



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

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

453 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4 | tel: 3-1-1, outside Vancouver 604.873.7000 | fax: 604.873.7100
website: vancouver.ca | email: planning@vancouver.ca | app: VanConnect

MULTIPLE CONVERSION DWELLING GUIDELINES (RT-1 AND RT-2 DISTRICTS)

Adopted by City Council on April 10, 1984

Amended March 12, 1991, February 4, 1992, October 31, 2000, January 9, 2001, September 15, 2020, July 20, 2022, and October 17, 2023

1 Application and Intent

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the Zoning and Development By-law for development permit applications involving multiple conversion dwellings in areas zoned RT-1 and RT-2. As well as assisting applicants, the guidelines will also be used by City staff in the evaluation of projects.

The intent of the guidelines is to help achieve good-quality multiple accommodation in a building not originally designed for such use, and to maintain or improve the physical compatibility of the building with its neighbours.

Multiple conversion dwellings may be permitted in order to make better use of existing buildings. Converting these buildings to multiple occupancy is a means of conserving neighbourhood character and reinforcing the continued availability of moderate-cost rental accommodation, some of which will be suitable for families. In principle, good-quality conversions are preferred to demolition of sound buildings for redevelopment.

The objective of a conversion should be to make better use of an existing building through renovation. The intent should not be to reconstruct the building, although existing finishes and structural members should be renewed if they are deteriorated. Conversions should not require more than minor changes to the basic structure (structural members, bearing walls, and foundations) of the existing building, although the Building By-law and other relevant by-laws will require varying degrees of upgrading, depending on the specific situation. As the amount of conversion work increases, so will the proportion of required compliance with the Building By-law.

2 General Design Considerations

In considering development permit applications for multiple conversion dwellings, the following factors will be taken into account: the quality and liveability of the resulting units, the suitability of the building for conversion in terms of age and size, and the effect of the conversion on adjacent properties and on the character of the area. These guidelines clarify these factors in terms of the basic measures that will be applied.

In designing a conversion, the objective should be to retain the original character of the existing building as well as reflect the character of the surrounding community. If original detailing has been removed, renovations should attempt to restore or improve the character of the building. Design character is provided through scale, roof shapes and heights, window and porch treatment, building materials and textures, typical landscape elements (such as retaining walls, railings, trees, and topography) and other design details. In most cases, the existing building and major landscape elements should still be clearly recognizable after conversion. However, since it is recognized that not all existing building design is of equal quality, some design changes contribute more to the area's character than the existing building's design. When additions are involved as permitted in the district schedules, the completed building (combining old and new construction) should be perceived as a unity.

Conversions should be designed with sensitivity to the needs of surrounding neighbours in terms of minimizing noise transfer, protecting privacy, avoiding direct alignment of windows, providing compatible yard grades, and permitting sunlight penetration into living areas.

Conversions should be designed to ensure the useability of living units in terms of circulation patterns, room sizes, adequacy of storage (in bedroom closets as well as general long-term storage areas for each unit), and orientation of activities (quiet areas of units should face quiet areas of the site). The existence of units should be identifiable from the street through visible doors, entry walks, mailboxes, or doorbells.

3 Guidelines Pertaining to the Regulations of the Zoning and Development By-law

3.1 Off-Street Parking and Loading

Parking spaces should be provided and maintained with a hard, durable, dust-free surface. All parking spaces should be landscaped and screened so as to maximize the usefulness of adjacent open space.

3.2 Residential Unit Density, Size and Type

The objective of conversion is to maximize the use of the existing building within a density that is in keeping with the surrounding area. Density should not exceed 62 units per hectare. The following table gives examples of how this unit density guideline will be applied assuming the floor space ratio is close to the maximum permitted.

Site Frontage, Assuming 36.5 m Site Depth	18.3 m	15.3 m	12.2 m	10.1 m	7.6 m
Maximum Number of Units Which May Be Permitted	4	3	2*	2	2

* Fractional units are rounded down to the next whole unit

For further conversion of existing buildings where the number of units now approved under a development permit is greater than the above guideline, and where the conversion will decrease the number of units and create larger, more liveable units, the above guideline will not apply and unit density will be based on the liveability of the resulting units.

4 Open Space

Public and private open space should be designed to provide for the wide variety of outdoor activities that households pursue. Some privacy of outdoor spaces is important, as is the opportunity for the expression of individuality and self-expression by the new residents. Open space should contain some useful space which could be considered an extension of the indoor

living areas (such as decks, porches, and roof decks (which may include a garden)). Movement to and from the units should be facilitated by the sensitive siting of the development, and landscape design. When surface parking is provided, the location and arrangement of parking spaces should not unduly compromise the open space objectives.

Appendix

Submission Requirements

Development permit applications should include, in addition to the items in Section 4 of the Zoning and Development By-law:

- (a) A site plan which locates buildings on abutting parcels including their windows, doors, and outdoor living spaces;
- (b) A landscape plan which indicates major trees to be retained or removed, the species, number and sizes of new plant materials, paving materials, walls, fences, arbors, and trellises;
- (c) A drawing showing the view of the proposed development and the development on the two abutting parcels as seen from the street on which the proposal fronts;
- (d) Photos of the existing building and buildings on surrounding lots and the streetscape.

If the application involves additions or exterior alterations, the plans and drawings should clearly distinguish those parts of the building being retained from those being added or altered.