Update Vancouver's Heritage Conservation Program*). This action directed consideration of amendments to RS district schedules (zoning regulations) using RT-3/6/8 district schedules as a model to encourage heritage and character retention. Action #6 was included in the Heritage Action Plan in response to community concern around increasing demolitions, rising land values, compatibility and fit of new homes, and the related erosion of neighbourhood character in single-family areas. The Character Home Zoning Review began by focusing first on ideas to encourage the retention of character homes in discretionary zones (RS-5, RS-3/3A), and several public consultation activities were held in these zones in 2015.

In mid-2016, the review expanded to include all RS zones, to acknowledge similar concentrations of character homes in other neighbourhoods in the City, and respond to broad city-wide interest in the issues. A comprehensive, city-wide public consultation process was held in November 2016 to January 2017. Consultation was held on a variety of options and ideas for character home retention and new house construction. Staff presented a summary of the public consultation to Council on May 3, 2017 (hereafter referred to as the "May 3 report" found online here:

[council.vancouver.ca/20170503/documents/pspc1withappendices.pdf](http://council.vancouver.ca/20170503/documents/pspc1withappendices.pdf))

and shared with Council emerging directions to incentivize character home retention in RS zones city-wide through an "opt-in" approach. Since the May 3 report, additional public consultation on the proposed incentives has been conducted and is summarized below along with final recommendations.

### **Expanding Character Retention Incentives in RT Zones - Mount Pleasant and Grandview-Woodland Community Plans Implementation**

Similar zoning amendments are proposed as part of the implementation of the Council-approved Mount Pleasant Community Plan and the Grandview-Woodland Plan. Both plans include objectives to support opportunities for additional housing and to encourage

retention of character homes. Amendments are being proposed to the RT-5(5N) and RT-6 district schedules to increase opportunities for housing choice and to provide more character home incentives. For additional information see the report entitled *Increasing Character Home Retention Incentives and Housing Choice in RT Zones (two-family) areas within Grandview-Woodland and Mount Pleasant - Amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law* (RTS12090).

## Connection to Housing Vancouver Emerging Directions

The Housing Vancouver Emerging Directions adopted in principle by Council on March 29, 2017, (RTS11850) identified a number of ways that the City is looking to connect new housing supply to local residents' incomes, family size, tenure, and location. The proposed incentives for character home retention in RS zones are identified in this report as contributing new housing choices to low-density neighbourhoods by allowing for new housing forms, and tenures.

## Strategic Analysis

As described in the May 3 report, the Character Home Zoning Review introduced optional incentives for the retention and upgrading of pre-1940 character homes in RS zones city-wide. These ideas were further refined and the proposed incentives are recommended for implementation as follows.

## Summary of Recommendations

### 1. Amend the Zoning and Development By-law to Introduce Optional Zoning Incentives

To introduce optional incentives into all RS zones in the Zoning and Development By-law, the following amendments are proposed, generally as outlined in Appendix A:

- Add a definition for 'character house' and provide the Director of Planning with the authority to determine whether or not a building is a character house, and add additional regulations that will apply to 'character house' retention projects in all zones.  
*The specific criteria to qualify as a character house remain the same as outlined in the May 3 report, and are included in the proposed new guidelines attached at Appendix B. The proposed new additional regulations will provide clarity and increased flexibility for character house retention projects.*
- Amend existing intent statements of all RS district schedules to refer to infill dwelling and multiple conversion dwelling in conjunction with retention of a character house.  
*Where appropriate in each RS district schedule the intent statement will be amended to refer to infill or multiple conversion dwelling in association with a character house that is retained. The balance of the intent statements will remain the same.*
- Add new conditional approval uses to all RS district schedules for infill dwelling and multiple conversion dwelling in conjunction with the retention of a character house, noting these units can be either rental or strata-titled.  
*Some RS district schedules already allow for infill or multiple conversion dwelling uses but the associated guidelines limit these uses to very large sites. The proposed amendments will enable infill and multiple conversion dwelling on smaller sites in conjunction with the retention of a character home.*

- Add regulations to all RS district schedules to allow additional floor area for the retention of a character house.  
*For the majority of RS zones the additional floor area will be up to 0.75 FSR for additions to a character house, or up to 0.85 FSR for infill in conjunction with the retention of a character house. For RS-3/3A the additional floor area will be up to 0.25 FSR plus 130m<sup>2</sup> for additions to a character house or up to 0.3 FSR plus 130m<sup>2</sup> for infill in conjunction with the retention of a character house.*
- Add a new relaxation provision to all RS district schedules giving the Director of Planning the ability to relax certain regulations when a character house is retained.  
*Due to the variety of site sizes and character homes, it is anticipated that some existing conditions may have limited ability to make use of the incentives without relaxations. A general relaxation provision is recommended to allow some flexibility and support character home retention projects on a case-by-case basis, as needed.*

## ***2. Adopt New Guidelines to Inform Eligibility and Implementation of the Incentives***

A new policy entitled *Guidelines for Additions, Infill and Multiple Conversion Dwelling in Association with the Retention of a Character House in an RS Zone* has been developed to inform the implementation of the incentives proposed in this report. It is recommended that Council adopt these guidelines, generally as outlined in Appendix B, pending enactment of the proposed by-law changes. These guidelines include the specific criteria for the retention of a character house, and provide technical specifications for such things as additions, multiple conversion dwellings, infill buildings, site design and tree retention, parking, and overall dwelling unit density. They aim to provide clarity to applicants as they explore options for their site, as well as to ensure that additions and new infill buildings are respectful of the character house and surrounding neighbourhood context. Any zoning relaxations the Director of Planning may be prepared to make will be in accordance with these Council approved guidelines.

## ***3. Implementation and Monitoring - Report Back in One Year***

### *Public Communications and Awareness of Opportunities*

If the amendments are approved, staff will develop an information and promotion campaign to make owners of character homes and small scale developers aware of the new incentives in both the RS and RT zones. Initial steps will include development of a web page with clear information and description of options, a dedicated email address and staff team for responding to enquiries, and information cards for distribution at the Services Centre counter.

### *Staff Training and Implementation Working Group*

An interdepartmental staff working group has been established to build staff awareness, roll-out a staff training program to ensure smooth application processing, and examine and find solutions to processing and technical challenges that may arise over the coming year. Staff will also be looking at how to effectively improve processing through the Housing Renovation Centre model, which may require supplemental staff resources and additional space in the Services Centre or elsewhere. A report back to Council on these

needs will be made based on early monitoring and evaluation of any processing challenges, as well as the amount of interest shown in pursuing the incentives.

#### *Continue the Interim Procedure in Discretionary Zones*

Staff recommend that the *Heritage or Character Buildings Review - Interim Procedure* (the Interim Procedure), established under the authority of the Director of Planning in June 2014, be continued to facilitate implementation of the proposed incentives. Subsequent review of the interim procedure will be included in the one year report back on the incentives described below. Discussion of this recommendation is provided in the strategic analysis section of this report.

#### *Monitoring and Report Back after One Year*

Staff also recommend a report back after one year to allow homeowners to become aware of the opportunities, and for some applications to be submitted and completed. This report back will include an update on the number of character homes retained and demolished, and for those retained, which incentives were pursued and how many new dwelling units were created. This timeframe also enables work arising from a Housing Vancouver Strategy to advance, so a better understanding of what income brackets and family types are served by the character retention approach should also be available.

In the one year report back, staff will include as part of the report a summary a discussion of the yield of dwelling units in the single-family zones, such as the number of new units in retained character homes, new infill buildings, new single-family homes constructed, new secondary suites, and new laneway homes.

### **Additional Analysis Undertaken to Refine Proposals**

Since presenting the May 3 report to Council, staff have conducted additional technical analysis on the proposed directions to develop the refined recommendations in this report. The goal of this analysis was to ensure that the incentives offered are attractive to the market, lead to increased retention of character homes, and create new housing choices in RS zones.

#### *Technical Review to Improve Incentives*

As part of this phase of work, staff looked at the feasibility of increasing the floor area incentive to improve attractiveness of retention of a character home over new home construction. For the majority of RS zones, a revised proposal to allow up to 0.83 FSR for character house retention with an infill building was taken out for public consultation (0.83 is a 10 percent increase over the 0.75 FSR incentive for retention of the house without infill). Public consultation feedback showed high levels of support for additional floor area for infill buildings. For simplicity in implementation, staff recommend adjusting the incentive to be up to 0.85 FSR for character house retention when an infill building is proposed. The floor area regulations in RS-3 and RS-3A are structured differently and focus on above-grade floor area to manage neighbourhood scale. The incentives for these zones are recommended to be up to 0.25 FSR plus 130m<sup>2</sup> for additions to a character house, and up to 0.3 FSR plus 130m<sup>2</sup> for infill in conjunction with the retention of a character house.

