

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

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## COUNCIL REPORT

Date:	November 18, 2020
From:	Courtney Miller, Senior Planner
Subject:	Neighbourhood Character Working Group: Final Report
File:	0117-20-NCWG 2020

### RECOMMENDATION

THAT the “Neighbourhood Character Working Group Recommendations”, attached as **Appendix A** to the report from the Senior Planner dated November 18, 2020, be received; and

THAT staff report back with implementing policies and guidelines with reference to the Neighbourhood Character Working Group’s recommendations.

#### 1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to bring forward to Council the recommendations of the Neighbourhood Character Working Group (NCWG) and receive direction to bring forward implementing initiatives.

#### 2.0 Legislation/Bylaw/Policy

West Vancouver controls the design and construction of dwellings and associated landscaping through a range of regulations including the *Zoning, Building, Subdivision Control, Boulevard, Development Procedures, and Soil Removal and Deposit Regulation Bylaws*. The NCWG provides recommendations to amend bylaws, policies and practices to protect and enhance neighbourhood character.

#### 3.0 Council Strategic Objective(s)/Official Community Plan

The District of West Vancouver’s housing goal under its Council Strategic Plan 2020 – 2021 is to “significantly expand the diversity and supply of housing, including housing that is more affordable.” It includes the objective:

- 1.4: Create policies and guidelines for single family residential zones with reference to the findings in the Neighbourhood Character Working Group report.

The District of West Vancouver’s 2018 Official Community Plan (OCP) Housing and Neighbourhoods theme includes the policy:

2.1.8: Ensure that new single-family dwellings respect neighbourhood character by:

- a. Reviewing regulations controlling the scale of new single-family dwellings; and
- b. Applying and updating built-form guidelines, as relevant, in regards to neighbourhood context and character, streetscape and natural features.

## 4.0 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications to receiving the NCWG recommendations. Should Council direct staff to report back with policies and guidelines, subsequent reports will inform Council of any financial implications related to the implementation of the specific regulations under consideration at that time.

## 5.0 Background

### 5.1 Previous Decisions

At the July 8, 2019 Council Meeting, Council passed the following resolution:

*THAT the report “Neighbourhood Character Working Group Progress Report” be received for information.*

This report informed Council of the NCWG’s progress to date.

At the March 12, 2018 Council meeting, Council passed the following resolution:

*THAT the report “Neighbourhood Character Working Group for Single Family Dwelling Zones” be received for information.*

This report advised Council of staff’s intention to convene the NCWG with the approval of the Community Engagement Committee (CEC).

### 5.2 History

2013 – Council endorsed “housing and neighbourhood character” and “housing bulk” as priority work items, leading to the preparation of a discussion paper with options for consideration.

2014 – Staff engaged the community to seek input on draft regulations, informing Council consideration of Zoning Bylaw amendments. Council directed staff to further engage the community on a range of regulatory options.

2015 – Council considered a process for additional engagement, directing staff to work with the community to address concerns regarding the size, siting, massing, grading and landscaping of single-family dwelling zones.

2016 – Council adopted Zoning and Boulevard Bylaw amendments to address lot consolidation, site landscaping and boulevard regulations, directing staff to report back on the remaining issues. Council subsequently redirected resources to prioritize the consideration of tree protection and management.

2018 – Staff supported the CEC in the approval of draft terms of reference for the NCWG and the appeal for community volunteers. The CEC appointed the Working Group members, and the NCWG began meeting in August.

2019 – The NCWG provided a progress report to Council including a definition of success, vision statement and three-phase engagement plan. The CEC granted the NCWG’s request to extend its term.

2020 – With timeline adjustments resulting from the COVID-19 global pandemic, the NCWG concludes its final phase of engagement and the delivery of its recommendations to Council (the subject of this report).

## 6.0 Analysis

### 6.1 Discussion

The purpose of the NCWG was “to propose, consider and review regulations and policies that respect neighbourhood character, protect heritage and reduce the impacts of development in the District’s single-family dwelling zones.” Building on its terms of reference, the NCWG’s final recommendations address this mandate through the following six categories of recommended actions:

1. Reduce actual building size;
2. Encourage suites and coach houses;
3. Limit visual impact of buildings as seen from the street;
4. Encourage landscaping;
5. Simplify process; and
6. Encourage neighbour consideration.

