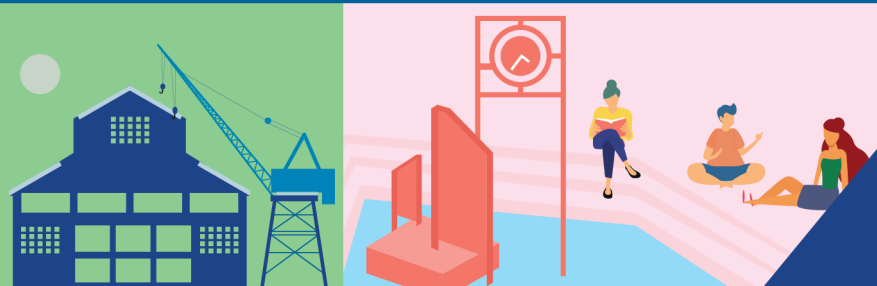




# ZONING



# AND PLANNING

## Zoning Bylaw Update Backgrounder 1

# Creating a Modern Zoning Bylaw for the City of North Vancouver

The City of North Vancouver continues to grow and change, and our Zoning Bylaw needs to grow and change too. This project will result in the creation of a new Zoning Bylaw that is simple, effective, and easy to use. In this backgrounder, we provide an overview of how zoning bylaws are the primary tool used by cities to regulate land use and development.

A zoning bylaw outlines zones that set requirements for how buildings can be built and what uses are allowed in them (like homes and businesses). All zoning bylaws contain a map showing the zoning of all properties along with the requirements that apply to each. The types of requirements in each zone can vary, but they typically include:

- the general size and shape of a building, like height and floor area;
- permitted uses or combination of uses and where they may be located in the building;
- parking and loading requirements; and
- building performance and design elements like green roofs, landscaping, location of doorways.

This backgrounder is one in a series of eight, you can find them all on our project webpage at [cnv.org/zoningupdate](http://cnv.org/zoningupdate).



# Planning and Zoning in the City of North Vancouver

The Zoning Bylaw is enabled by provincial legislation called the Local Government Act (LGA) which gives the City the authority to regulate buildings and uses.

## Local Government Act

- Provincial legislation that applies to all municipalities in B.C.<sup>[1]</sup>
- Allows municipalities to create an Official Community Plan (OCP) and a Zoning Bylaw, spelling out processes for adopting and amending both (often referred to as Planning Applications)

## Official Community Plan

An Official Community Plan (OCP) outlines a community’s long-term vision through objectives and policies that inform local decision-making. When it comes to construction, infrastructure and development, the OCP guides Council decisions (e.g., when Council is considering whether to approve a rezoning application or a development variance permit).

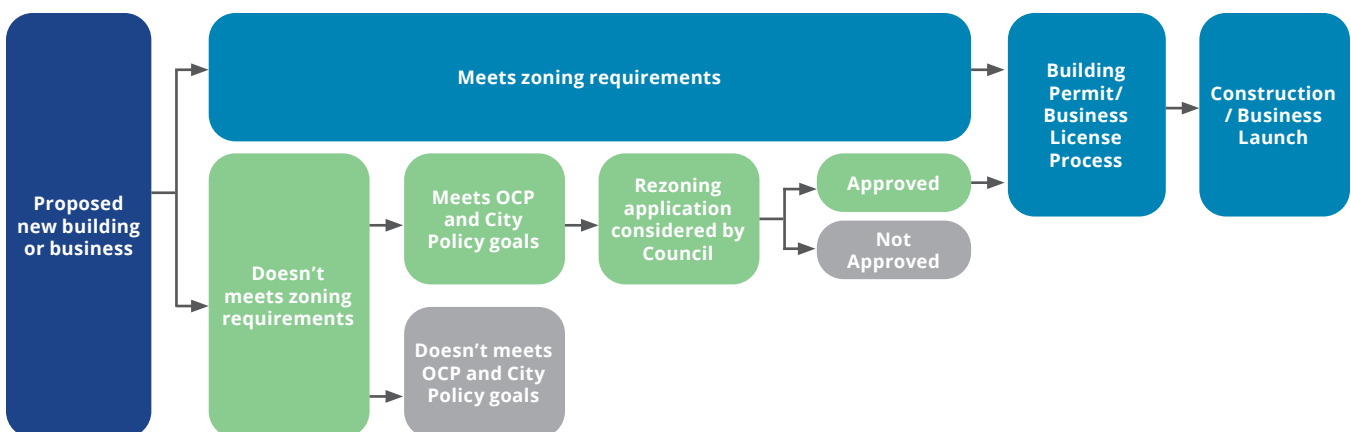
The City of North Vancouver’s Official Community Plan sets out:

