



# **Corporate** NO: C002

# **Report** COUNCIL DATE: January 17, 2000

## **COUNCIL-IN-COMMITTEE**

**TO: Mayor & Council**    **DATE: January 10, 2000**

**FROM: General Manager, Planning & Development**    **FILE: 0665-002**

**SUBJECT: Proposed Small Lot Residential Zones**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Planning & Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Endorse the following small lot residential zones and authorize staff to review and process proposals for small lot residential developments based on these zones (which are more specifically described in Appendix 1):
  - Single Family Residential (12) Zone (RF-12);
  - Single Family Residential (9) Zone (RF-9);
  - Semi-Detached Residential Zone (RF-SD); and
  - Multiple Residential 19 Zone (RM-19).
2. Adopt the proposed General and Zone Specific Small Lot Policies as described in Appendix 2 as the basis for reviewing development proposals with respect to the proposed new zones;
3. Instruct the Engineering Department to incorporate the proposed new zones in the current review of the Development Cost Charge By-law; and
4. Authorize staff to bring forward consequential amendments to the Official Community Plan, Zoning By-law and other City By-laws concurrently with the first rezoning project to proceed to By-law Introduction for each proposed new zone.

## **BACKGROUND**

To facilitate the increasingly popular small lot residential developments, the Planning & Development

Department engaged Stantec Consulting in December 1997 to study the issues related to these developments and propose a standardized zone or a number of standardized zones to facilitate such developments. Due to the absence of an appropriate zone in the Zoning By-law, the existing small lot developments have to be accommodated through site-specific Comprehensive Development Zones (e.g. Clover Valley Station and Panorama Village). Each time such an approach is used, it results in lengthy negotiations with the applicant and often inconsistent standards and inefficient use of staff resources. As an alternative to the existing zones, to facilitate the provision of ground-oriented housing, the purpose behind proposing small lot zones is to "fix the goal posts" for both developers and staff. This is accomplished by providing minimum standards as the basis for consistent recommendations to increase predictability and efficiency and to make the Zoning By-law more responsive to the market.

## **DISCUSSION**

Small lot housing provides an alternative form of ground-oriented housing that is considered suitable for family-living and more affordable than houses built on the current standard lots (15-metre/50 ft. wide and 560 square metres/6,000 sq. ft. in size). It contributes to the densification of the Urban areas in keeping with the growth policies of the Official Community Plan, uses the land and services more efficiently compared to the current standard lots, increases housing choices and adds to the stock of ground-oriented housing as recommended by the Greater Vancouver Regional District's Livable Region Strategic Plan.

Small lot developments in Surrey and other cities were studied and standards were compared by the consultant. Discussions were held with the Development Advisory Committee through its Sub-committee on small lots. In light of the common objective of creating small lot zones, the discussions generally centred around finding a balanced approach to resolving several issues which were often in conflict with each other. The following summarizes these issues:

- the need to provide standards that promote an efficient use of land to increase the affordability of housing while maintaining the quality of the residential environment, without compromising the City's objectives expressed in the Official Community Plan;
- the need to respond to the market demand and provide certainty through the provision of zones that fit within the framework of the existing Zoning By-law with standardized requirements while allowing some flexibility; and
- the need to provide a clear indication of where and how these zones may be applied throughout the City.

### **Proposed Zones**

To deal with the majority of small lot residential development proposals in Surrey, the consultant proposed four new zones. It is anticipated that these new zones will significantly reduce the need for Comprehensive Development (CD) zoning to accommodate this use. The four proposed new zones are as follows:

- Single Family Residential (12) Zone (RF-12);
- Single Family Residential (9) Zone (RF-9);
- Semi-Detached Residential Zone (RF-SD); and
- Multiple Residential 19 Zone (RM-19).

