



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

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# **NORQUAY VILLAGE CHARACTER HOUSE AND RETENTION GUIDELINES**

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# 1 Application and Intent

The **Norquay Village Neighbourhood Centre Plan** supports encouraging the retention of character houses. The RT-11 and RM-7 District Schedules include incentives for the retention of pre-1940 character houses on single lots. With the exception of Small House/Duplex development sites, the retention of a character house is at the owner's discretion.

## 1.1 Definition of a Character Building

For the purpose of these guidelines, a character building is defined as a building built before January 1, 1940\* which in the opinion of staff meets at least four of the following seven criteria with respect to the street facing facades (See Appendix A for more detailed information about character buildings in Vancouver).

A character house has retained at least **four** of the following features on the street-facing façade(s):

- (a) Retains original massing and roof form.
- (b) Has original front porch or veranda or only partially filled in.
- (c) Has original cladding or replaced with materials typical of the pre-1940's.
- (d) Has 50% or more of typical period window openings (original location, size and shape).
- (e) Has 50% or more original casings or trim such as wood treatment around windows and doors.
- (f) Retains a minimum of two period detailing or decorative elements (fascias, eave brackets, soffits, exposed beam or joist ends, half timbering, decorative shingling, porch columns, original wood doors, entry transom/sidelights, decorative or feature windows of round, diamond, octagonal or palladian shapes or crafted glass).
- (g) Exhibits other period features (secondary porch, secondary roof with gable ends and dormers, brick or stone foundations etc.).

\*as determined by building permit or water connection records.

## EXAMPLES OF CHARACTER BUILDING ASSESSMENT OF PRE-1940'S HOUSES



- ☒ original massing and roof form
- ☒ original front porch (or only partially filled in)
- ☒ cladding is original
- ☒ contains 50% or more typical period window openings
- ☒ retained 50% or more original casings or trims
- ☒ retained pre-1940's detailing (eave fascias, brackets, etc.)
- ☐ other features (intact secondary porch, turrets, etc.)
- 6 TOTAL (character elements)



- ☒ original massing and roof form
- ☐ original front porch (or only partially filled in)
- ☐ cladding is original
- ☒ contains 50% or more typical period window openings
- ☐ retained 50% or more original casings or trim
- ☐ retained pre-1940's detailing (eave fascias, brackets, etc.)
- ☐ other features such as intact secondary porch, etc.
- 2 TOTAL (character elements)



- ☒ original massing and roof form
- ☐ original front porch (or only partially filled in)
- ☒ cladding is original
- ☒ contains 50% or more typical period window openings
- ☒ retained 50% or more original casings or trim
- ☒ retained pre-1940's detailing (eave fascias, brackets, etc.)
- ☐ other features such as intact secondary porch, etc.
- 5 TOTAL (character elements)



- Y original massing and roof form
- Y original front porch (or only partially filled in)
- Y cladding is original
- Y contains 50% or more typical period window openings
- Y retained 50% or more original casings or trim
- Y retained pre-1940's detailing (eave fascias, brackets, etc.)
- other features such as intact secondary porch, etc.

6 TOTAL (character elements)



- Y original massing and roof form
- Y original front porch (or only partially filled in)
- cladding is original
- Y contains 50% or more typical period window openings
- retained 50% or more original casings or trim
- Y retained pre-1940's detailing (eave fascias, brackets, etc.)
- other features such as intact secondary porch, etc.

4 TOTAL (character elements)

## **2 Renovation and Addition to Retained ‘Character’ Building**

The intent of the following guidelines is to ensure that changes to an existing ‘character’ building maintain its original form and character, and that additions are compatible. To determine whether an existing building is considered a ‘character’ building refer to Section 1.

### **2.1 Principles**

- (a) **Retention of Original Character**  
Where a renovation is occurring to a ‘character’ building as defined in these guidelines, the new architectural components should maintain the original character of the building. Renovation to current standards may require the replacement of a good deal of material. The amount of original exterior building fabric that is to be replaced is not limited as long as it is replaced in a manner closely similar to the original, as set out in the following guidelines. Provision of drawings documenting the extent of material to be replaced may be required at time of application.
- (b) **Infill Character**  
Where an infill building is being added behind a retained ‘character’ house, it may be designed either to reflect the traditional character and style of the main house, or to express itself clearly as a later building by choosing a contemporary architectural style.
- (c) **Additions**  
In general, additions will not be supported on the front of character buildings, as this would significantly alter the character of the building as viewed from the street. Additions to existing character buildings should always appear secondary in visual prominence to the main house as seen from the street.