As discussed in related report recommending zoning changes in Mount Pleasant and Grandview-Woodland Plan, staff also examined the option of allowing multiple suites in an existing house. There is a major challenge in regularizing an existing house that has three units or more, where work was completed without permits. To be regularized by the City, the building needs to meet significantly higher building code requirements. It is anticipated that large character homes could meet the higher code obligations as part of a multiple conversion dwelling (MCD) proposal that would involve a significant renovation, but it would not be practical or feasible otherwise. Relaxing the Vancouver Building By-law (VBBL) requirements for a multiple-family building would conflict with both national and provincial building codes and pose significant risk and life safety issues. Given these challenges, staff do not propose zoning measures to enable the legalization of multiple suites in a house beyond the MCD option (strata) which would require meeting the VBBL requirements.

*Continuation of the Interim Procedure in Discretionary Zones to Support Incentive Implementation and Allow Improvements to the Design Review Process*

Staff recommend that the interim procedure in discretionary zones (RS-5, RS-3/3A) be maintained, should the incentives be approved. This will ensure broad awareness of the new incentives and prevent unconstrained demolitions of character homes in these areas. No action by Council is required as the procedure is established under the authority of the Director of Planning. Without the interim procedure, there will be no means to engage with applicants to encourage exploration of new retention opportunities, as it is through the interim procedure that the character merit assessment process is implemented.

The discretionary RS zones were established with the intent to encourage retention and renovation of existing development and compatibility of new buildings with existing character. With over one-third of the city's remaining character homes located in the discretionary RS zones, broad awareness of the incentives will be essential to see retention occur in a meaningful way (there are approximately 5,000 pre-1940 homes in RS-5, and approximately 300 in RS-3/3A of the total estimated 15,000 pre-1940 homes in RS zones city-wide). While the interim procedure does not prevent demolition, it limits the above-grade floor area allowed when a character home is demolished. It does not limit the overall floor area allowable, which is the same in both the outright and discretionary stream.

There has been criticism of the interim procedure by some home owners, with concerns relating to market value impacts, the appearance of new homes built in the outright stream (where no design review required), and the limit on above-grade floor area. However, staff have also heard from residents and home owners who want the City to take stronger measures to prevent the demolition of high-quality character homes in these areas. On balance, staff recommend that the interim procedure be maintained so that the proposed new incentives will have the best chance of success.

There is also a desire to improve the design review process for new house construction in discretionary RS zones. Processing discretionary permits for new houses requires significant staff resources, is a lengthy process for applicants, and does not achieve more housing units than the outright permit approval stream. Staff will look at embedding design regulations into all RS zoning district schedules, similar to RS-7, rather than having separate design guidelines or no guidelines at all. This could lead to a more efficient permit process while ensuring positive design outcomes. Also, the size and impact of

allowable parking structures on trees and landscape could be improved across RS zones in the city. Staff will examine these and related issues, and will report back to Council on possible improvements.

### *Financial Viability of Incentives*

Detailed financial analysis was undertaken by Coriolis Consulting in October 2016, of the incentive ideas to encourage retention of character homes. This analysis is summarized and appended to the May 3 staff report to Council. Findings indicated that the incentives alone may not be sufficient to encourage retention of a character home based on current market values and what is achievable under zoning for new home construction. Early ideas to reduce floor area for new home construction were proposed in part by these findings to create a greater differential between floor area allowed in new homes and that provided as an incentive for retention of character homes. These ideas were abandoned earlier this year and the work refocused on an incentives-only approach.

Additional financial analysis of the revised proposals was not conducted, as the incentives are very similar to those tested in the October 2016, with the exception of a small increase to allowable floor area for character house retention in conjunction with an infill building. For these scenarios there would be a slight improvement to the financial viability of retention than otherwise reported. Some informal feedback on the financial viability of the proposed directions was received from members of the public at open houses and practitioners at the round-table discussion. In general, both homeowners and practitioners were positive about the incentives and expressed views that projects would be financially viable in a number of circumstances.

During the recent consultation questions were asked about the impact of federal government changes to reporting requirements for capital gains tax on home owner interest. There are many factors a home owner will need to consider when contemplating the optional incentives, such as any required building code upgrades and possible tax implications. Staff recommend that property owners consult with a building code specialist and a tax advisor when exploring the incentive options available to them under zoning.

## **Anticipated Outcomes**

### *Housing Yield Projections*

There are over 15,000 pre-1940 homes in RS zones city-wide. Conservative estimates indicate that approximately 80 percent of pre-1940 homes possess character merit, indicating that approximately 12,000 homes in the RS zones may qualify for the proposed retention incentives. At this stage it is difficult to estimate how many homeowners would pursue the character incentives, or how many additional dwelling units might be created. Based on the last two years (2015/2016) the annual development in RS zones has seen 300-400 new single-family homes, 400-425 new single-family homes with a suite representing 800-850 new dwelling units, and over 500 laneway units. With the character incentives, the potential exists for hundreds of new units to be added as additional suites and laneway homes (including possible strata laneway/infill homes) as part of a character home retention project.



Regarding Council's direction to enhance and expand accessibility in residential units across the city, the proposed incentives will support increasing accessibility of existing character homes by allowing more floor area for additions (that could be made accessible), than under current zoning. In addition, the proposed infill dwelling use introduces the opportunity to create new, fully accessible units across RS zones in conjunction with a retained character home. Staff continue to study ways to improve the accessible path of travel in residential units across the city and a report to Council is anticipated later this year.

### *Potential Site Impacts*

Character retention incentives, such as additional floor area for additions and allowing an infill building (which is larger than a laneway house) in the yard, will have varying impacts on a site depending on the current conditions and surrounding context. It is possible that neighbouring sites will experience a change in solar access during certain times of day, trees may be removed to accommodate additions and infill buildings on some sites, and on-street parking may increase should parking relaxations be granted.

Staff do not propose amendments to the Protection of Trees By-law nor to the Parking By-law at this time, as both by-laws provide the ability for Director of Planning relaxations under current regulations on a site-by-site basis. The new *Guidelines for Additions, Infill and Multiple Conversion Dwelling in Association with the Retention of a Character House in an RS Zone*, generally as attached in Appendix B, have been developed based on current practice in other zones to assist in mitigating impacts of a proposed development. Over the coming year, staff will monitor site impacts on character retention projects and will report back to Council if there are any recommendations to improve outcomes.

### *Potential Neighbourhood Impacts*

While hopeful there will be interest in the new character home retention incentives, staff do not expect that incentives alone will result in a significant change to current development trends in single-family zones. Independent economic analysis has shown that an incentives-only approach is not likely sufficient to curb demolitions under recent market conditions. Reducing the floor area for new construction, as exists in our RT zones, would have a great impact in retaining character homes but is not recommended as part of this report. While the new incentives may provide some change in behaviour (as well as new housing opportunities), there will continue to be character homes demolished and rebuilt with new, larger homes. A review of the role of low-density housing areas, such as the RS zones, will be undertaken through the Housing Vancouver Strategy or other planning work programs. For example, it is possible that some RS neighbourhoods could be adapted in the future to be RT-type zones where character retention incentives are blended with opportunities for new, denser housing forms such as duplexes and triplexes. These types of studies will be explored through the Housing Vancouver Strategy or other future planning work programs and will involve public consultation.

### *Potential Heritage Conservation Program Impacts*

Many of the proposed incentives are similar to those provided for heritage properties through the City's Heritage Conservation Program. It is possible that some heritage sites (already listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register) may pursue the character home incentives under zoning rather than proceed through a heritage process, which involves a

higher level of retention and legal protection of the building through designation or a Heritage Revitalization Agreement. Character homes that pursue the retention incentives will not be added to the Heritage Register nor become protected heritage property. Staff anticipate that there will continue to be houses in RS zones that pursue incentives through the Heritage Conservation Program, but support the possibility that heritage house owners may now choose to retain their building through the character home zoning incentives instead. There are approximately 500 sites in RS zones on the Heritage Register that may be candidates for the proposed character house retention incentives. While having some of these buildings retained through character house incentives will not achieve legal protection, it is likely a faster process for applicants and may free up some staff time to focus on the conservation other types of heritage resources that are under represented on the Heritage Register. Through the Heritage Action Plan, staff are looking at other opportunities to support retention of heritage resources in low-density areas and will report back to Council on this later this year.

#### *Implications to Current Development Permit Applications*

The proposed zoning changes will not impact the processing of development permit applications already in stream. Should an applicant wish to adjust a current application in order to pursue the incentives, they can discuss the new options that may be available to them with staff and how to amend their current application as desired. Further, as there are no changes proposed to current zoning provisions with this report, active enquiries and pending applications can continue. However, homeowners of pre-1940 homes should review the proposed incentives in order to understand the new opportunities that may become available to them pending Council's decision at the Public Hearing.

