DISTRICT OF WEST VANCOUVER
750 17TH STREET, WEST VANCOUVER BC V7V 3T3

COUNCIL REPORT

Date: November 20, 2015
From: Chris Bishop, Manager of Development Planning
Subject: Neighbourhood Character and Building Bulk
File: 2515-08

RECOMMENDATION

THAT:

1) Council direct staff to prepare bylaws for consideration regarding:
   a. fencing; and
   b. lot consolidation controls;

2) Council direct staff to prepare polices and bylaws for consideration regarding:
   a. requirements for landscaping; and
   b. the treatment of boulevards, public roads and lanes;

all for Council consideration at a targeted spring 2016 Council meeting, including proposed recommendations on next steps.

3) Council direct staff to further consult with the public on potential regulations for:
   a. items related to site alteration including retaining walls, lot grading, and site clearing;
   b. retention of on-site trees and vegetation;
   c. basement exemptions;
   d. highest building face envelope; and
   e. amendments to the Soil Removal and Deposit Regulation Bylaw No. 3786, 1992,

all for Council consideration at a targeted fall 2016 Council meeting, including proposed recommendations on next steps.

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

1) provide a summary of the Single Family Siting, Form and Character public engagement initiative conducted in the spring of 2015;

2) recommended proposed options and responses to issues identified through the public engagement initiative; and
3) seek direction from Council to prepare amendments to the Zoning Bylaw and other regulatory documents as required.

2.0 Executive Summary

Impacts from development and redevelopment of single family dwellings within established neighbourhoods is a long standing issue for the community and has been a focus of District efforts in the past. An issue identified as a threat to the established character of neighbourhoods is the demolition of smaller homes and redevelopment of much larger houses and associated construction practices including complete lot clearing, altering existing grades, installation of large retaining walls and alteration of the public boulevard.

The District of West Vancouver has undertaken a robust public outreach and engagement effort regarding single family neighbourhood character and building bulk following Council direction on February 23, 2015, where Council resolved that building bulk is an outstanding community issue.

The scope of the consultations included: four workshops with building industry representatives; consideration by the Design Review Committee at its April 30, 2015 meeting; and outreach and engagement meetings with neighbourhood associations (i.e. the Lower Caulfeild Advisory Committee, the Ambleside Dundarave Ratepayers Association, and the Altamont Neighbourhood Housing Group). Open Houses were held in the Community Centre Atrium throughout April and May 2015, and a Town Hall meeting was held on May 26, 2015. Online engagement through WestvancouverITE on the District website was also conducted.

Through this enhanced public engagement, a broad cross section of the community was consulted on the issues related to single family siting and form and character, or ‘building bulk’ as it is also referred to. The issue of building bulk as it relates to established neighbourhoods can be very polarizing, and moving toward consensus on how to mitigate negative impacts has proven to be extremely challenging.

In an attempt to move forward with addressing building bulk while respecting differing opinions and points-of-views on the topic, the proposed approach to the issues is designed to be incremental in nature and phased over time.

There are specific issues (i.e. introduction of residential fencing regulations, landscape regulations, the treatment of boulevards, roads and lanes and lot consolidation controls) which have a broader base of public support and it is recommended that these items be addressed in the short term via bylaw amendments and policy development.

There are other specific issues (i.e. amendments to the ‘highest building face’ envelope, changing the regulations for basements, on-site tree retention and retaining wall regulations) that require further consultation with the public and building industry. It is proposed that regulations for the mid-term to deal with in stream applications and to allow for time to
examine changes and avoid unintended consequences be brought forward following further public consultation.

Lastly, there are other possible amendments (e.g. Floor Area Ratio (FAR) reductions, elimination of floor area exemptions or implementing Development Permits for single family developments) that did not garner substantial public support. Also, it would be beneficial to first determine if the short and mid-term programs were successful in addressing issues related to building bulk prior to considering further amendments. As such, amendments to FAR or adding development permit requirements to single family developments are not recommended.

Should Council support the recommendations outlined in this report, staff would prepare amending bylaws that would implement the short term goals for addressing residential building bulk and look to further consult with the community on the mid-term goals.