### **2.2 Roofs and Chimneys**

- (a) The original roof forms should be maintained.
- (b) Consideration will be given to changing the main roof form to reflect those of other neighbourhood ‘character’ buildings, in those cases where the height under the main ridge line is not sufficient to enable a reasonable configuration of inhabited space according to the City’s by-laws.
- (c) Where dormers are being added or extended, they should remain subordinate to, and not detract from the integrity of the main roof.
- (d) Roofs on additions should be compatible with the existing building’s roof form, or similar ones of the period.
- (e) Secondary roof elements may vary from the pitch of the main roof and may include flat roofs and shallow pitches.
- (f) If roofing material is to be replaced, either wood shingle or asphalt shingle should be used. Other materials may be considered where it can be shown they were characteristic of the original house style. If roofing is to be repaired, material should match existing.
- (g) Original chimneys should be retained and repaired where possible. While matching new chimneys to existing ones is desirable, boxed-in chimneys clad with a material that matches the building wall is also acceptable.

### **2.3 Windows and Skylights**

- (a) In general, original window openings on the front façade of existing buildings should be maintained. If it is not practical to keep original frames and exterior wood trim, new windows should match the original design as closely as possible. Window replacements from previous renovations that are not in character with the original building should be returned to a design in keeping with the original building. It is desirable to maintain existing window pane shapes and mullions as well, however, if reproduction is too costly, plain glass can be used. Use of ‘stick-on’ mullions or leading is not acceptable.
- (b) On facades not visible from the street, more substantial alterations to existing window shape and size may be considered. Materials and detailing of frames should be compatible with the existing style.

- (c) When an addition will be seen from the street, the addition's windows should follow the same general practices as in the original building regarding shape, placement, materials and trim.
- (d) Skylights should be modest in size when visible from the street.

## **2.4 Entrances Stairs and Porches**

- (a) Entrances and Stairs
  - (i) Original front entrance frames, trim, and stairs should be maintained where these exist. If replacement is necessary, the design should match the original design and material as closely as possible.
  - (ii) Maintaining the original front door and any sidelights is desirable. Where doors must be replaced, or where earlier renovations resulted in inappropriate doors, doors of similar quality to the original should be used.
  - (iii) When an original door and sidelights have been compromised, and an additional entrance is needed to a unit on the same level as the main entrance, a number of solutions are acceptable:
    - placing the door inside the original entry in a lobby arrangement;
    - placing two doors side-by-side; and
    - placing one entry at the side of the building.
  - (iv) When an additional entrance is desired to a basement unit, or to other living space on the basement level, it may be located on the front façade, but it should not detract from the visual dominance of the original entry.
- (b) Porches
 

The RT-11 and RM-7 District Schedules provides a floor space exclusion for porches, to both encourage new porches, and facilitate the opening up of old ones which may have been filled in for extra living space.

  - (i) Original porches on existing buildings should be kept and restored.
  - (ii) If possible, porch infill should be removed. If the enclosed space must remain for liveability, the detailing of the enclosure should be made consistent with the original style of the building.

## **2.5 Balconies and Decks**

- (a) Projecting balconies and decks should not be located on the front façade of older houses. Decks located on, or partially within a roof may be acceptable on the front of the building provided they appear integrated and are modeled on traditional examples.
- (b) Projecting balconies or decks may be located at the rear, subject to guidelines regarding privacy and setbacks.

## **2.6 Exterior Walls and Finishing**

- (a) Materials:
 

Original materials should be retained and repaired where practical. If replacement is necessary, the same material should be used, although it may be manufactured in a different way. (For example, narrow wood clapboard is available in sheets).

  - (i) Materials on additions should match those of the existing building.
  - (ii) The same materials should be used consistently on all facades, including the interior of inset porches. The use of a material only as a 'paste-on' on one or two facades is not acceptable.
  - (iii) "Imitative" materials such as vinyl siding are generally not acceptable, although some materials that have advanced to a point where they convincingly replicate original materials may be acceptable and will be evaluated at time of application (e.g. some types of cementitious board will be appropriate).
- (b) Detailing:
  - (i) Existing detailing on buildings should be kept and restored. If it has been removed, it should be replaced in the original style and material;
  - (ii) Uncharacteristic detailing (gingerbread to 'Victorianize' buildings) should not be added; and

- (iii) Detailing on additions should be compatible with that on the original building, but the degree of detailing may vary considerably, depending on the overall design intent of the addition and its visibility from the streets.
- (c) Where a material is proposed that is not covered by (a) or (b), its acceptability will be evaluated on a case by case basis.