- general expectations for how the City will grow and change over time
- general requirements for the use of land and form of buildings
- goals for sustainable development, community resilience, and a range of housing types

## Zoning Bylaw

The Zoning Bylaw is considered an “implementation tool” for the OCP and City policies. By setting specific requirements for buildings and permitted uses, it defines how to achieve the vision and growth that is generally set out in the OCP. The Zoning Bylaw is administered by City staff with little room for interpretation and discretion. Council may consider proposed changes to the zoning bylaw but may only approve those that are aligned with the OCP.

### Example Development Proposal:



<sup>[1]</sup> Excluding City of Vancouver, which has its own agreement with the Province called a “charter”

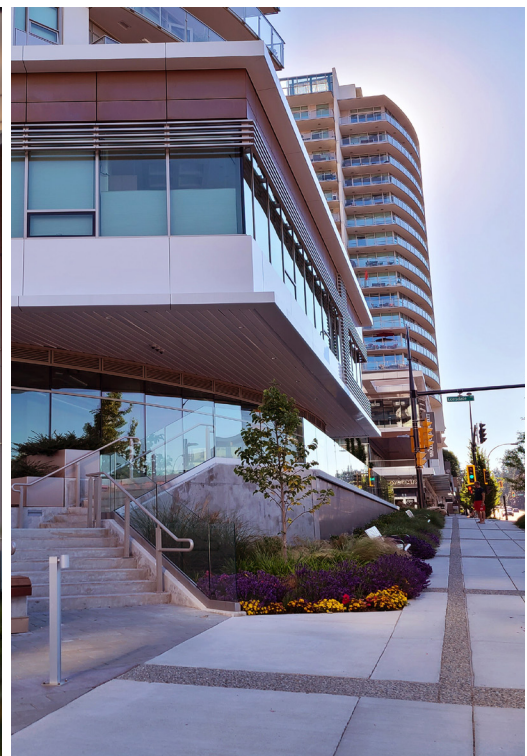


## City Policies

Council may adopt various policies in response to critical issues like the housing crisis and climate change. The policies are prepared by City staff and are based on research and analysis on the specific topic. They inform Council, other City staff and the public about the issue and recommend specific actions. Once adopted, these policies act as guiding documents that Council may follow when making decisions. Policies often call for various actions, including changes to City bylaws, community programs, operating budgets, or capital projects.

Below are some of the policies that Council uses to guide their decision-making:

Policy Documents	Implementation Documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Official Community Plan</li> <li>• Council Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Parks Master Plan</li> <li>• Housing Action Plan</li> <li>• Mobility Strategy</li> <li>• Climate &amp; Environment Strategy (in draft)</li> <li>• Economic Development Strategy (in draft)</li> <li>• Community Wellbeing Strategy (in draft)</li> <li>• Density Bonusing Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Work Plan and City Budget</li> <li>• Corporate Business Plan</li> <li>• Zoning Bylaw</li> <li>• Business Licence Bylaw</li> <li>• Development Permit Guidelines</li> <li>• Construction Regulation Bylaw</li> <li>• Noise Bylaw</li> <li>• Subdivision and Development Control Bylaw</li> </ul>



## What do Modern Zoning Bylaws Look Like?

Many zoning bylaws in B.C. and across Canada today were written several decades ago. Much of the City of North Vancouver's existing Zoning Bylaw was written in 1967 with minor updates, issue-specific changes and housekeeping amendments in the years since.

There is a growing movement to review zoning bylaws and update them to make them easier to interpret and use, with a greater focus on desired city-building outcomes and a more equitable approach to development standards. The City of North Vancouver is welcoming this new approach to zoning through a comprehensive review of our existing Zoning Bylaw. This initiative is part of the continuing effort of the City to be a more livable, healthy, connected, vibrant and prosperous city for people.

Traditionally, zoning bylaws have been exclusionary, with uses separated from each other and in self-contained buildings. This practice has led to cities that have different types of land uses placed far apart from each other leading to long commutes by car to work and destinations like daycare, shopping and entertainment.