3.0 Legislation, Bylaws and Policies

Broadly speaking, in British Columbia local governments are enabled and empowered through the Local Government Act and the Community Charter. These documents authorize the creation and amendment of bylaws including official community plans, zoning bylaws and building bylaws. Appendix A provides a summary of the relevant legislation, bylaws and policy as they relate to the issue of single family siting, form and character.

4.0 Background

4.1 Previous Decisions

Over the last few years, the issue of building bulk has been before Council on numerous occasions. Council has directed a variety of steps be undertaken. The most recent direction of Council is as follows:

At the February 23, 2015 Council Meeting Council passed the following motion:


THAT the Council of the District of West Vancouver resolves that there are well documented and recognized issues related to the compatibility of new and renovated single family residential dwellings within the District with respect to size, siting, massing, grading and landscaping and directs staff to engage the community and commence the preparation of bylaw amendments to address the issue based upon the consultation.

THAT Council direct that staff engage the community on these issues as outlined in the report dated January 29, 2015 and titled “Single Family
Housing – Siting, Form and Character Public Engagement Process – 2015”.

Other Council motions related to this issue are attached as Appendix B.

5.0 Analysis

5.1 Discussion

Single family siting and form and character (or, ‘building bulk’) and the issues surrounding the impact a dwelling can have on established neighbourhood character are extremely challenging. ‘Building bulk’ can, and does, mean different things to different people.

West Vancouver, like most local governments in the Province, regulates the use, size and siting of dwellings and structures through bylaws such as the Official Community Plan (OCP), the Zoning Bylaw, the Building Bylaw, and the Subdivision Control Bylaw. The Soil Removal and Deposit Regulation Bylaw also influences the size and siting of dwellings and structures on a lot, as it influences the extent of land alteration that can occur.

Proposed Approach to Regulations

Council has directed that options be explored that would see amendments to the Official Community Plan, the Zoning Bylaw, the Subdivision Control Bylaw and the Soil Deposit and Removal Bylaws, with the purpose of mitigating the impact of construction and its associated practices on established neighbourhood character.

As described and recommended in this report, it is proposed that a suite of bylaw regulations be brought forward for Council consideration that tackles building bulk in a phased approach:

- Phase One: Immediate/Short-Term; and
- Phase Two: Mid-Term.

A final category, “Not Recommended,” identifies items that are not specifically recommended for change at this time. Each of the proposed phases are discussed below.

It is worth noting that in all circumstances where regulations are proposed, applicants and homeowners could apply to Council for consideration and approval where site specific situations are warranted.
A. Immediate/Short-Term

Immediate and short term goals are related to specific issues that have been identified as having more broad public support through the public engagement held in the spring of 2015, and can immediately begin to positively address building bulk in the community. They include:

i. Fencing Regulations

The District has no regulations regarding fencing. Common areas of fencing concerns identified by the public were:

a. No maximum heights;

b. Location of fences within the boulevard and on top of retaining walls; and

c. Materials used in fence construction.

These issues result in fences that can be out of character with the neighbourhood, present a 'hard edge' to the street, and in limited cases, very tall fences. Feedback reveals that fence regulations are both needed and wanted and could assist in helping new and renovated developments integrate into existing community character. Most jurisdictions through the Province regulate fences relative to yards and height.

In order to reduce the visual impact of fences on streetscapes and on adjacent properties, the following regulations are recommended:

Recommendation 1: Establish a maximum height of 1.2 metres for fences located within a front yard, and 1.8 metres for fences located within a side or rear yard.

Recommendation 2: Restrict the maximum combined height of fences and retaining walls to 2.4 metres.

Recommendation 3: Not allow fences within public boulevards, roads or lanes, unless safety or steep terrain needs to be addressed. Such situations would be evaluated on their specific conditions during a mandatory permitting process.

ii. Requirement for Landscaping

Landscaping and site treatment is a significant issue related to building bulk. Establishing and maintaining landscaping on a property is very important in maintaining and enhancing neighbourhood character throughout West Vancouver and mitigating the impact of new construction.

Almost unanimous public feedback during engagement was the importance of landscaping to mitigate building bulk. Landscaping can effectively soften the appearance of retaining walls, buildings, other structures and built features when a healthy and robust landscape scheme is implemented and maintained. However, by
equal measure, landscaping installations that are insufficient or missing altogether can have a significant detrimental impact to both a development and the neighbourhood in which it is situated.