### **Key Characteristics of the Proposed New Zones**

1. All zones are for dwellings on fee-simple lots. The minimum lot sizes and widths are generally smaller than, and the resulting units per hectare densities are higher than those permitted under the current RF and RF-G Zones.
2. Permitted uses are generally restricted to single family dwellings, either as detached units as in RF-12 and RF-9 or as attached units as in RF-SD and RM-19, except that in the RF-12 Zone accommodation for up to 2 boarders or lodgers is permitted as an accessory use.
3. Floor area ratios (FAR) have been increased in each of the proposed zones from the maximum allowable 0.52 FAR of the current RF Zone because of the small lot sizes. However, limits are placed on the maximum size of a dwelling that can be built on a lot in each zone to ensure houses are compatible with each other within the same zone by preventing large houses on larger lots in the same zone. In the case of the RF-SD Zone, the limit on the house size will ensure that in an infill area, new dwellings in this zone will be compatible with the existing dwellings.
4. The area of a lot that can be covered by the building footprint (lot coverage) has been increased above that which is permitted in the RF Zone to increase design flexibility on small lots.
5. Generally, the front and side yard setbacks have been reduced from those required under the current single family zones to allow design flexibility.
6. A minimum distance is specified between the principal building and accessory buildings higher than 2.4 metres (8 ft.) to ensure minimum private yard space and to allow daylight and sunlight into the lot and dwelling.
7. The maximum allowable building height has been slightly increased from the current 9 metres (30 ft.) to 9.5 metres (31 ft.) to accommodate higher ceilings and provide design flexibility.
8. Generally, rear lane access is required in all zones, except in RF-12 and RF-SD Zones where access from the front is allowed under certain circumstances (e.g. due to site conditions). In the case of RF-9 and RM-19 Zones, however, a variance to the rear lane access provision may be considered only through a Development Variance Permit.
9. A limit has been proposed on the maximum lot area that can be covered by hard surfaces (i.e., buildings and paved surfaces) and a certain area of landscaped front yards is required to reduce the cumulative impact of small lots on the area drainage.

Appendix 1 provides a comparison of the key attributes of the proposed new zones and shows possible lot layouts under each proposed zone.

### **RF-12 and RF-9 Zones**

The RF-12 and RF-9 Zones are exclusively for detached single family dwellings. The RF-12 Zone allows for lots which are a minimum of 12 metres (40 ft.) wide and have a minimum area of 360 square metres (4,000 sq. ft.). The RF-9 Zone generally requires a minimum of 9-metre (30 ft.) wide frontage for each lot and a minimum area of 270 square metres (3,000 sq. ft.). However, to allow for layout flexibility the RF-9 Zone permits lots as narrow as 8 metres (26 ft.) in width for up to 30% of the total lots in a subdivision.

In comparison, the lots permitted under the Comprehensive Development Zone governing the second phase of the Clover Valley Station range from 7.5 to 12 metres (25 to 40 ft.) in width and 215 to 340 square metres (2,314 to 3,660 sq. ft.) in size. Lots smaller than those permitted in the RF-12 and RF-9 Zones are not

considered appropriate as standardized zones. The reason is that lots smaller than those permitted in the RF-12 and RF-9 Zones would result in additional density without the benefit of additional subdivision and design controls that are considered necessary and are possible through a site-specific Comprehensive Development Zone.

Appendix 3 provides illustrations of the types of development scenarios which will be possible under the proposed RF-12 and RF-9 Zones (see Illustrations 1 to 3).

### **RF-SD Zone**

The intent of this zone is to permit two dwellings attached to one another with each dwelling located on its own 9-metre (30 ft.) wide fee-simple lot. The two attached dwellings will form a side-by-side "duplex" (called "semi-detached dwelling" under the proposed zone). However unlike a duplex under the existing RM-D Zone, each of the two dwellings will be on its own separate lot and corner lots will not be a criteria for rezoning to allow these semi-detached dwellings as is the case for duplexes under the current RM-D Zone.

While this zone can be used in new areas subject to the proposed location policy, the primary purpose of this Zone, in keeping with the growth management policies of the Official Community Plan, is to allow a gradual densification of the older single family areas by permitting the subdivision of the older 18-metre (60-ft.) wide lots into two 9-metre (30 ft.) wide lots.

