



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

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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ZERO EMISSIONS BUILDING CATALYST POLICY

Adopted by City Council on May 22, 2018

Effective May 23, 2018

Amended December 10, 2019, April 26, 2023, October 17, 2023, April 23, 2024, and March 11, 2025

1 Introduction

In July 2016, Vancouver City Council approved the Zero Emissions Building Plan, aimed at reducing emissions from new buildings by 90% in 2025. The Plan also adopted a target of reducing emissions from all newly permitted building to zero by 2030. In adopting the Plan, Council directed the development of new measures to facilitate the development of zero emission buildings and provide them with equal weight as other public policy objectives wherever such rules offer discretion to City officials or boards.

In May 2018, Council approved new catalyst tools to help builders and developers demonstrate zero emissions multi-unit residential and mixed-use buildings in advance of 2025. The purpose of this policy is to inform staff and applicants about the range of measures available to advance zero emission buildings at the rezoning and development permit stage, with reference to the Zoning and Development By-law and related Planning policies.

2 Limits

The Director of Planning may decline to apply this policy if the proposed development would detract from other civic goals, especially where the proposed development would affect:

- Buildings that are listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register
- Existing buildings with rental dwelling units in a Rate of Change area
- Council-approved view corridors, except where permitted in policy
- Lot assemblies that unduly restrict the development of remaining parcels

Council has directed that Vancouver's Building By-law should be updated with time-stepped targets aimed at achieving zero emissions in line with the Zero Emissions Building Plan. Therefore, this policy will cease to be in effect on December 31, 2025.

3 Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, zero emissions buildings are projects designed for certification under the Passive House standard set by Passive House International (PHI), or the Zero Energy standard set by the International Living Future Institute (ILFI).

In this policy, reference to the Director of Planning includes the Development Permit Board.

4 General

Applications must respond to a wide range of policies including community plans, district schedules and design guidelines. Where appropriate, the Director of Planning may consider using discretion to facilitate a zero emissions building. Examples of regulations, policies and guidelines that may be considered for relaxation or variance include frontage regulations, floor plate policies, and built form guidelines.

Relaxation or variance is discretionary, and the maximum amount proposed or permitted in policy or regulation may not be supported. Amounts will be evaluated based on the specifics of each proposal.

When making an enquiry or application under this policy, applicants should demonstrate the comprehensive integration of all other aspects of the relevant policies and regulations, including those on built form.

Passive House project teams must include a Certified Passive House Designer or Consultant. Zero Energy teams must include a consultant with relevant training and experience in net zero buildings. The project must be registered with ILFI or PHI, and the owner must commit to submitting the project for certification by those organizations.

5 Application

Discretion to vary policies and guidelines

Most policies and guidelines allow the Director of Planning to consider alternate approaches to their goals and intents.

Discretion to relax regulations

Regulations such as frontage requirements or site coverage may be relaxed as described in section 5.2.1(g) of the Zoning and Development By-law for specific zero emissions buildings. Where regulations include a reference to community and social goals, as in the RM-4 district schedule, discretionary increases may be considered to facilitate a zero emissions building.

Discretion to increase floor area

Density may be increased above the amount permitted in a district schedule, as described in section 10.19 of the Zoning and Development By-law, for specific zero emissions buildings. This increase will not be applied where the use of section 5.2.1(g) increases the permitted floor area.

6 Information Sharing

Early zero emissions buildings provide practical examples for other voluntary leaders, and can help identify barriers or opportunities in City policy. Data from these early examples will help to refine future practices. Therefore, applicants that propose increased floor area through this policy shall commit to providing a case study that includes lessons learned, along with reports on indoor air quality and building energy use. Reports should be consistent with the *Green Buildings Policy for Rezoning*.

7 Additional Resources

For additional information on the application of this policy including illustrative examples of the use of section 10.19 and 5.2.1(g) in the Zoning and Development By-law, see the *Zero Emissions Building Catalyst Bulletin*.

For additional information on the energy use and indoor air quality reporting requirements noted in section 6, see the *Green Buildings Policy for Rezoning – Process and Requirements* bulletin.

Applications using the Passive House building standard that propose the use of section 10.33 of the Zoning and Development By-law should also refer to the *Larger Zero Emission Buildings Bulletin*.

Applications using the Passive House building standard that propose the use of discretionary sections of the R1-1 district schedule in the Zoning and Development By-law should refer to the *Zero Emission Buildings in R1, RT and RA Districts Bulletin*.