Further, feedback from those in the homebuilding and construction industry suggest that improved landscape regulations and bonding/security requirements would be welcomed and assist in encouraging their clients to take this matter more seriously when planning and undertaking residential projects within existing neighbourhoods.

Some measures are available to local governments to help reduce the visual impact of new development through limiting the amount of hard surfacing on a lot and by promoting robust landscaping of a property.

**Recommendation 4:** Restrict the maximum percentage of hard surfaces in public boulevards and within the front yards of properties to 30%.

**Recommendation 5:** Require a landscape plan that details a planting plan for the site secured through a permit bond or security. The landscape plan will document the applicant’s proposed retention of existing trees and vegetation (where possible) and will identify vegetation buffers adjacent to surrounding properties, public roads, or parks. While this proposed recommendation *does not require* tree/vegetation retention, it encourages the property developer to consider tree/vegetation retention strategies where appropriate. Regulatory requirements related to tree protection are proposed as part of the “medium-term” strategies, which are subject to future consultation.

**iii. Treatment of Boulevards, Roads and Lanes**

Publicly owned rights of way include boulevards, roads and lanes. Public boulevards are commonly considered the area between the edge of a private property and the edge of the travelled road. Boulevards, roadways and lanes are an extremely important component in the maintenance and enhancement of community character and mitigating the impact of new construction.

Policies BF-B1 and B2 of the Official Community Plan state: “*Review regulations to support replacement of existing buildings with new construction that is compatible with terrain, site, streetscape and neighbourhood characteristics . . . *” and “*Encourage a high standard of landscaping including within the boulevards.*”

West Vancouver is well known for its gentle, ambling roads and country style lanes. Retention of existing boulevard features or a comprehensive landscape plan for the boulevard is critical in ensuring new construction is compatible with the character of a
neighbourhood and in reducing the visual impact of site development.

In many cases the boulevards and road allowances in West Vancouver contain significant vegetation and trees. Regulations would align with the OCP to ensure that the existing boulevard character would remain intact, mitigating the impact of new development.

**Recommendation 6:** Clarify existing requirements for boulevard plans as part of the building permit process that would 1) require retention of existing trees and vegetation; 2) require a landscape plan (submitted as part of a landscape plan for the site or as a stand alone plan where no application exists onsite); and 3) prescribe a replanting ratio of trees and vegetation where removal is warranted.

**Recommendation 7:** Implement tree protection regulations to protect trees within boulevards, road right-of-ways and lanes.

**Recommendation 8:** Restrict the construction of retaining walls and grade alteration within boulevards, road right-of-ways and lanes, except where required for driveway access.

### iv. Lot Consolidation Controls

Currently, the *Land Title Act* allows for the consolidation of lots by the Land Title Office without the approval of either the District or the District's Approving Officer. Currently a lot consolidation enables a correspondingly larger house to be constructed based on current floor area ratio regulations. Put more simply, as a parcel grows the dwelling size can expand in a direct, linear amount (i.e. as the lot area doubles so does the possible dwelling size). There are examples within the District of how lot consolidation creates large dwellings that are significantly out of character with the surrounding lot pattern and neighbourhood.

Through the public engagement, there was a fulsome dialogue with stakeholders and residents with an understanding of the impacts that lot consolidation can have on a neighbourhood. Many respondents supported restricting how many lots can be bought and consolidated in order to prevent houses being constructed that may be out of scale with surrounding houses. While lot consolidation cannot be controlled directly by the District, Council can create regulations to control and mitigate building bulk by regulating lot consolidation. An example of the concept is illustrated in Table 1.
Table 1:

Example: RS3 Zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Regulations</th>
<th>Lot Area</th>
<th>Floor Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Lot, minimum area</td>
<td>12,000 sq ft</td>
<td>4,200 sq ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidation – 2 lots</td>
<td>24,000 sq ft</td>
<td>8,400 sq ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidation – 3 lots</td>
<td>36,000 sq ft</td>
<td>12,600 sq ft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Regulations</th>
<th>Lot Area</th>
<th>Floor Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single lot, minimum area</td>
<td>12,000 sq ft</td>
<td>4,200 sq ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidation – 2 lots</td>
<td>24,000 sq ft</td>
<td>6,300 sq ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidation – 3 lots</td>
<td>36,000 sq ft</td>
<td>6,300 sq ft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proposed Lot Consolidation regulations would result in FAR being calculated on 150% of the minimum lot area in the zone, regardless of how large the lot grows through consolidation.