### **Recent Public Engagement and Consultation Activities**

Public consultation on the proposed incentives for the character home retention in RS Zones has been multi-faceted, providing the public with a variety of ways to get involved, learn more, and provide their feedback. Highlights of the various engagement opportunities during May 27 to June 18, 2017, consultation period are summarized below.

#### *Notification*

- Advertisements were printed in four newspapers (two being Chinese language newspapers).
- Emails to the Heritage Action Plan email list that has 1005 registrants.
- Ideas were presented through a social media campaign consisting of two Facebook posts, and 10 tweets via Twitter.
- Posters were placed in all library branches and community centres across the city.

#### *Open Houses and Practitioner Round-table*

- Three public open houses were held with over 300 attendees in total. All open houses were facilitated by City staff (including multilingual staff representing seven languages) to engage with participants on the presented content. Information, ideas, and concerns were shared through one-on-one engagement and informal group discussions.
- A complete overview of the proposed directions can be viewed in the open house display boards found online here: <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/character-home-retention-incentives-open-house-boards-may-2017.pdf>

- One Practitioner round table was held with nine architects, designers, home builders and small-scale developers with experience working in single-family and two-family zones.

#### *Questionnaire*

- A questionnaire consisting of multiple choice and open-ended questions related to the proposed optional incentives for character home retention was distributed online and as hard-copy at the open houses. A full summary of questionnaire responses is attached as Appendix C.

### **Feedback Summary**

Summarized below is the feedback received in the recent consultation period from the public, practitioners and advisory bodies on the proposed directions.

#### *Questionnaire Responses*

To help inform the Character Home Zoning Review, the public was invited to complete a questionnaire to share their thoughts and attitudes on zoning incentives to encourage greater retention of character homes. The questionnaire was available online for a three week period between May 27 and June 18, 2017. Hard copies were provided at three public open house events held throughout the city in May 2017. These consultation events were well attended, attracting over 300 people that generated hundreds of conversations and 220 questionnaires were completed. Over three-quarters of respondents had previously participated in the Character Home Zoning Review public consultation held last year. Nearly all respondents lived in Vancouver and over three-quarters were property owners. In general, respondents were older as more than half reported being 50 years of age or older.

The following is a summary of the questionnaire responses:

- Similar to previous surveys, the recent questionnaire responses showed strong public support for incentives for character home retention, including a significant proportion of 'strongly agree' responses.
- A large majority (80 percent) of respondents supported providing incentives as an approach to encouraging the retention of character homes.
- Of the incentives to encourage the retention of character homes, a majority of respondents supported:
  - increasing floor area (83 percent)
  - allowing multiple conversion dwellings (78 percent)
  - allowing infill (75 percent)
  - allowing stratification of multiple conversion dwellings (70 percent)
  - allowing stratification of infill (73 percent)
- Over two-thirds (68 percent) of respondents supported the draft design guidelines.
- Comments to open ended questions included both support and concern about a range of topics related to the Character Home Zoning Review.

A full summary of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix C.

#### *Practitioner Feedback*

Throughout the process, practicing architects, designers and builders were invited to provide feedback on the proposed zoning incentives in order to refine staff

recommendations. Feedback was received in individual meetings and submissions, and one small round-table discussion held in June.

The round-table discussion involved staff and nine architects, designers, home builders and small-scale developers with extensive experience working in single-family and two-family zones. The practitioners at this session were supportive of the proposed zoning incentives and believed that they would be successful in encouraging character home retention in single-family zones. A main area of concern expressed at this meeting was related to permit processing times, and the length of time and complex review required for these types of projects. Feedback was that improvements to processing would make a significant difference to the take-up and success of the incentives.

Comments received by other practitioners through the process involves support for integrating design regulations into the zoning rather than through separate design guidelines wherever possible, consideration of exempting basements from floor area calculations for retained character homes, and a desire to see more opportunities for increased housing density in RS zones.

#### *Vancouver Heritage Commission Feedback*

Staff presented the Incentives for Character Home Retention in RS Zones to the Vancouver Heritage Commission and received unanimous motion in support. The June 19, 2017, motion is as follows:

*THAT the Vancouver Heritage Commission supports the general direction of the Character Home Retention Incentives Program, as presented at its meeting on June 19, 2017, and draws attention to the need for certainty about the application process and the need to address relaxations for non-conformities.*

*FURTHER THAT the Commission wishes to discuss the loss of pre-1940 houses and revisit the opportunity to explore greater incentives for the retention of the pre-1940's housing stock.*

*FURTHER THAT the Committee has asked that the language in the Character Homes Policy be revised to re-characterize "single family houses" as "detached houses".*

*CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY*

#### *Other Submissions*

In addition to the questionnaire, the Character Home Zoning Review page on [vancouver.ca](http://vancouver.ca) was viewed approximately 960 times during the 3 week consultation period. Staff received dozens of written comments by post and email, as well as had dozens of conversations with community members during events and meetings, and by telephone.

Many of these other submissions related to the *Heritage or Character Buildings Review - Interim Procedure*, an administrative bulletin that explains that the Director of Planning is under no obligation to approve conditional provisions of zoning by-laws when a character merit building is to be demolished. These comments and a staff response are described earlier in this report.

### *Implications/Related Issues/Risk*

#### *Financial*

New applications to pursue the incentives are anticipated to be moderate at the outset, therefore implementation will be handled by current staff and existing budgets. Staff will monitor and report back on take-up of the incentives and processing of development and building permit applications that involve the retention of a character home. Should there be significant interest in the incentives, additional staff resources may be required to more effectively and expediently process and administer applications. Staff will bring forward any future resourcing recommendations for Council's consideration as part of the operating budget process, once they become more fully understood.

Development Cost Levies (DCLs) will be collected from certain character home retention projects, depending on the amount of floor area developed as an addition or infill building, and would help pay for public amenities and infrastructure made necessary by growth including parks, childcare facilities, replacement (social/non-profit) housing and engineering infrastructure.

#### *Legal*

There are no legal implications with this report.

### *CONCLUSION*

This report recommends that Council refer the proposed Zoning and Development By-law amendments to Public Hearing as outlined in Appendix A, along with proposed design guidelines as outlined generally in Appendix B. These changes will introduce optional incentives for the retention of pre-1940 character homes in RS zones across the city. The incentives are aimed at increasing the retention of character homes as an attractive option and creating new opportunities for housing choice in single-family neighbourhoods.

\* \* \* \* \*

Amendments regarding  
Character Houses,  
Multiple Conversion Dwellings  
and Infill Dwellings

Draft for Public Hearing

BY-LAW NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**A By-law to amend  
Zoning and Development By-law No. 3575  
regarding Character Houses,  
Multiple Conversion Dwellings and Infill Dwellings  
in RS zoning districts**

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VANCOUVER, in public meeting, enacts as follows:

1. This by-law amends the indicated provisions of By-law No. 3575.
2. In Section 2, in alphabetical order, Council adds the following definition:  
  
“**Character House** means an existing building that, in the opinion of the Director of Planning, has sufficient heritage character to justify its conservation.”
3. In Section 3, Council re-numbers sections 3.2.6, 3.2.7, 3.2.8 and 3.2.9, as 3.2.7, 3.2.8, 3.2.9, and 3.2.10 respectively, and adds:  
  
“3.2.6 The Director of Planning is authorized to determine whether or not a building is a character house and, in making that determination, may consider the age and architectural form and style of the building, in accordance with all applicable Council policies and guidelines.”
4. In Section 11, at the end, Council adds:  
  
“**11.31 Character House**  
  
11.31.1 The Director of Planning may permit more than one entrance facing a front yard or a side yard if the entrances provide access to a dwelling unit in a character house.  
  
11.31.2 Computation of floor area in a character house may exclude:  
  
(a) existing covered porches that:  
(i) in the opinion of the Director of Planning, are original to the character house,  
(ii) face a street, and  
(iii) are open or protected by guard rails which do not exceed the minimum height specified in the Building By-law;

- (b) areas of undeveloped floors with a ceiling height or height to the underside of joists of less than 2.0 m located below the floors of covered porches complying with subsection (a);
- (d) floor areas under sloping roofs with a pitch of at least 7:12 if:
  - (i) the vertical distance from the floor to any part of the ceiling is 2.0 m or less, and
  - (ii) the ceiling attaches directly to the underside of the sloping roof rafter and follows its slope; and
- (e) floors used for off-street parking, not exceeding 6.7 m in length, located in an infill building in conjunction with a retained character house, to a maximum of 42 m<sup>2</sup>.

11.31.3 Building depth, in the case of a character house, means the distance from the front exterior wall measured in a straight line to a point directly opposite on the rear exterior wall, except that covered porches that comply with section 11.31.2 (a) may be excluded from the measurement of building depth.

