

# Guidelines

RM-3A and RM-4 Guidelines for Social Housing

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# **1 APPLICATION AND INTENT**

## **1.1 Application**

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the RM-3A and the RM-4 District Schedules of the Zoning and Development By-law for discretionary approvals for social housing in a six-storey apartment typology. Social housing is defined in accordance with the definition of Social Housing in Section 2 of the Zoning and Development By-law. As well as assisting the applicant, the guidelines will be used by City staff in the evaluation of projects.

These guidelines apply city-wide to all social housing projects in RM-3A and RM-4 zoning districts, but also provide certain area-specific considerations.

## **1.2 Intent**

Social housing is important to the overall health of Vancouver's housing system. Social housing provides secure housing options for many low and moderate income households in Vancouver.

A significant portion of Vancouver's existing stock of social housing, including non-profit co-operative housing, is located in RM-3A and RM-4 zoning districts. Many existing social housing buildings were constructed in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. To ensure long-term liveability and resiliency, some of these aging properties may be in need of re-investment, including renovations or redevelopment.

The intent of these guidelines is to:

- (a) Encourage development of social housing to add to the overall social housing stock in the city;
- (b) Provide guidance for situations where variances to the zoning regulations may be considered to:
  - (i) help ensure that the allowable density for social housing is achievable;
  - (ii) improve residential liveability of units; and
  - (iii) respond to the context of the site.

## **1.3 Affordability**

Where possible, applicants are encouraged to provide a deeper level of affordability than the minimum set out in the Zoning and Development By-Law. The Director of Planning or Development Permit Board is to consider the following in reviewing the development application:

- (a) Maximizing the level of affordability delivered on site, subject to the availability of funding;
- (b) Replacement of existing affordability levels of rental units currently on site, where possible;

- (c) Ensuring the provision of a Tenant Relocation Plan in keeping with the Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy, if applicable.
- (d) All relevant affordable housing policies contained in Council approved by-laws, policies, area plans, and community plans.

## **2 GENERAL DESIGN CONSIDERATION**

### **2.1 Neighbourhood and Street Character**

RM-3A and RM-4 zoning districts span multiple neighbourhoods throughout the city. These zoning districts consist primarily of three-storey and four-storey residential apartment buildings, many of which were constructed between the 1960s and 1980s. Detached homes and other ground-oriented housing types also exist in these areas.

Most RM-3A and RM-4 zoning districts are located off major arterial streets. Many streets are lined with mature street trees and apartment buildings typically include generous front yards and landscaped areas, creating a green streetscape. Point-tower typologies are also evident in these areas, a legacy of a previous era when the tower format was permissible. In general, these areas demonstrate how a mix of building typologies can achieve a healthy, liveable environment for renters and owners, and a wide spectrum of social demographics.

For certain areas of the RM-4 zoning district, area-specific RM-4 guidelines may also apply. For social housing projects, this set of guidelines should be used in conjunction with any applicable area-specific RM-4 guidelines where possible, while prioritizing the need to achieve social housing. Applications which vary from the area-specific RM-4 guidelines will be considered in order to achieve social housing development.

Several RM-3A and RM-4 sites are also located within Council-approved community plan areas, including the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan and Marpole Community Plan. These plans often provide specific direction for rezonings of RM-3A and RM-4 sites to deliver rental and social housing. For example, for RM-4 sites in Britannia-Woodland, the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan provides direction for minimum and maximum building frontages, setback dimensions, and ground-level access for units located on the first storey of the building. Specific community plan direction for RM-3A or RM-4 sites for this typology should be considered for social housing applications as much as practicably possible, while prioritizing the need to deliver new social housing.

New social housing development may have greater building heights and densities than many of the older low-rise apartment stock or other developments in the area. New social housing developments should be designed to consider as much as practicably possible, while prioritizing the overall need to deliver new social housing:

- (a) Any directions committed to in any relevant Council-approved plans, policies, and guidelines; and

- (b) The green streetscapes of these areas and maintaining generous building setbacks, landscaped surfaces, and open spaces, unless contrary direction is specified by other Council-approved plans, policies, or guidelines.

## **2.2 Family Units**

The Housing Vancouver Strategy (2017) and Affordable Housing Delivery and Financial Strategy (2018) prioritize delivery of family units in new social housing to meet the needs of lower income households and families. Recent Council-approved community plans covering including the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan and Marpole Community Plan require a minimum of 50% of units with two or more bedrooms in new non-market housing.

Applicants should refer to relevant housing mix requirements contained in Council-approved community plans, area plans and policies. Where possible, applicants should include no less than 35% of dwelling units to be family units with 2 or more bedrooms and are encouraged to include 50% family units, except for seniors and supportive housing.

# **3 GUIDELINES PERTAINING TO THE REGULATIONS OF THE ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT BY-LAW**

## **3.1 Site Frontage**

The maximum site frontage requirement is intended to prevent wide facades on larger development sites, which may compromise pedestrian interest and create a bland and anonymous streetscape, particularly if facade design is overly flat and monotonous.

For social housing development, the Director of Planning or the Development Permit Board may consider increasing the maximum site frontage requirement where necessary to:

- (a) maximize delivery of social housing space and achieve the permitted floor space ratio for social housing;
- (b) improve liveability outcomes of residential units; or
- (c) provide a child day care facility on site.