**Recommendation 9:** Restrict maximum floor area to 150% of that permitted for the minimum lot area in the zone for lots consolidated after a date specified by Council (does not apply to existing lots).

**B. Mid-term**

Mid-term goals are related to broader items that need further discussion with Council and the public. These goals would contribute to dealing with single family siting and neighbourhood character issues over time.

*i.* Retaining Walls, Lot Grading and Site Alteration

Current retaining wall regulations in the Zoning Bylaw are:

a. an “envelope” on the property lines, within which retaining walls must be located;

b. limitation of the maximum height of any retaining wall located within 2.4 metres of the front property line to 1.2 metres; and

c. limitation of the maximum height of any retaining wall elsewhere on the property to 2.4 metres.

These regulations allow for retaining walls of up to 1.2 metres on property lines, “cut” or excavated retaining walls on property lines, and no limit on “terracing” of retaining walls back into a site to create flat areas for pools or lawns or even to place a house above the natural grade.

Expansive areas of exposed retaining walls can result in visual impact on the neighbourhood and privacy impacts on adjacent neighbours. It can also limit the ability to establish landscaping in front of and between retaining walls, in order to reduce the visual impact or re-establish privacy. Further, it encourages home designs to not seek to work with the land and topography of a lot.
Recommendation 10: Explore setbacks for retaining walls from property lines to allow for suitable areas for landscaping/screening.

Recommendation 11: Explore limiting retaining walls to 1.2 metres in height within front yards, except where necessary to allow for driveway access.

ii. Retention of Existing Site Trees and Vegetation

Concern has been raised by many residents and stakeholders regarding the practice of clearing lots of existing landscape and vegetation as part of a development project. This may be done as it is viewed as easier to manage site development and projects without having to consider protection of existing vegetation or landscaping. This leads to buildings, grade manipulation and retaining walls being placed with few constraints, and they contribute to the exacerbation of impacts that new houses and site development have on a neighbourhood (e.g. visual impact and loss of privacy).

Recommendation 12: Explore regulations to require the retention of existing trees and vegetation. This proposed measure would build upon a landscape plan requirement described in the “short-term recommendations” by compelling tree and vegetation retention for significant or important trees. Regulations could include the requirement to provide reports on the status of existing trees and vegetation and grading plans in context of overall site development and within proximity to critical root zones.

iii. Basements

The Zoning Bylaw allows the lowest storey of a house to be considered a basement (and therefore considered for floor area exemption) where the floor is just 0.3 metres (12 inches) below the average grade. This creates an allowance for a house with three floors (two full floors plus a basement). The issue relative to building bulk occurs where basements are predominantly above grade (ostensibly to gain more light access and accommodate ‘walk-out’ designs). This directly contributes to building bulk by exposing the mass of a house that, as a basement, is typically much further below grade. While requiring a building to be further below grade may result in additional blasting and rock removal, it would most certainly address permanent exposed building mass from contributing to bulk.

Recommendation 13: Explore the requirement for basement to be a minimum of 1.8 metres below average grade.

iv. Highest Building Face Envelope

The intent of the Highest Building Face Envelope is to reduce the apparent bulk of a house on the lowest side of a
development. It requires that houses have a maximum exposed face of 6.7 metres before requiring the building to be stepped back (see Figure 1). While the regulation controls the appearance of a house from having three floors of house fully exposed (two floors plus a basement), it is complex to calculate and allows for one-third of the highest building face to be exempted from the envelope requirement. Other exemptions allow for certain features such as decks, eaves and architectural features to project into the envelope. The focus is on stepping the mass of the building back from the lowest side. It should be kept in mind that this is not always the elevation facing a public street or lane.

Fig 1. Highest Building Face Envelope

Through public consultation, it became clear that there is value in retaining the Highest Building Face concept as a means to modulate the building mass on the property. There is merit in revising the existing regulations to clarify how to calculate Highest Building Face, and to remove the one-third exemption requirement to make the regulation more meaningful. The one-third exemption allows for living space to protrude beyond the Highest Building Face Envelope, contributing to building bulk.