11.31.4 Covered porches that comply with section 11.31.2 (a) may project into the required front yard."

5. In the RS-1 District Schedule, Council:

(a) in section 1, after "laneway houses" strikes out "." and adds "and infill and multiple conversion dwellings in conjunction with retention of character houses.";

(b) in section 3.2.1.DW[Dwelling]:

(i) before:

"

- Infill One-Family Dwelling" adds:

"

- Infill in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*", and

(ii) after:

"

- Laneway House, subject to the provisions of section 11.24 of this By-law." adds:

"

- Multiple Conversion Dwelling, in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*, that contains no housekeeping or sleeping units.";

- (c) after section 4.7.1(e), strikes out "." and substitutes ";" and adds:
- "(f) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.75 to facilitate an addition to a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council; and
- (g) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.85 for infill in conjunction with retention of a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council."
- (d) in section 5:
- (i) in section 5.1:
- A. at the end of subsection (c) strikes out "and",
- B. at the end of subsection (d) strikes out "." and substitutes "; and", and
- C. after subsection (d), adds:
- "(e) infill or multiple conversion dwelling in conjunction with retention of a character house."; and
- (ii) after section 5.5, adds:
- "5.6 The Director of Planning may relax the provisions of this district schedule regarding height, required yards, maximum site coverage, building depth and external design when a character house is retained, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this Schedule and all applicable Council policies and guidelines."
6. In the RS-1A District Schedule, Council:
- (a) in section 1, after "laneway houses" adds "and infill and multiple conversion dwellings in conjunction with retention of character houses.";
- (b) in section 3.2.DW[Dwelling]:
- (i) after:
- "
- Dwelling Unit in conjunction with a neighbourhood grocery store existing as of July 29, 1980, subject to the provisions of section 11.16 of this By-law." adds:
- "
- "Infill in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of [date of enactment]", and



(ii) after:

"

- Laneway House, subject to the provisions of section 11.24 of this By-law." adds:

"

- "Multiple Conversion Dwelling, in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of [date of enactment], that contains no housekeeping or sleeping units.";

(c) after section 4.7.1(c), strikes out "." and substitutes ";" and adds:

"(d) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.75 to facilitate an addition to a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council; and

(e) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.85 for infill in conjunction with retention of a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council.".

(d) in section 5:

(i) in section 5.1:

- A. at the end of subsection (c) strikes out "and",
- B. at the end of subsection (d) strikes out "." and substitutes "; and", and
- C. after subsection (d), adds:

"(e) infill or multiple conversion dwelling in conjunction with retention of a character house."; and

(ii) after section 5.3, adds:

"5.4 The Director of Planning may relax the provisions of this district schedule regarding height, required yards and maximum site coverage, when a character house is retained if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this Schedule and all applicable Council policies and guidelines."

7. In the RS-1B District Schedule, Council:

(a) in section 1, after "laneway houses" strikes out "." and adds "and infill and multiple conversion dwellings in conjunction with retention of character houses.";

(b) in section 3.2.DW[Dwelling]:

(i) before:

"

- Infill One-Family Dwelling" adds:

"

- Infill in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*", and

(ii) after:

"

- Laneway House, subject to the provisions of section 11.24 of this By-law." adds:

"

- Multiple Conversion Dwelling, in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*, that contains no housekeeping or sleeping units.";

(c) after section 4.7.1(c), strikes out "." and substitutes";", and adds:

"(d) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.75 to facilitate an addition to a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council; and

(e) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.85 for infill in conjunction with retention of a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council."; and

(d) after section 5.4, adds:

"5.5 The Director of Planning may relax the provisions of this district schedule regarding height, required yards, site coverage, area of transparent surface and acoustics when a character house is retained if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this Schedule and all applicable Council policies and guidelines."

8. In the RS-2 District Schedule, Council:

(a) in section 1, after "multiple family dwellings" strikes out "." and adds "and infill and multiple conversion dwellings in conjunction with retention of character houses.";

(b) in section 3.2.DW[Dwelling]:

(i) after:

"

- Infill" adds:

"

- Infill in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*", and

(ii) after:

"

- Laneway House, subject to the provisions of section 11.24 of this By-law." adds:

"

- Multiple Conversion Dwelling, in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*, that contains no housekeeping or sleeping units.";

(c) after section 4.7.1(c), strikes out "." and substitutes ";" and adds:

"(d) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.75 to facilitate an addition to a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council; and

(e) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.85 for infill in conjunction with retention of a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council."; and

(d) in section 5:

(i) in section 5.1:

- A. at the end of subsection (c) strikes out "and",
- B. at the end of subsection (d) strikes out "." and substitutes "; and", and
- C. after subsection (d), adds:

"(e) infill or multiple conversion dwelling in conjunction with retention of a character house."; and

(ii) after section 5.4, adds:

"5.5 The Director of Planning may relax the minimum site area, height, required yards and maximum site coverage when a character house is retained if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this Schedule and all applicable Council policies and guidelines."

9. In the RS-3 and 3A District Schedule, Council:

(a) in section 1, after "laneway houses" strikes out "." and adds "and infill and multiple conversion dwellings in conjunction with retention of character houses.";

(b) in section 3.2.DW[Dwelling]:

(i) before:

"

- One-Family Dwelling with Secondary Suite" adds:

"

- Infill in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of [*date of enactment*]", and

(ii) After:

"

- Laneway House, subject to the provisions of section 11.24 of this By-law" adds:

"

- "Multiple Conversion Dwelling, in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of [*date of enactment*], that contains no housekeeping or sleeping units.";

(c) after section 4.7.1(d), strikes out "." and substitutes ";" and adds:

"(e) notwithstanding subsection (d), the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.25 plus 130 m<sup>2</sup> to facilitate an addition to a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council; and

(f) notwithstanding subsection (d), the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.3 plus 130 m<sup>2</sup> for infill in conjunction with retention of a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council."; and

(d) after section 5.4, adds:

"5.5 The Director of Planning may relax the provisions of this district schedule regarding height, required yards, maximum site coverage, building depth and width, external design and above grade basement

floor area exclusion, when a character house is retained if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this Schedule and all applicable Council policies and guidelines."

10. In the RS-4 District Schedule, Council:

- (a) in section 1, at the end, strikes out "." and adds "and infill and multiple conversion dwellings in conjunction with retention of character houses.";
- (b) in section 3.2.DW[Dwelling]:
  - (i) after:
    - "
    - Infill." adds:
    - "
    - Infill in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*";
  - (ii) after:
    - "
    - Laneway House, subject to the provisions of section 11.24 of this By-law." adds:
    - "
    - Multiple Conversion Dwelling, in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*, that contains no housekeeping or sleeping units." ;
- (c) after section 4.7.1(c), strikes out "." and adds:
  - "(d) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.75 to facilitate an addition to a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council; and
  - (e) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.85 for infill in conjunction with retention of a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council."; and
- (d) after section 5.2, adds:
  - "5.3 The Director of Planning may relax the provisions of this district schedule regarding minimum site area, height, required yards, maximum site coverage, dwelling unit density when a character house is retained if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this Schedule and all applicable Council policies and guidelines."

11. In the RS-5 District Schedule, Council:

- (a) in section 1, after "laneway houses" strikes out "." and adds "and infill and multiple conversion dwellings in conjunction with retention of character houses.";
- (b) in section 3.2.1.DW[Dwelling]:
  - (i) before:
    - "
    - Infill One-Family Dwelling" adds:
    - "
    - Infill in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of [*date of enactment*]", and
  - (ii) after:
    - "
    - Laneway House, subject to the provisions of section 11.24 of this By-law." adds:
    - "
    - Multiple Conversion Dwelling, in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of [*date of enactment*], that contains no housekeeping or sleeping units.";
- (c) after section 4.7.1(e), strikes out "." and substitutes ";" and adds:
  - "(f) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.75 to facilitate an addition to a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council; and
  - (g) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.85 for infill in conjunction with retention of a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council;" and
- (d) in section 5:
  - (i) in section 5.1:
    - A. at the end of subsection (c) strikes out "and",
    - B. at the end of subsection (d) strikes out "." and substitutes ";" and", and
    - C. after subsection (d), adds:

"(e) infill or multiple conversion dwelling in conjunction with retention of a character house."; and

(ii) after section 5.5, adds:

"5.6 The Director of Planning may relax the provisions of this district schedule regarding, height, required yards, maximum site coverage, building depth, and external design when a character house is retained if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this Schedule and all applicable Council policies and guidelines."