Despite any increase in the maximum site frontage requirement for social housing development, an articulated building frontage that achieves a high level of architectural interest should be provided to adequately enhance pedestrian interest and the public realm without jeopardizing sustainability goals by:

- (a) avoiding overly monotonous and repetitive facade design;

- (b) employing strategic use of architectural elements that are not co-planar to elicit a play of light and shadow, human-scaled texture, different cladding materials, and through the use of different colours; and
- (c) breaking the larger massing into smaller components to express strong unit identity and to relate to the characteristic subdivision of the area.

### **3.2 Building Height**

Semi-private indoor and outdoor spaces are highly encouraged to improve liveability for apartment living. Section 10.1 of the Zoning and Development By-law allows the Director of Planning to consider greater building height than otherwise permitted for select structures associated with common rooftop amenity spaces. This provision is intended to encourage common amenity spaces on the building roof deck.

### **3.3 Front Yard**

The front yard setback requirements are an opportunity to be meaningfully used as private outdoor open space for ground-floor units, while also generating visual interest and casual social interaction for the adjacent public pedestrian sidewalk. Where pedestrian comfort is established, the frequency and intensity of meaningful neighbourly interactions between citizens may be increased.

For social housing development, the Director of Planning or the Development Permit Board, as the case may be, may consider modest and incremental reductions to the minimum front yard depth requirement. Reductions in front yard depth requirements will be considered where necessary to:

- (a) Maximize delivery of social housing space and achieve the permitted floor space ratio for social housing;
- (b) Improve liveability outcomes of residential units; or
- (c) Provide a child day care facility on site.

### **3.4 Side Yards**

For social housing development, the Director of Planning or the Development Permit Board, as the case may be, may consider variations and reductions to the minimum side yard width requirement. Reduction in side yard widths will be considered where necessary to:

- (a) Maximize delivery of social housing space and achieve the permitted floor space ratio for social housing;
- (b) Improve liveability outcomes of residential units; or
- (c) Provide a child day care facility on site.

Despite any reductions to side yard requirements for social housing development, the applicant should endeavour to maximize landscaped surfaces and minimize impervious surfaces.

### **3.5 Rear Yard**

For social housing development, the Director of Planning or the Development Permit Board, as the case may be, may consider modest and incremental reductions to the minimum rear yard depth requirement. Reductions in rear yard depth requirements will be considered where necessary to:

- (a) Maximize delivery of social housing space and achieve the permitted floor space ratio for social housing;
- (b) Improve liveability outcomes of residential units in the form of private outdoor space for ground-level units and/or indoor amenity rooms; or
- (c) Provide a child day care facility or outdoor play area on site.

Despite any reductions to rear yard requirements for social housing development, the applicant should endeavour to maximize landscaped surfaces and minimize impervious surfaces.

### **3.6 Off-Street Parking and Bicycle Storage**

- (a) Parking requirements are regulated by the City's Parking By-law.
- (b) Parking should be located at the rear of the site with access from the lane.
- (c) Where above-grade surface parking is provided, surface parking spaces should be located along the lane and be screened by planting beds, rather than fences, if possible, to limit impact on outdoor open space. Surface parking spaces may be provided with open trellis structures (open walls and roofs) to support landscape and greenery at the lane, while remaining pervious to rainwater.

## **4 OPEN SPACE**

### **4.1 Private Open Space**

- (a) Usable private open space should be provided for dwelling units as follows:
  - (i) Each unit with two or more bedrooms should provide private open space. Refer to the High-Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines for guidance on private open space for family units.
  - (ii) Studio and one bedroom units should provide private open space for each unit, unless the building contains a suitable amount of common exterior amenity space. Where private open

space is not provided for studio and one bedroom units, common amenity space should generally be approximately 4.5 m<sup>2</sup> per unit based on total dwelling units in the development.

- (iii) If private outdoor space is not provided for a studio or one bedroom unit, unit layout and design should maximize solar and ventilation access by maximizing operable glazing units. Provision of improved ventilation (e.g. juliet balconies) should also be considered.
- (b) Examples of usable private open space include open balconies, private terraces, and private roof decks.
- (c) Private open space should be oriented towards the rear or front yards, and not solely oriented towards a mid-block sideyard where sightlines are limited.
- (d) Private open space in the form of balconies, decks or patios should have a minimum single horizontal dimension of 1.8 m and minimum area of 4.5 m<sup>2</sup>.

## **5 LANDSCAPING**

Landscaping can improve the liveability of dwelling units and minimize impacts on adjacent residential uses.

- (a) Existing trees and significant landscape features should be retained where possible;
- (b) Accessible roof spaces should be combined with intensive and extensive green roof systems, including planters for growing food, wherever possible.
  - (i) Intensive green roof planters with shade trees and varied plantings may be integrated with, and help spatially define, more actively programmed areas.
  - (ii) Container planters are supported; however, consideration must be given to the minimum soil volumes needed for planting types and the structural design.
  - (iii) Extensive green roofs contribute to enhancement of many City wide goals such as biodiversity, air quality and rainwater management, and may be established on non-accessible roof areas.
- (c) Seating for the public off the sidewalk may be considered in order to enhance interactions between buildings and the public realm.