## **Character Buildings**

### **Background**

Much of the early residential development in many of Vancouver's neighbourhoods took place between 1910 and 1940. Homes built in this period were of various architectural styles and have been well documented. The most popular styles are described below and range from the bungalow, cottage, and classic frame homes built in the craftsman style to the more elaborate homes such as the Queen Anne and Tudor styles seen in the City's older neighbourhoods of Shaughnessy and Mount Pleasant. Vancouver's neighbourhoods still contain a large proportion of the "pre-1940's houses and these are often referred to as 'character houses'. Many "pre-1940's houses were modest structures with little ornament, and many have been modified over the years. Vancouver's neighbourhoods still contain a large proportion of the "pre-1940's houses and these are often referred to as 'character houses'.

### **Principal Elements**

The principal elements which are generally common to the traditional pre-1940's houses are the following:

- (a) Simple mass with a dominant main pitched roof  
Pre-1940's houses were simple with a basement projecting 1.2 m (4 ft.) to 1.8 m (1.6 ft.) above ground, a main floor, and optional full or partial second floor. On this basic box structure was a simple pitched primary main roof over the first storey eave. Roofs were most commonly end-gable (gable facing the street, ridge running lengthwise on the lot) or cross-gable (slope facing the street, ridge running across the lot). Roof pitch was usually substantial although bungalow styles feature low pitched gables roofs with broad overhangs. Other roof forms such as hip, gambrel or mansard were less common. Some houses also featured secondary roof elements over porches and verandas and projecting rooms.
- (b) Emphasis on front entries and porches  
Covered porches on the main (entry) level were a universal feature, and were of several types.
  - (i) projecting from the facade under a separate roof structure, but with a solid base;
  - (ii) projecting, but under an extension of the main roof; and
  - (iii) inset from the façade.

The front entrances were on the main level, about 1.2 m (4 ft.) to 1.8 m (6 ft.) above grade. Upper level porches were also common on some styles. They were inset into the second storey wall, or partially inset into the wall and the porch roof below.

All porches have substantial depth, single storey height, robust wood supporting beams and columns, and robust picket type wood railing, or solid balustrade formed by an extension of the wall below. Any columns or posts were limited to the first storey. They were single storey front entry covered porches, or recessed balconies.

- (c) Windows and Doors  
Pre-1940's buildings were characterized by limited amounts of window area (relative to the wall) and simple rectangular shapes. Windows tended to be symmetrical often rectangular window openings with trim. Decorative window shapes were relatively rare. Doors were generally single, not double, but were usually panelled, some with windows.
- (d) Materials and Detailing  
Wood was the most prevalent wall material. This was usually in the form of horizontal 76 mm (3 in.) to 101 mm (4 in.) clapboard, board and batten or shingles. Stucco was used on some "English Builder" and "Germanic cottage" style houses. Stucco was stone-dash, pebble-dash or medium textured stucco. Brick was used much more rarely.

Though not an exhaustive list, decorative detailing tended to be the expression of the wood trim such as around doors and windows, heavy beam and columns in porch structures, window casing frames and mullions, bargeboards and eaves brackets and braces, fascias, or exposed ends of “roof joists” under the roof overhangs. Detailing in wall materials included decorative shingling (fish-scale, scalloped, staggered or diamond-shaped), usually small amounts in the upper parts of gables and half timbering.

### **Popular “Pre-1940’s” Architectural Styles**

The following architectural styles are representative of the less complex pre-1940’s buildings prevalent in many of Vancouver’s neighbourhoods.