**Recommendation 14:** Explore revising the Highest Building Face regulations so that it is measured from the basement level or finished grade (rather than the lowest of finished or natural grade).

**Recommendation 15:** Consider deleting the permitted one-third exemption.

**Recommendation 16:** Continue to allow for certain exemptions for design details such as decks, porches, and eaves to protrude into envelopes that do not contribute to building bulk.
C. Not Recommended

Through the public consultation, the District has heard concerns regarding any broad reduction of Floor Area Ratios (FARs) or the elimination of current exemptions. At this time, it is not recommended that the following regulations be considered for amendment, introduction or elimination:

- the reduction of Floor Area Ratios (FARs);
- the elimination of exemptions to the FAR calculations (i.e. basement areas below the required grade line, accessory buildings and eligible garage areas); or,
- the introduction of Development Permit requirements for single family residential development.

Following any amendment and implementation on short and mid-term goals related to building bulk, and with time to determine their impact on addressing the issues, it could be better determined if further measures are needed. This could include considering reducing FAR or deleting exemptions if it was determined that the short and midterm goals would need to be augmented by considering these additional measures.

It is not recommended that Development Permits for residential development be considered. Working with the community through meaningful engagement on amending or adding development regulations as outlined in this report are considered more suitable and realistic for addressing building bulk.

5.2 Sustainability

When considered fully, the issue of building bulk (including larger dwelling size and related development impacts), does have a significant impact on sustainability. Smaller dwellings and projects designed with lower site modification and placed more sensitively within their context inherently have lower impacts on our environment and energy consumption. Taken individually this is perhaps less meaningful but when applied across the community, this can have a significant impact on sustainability in West Vancouver.

Regarding social sustainability, issues related to building bulk have been a flashpoint for the community and have polarized opinion on the rate and types of development in West Vancouver. Due to this, residents of West Vancouver are engaged and passionate about the community and their neighbourhoods. Working to address the issue and to mitigate the impacts of ongoing development and building bulk will move West Vancouver to a more socially sustainable position by improving neighbourhood liveability, supporting community development and place making, and the fostering of an open and inclusive community.
5.3 Public Engagement, Communication and Outreach

As directed by Council, further community consultation was undertaken on the topic of single family siting and form and character. Council desired to see a broad outreach to the citizens, building community, stakeholders and decision makers.

As such, enhanced community consultation occurred in the spring of 2015. Through this process, staff proposes short and midterm recommendations for Council consideration based on public input.

The public engagement and consultation history is attached as Appendix C with a more detailed focus on the 2015 process undertaken by staff.

Moving forward, should Council support the recommendations outlined in this report, the District would further consult with the community on the mid-term goals consistent with our Community Engagement Policy. Methods for consultations could include additional public meetings and forums, open houses, and online engagement. The feedback from this consultation would be reported back to Council, with recommended next steps, targeted for a fall 2016 Council meeting.

6.0 Options

6.1 Recommended Option

It is recommended that Council direct staff to prepare amending bylaws for consideration that would see the implementation of the short-term goals, and that staff be further directed to consult with the community on mid-term goals, including policy and bylaw amendments, and report back to Council on the findings of the consultation.

Many options and approaches with respect to introducing regulations regarding building bulk were considered. The building bulk issue is not easily resolved and different approaches have differing benefits and drawbacks. The recommended approach is balanced and incremental. The changes are intended to be modest yet effective and can be reviewed once implemented to ensure that they are mitigating the impacts of building bulk as intended.

6.2 Considered Options

a. Council direct staff to prepare amending bylaws and consult with the community as described within the recommended option; or

b. Council request that additional information (to be specified) be provided; or

c. Council direct an amended course of action with regards to the short and midterm goals (to be specified).
7.0 Conclusion

The recommended approach seeks to make incremental and meaningful changes to District bylaws which can assist in mitigating the impacts of residential development within the community. The proposed changes do not limit or preclude Council's discretionary authority to direct future changes, and Council may desire to see additional measures brought forward. These are the first steps to address the concerns surrounding the issue and help the development of our community proceed more harmoniously.