12. In the RS-6 District Schedule, Council:

(a) in section 1, after "laneway houses" strikes out "." and adds "and infill and multiple conversion dwellings in conjunction with retention of character houses.";

(b) in section 3.2.DW[Dwelling]:

(i) before:

"

- Infill One-Family Dwelling" adds:

"

- Infill in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*", and

(ii) after:

"

- Laneway House, subject to the provisions of section 11.24 of this By-law." adds:

"

- Multiple Conversion Dwelling, in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*, that contains no housekeeping or sleeping units.";

(c) after section 4.7.1(f), strikes out "." and substitutes ";" and adds:

"(f) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.75 to facilitate an addition to a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council; and

(g) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.85 for infill in conjunction with retention of a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council."; and

(d) in section 5:

(i) in section 5.1:

- A. at the end of subsection (c) strikes out "and",
- B. at the end of subsection (d) strikes out "." and substitutes "; and", and
- C. after subsection (d), adds:

"(e) infill or multiple conversion dwelling in conjunction with retention of a character house." ; and

(ii) after section 5.6, adds:

"5.7 The Director of Planning may relax the provisions of this district schedule regarding height, required yards, maximum site coverage and impermeability, building depth and external design when a character house is retained if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this Schedule and all applicable Council policies and guidelines."

13. In the RS-7 District Schedule, Council:

(a) in section 1, after "infill" strikes out "." and adds "and infill and multiple conversion dwellings in conjunction with retention of character houses." ;

(b) in section 3.2.1.DW[Dwelling]:

(i) after:

"

- Infill" adds:

"

- Infill in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*" , and

(ii) after:

"

- Laneway House, subject to the provisions of section 11.24 of this By-law." adds:

"

- Multiple Conversion Dwelling in conjunction with retention of a character house existing on the site as of *[date of enactment]*, that contains no housekeeping or sleeping units." ;

(c) after section 4.7.1(c), strikes out "." and substitutes ";" and adds:



- “(d) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.75 to facilitate an addition to a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council; and
- (e) the Director of Planning may increase the maximum permitted floor space ratio to 0.85 for infill in conjunction with retention of a character house, if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this schedule and all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council.”; and

(d) in section 5:

(i) in section 5.1:

- A. at the end of subsection (e) strikes out “and”,
- B. at the end of subsection (f) strikes out “.” and substitutes “; and”, and
- C. after subsection (f), adds:

“(g) infill or multiple conversion dwelling in conjunction with retention of a character house.”; and

(ii) after section 5.9, adds:

“5.10 The Director of Planning may relax the provisions of this district schedule regarding minimum site area, height, required yards, maximum site coverage and impermeability, building depth, external design and dwelling unit density when a character house is retained if the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this Schedule and all applicable Council policies and guidelines.”

14. A decision by a court that any part of this By-law is illegal, void, or unenforceable severs that part from this By-law, and is not to affect the balance of this By-law.

15. This By-law is to come into force and take effect on the date of its enactment.

ENACTED by Council this                      day of                      , 2017

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

## DRAFT DESIGN GUIDELINES

### *Guidelines for Additions, Infill and Multiple Conversion Dwelling in Association with the Retention of a Character House in an RS Zone*

#### 1. Application and Intent

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the RS 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.

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) Additions, infill, and conversion developments are respectful of the design of adjacent properties and provide a good fit with the overall neighbourhood; and,
- (c) 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, the conditional uses of infill and multiple conversion dwelling, and discretionary variations in regulations.

#### 2. General Design Consideration

##### 2.1 Character House Criteria

*A character house is defined as 'an existing building that, in the opinion of the Director of Planning, has sufficient heritage character to justify its conservation'.*

A character house is typically a one 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 conditional floor area, infill or multiple conversion dwelling, and development relaxations.

The following are the minimum criteria:

##### 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 veranda, or only partially filled in, or other original entry feature.
- ii. *Cladding* - Original cladding or replacement cladding consistent with the era when the house was built.
- iii. *Window Openings* - Original location, size and shape (50 percent 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 on the same block face (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 severely altered and do not qualify as character houses may be considered for incentives, including 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, 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. The extent of restoration will be informed by the overall scope of the proposal. 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 extend to the side, noting that side additions should be set back from the front façade in order to create a clear distinction between old and new. Additions to the existing front facade are not desirable.

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

Additions should be subordinate to the form and massing of the original house. 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 building depth for additions, noting that additions should be responsive to the configuration of neighbouring buildings and open space [see section 4(v) of these guidelines]. The best massing solution may vary, depending on the particulars of the existing character house and adjacent buildings.

## 2.4 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.

## 3 Uses

### 3.1 Multiple Conversion Dwelling

Multiple conversion dwelling is the conversion of an existing character house to contain more than one dwelling unit, but does not include a one-family dwelling with secondary suite.

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.

### 3.2 Infill

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

In certain cases, on large sites where there is no lane access, 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.

The Director of Planning may also consider front or side yard infill buildings on large sites on a case-by-case basis, where doing so would not unduly detract from the prevailing streetscape character or the pattern of development of the surrounding neighbourhood.

To facilitate the provision of infill, relocation of the existing character house may be considered with due regard to the zoning regulations for yards, and provided significant features such as stone foundations and pillars will not be jeopardized.

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.

#### 3.2.1 Floor Space Ratio (FSR)

The infill should not exceed 0.25 FSR, or 186 square metres (2000 square feet).

#### 3.2.2 Yards, Separation and Building Width

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

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

There should be a minimum separation of 4.9 metres (16 feet) between the existing character house and the infill building 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.

#### 3.2.3 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 metres (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 metres (4 feet) above the second floor level.

ii. **Dormers**

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

Dormer walls should be set in a minimum of 0.6 metres (2 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 60 percent of the width of the partial upper storey; and,
- Dormers facing the character house should not exceed 35 percent 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 50 percent of the building length.

○ **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 maximum overall height should not exceed 5.8 metres (19 feet). The floor area of the second storey should be approximately 60 percent of the floor area of the first storey, with setbacks to reduce its' prominence.

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.

○ **Solar Panels**

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

○ **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.

### **3.2.4 Balconies and Decks**

Balconies may be located at the second storey of the infill building, and should face the lane and/or a flanking street. Upper most roof decks, or decks facing the interior of the site, are not permitted for infill buildings.

## **4 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 RS 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:

### **4.1 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;

### **4.2 Height**

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

### **4.3 Yards**

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

### **4.4 Above-grade basement floor area exclusion in RS-3 and RS-3A**

Basements are typically excluded from floor area in the RS-3 and RS-3A Districts. Historically, character houses may have a higher main floor and entry level located 2.0 metres (6.56 feet) or more above finished grade, resulting in the existing 'basement' being included in floor area. For a character house, the Director of Planning may exclude floor space below the existing main floor level which is located 2.0 metres (6.56 feet) or more above finished grade.

When the renovation project includes a new basement and foundations, the Director of Planning may require the main floor level of the house to be lowered to a height of less than 2.0 metres (6.56 feet) above finished grade to provide compliance with the regulation.

### **4.5 Site Coverage**

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

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

The area of impermeable materials, including building coverage, should not exceed 60 percent 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*.

#### 4.6 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 percent may be allowed;
- (b) For the second floor and above, a maximum building depth of 40 percent may be allowed;
- (c) In general, the building depth should not exceed 50 percent; and,
- (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 metres (100 feet), 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; and,

#### 4.7 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 existing character house designs.

### 5 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 into crawl space or parking is strongly discouraged.

Some existing character 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 existing character house, the main floor should not be located disproportionately high above grade, entry porches or features should be kept in their original location at the main floor 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 metres (18 inches), and should not be located more than 2 metres (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.



## 6 Quality, Durability and Expression

Additions, infill and conversion 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 buildings, 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.

## 7 Entrances and Access to Dwelling Units

### 7.1 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.

### 7.2 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 character 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 metres (3 feet)
Access to two dwelling units:	1.2 metres (4 feet)
Access to more than two dwelling units:	2 metres (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 infill and conversion projects, where entries to units are not clearly visible from a street (as in, units are located at the rear of the site), their presence and location may be announced through architectural and landscape features.

## 8 Dwelling Unit Density

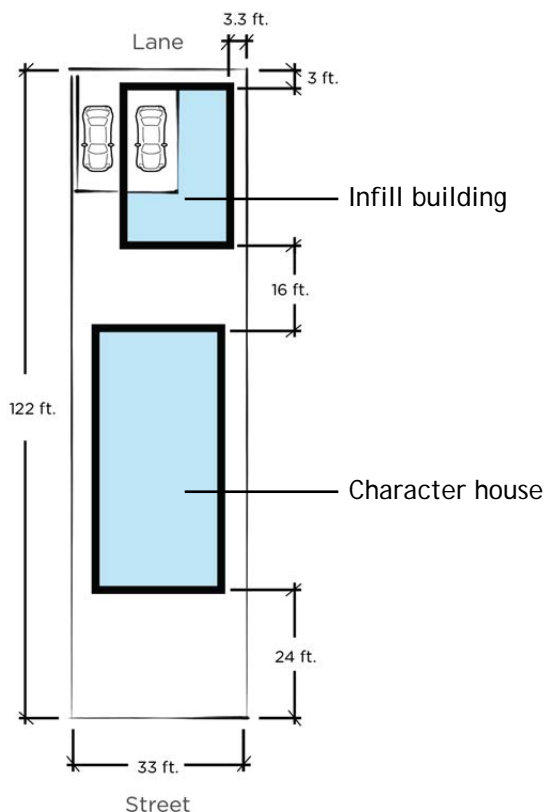
For Multiple Conversion Dwelling and Infill, the dwelling unit density should be 74 units per hectare for the overall site.