The most current trend in zoning is to move away from restrictive and exclusionary zoning, and towards more inclusive, mixed-use zoning approaches. Some cities are achieving this shift by making form-based bylaws. These are bylaws that focus on the shape and placement of buildings. Form based bylaws are:

- less technical and easier to understand;
- more visual, using illustrations, tables and diagrams they can show people what shape and types of development are allowed;
- more focused on the form of the building and how it relates to the street; and
- more focused on ensuring building shape and design are compatible with the street and other buildings, rather than using abstract calculations to determine building shape.

The City will be transitioning from a traditional Zoning Bylaw that is heavy on text and technical jargon to a more modern Zoning Bylaw that is simplified and easy to use, with more visuals and a greater focus on how buildings frame the street and other public spaces.

## Comparing Old and New Approaches to Zoning



<p>Different use types like industrial, commercial and residential were considered to not mix well and were be separated to reduce nuisances and risks</p>	<p>Separating use has led to neighbourhoods with very few (if any) services like grocery stores and doctor’s offices, and many downtown cores that are deserted in the evenings because no one lives nearby.</p>	<p>Modern planning allows for mixing of compatible uses. This helps to reduce the distances people need to travel, supports smaller-scale businesses, and makes communities more resilient (think getting around in a snow storm, or knowing your neighbours) – living more locally.</p>
<p>Residential areas were zoned for low density with large lots located away from downtown, while downtowns were drained of residences and left exclusively to businesses. Areas for jobs and residences were separated, forcing longer commutes mainly by car.</p>	<p>Higher-density, urban neighbourhoods were seen as “messy” and “disorganized” due to their varied forms and relatively high densities. In the worst examples, entire neighbourhoods were bisected by massive new roads (often to connect new suburbs to the urban center) and many people (typically already-marginalized ones) were displaced from their dense, mixed-use urban neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>There are multiple benefits of making communities more complete with diverse housing, employment, goods and services. The benefits include support for sustainable transportation, greater neighbourhood resiliency, more efficient distribution of costly infrastructure and services (meaning lower taxes). Higher densities support higher-quality infrastructure, amenities and services due to a broader user-base and cost savings on city expenses like road maintenance.</p>
<p>Zoning and similar tools have been used to further agendas of power and inequality.</p>	<p>Large lot and parking requirements were used to prevent lower-income households from buying in certain neighbourhoods. Restrictive covenants were used for purposes of segregation, allowing only affluent people to own properties in certain neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Cultural diversity is seen as an asset. Planning policies today aim to recognize and make room for cultural diversity. They further encourage social connections within buildings or neighbourhoods. Some examples are shared gardens and playgrounds and shared indoor amenity space in apartment buildings.</p>