Author: Chris Bishop, Manager of Development Planning

Appendices:

A. Legislation Summary related to single family siting, form and character.
B. Previous Council Motions
C. Public Consultation Summary
APPENDIX A
Legislation, Bylaws and Policy Summary

Legislation, Bylaws and Policy

Legislation

The Community Charter and Local Government Act are the enabling legislation for local governments. They are entirely within the purview of the provincial government and they authorize the creation and amendment of bylaws including the Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaws by local government.

Bylaws

Bylaws, enabled through the Local Government Act, allow local governments to put their community's vision and goals into regulations which will affect the way in which communities and neighbourhoods will be developed. One example of this is a zoning bylaw. A zoning by-law controls the use of land in a community. It specifies:

- how land may be used,
- where buildings and other structures can be located;
- the types of buildings that are permitted and how they may be used,
- the lot sizes and dimensions;
- parking requirements;
- building heights and setbacks. A zoning bylaw aims to implement the objectives and policies of the Official Community Plan, provides a legal way of managing land use and future development in addition to the official plan. Other examples of similar regulatory bylaws include building bylaws, noise bylaws, and subdivision control bylaws.

District Policy

The District of West Vancouver Official Community Plan (OCP) contains policies related to residential development and more specifically to the preservation of community and neighbourhood character. Policy BF-B1 strives to "preserve and enhance neighbourhood character and the character of supporting streetscapes." This policy includes the following statements:

- "Promote local area planning initiatives, including the development of Local Area Plans to assist in defining the attributes, qualities and character of specific neighbourhoods."

- "Review regulations to support replacement of existing buildings with new construction that is compatible with terrain, site, streetscape and neighbourhood characteristics."

- "Require contextual review of streetscapes and evaluate the contribution of boulevards to neighbourhood character before proceeding with street improvements such as widening roads or installing curbs and sidewalks."
APPENDIX A
Legislation, Bylaws and Policy Summary

Policy BF-B2 is to "preserve and enhance the valued qualities of existing neighbourhoods." Policy BF-B2 includes the following bulleted statements:

- "Retain and enhance the overall character of neighbourhoods, particularly in relation to boulevards, general lot sizes, building form and size, public and natural amenities and street forms."

- "Use local area planning initiatives, including the development of Local Area Plans to examine regulation, designations or guidelines to preserve and enhance neighbourhood character."

- "Ensure that new development recognizes and is compatible with the character of existing neighbourhoods."
APPENDIX B
Previous Council Motions

Past Council Motions

Previous Council recommendations At the October 20, 2014 Council Meeting Council passed the following motion:

"THAT staff be directed to consult with all interested parties on the full range of regulatory options for addressing single family home siting, form, and character contained in the June 2014 report titled “Single Family Housing - Siting, Form, and Character" and report back to Council with draft bylaw amendments to address those issues."

Based on the work undertaken by staff to fulfill this direction at the July 7, 2014 Council Meeting the following motions were passed:

"Staff prepare draft Zoning Bylaw amendments pertaining to regulation of retaining walls and floor area exemptions for Council’s consideration in September 2014, as outlined in the report from the Manager of Community Planning dated June 18, 2014; and

Staff report back on possible further actions to address building bulk in early 2015, following further analysis of the options outlined in the consultants’ report attached as Appendix ‘A’ to the report from the Manager of Community Planning, dated June 18, 2014.”

At the November 18, 2013 Council Meeting, Council passed the following motions:

"THAT the discussion paper titled “Siting, Form and Character, West Vancouver Housing Study”, attached as Appendix ‘A’ to the report dated October 22, 2013, titled, “Single Family Housing – Siting, Form and Character” be used as an information tool during community engagement on housing bulk and site development in early 2014; and

THAT staff report back to Council in spring 2014 on the results of the community engagement process, and make recommendations to Council on possible District actions to address community concerns over the integration of new houses in established neighbourhoods.”
APPENDIX C
Public Consultation Summary

Public Engagement, Communication and Outreach

Background


The final report and recommendations of the Community Dialogue Working Group (September 2008) provided direction for further District action related to the character impacts of new houses being built in established neighbourhoods, specifically:

- To amend single-family zoning regulations pertaining to ‘size’ of new houses – i.e., floor area, sitting, height, and massing (Recommendation 2.2).