- (a) **Bungalow or Craftsman**  
The Bungalow and its variants dominated Vancouver domestic building in the years after 1910, supplanting the Classic Frame as the most popular house type. The features common to the many variations of Bungalows are low-pitched gabled roofs with broad eaves or overhangs, and the profuse use of wood detail (exposed rafters and beams, eaves brackets and braces, and textured wood clapboard or shingles. The most prevalent Bungalow type in Vancouver is an expansive house 1 or 1.5 storeys high with the gable facing the street and often having a smaller, secondary gable over the projecting entrance porch. Entry stairs were solid substantial staircases, not flimsy open stairs. The porch columns/supports are usually short with sloping sides and their bases may be made of rough “clinker” bricks. The principal window beneath the main gable is often composed of three sashes.
- (b) **Bungaloid**  
The term Bungaloid describes buildings in which features characteristic of Bungalows are seen in houses too large or different in form from that style. The most common Bungaloid type in Vancouver is a 2.5 storey house with a front-facing gable, too tall to be a Bungalow, but sharing its profuse use of brackets, beam ends, stubby porch columns and other decorative wood features. Another version has side-facing gables, with dormers or other vertical features piercing the eaves.
- (c) **Classic Box**  
The Classic Box is a foursquare 2 or 2.5 storey house with a hipped roof, often one of low pitch. The second storey is a full floor high, and if there is an attic floor, the roof has a dormer. Earlier versions are undecorated, like the Pioneer house. Later examples (after 1900) may have the ornamentation associated with the Decorated Pioneer, including bay windows and decorative window openings. Classical detail may also be found. Porches are common, and the bay windows may interrupt the simple lines of the hipped roof. The front door is usually on one side of the façade.
- (d) **Classic Frame**  
This is the most common Vancouver dwelling house for the middle class in the early 1900’s. It is a timber-frame building between 1.5 and 2.5 storeys high, with the gable end of the roof presented to the street. Façade features usually include a porch and one or more bay windows. The door is located to one side. Ornamental variety in the wood and shingle siding is common. The house is similar to the Pioneer and Decorated Pioneer, but it has broader proportions and more interior space. A number of Classic Frames often appear side by side along the street, usually with minor variants in window shape, porches and decorative detailing.
- (e) **Edwardian Builder**  
This style was popular between 1900-1910, and used on various building forms. It’s characterized by a steep roof and large porch, narrow bevelled wood siding or cedar shingle cladding, plain classical-inspired details such as small eaves brackets or dentils mouldings, porch column capitals, pediment roof forms, multi-paned or diamond-patterned windows; and stone/brick or porch supports or foundations not commonly used.

- (f) **Pioneer**  
These are modest houses usually 1.5 (but sometimes 2 or 2.5) storeys high with a front gabled roof facing the street containing the entrance door and perhaps a simple porch or veranda. Windows are usually plain, but a bay window may be situated beside the door or on the second floor. Proportions are tall and narrow. The houses are shiplap or narrow clapboard siding, the latter becoming prevalent around 1900. Corner boards and window trim are usually plain 25 mm x 150 mm (1 x 6 inch) boards, and windows are double-hung with two or four panes in each sash. A shed-roof kitchen is common at the rear. Basements are rare.
- (g) **Decorated Pioneer**  
Similar to Pioneer houses, but are more elaborate because of the addition of wood ornamentation at the gable ends, on porches, and for door and window detail. The fretwork – often called “gingerbread” – was created with the fret saw or the jig saw. Porch posts were turned with the lathe and chamfered. These dwellings often use contrasting patterns of wood siding and shingles, and scalloped and lozenge-shaped shingles appear frequently.
- (h) **English Builder**  
The English Builder style began to be built in the late 20’s. It was an economical version of the more elaborate English Arts and Crafts or Tudor revival styles popular for estates. Characteristics are step cross-gable main roof, with one or more large, steep, front-facing gables, usually asymmetrically placed; very small front porch; stucco cladding; and limited detailing (plain fascias and window frames), leaded windows; sometimes small pointed arches above windows, doors etc.
- (i) **Pioneer Cottage**  
The Pioneer Cottage is a small dwelling, usually one storey high on a raised roof, and sometimes having a dormer window illuminating a bedroom in the attic space. They were frequently built in groups, and intact clusters have a row of them closely sited along the street. More elaborate versions may have a porch with classical columns and eaves brackets, but simpler ones have little ornament.
- (j) **Germanic Cottage (also called Eastern Cottage)**  
This style began to be used in the late 20’s. Characteristics include small, 1.5 storey form, with shallow-pitched end-gable roof, usually chamfered, stucco cladding, very small front porch, and detailing was limited: plain fascias and window frames, small window panes.

**Photos of Character Buildings**

**Pre-1940's Character Houses: 1 to 1.5 Storey Bungalow, Cottage and Pioneer Styles and their variants**





**Pre-1940's Character Houses: 1 to 2 storey Classic frame houses and variations**