The dwelling unit density will generally allow three units on a standard 33 foot wide lot and four units on a standard 50 foot wide lot.

## 9 Parking

One parking space per dwelling unit should be provided, where possible. The Director of Planning may consider a lesser number of parking spaces where warranted due to site constraints.

On 33 foot wide lots, a maximum of two spaces may be considered: 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 must be permeable, such as permeable pavers or wheel strips in gravel or ground cover. Standard unit pavers are not considered as permeable. Surface parking should be screened with landscape where possible, and buffered by a 1.0 metre (3.3 feet) landscape planting bed where adjacent to a side property line, noting that dimension may be reduced to 0.3 metres (1 foot) for 33 foot lots to accommodate a fence and climbing vine planting.

## 10 Landscape Design

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.

### 10.1 Street Frontage

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

### 10.2 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.

### 10.3 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 metres (5.0 feet) may meet the intent of the guidelines for private outdoor space.

### 10.4 Lane Frontage

The 0.9 metres (3.0 feet) 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 inch curb should be provided to protect planting beds at lane edge. Vehicular gates, including sliding types, are discouraged.

### 10.5 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.



# Consultation Overview

## Background

The *Character Home Zoning Review* explores ways to encourage the retention of pre-1940 character homes in single-family (RS zoned) neighbourhoods. City Council requested this work as part of the Heritage Action Plan (HAP), a comprehensive review of the City's Heritage Conservation Program. In this phase, we proposed optional retention incentives for character homes in all single-family (RS zoned) neighbourhoods across the city. We sought public feedback on these incentives to inform and shape directions and recommendations to City Council.

## Public Engagement

To help inform the review, we held three public open houses in various parts of the city in May 2017. These consultation events were well attended, attracting over a 300 people that generated hundreds of conversations. We invited members of the public to complete a questionnaire to share their thoughts and attitudes on ideas to encourage greater retention of character homes. The questionnaire was available for a three week period between May 27 and June 18, 2017. It was broadly promoted with four newspaper advertisements, and posters in local community centres and libraries. There was an extensive social media campaign that generated over 960 webpage views. A practitioner round-table discussion was also held with architects, designers, home builders and small-scale developers, as well as many conversations and meetings were held with interested stakeholder.

The questionnaire was widely available, including:

- At three consultation open houses (May 2017)
- Through the Heritage Action Plan list-serv
- On the *Character Home Zoning Review* webpage ([vancouver.ca/characterhomereview](http://vancouver.ca/characterhomereview))
- Through social media links (Facebook, Twitter)

### Quick Stats

- 220 completed questionnaires
- 76% previously participated in the *Character Home Zoning Review*
- 96% of respondents live in Vancouver
- 87% heard about the *Character Home Zoning Review* online
- 82% are home owners and 16% are renters (2% other)
- 58% over 50 years of age

# Questionnaire Summary

## Executive Summary

The following is a high-level overview of findings of the *Character Home Retention Incentives* questionnaire.



Support providing **incentives overall** as an approach to encourage character home retention in single-family zones across the city.



Support for **increasing floor area** to encourage character home retention in all single family zones across the city.



Support for **allowing multiple conversion dwellings** in all single-family zones across the city to encourage character home retention.



Support for **allowing infill** in all single-family zones across the city when an existing character home is retained.



Support for **allowing strata-titling of multiple conversion dwellings** when an existing character home is retained.



Support for **allowing strata-titling of infill** when an existing character home is retained.



Support the **draft design guidelines** for existing character homes, multiple conversion dwellings, and infill.

Please note: As a result of rounding, percentages may not necessarily add up to 100%.

# Character Home Retention Incentives

## Question 1

Floor area can be a factor in whether a character home is retained or demolished. Increasing allowable floor area for sites with a character home encourages retention by providing opportunities to add more living space, such as an addition, and/or build a second dwelling.

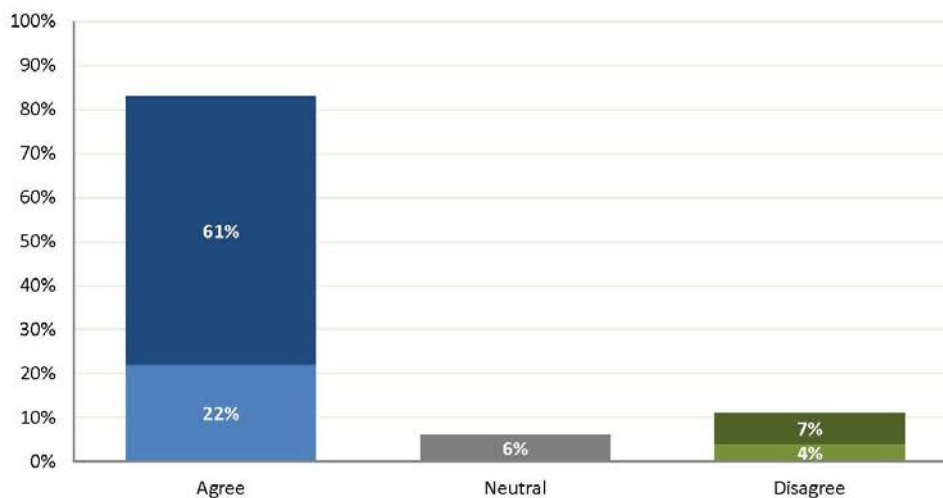
**Do you agree or disagree with increasing allowable floor area to encourage character home retention in all single-family RS zones across the city?**

## Snapshot

- Over three-quarters (83 percent) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with increasing floor area to encourage character home retention in all single family zones across the city, with almost two-thirds (61 percent) strongly agreeing.

## Results

Total respondents (218)



# Character Home Retention Incentives

## Question 2

A multiple conversion dwelling is an existing house that has been divided into two or more dwelling units. The units can be strata-titled. This allows an owner of a character home to renovate and convert their house into multiple units that can be sold separately or kept as rental units.

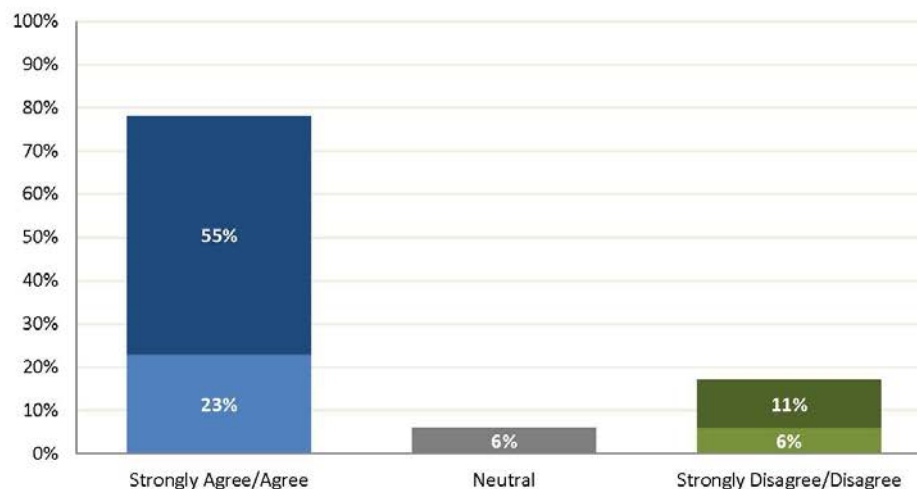
**Do you agree or disagree with allowing multiple conversion dwellings in all single-family RS zones to encourage character home retention?**

## Snapshot

- Three-quarters (78 percent) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with allowing multiple conversion dwellings in all single-family zones across the city to encourage character home retention, with over half (55 percent) strongly agreeing.

## Results

Total respondents (218 responses)





# Character Home Retention Incentives

## Question 3

An infill is a second house with one or more units built on a property with an existing house. An infill is typically larger than a laneway house, and would only be allowed when the existing character home is retained. Infill can be strata-titled. This allows an owner of a character home to build an infill that can be sold separately from the existing house or kept as rental units.