The zoning provisions such as the maximum house size and minimum setbacks are proposed such that the overall bulk of the semi-detached dwelling straddling two 9-metre (30 ft.) lots will be compatible with the bulk of the single detached dwellings on the neighbouring 18-metre (60 ft.) wide lots.

Illustration No. 4 in Appendix 3 shows a possible house design and massing scenario under this zone.

### **RM-19 Zone**

This zone is intended to allow ground-oriented single family dwelling units in the form of row housing wherein each unit is attached to another unit but is on a fee-simple lot and has a direct individual vehicular access from a rear lane. While the row housing form is permitted under the current townhouse zones, the attributes of the proposed zone may make it an attractive alternative for those who prefer fee-simple ownership of their own unit and lot and seek the experience of urban living with a direct relationship and private entrance to the street, having individual vehicle access directly from the rear and having their own small and manageable private yard space within the lot. Also, unlike the proposed zone, the current townhouse zones require a minimum of 1 hectare (2.5 acre) site area in order to achieve the maximum permitted density. No minimum site area is proposed for the RM-19 Zone.

Illustrations No. 5 and 6 in Appendix 3 show streetscape scenarios possible under this zone.

This form of ground-oriented housing with units on fee-simple lots is relatively new to British Columbia. However, it is popular in Eastern Canada and is being considered in some of the other Lower Mainland cities such as Vancouver, North Vancouver, Burnaby, Coquitlam and New Westminster. In keeping with the Official Community Plan's policy of increasing housing choices, this form of housing will add one more option for affordable home ownership in Surrey.

### **Other Amendments to the Zoning By-law**

In conjunction with the proposed new zones, it will be necessary to amend the current Zoning By-law to add new definitions for the "semi-detached dwelling" to be permitted under the RF-SD Zone, "street-oriented multiple residential building" proposed under the RM-19 Zone, and "internal dwelling unit" and "end-dwelling unit" to define the characteristics of the units within the street-oriented multiple residential building.

Also, General Provisions of the current Zoning By-law will need to be amended to revise the minimum size of a single family dwelling and minimum number of intervening lots required between dwellings of similar designs under the proposed new zones.

### **Proposed Policy for the New Zones**

The proposed small lot zones will facilitate small lot developments as an alternative form of ground-oriented housing. The intent is not to replace the existing single family housing zones with the new zones. While the small lot housing is considered to be similar to the standard detached housing albeit on smaller lots, is becoming increasingly popular both with the public and development industry and may eventually be accepted by the community as a standard, its widespread and uncontrolled use in the City is not recommended at this time for the following reasons:

1. The small lot zones create denser residential developments resulting in more demand on amenities, facilities and services;
2. The small lot developments have a different physical character and impact on the streetscape than the standard single family residential developments due to the narrower lots, smaller setbacks, increased lot coverage and the need to still accommodate two cars on each lot with the resultant loss in the amount of private open space;
3. Surrey's traditional development pattern of single family residential development on larger lots should be recognized. The new developments under the proposed zones should be compatible and should not impose a widespread and sudden change on a large scale in a short time frame within the community; and
4. The introduction of new zones should be used to direct and shape the urban growth to achieve the City's objectives reflected in the policies of the Official Community Plan.

Therefore, a set of guidelines to supplement the provisions of the new zones are proposed (Appendix 2). It is recommended that these guidelines be adopted by Council as a policy to guide developments proposed under the new zones. There are two sets of policy guidelines:

- General Policy Guidelines which should be considered in conjunction with the application of all new zones; and
- Zone-specific Guidelines which apply to a particular zone.

### **Key Recommendations - Policy Guidelines**

1. Community impacts are to be addressed to the satisfaction of City Council in the Urban areas without Neighbourhood Concept Plans. Within the Neighbourhood Concept Plan (NCP) areas, the impact of the new zones on the amenities envisioned will need to be resolved and the overall objectives of the applicable NCP should be maintained.

2. RF-12 Zone may be located within approximately 800 metres (1/2 mile) and RF-9 and RM-19 Zones within approximately 400 metres (1/4 mile) of the edges of the City Centre, town centres, neighbourhood centres and major employment centres (e.g. hospitals, college/university campuses, etc.). A distance of 400 metres (1/4 mile) is generally accepted as a suitable maximum walking distance.

