



City of Vancouver *Planning - By-law Administration Bulletins*

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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RT Districts Infill and Conditional Density

Authority - Director of Planning

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1 Introduction

This bulletin clarifies the administration of the RT District Schedules and Guidelines regarding infills and discretionary density being applied to sites not meeting the minimum size or the side yard requirements of the District Schedule or Guidelines. Where sites are located in retention zones, the Director of Planning will rely on existing zoning requirements to fulfill the retention objectives of the area.

The bulletin is limited to the following zones: RT-3, RT-4, RT-5, RT-6, RT-7 and RT-8; other RT zones are not subject to the guidelines outlined herein.

2 Background

The Heritage Action Plan (HAP) was adopted in December 2013. A component of the HAP was to incentivize retention by alleviating the requirement for a proforma for additional density up to 10% for those zones where retention incentives are not already in place, i.e. RS zones and some RT zones (see Bulletin Heritage Proforma Review - Interim Policy (<http://former.vancouver.ca/commsvcs/bylaws/BULLETIN/H007.pdf>)). Where sites are located in effective retention zones, the Director of Planning will rely on existing zoning requirements to fulfill the retention objectives of the area.

For RT sites seeking an infill and/or increases in density, applicants should refer to the applicable District Schedule and Guidelines. The criteria for infill eligibility on these sites and discretionary density are summarized further below.

3 Synopsis of Retention Zones

RT-3: The RT-3 zoning is designed to encourage the retention of its neighbourhood and streetscape character. Within the District Schedule, there is considerable discretion in the regulations to achieve a floor space ratio up to .95 FSR for infill projects. The granting of density beyond 0.95 FSR is not anticipated. If a character house is demolished only the outright FSR will be permitted. The required site area for an infill is 418 m². The site area criteria is expected to be met except that corner sites having a site area of less than 418 m² may be considered for an infill if a sensitive response to adjacent sites is demonstrated;

RT-4 (RT-4, RT-4A, RT-4N and RT-4AN): The RT-4 zoning encourages the retention of existing residential structures and maintain a family emphasis. The zone has both outright and conditional density at 0.60 FSR. The Director of Planning may consider the HAP incentives for additional 10%, however the Guideline requirements for infill sites will apply. Infills are possible on sites with a minimum adjacent side yard of 4.9 m (16 ft.) [*RT-4 Guidelines Section 3.1.2*]. The Director of Planning may consider varying this criteria if:

- (a) An addition to the existing house overwhelms its heritage character, and
- (b) An infill is suited to its context and does not require the removal of mature trees;

RT-5 (RT-5, RT-5A, RT-5N and RT-5AN): The RT-5 zoning is designed to encourage the retention of existing character structures by allowing for an increase in floor space ratio from 0.6 to 0.75 FSR. If a character house is demolished only the outright FSR will be permitted.

Infills are possible on sites with a minimum adjacent side yard of 4.9 m (16 ft.) [RT-5 Guidelines Section 3.1.2] The Director of Planning may consider varying this criteria if:

- (a) An addition to the existing house overwhelms its heritage character, and
- (b) An infill is suited to its context and does not require the removal of mature trees;

RT-6: This neighbourhood is known as the special character merit area of West Mount Pleasant. The established building pattern is large character houses on large lots that are framed by mature trees. The RT-6 zoning is designed to encourage the retention of existing character structures by allowing for an increase in floor space ratio from 0.6 to 0.75 FSR. If a character house is demolished only the outright FSR will be permitted. Infills are possible on sites with a minimum adjacent side yard of 4.9 m (16 ft.) [RT- 6 Guidelines Section 3.1.2] The Director of Planning may consider varying this criteria if:

- (a) An addition to the existing house overwhelms its heritage character, and
- (b) An infill is suited to its context and does not require the removal of mature trees;

RT-7: The intent in this zone is to support retention and renovation of existing buildings that maintain the architectural style and building form consistent with the historical character of the area. The RT-7 zoning is designed to encourage the retention of existing character structures by allowing for an increase in floor space ratio from 0.4 to 0.6 FSR, primarily through additions. If a character house is demolished only the outright FSR will be permitted. Infills are possible on sites with a minimum adjacent side yard of 4.9 m (16 ft.) [RT- 7 Guidelines Section 3]. In cases where buildings are on the *Vancouver Heritage Register*¹ (VHR), or strong candidates to be brought on it, the side yard requirement may be reduced to 3.7m. (*Kitsilano RT-7 & RT-8 Guidelines [Section3.1.2 (a) iii]*).

RT-8: The intent in this zone, like RT-7, is to support retention and renovation of existing buildings that maintain the architectural style and building form consistent with the character of the area. The RT-8 zoning is designed to encourage the retention of existing character structures by allowing for an increase in floor space ratio from 0.5 to 0.75 FSR, primarily through additions. If a character house is demolished only the outright FSR will be permitted. Infills are possible on sites with a minimum adjacent side yard of 4.9 m (16 ft.) [RT-8 Guidelines Section 3]. In cases where buildings are on the *Vancouver Heritage Register*¹ (VHR), or strong candidates to be brought on it, the side yard requirement may be reduced to 3.7m. (*Kitsilano RT-7 & RT-8 Guidelines [Section3.1.2 (a) iii]*).

4 HAP – Heritage Action Plan Density Considerations

The Director of Planning has the authority to consider density up to 10% beyond what is prescribed in a District Schedule to incentivize the retention of a heritage resource [Section 3.2.5 Zoning & Development By-law]. Where sites are located in retention zones, the Director of Planning will rely on existing zoning requirements to fulfill the retention objectives of the area. Discretionary density is highly conditional and not achievable in all cases. The Director of Planning may reserve approval of discretionary density for the protection of a heritage resource. In general the granting of any discretionary density for an addition is the preferred option on sites not meeting the minimum size or side yard requirements for infills as outlined in the applicable Guidelines.

5 Conclusion

Retention projects need to be reviewed carefully based on their specific merits and rigorous analysis of the context. In some cases, the Director of Planning may consider varying criteria for an infill. In all cases, whether considering an infill on a site that otherwise would not occur, or granting discretionary density, the urban design performance criteria including shadowing, visual scale, privacy, overlook, and compatibility with adjacent sites must always be achieved with excellence and upheld by general support of neighbours and advisory bodies. Staff will continue to monitor and adjust the administration of retention zones as the HAP work continues and evolves.

¹ *Vancouver Heritage Register*: <http://vancouver.ca/docs/planning/vancouver-heritage-register-2011-September-19.pdf>