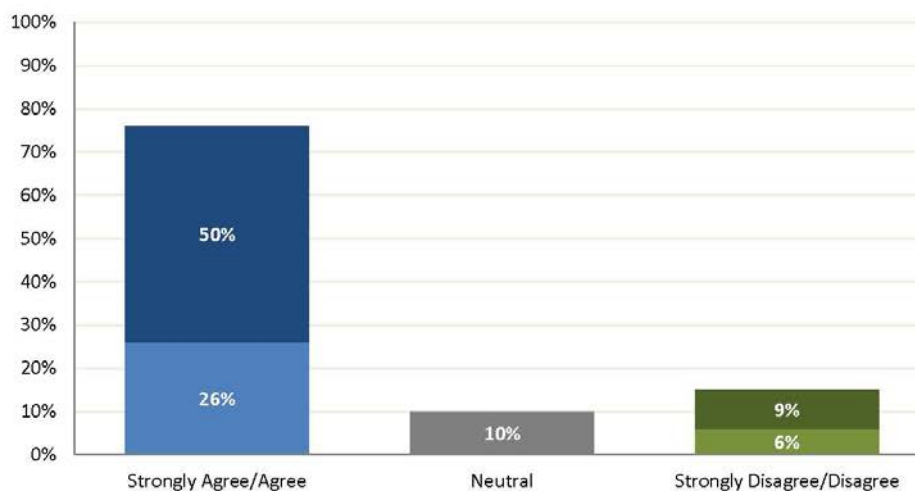
**Do you agree or disagree with allowing infill in all single-family RS zones across the city when an existing character home is retained?**

## Snapshot

- Three-quarters (75 percent) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with allowing infill in all single-family zones across the city when an existing character home is retained, with half (50 percent) strongly agreeing.

## Results

Total respondents (218 responses)



# Character Home Retention Incentives

## Question 4

Currently in single-family RS zones, only single-title ownership is permitted. This means a site, regardless of the number of units, can only be sold as a whole. The proposed new housing types (infill and multiple conversion dwellings) can be strata-titled. Strata-titling allows home owners to sell these dwelling units separately or keep them as rental units.

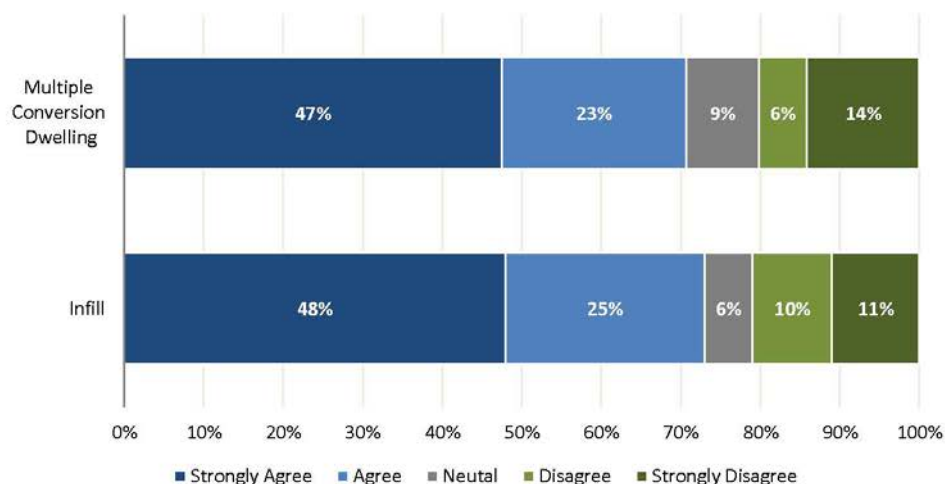
- Do you agree or disagree with allowing strata-titling of multiple conversion dwellings in all single-family RS zones across the city when an existing character home is retained?
- Do you agree or disagree with allowing strata-titling of infill in all single-family RS zones across the city when an existing character home is retained?

## Snapshot

- Over two-thirds (70 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with allowing strata-titling of **multiple conversion dwellings** when an existing character home is retained.
- Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with allowing strata-titling of **infill** when an existing character home is retained.

## Results

Total respondents (219 responses)



# Character Home Retention Incentives

## Question 5

To summarize, the following zoning incentives are being proposed to encourage the retention of character homes: increasing allowable floor area, introducing new housing types (multiple conversion dwellings and infill), and providing the option to strata-title these new housing types.

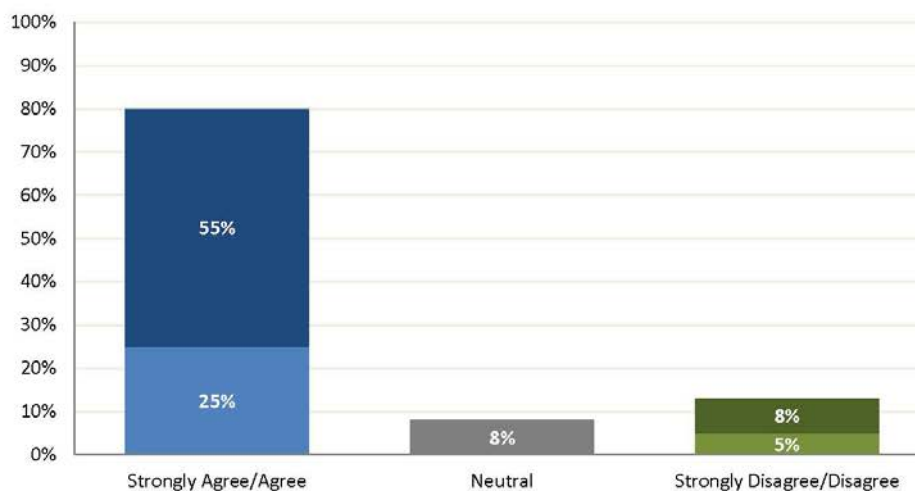
**Overall, do you agree or disagree with the approach of providing incentives to encourage character home retention in all single-family RS zones across the city?**

## Snapshot

- Over three-quarters (80 percent) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the approach of providing incentives to encourage character home retention in single-family zones across the city, with more than half (55 percent) strongly agreeing.

## Results

Total respondents (218 responses)



# Draft Design Guidelines

## Question 6

Design guidelines are a companion to zoning regulations and provide direction to applicants proposing developments, and City staff in evaluating these projects. Design guidelines help enhance the character of a neighbourhood, and focus on the aesthetics and function of a building, such as size, height, etc.

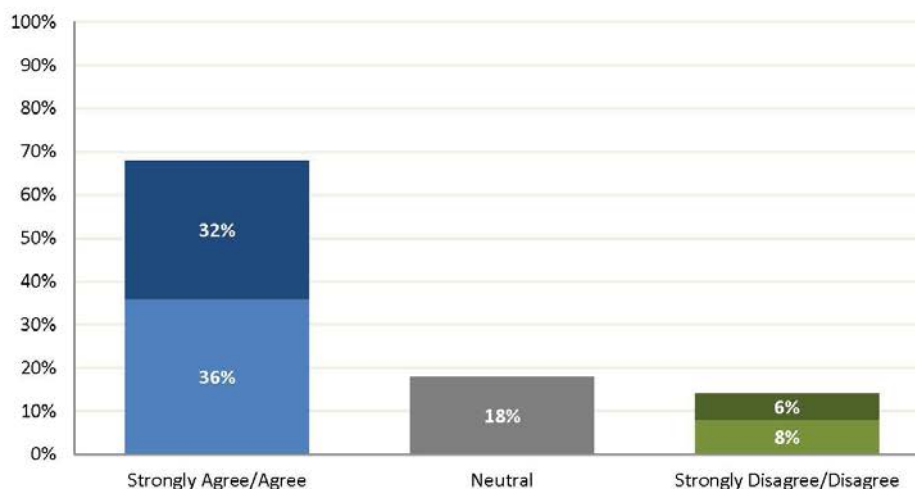
**Overall, do you agree or disagree with the draft design guidelines?**

## Snapshot

- Two-thirds (68 percent) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the draft design guidelines.

## Results

Total respondents (217 responses)



## Other comments

### Other thoughts we heard

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#### Main themes:

- Support for incentives with some suggesting that incentives should only be considered with disincentives to discourage the demolition of character homes.
- Concerns about the loss of neighbourhood character, as well as the pace and amount of change in established neighbourhoods.
- Desire for faster processing times, particularly for developments retaining character homes.
- Mixed responses to the role of single family neighbourhoods with support for maintaining single-family neighbourhoods as low-density areas as well as concerns about housing affordability, particularly the need for high density housing types.
- Concerns about vacant and unoccupied homes, and lack of building maintenance.
- Desire for incentives to be provided for new homes built to look like character homes.