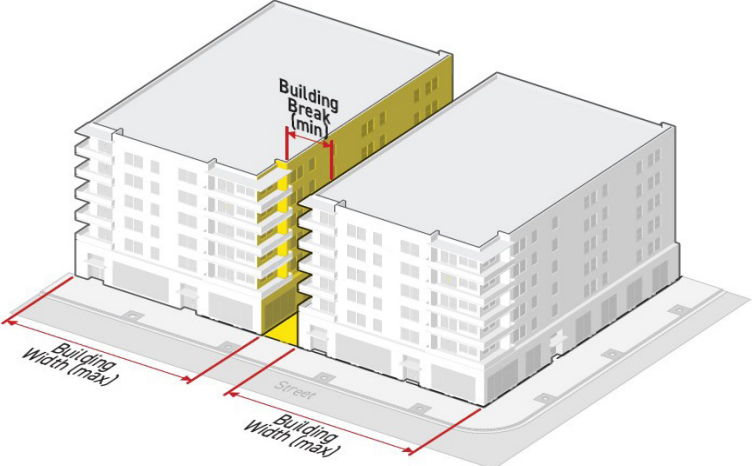
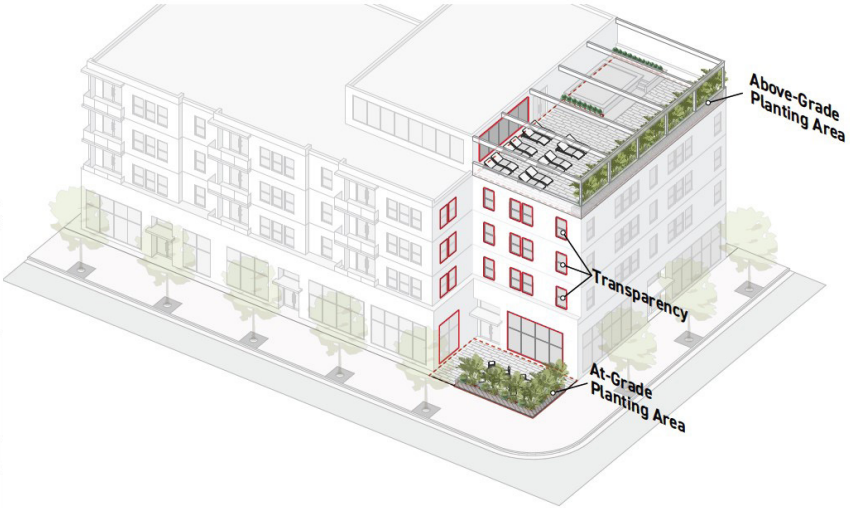
<p>Many people became car owners and wanted to drive everywhere. Planners and engineers focused on building communities that were heavily reliant on cars. Travel by means other than car was rarely considered and became increasingly dangerous.</p>	<p>Parking requirements are often too high given nearby transit options and walkability. The result is higher housing costs and incentivising driving in areas that may already have high traffic. Additionally, for decades there was no support or even consideration for alternative travel modes.</p>	<p>Driving is not the preferred mode of travel for everyone: this is a good thing! Best practice today is to consider all modes, ensuring there are multiple practical and convenient travel options for those who don't want to (or can't) drive.</p>
<p>Professional planners and lawyers assumed the public would not need to be able to read and understand Zoning Bylaws so they were written in complex language.</p>	<p>Most zoning bylaws are very challenging to read and understand, making it more difficult to obtain development approvals.</p>	<p>Being such a significant city-building document, zoning bylaws should be written for a broad audience, not just the people who work with them on a daily basis.</p>

Form-based zoning diagrams from re:Code LA, the City of Los Angeles' Draft Zoning Bylaw (2022)

A. Lot Parameters



<b>1. LOT SIZE</b>		<i>Div. 2C.1.</i>
A	Lot area (min)	2,500 sf
B	Lot width (min)	25'
<b>2. COVERAGE</b>		<i>Div. 2C.2.</i>
C	Building coverage (max)	80%
Building setbacks		
D	Primary street (min)	5'
	Side street (min)	0'
E	Side (min)	0'
	Rear (min)	0'
F	Alley (min)	0'
	Special: All (min)	0'
<b>3. AMENITY</b>		<i>Div. 2C.3.</i>
C	Lot amenity space (min)	25%
	Residential amenity space (min)	10%





## What Does Success Look Like Once We Have Modernized our Zoning Bylaw?

A modern zoning bylaw will help us achieve our policy goals of:

- **Building Complete and Sustainable Communities** by enabling access to daily needs closer to where people live and work, with a focus on sustainable city building;
- **Improving Housing Diversity and Livability** by allowing for a greater mix of housing types;
- **Aligning Parking Requirements** based on context and the different ways people move around the City for both conventional and electric vehicles, bicycles, and other mobility devices;
- **Improving the Way Buildings and Streets Work Together** using a design-focused approach so that new buildings help to improve the street and other public space;
- **Streamlining Development Approvals** by making the Zoning Bylaw itself more clear, accessible and easy to use; and
- **Supporting Future Opportunities** by creating a more resilient and adaptable Zoning Bylaw that can respond to emerging and future needs of the City.



### Stay Informed

For more information on this exciting initiative, please visit the Zoning Bylaw Update webpage and subscribe to our mailing list.

### Links To Related Policies + Background Documents

- [Metro 2050: Regional Growth Strategy \(2022\)](#)
- [City of Vancouver Mobility Strategy \(2022\)](#)
- [City of North Vancouver Strategic Plan \(2018\)](#)
- [City of North Vancouver's Housing Action Plan \(2016\)](#)
- [Active Design Guidelines \(2015\)](#)
- [City of North Vancouver Official Community Plan \(2014\)](#)
- [City of North Vancouver Economic Development Strategy \(2008\)](#)



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