- To prepare regulations, guidelines and/or incentives to encourage designs that are more sympathetic to a site’s natural features, and that minimize site alteration, and loss of trees and vegetation during site preparation for construction (Recommendation 2.5).

- To determine what regulatory changes would be necessary to support the community objective of ‘designing with nature’ – i.e., working with a site’s natural features, and minimizing site alteration through clear-cutting of trees, excessive blasting, and alteration of established landscape character (Recommendation 2.6).

2013–2014: Neighbourhood Character - Siting, Form and Character

2013

More current work on the siting, form and character of ‘replacement’ houses built on the issues identified during the 2006-08 Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing, the recommendations of the Community Dialogue Working Group, as well as the continued public concerns about new construction in West Vancouver. Through this engagement, the areas of focus included, the difference in size and scale of older versus new houses, differences in landscape treatment (new vs. established), and the impact on privacy and views for existing residents.

In fall 2013, the District retained CitySpaces Consulting Ltd. to undertake a focussed study on the siting, form and character of new replacement houses in established neighbourhoods. This work was an opportunity to explore how the siting and form of new houses contributes to and/or impacts what residents define as the ‘character’ of their neighbourhoods. The consultants focused on
neighbourhoods below the Upper Levels Highway, and identified the following key objectives for this study:

- To reduce the perceived bulk of new houses, especially from adjacent properties;
- To ensure sensitive siting of new construction, relative to existing development;
- To reduce development impacts to the existing landscape;
- To limit changes to the existing site grading; and
- To simplify the regulatory language.

**Discussion Paper (October 2013)**

The first part of this work included the preparation of a discussion paper on ‘building bulk’ issues. The discussion paper provides the historical and community contexts for understanding building bulk issues, and the character ‘conflicts’ between new and existing forms of development.

The report also details the demographic changes that have occurred in West Vancouver since the 1960s, and the replacement of first generation of houses with much larger houses of 3,500 to 6,000 square feet. Added to the increasing size of new and replacement houses, are a set of now common development practices, such as site clearing of mature vegetation and significant grade alteration. It also describes the historical and ongoing amendment of West Vancouver’s zoning regulations which have attempted to deal with character impacts of new construction; and ‘best practices’ employed in other municipalities.

The discussion paper was posted on westvancouver.ca in November 2013 for public information.

2014

**Neighbourhood Character - Siting, Form and Character Community Engagement (Spring 2014)**

Community engagement was undertaken from February through May 2014, and included:

- Information displays and questionnaire at the West Vancouver Housing and Neighbourhoods Fair (February 24 and March 1, 2014);
- Online input via westvancouverITE; and,
- Technical workshops with District staff (April 2014), and design and construction industry stakeholders (May 2014).
APPENDIX C
Public Consultation Summary

To summarize this engagement, public feedback suggests that the issue of 'building bulk' is not only about 'size' but also about separation and articulation of buildings. There is a desire to see established landscapes (both on private and public lands) preserved as new development is introduced.

Another key concern is the amount of site modification required to accommodate new house designs, including tree removal and increased hard surface paving.

The focus of the technical workshops was on four key subject areas:
- massing;
- grades;
- basements; and,
- landscape treatment.

Siting Form and Character, West Vancouver Housing Study: Regulatory Approaches to Advance Siting Form & Character” Findings and Recommendations

The consultants' report, titled “Siting, Form and Character, West Vancouver Housing Study: Regulatory Approaches to Advance Siting Form & Character” was completed in June 2014 and its primary purpose was to identify potential modifications to the District's Zoning Bylaw to further address the perceived 'bulk' of new development. It's focus was on zoning changes that could assist in the regulation of building size and siting, and physical site alteration.

The technical workshops with the design/construction industry and District staff explored various regulatory tools, and possible directions for regulatory amendments or additions.