#### Sample comments:

- "I think there should be disincentives to deter the demolition of character homes."
- "I am pleased as a non-character home owner that restrictions on new construction's FSR have been removed from the proposed zoning change."
- "Well-built, renovated homes should not be demolished to feed the growing greed of the spec builders and property flippers. We have many, many empty homes - all to the detriment of the neighbourhoods. Again, we fill out questionnaire and write letters but the neighbourhood is a war zone of demolition and noise and more unpleasantness. Less and less the neighbourhood and city I love."
- "No more demolition permits are to be given out until every renovation permit which is retaining a character house or even better creating more housing units within a character home have been approved."
- "No. 1 incentive to retain is fast track permit process for renovations. Make it simpler. Allowances and relaxations. Right now it is faster, cheaper to build new."
- "The idea of cramming more dwellings onto single family lots will destroy the single family zones in Vancouver and will do nothing to increase affordability of homes. These units will simply be purchased for investment with no one living in them. Exactly as what has already occurred with Vancouver homes and condos."
- "A better priority would be to rezone these neighbourhoods to allow for duplexes, row houses and low-rises."
- "Increasing allowable FSR is a good idea, the rest of your suggestions are not as you will ruin the character of single family neighbourhoods."
- "The new houses that are being built fit in nicely with the neighbourhood so why keep a decaying "character" house. The new houses have character."

# Demographics

## Question

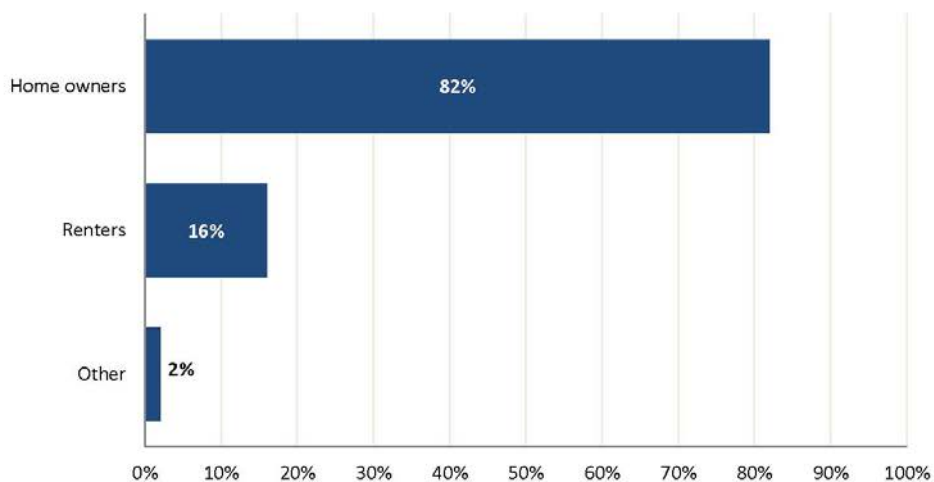
Do you own or rent your home?

## Snapshot

- Over three-quarters (82 percent) of respondents were home owners.

## Results

Total respondents (217)





# Demographics

## Question

Where do you live?

## Snapshot

- The majority of respondents (96 percent) live in Vancouver.
- Three-quarters (75 percent) live in single-family zone that share similar zoning regulations (RS-1, RS-1A, RS-1B, RS-2, RS-4, RS-5, RS-6, and RS-7).

## Results

Total respondents (217 responses)

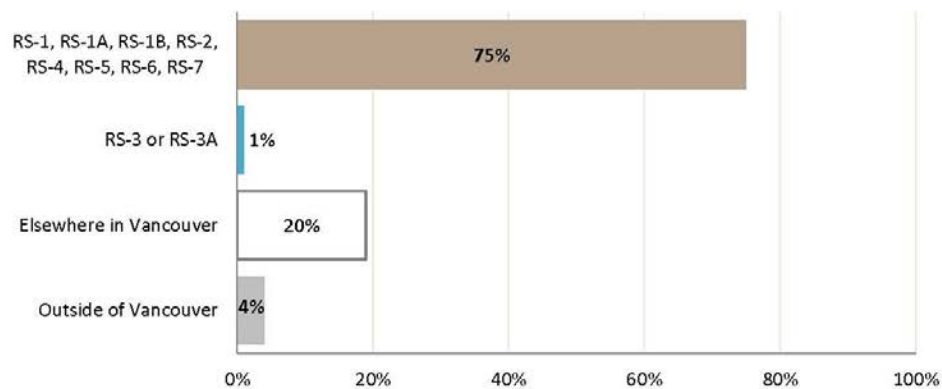
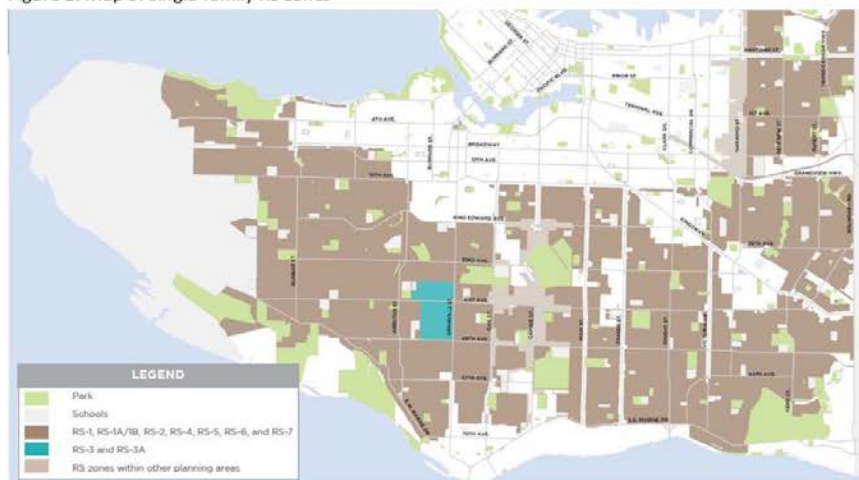


Figure 1: Map of single-family RS zones



# Demographics

## Question

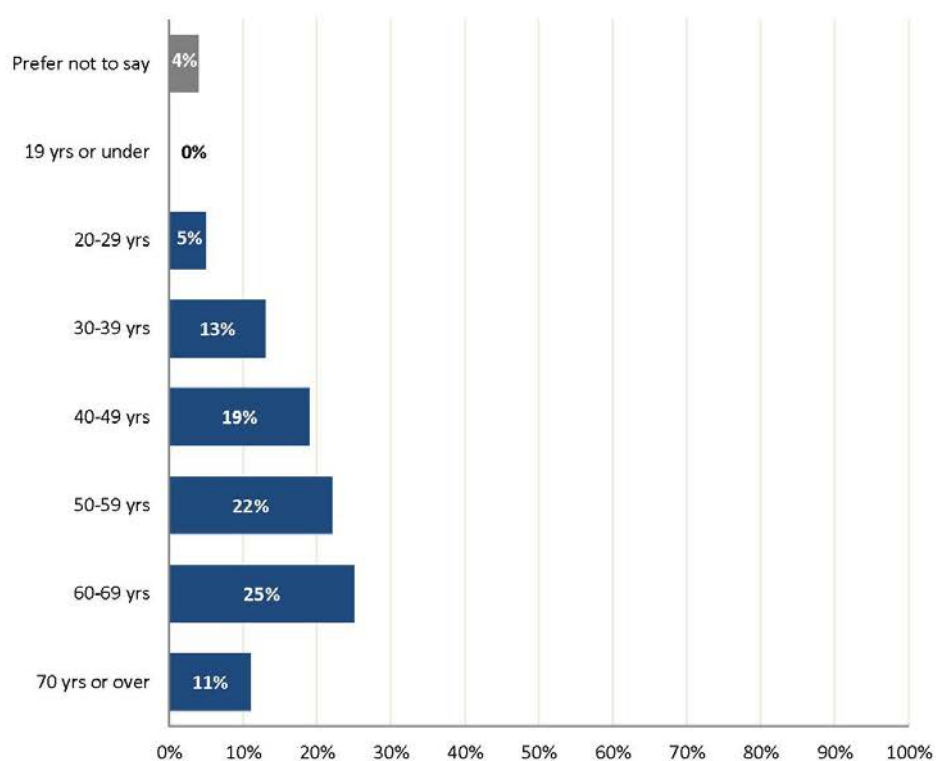
What is your age category?

## Snapshot

- More than half (58 percent) of respondents were over 50 years of age.
- Less than a quarter (18 percent) of respondents were under the age of 40.

## Results

Total respondents (218 responses)





## Demographics

### Question

How did you hear about the *Character Home Zoning Review* consultation?  
Choose all that apply.

### Snapshot

- Over two-thirds (76 percent) of respondents previously participated in the *Character Home Zoning Review*
- Over two-thirds (87 percent) heard about the *Character Home Zoning Review* consultation through an online source.

### Results

Total respondents (219 responses)