3. Subject to the recommended location guidelines, the RF-12, RF-9 and RF-SD Zones are considered appropriate in Urban areas and the RM-19 Zone is considered appropriate in Multiple Residential areas. RM-19 Zone can also be located in Urban areas if approved in a Neighbourhood Concept Plan.

4. Generally the zones should be applied to provide a gradation of land use intensity with exceptions to be considered only if the proposed developments have minimal impacts on the neighbourhood.

5. The provision of small lot housing through comprehensive site planning is to be encouraged provided that the objectives of the Official Community Plan are not compromised and within the established neighbourhoods development is proposed to be incrementally implemented.

6. In order to facilitate the movement of traffic generated from the small lot developments and provide for shorter walking distances for residents, the maximum length of a block in these developments is recommended to be approximately 100 to 150 metres (330 to 500 ft.).

7. Access from a rear lane is required for all zones. However, RF-12 and RF-SD Zones permit vehicular access from the front street under certain site-specific circumstances. In the case of developments under the RF-9 and RM-19 Zones, alternatives to providing access from a rear lane may be considered only through the Development Variance Permit process.

8. In RF-SD and RM-19 Zones, mutual agreements are required between the lot owners to protect the respective interests of all owners (e.g. maintenance of one's own lot/dwelling and ability to exercise some control over exterior changes after the building is built because the dwellings are connected to each other).

9. Building Schemes are required for the RF-12, RF-9 and RF-SD Zones to address the massing and design compatibility considerations. Development Permits are required for the RM-19 Zone. Any subsequent external changes to the building under the RM-19 Zone will need to be in keeping with the mutual agreements required to be registered on each lot within the development.

10. The roof forms should be designed to maximize daylight penetration between adjacent houses.

11. The Alternative Road Standards of Surrey Subdivision and Development By-law should be applied in small lot developments wherever considered feasible, subject to site-specific circumstances and any applicable Neighbourhood Concept Plan.

### **Implementation Strategy**

In order to incorporate each proposed zone in the Zoning By-law, an application for each zone on a specific site is required. In the meantime, the table in Appendix 1 can be used by developers and staff as the basis for small lot development proposals.

## CONCLUSION

A report by Stantec Consulting, discussions with the Development Advisory Committee and direction provided by the Official Community Plan formed the basis for the recommendations of this Report. Four new zones are proposed to be incorporated into the current Zoning By-law in order to facilitate the increasingly popular small lot developments and provide an alternative form of ground-oriented housing. Two of the four zones, RF-12 and RF-9 Zones, are for detached single family dwellings on lots as small as 270 square metres (3,000 sq. ft.) and 9 metre (30 ft.) wide with up to 30% of the total lots allowed to be as narrow as 8 metres (26 ft.) in width under the RF-9 Zone. The remaining two zones, RF-SD and RM-19 Zones, allow dwellings in the form of attached units with each unit located on its own fee-simple lot which can be as small as 180 square metres (1,900 sq. ft.) and 6 metres (20 ft.) wide under the RM-19 Zone.

In addition to the proposed zones, a policy comprising general and zone-specific policy guidelines is also proposed to provide further direction and guidance for consideration of developments proposed under these zones.

The proposed zones are expected to "fix the goal posts" for both developers and staff by providing minimum standards as the basis for consistency in considering small lot proposals, increasing predictability and efficiency and to make the Zoning By-law more responsive to the market. The proposed zones and policy guidelines will also provide a basis for the consideration of those small lot proposals that may not fit the zoning provisions and as a result, may require site-specific Comprehensive Development (CD) zoning.

It is recommended that Council endorse the proposed zones and approve the proposed policy guidelines to be used as a basis for reviewing small lot residential proposals.

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## APPENDICES

1. Zoning Attributes of the Proposed New Zones and Possible Lot Layouts
2. Proposed Policy for Small Lot Residential Zones
3. Illustrations showing Possible Streetscape Scenarios

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