Based on workshops, staff review of the proposals and public feedback to the proposal, the report recommended the following areas be elevated for further consideration:

- Consider an alternative approach to calculating 'grade';
- Introduce a setback for retaining walls;
- Introduce a maximum perimeter wall height (to replace highest building face);
- Introduce a maximum basement wall height;
- Include basement as a 'storey';
- Establish a minimum roof pitch;
- Remove FAR exemptions for accessory buildings;
- Relate lot coverage to massing and permeability;
- Relate required front and side yard setbacks to surrounding development;
- Widen side yard setbacks;
- Introduce a siting permit; and,
- Establish robust landscape standards and requirements
APPENDIX C
Public Consultation Summary

2015 Public Consultation

On February 23, 2015 Council directed that staff further engage the community on the issue of community character and housing bulk and to use the full suite of possible mitigation measures as identified in the 2013/14 consultant's report ("Siting, Form and Character, West Vancouver Housing Study: Regulatory Approaches to Advance Siting Form & Character") as a catalyst for discussion.

The approach to engagement was multi faceted and focussed on reaching a broad cross section of the community. With the direct assistance of the Manager of Community Relations and the support of the Communication Department, staff crafted a public engagement strategy which leveraged the neighbourhood associations, targeted stakeholder and industry professionals as well as utilizing online information platforms and input capabilities through westvancouverlTE. The dates, venues and in person engagement forums were as follows:

Neighbourhood Character – Public Consultation Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Builders Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 19</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Design Review Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>4:30 - 6:30 pm</td>
<td>Council Chambers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C
Public Consultation Summary

West Vancouver Neighbourhood Association Meetings (by invitation)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 8 LCAC</td>
<td>6 pm</td>
<td>LCAC - St. Francis in the Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9 Western Residents Association</td>
<td>7 pm</td>
<td>Gleneagles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 15 Ambleside and Dundarave Ratepayers Association</td>
<td>7 pm</td>
<td>Seniors Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 5 Altamont Neighbourhood Housing</td>
<td>6:30 pm</td>
<td>West Bay Elementary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Open Houses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 29</td>
<td>3 – 7 pm</td>
<td>Community Centre Atrium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 23</td>
<td>9 – 1 pm</td>
<td>Community Centre Atrium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Town Hall Meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 26</td>
<td>6 – 9 pm</td>
<td>Community Centre Gymnasium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the complexity of the issue as it relates to zoning and other regulatory issues, staff engaged the services of Karl Gustavson Architect to help explore each item and understand how the current bylaw effects house design and development. The consultant also created representative diagrams and illustrations detailing 'possible actions' related to ways in which the zoning bylaw might be amended to provide further regulation and control into the development process to mitigate the impact of new and replacement dwellings. It must be noted that these illustrations have been used to help with the engagement process and catalyze thinking around the issue of building bulk. These illustrations were not put forth as the only options available to the community in this regard.
APPENDIX C
Public Consultation Summary

Neighbourhood Association Meetings

Introduced as part of the Neighbourhood Character engagement process was the outreach and engagement with neighbourhood associations and community organizations that requested invitations for a presentation on the subject. The purpose of this initiative was to meet interested citizens in their neighbourhoods, to present the larger issue of neighbourhood character and to hear what these residents had to say and to add to the discussion. Through this process staff held meetings with the Western Residents Association, Lower Caulfeild Advisory Committee, Ambleside and Dundarave Ratepayers Association and the Altamont Neighbourhood Housing Group.

Builders Meetings

Staff convened a total of four meetings with the development and construction industry. Invitations to attend these meetings were extended through the District led Builder’s Forum and the recently created West Vancouver Homebuilders Association. Three formal meetings were held as detailed above. Staff modified the meeting format from the first scheduled meeting to subsequent meetings to better engage with the participants and to encourage a more solution based conversation. Finally, a fourth, open agenda meeting was convened prior to the Town Hall meeting to further engage with this group and to leverage the expertise of the attendees.

Design Review Committee

The District’s Design Review Committee (DRC) reviewed the issue at their regular meeting of April 30. The DRC received a brief report covering the background on the issue as well as the objectives of the Neighbourhood Character study. The DRC was interested in the subject but did recognize their limited exposure to the subject (single unit development) in practice. Overall there was cautious support for the suggested ‘possible actions’ with further exploration and study warranted.

District website and westvancouverITE

The District website had a page dedicated to the issue and was updated with new information as it became available. The westvancouverITE online tool was used extensively and the usage (from April 15 through June 1) was as follows:

- 980 attendees to the site;
- 560 individual responses; and,
- Over 28 hours of public comment were recorded.