These recommendations are the outcome of a three-phase process: validate issues; identify solutions; and finalize recommendations. The first phase focused on key issues—building size, housing diversity, landscaping, and neighbour and public interface—with a range of in-person and online engagement in February-May 2019. The NCWG’s July 8, 2019 progress report to Council provides more details, and the related analysis is included as **Appendix B** of this report.

Building on this initial phase, the NCWG proceeded to identify solutions that are actionable, technically feasible and implementable. This task was informed further by research conducted by Working Group members, staff input and ongoing community input received through correspondence and public attendance at the NCWG meetings. Industry representatives also contributed to this phase through a series of meetings conducted in January 2020.

The final phase again included a range of engagement in July-September 2020, although in-person events were replaced with virtual community workshops on account of COVID-19 restrictions. More details are provided later in this report, and the Working Group comprised the analysis as **Appendix C** of this report.

The NCWG typically met bi-weekly and, over the course of 26 months, convened over 75 times including regular meetings, educational workshops and community outreach. The NCWG's comprehensive consideration of its mandate and extensive engagement required countless volunteer hours: staff would like to place on record its thanks to the commitment from each of the NCWG members. The NCWG's final report and its 35 recommendations (**Appendix A**), accompanying summary (**Appendix D**), and appendix (**Appendix E**) represent the fulfillment of its mandate.

## 6.2 Sustainability

Resolution of the issues confirmed by the Working Group support social, economic and environmental sustainability. This includes improving liveability, facilitating sensitive housing diversity, encouraging respectful community development and reducing impacts on natural systems.

## 6.3 Public Engagement and Outreach

Over the length of its tenure, the NCWG was guided through regular direction from the CEC: February 13, 2019; April 10, 2019; July 10, 2019; February 12, 2020; June 9, 2020; and July 9, 2020. This provided the framework for the Working Group's approach to gain community input on its mandate.

The NCWG westvancouverITE project page, the primary source for the community to receive information and updates on the Working Group's progress, has generated 4,600 visits to date. Promotion of the NCWG community outreach was conducted through westvancouverITE, the District's social media platforms, digital newsletters and the North Shore News. In total across its engagement phases, the NCWG completed 13 outreach events reaching approximately 175 participants, and it collected 475 surveys and comment forms with over 5,250 responses to individual questions.

Most recently, this included two community virtual workshops, four industry-specific meetings, six online informational videos, and an online comment form available from July 24 to September 20.

#### 6.4 Other Communication, Consultation, and Research

The NCWG received input from standing committees (e.g. Heritage Advisory Committee and Design Review Committee), structured discussions with industry representatives, requested eight staff educational presentations on a range of technical topics, and completed a bus tour of West Vancouver neighbourhoods.

### 7.0 Options

#### 7.1 Recommended Option

Council receive the Neighbourhood Character Working Group's final recommendations and direct staff to report back with implementing policies and guidelines with reference to these recommendations.

#### 7.2 Considered Options

Council may request further information or provide alternate direction.

### 8.0 Conclusion

This report describes the NCWG's process, summarizes its community engagement and provides Council with its recommendations.

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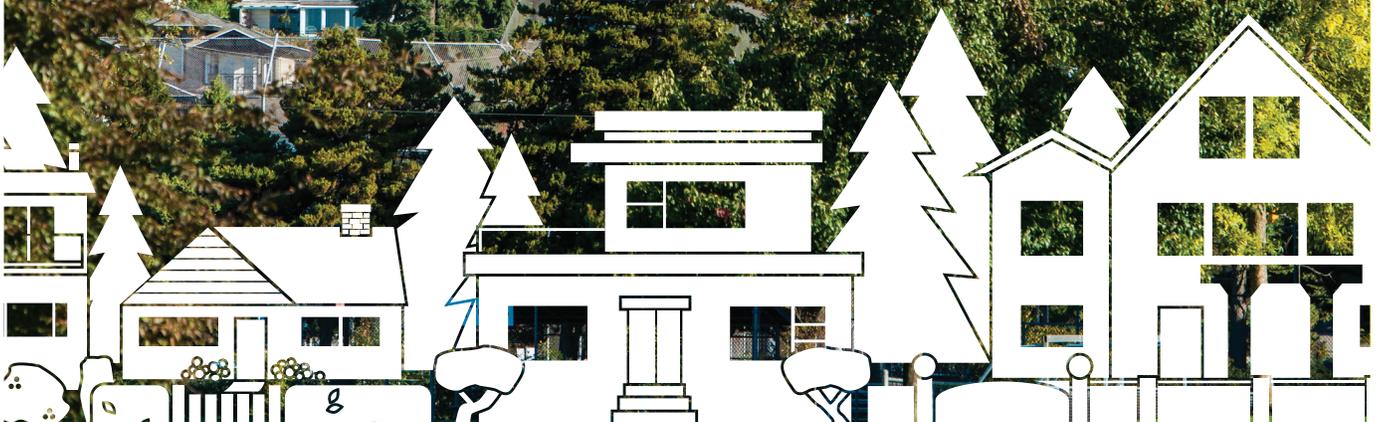
#### Appendices:

- Appendix A: NCWG Recommendations
- Appendix B: NCWG Validate Issues Engagement Summary (2019)
- Appendix C: NCWG Finalize Recommendations Engagement Summary (2020)
- Appendix D: NCWG Summary of Recommendations
- Appendix E: NCWG Appendix to Recommendations

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Final report  
**Neighbourhood Character  
Working Group**



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# Neighbourhood Character Working Group

## Recommendations

### **Purpose of the Neighbourhood Character Working Group:**

*To propose regulations and policies that respect and sustain the character and heritage of West Vancouver single-family neighbourhoods.*



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Neighbourhood Character Working Group (NCWG) was appointed by the District's Community Engagement Committee in August 2018 to make recommendations to Council that would enhance and preserve West Vancouver's 'neighbourhood character'. As a diverse group of 10 volunteer residents from different West Vancouver neighbourhoods, we met regularly over the course of 18 months. Together we toured West Vancouver, consulted with District staff and subject matter experts, and hosted public events to ensure we understood the issues of most concern.

The following report contains recommendations that are in response to the issues of building size, housing diversity, landscaping, approval processes and impact of construction on neighbours that were brought to our attention. The focus of our recommendations is to reduce housing size and the appearance of bulk, and to recognize the value of greenery.

These recommendations also support a move to more environmentally responsible building. In addition, we recognized the need to provide more diverse housing for a broader demographic by enabling suites and coach houses in a manner that will not detract from the general character of neighbourhoods. Our proposals envisage a smaller main house, but when combined with the bonuses of suites and coach houses, the same or greater Floor Area Ratio is achieved.

While individually, these changes may not result in dramatic changes, when taken together, the NCWG believes that they will produce the desired result of maintaining West Vancouver's 'neighbourhood character' while preserving the value of our homes as the community evolves. Our goal is to maintain context and character within neighbourhoods, not to encourage conformity.

A few things of note to keep in mind while reading this document:

- Most recommendations involve tradeoffs of one sort or another (e.g. existing regulations for partially exempting underground parts of basements encourage some of the space included in maximum FAR to be included in that basement, thereby reducing more visible space in the upper two storeys, but may require more digging). Our recommendations tend to favour neighbourhood character when making tradeoffs; other priorities may suggest different tradeoffs.
- This report does not suggest changes to site coverage or setbacks – although bylaw writers may wish to consider such changes to better achieve the objectives of some recommendations. Similarly, current parking requirements for additional suites are maintained to minimize additional street parking. In general the NCWG agrees with the premise that slightly higher density and site coverage, and relaxed parking requirements, may be appropriate in the smaller, more urban lots in Lower Ambleside.
- Legislative authority does not permit municipal bylaws to protect views or light, nor to legislate style or taste.

## 2. NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER WORKING GROUP

### Purpose and Scope

“To propose, consider and review regulations and policies that respect neighbourhood character, protect heritage and reduce the impact of development in the District’s Single Family Dwelling Zones. The working group will engage the community and make recommendations to Council regarding the creation of new bylaws and policies and/or the amendment of existing bylaws and policies.” *(Neighbourhood Character Working Group Draft Terms of Reference, August 2018.)*

The NCWG is aware that “neighbourhood character” is much more than a technical concept, and encompasses concepts such as familiarity, comfort, safety, friendliness, social interaction, sense of community and more. As well we recognize that amenities such as parks, view lines, picnic and gathering places, playgrounds, schools and community centres are all-important to the overall well-being and neighbourliness of the community.

However, this document is limited to the working group’s mandate to consider single family properties (and the suites that are permitted in those zones) and the zoning regulations that affect them. Our recommendations are further constrained by what a municipality can legally regulate.

*(See Appendix 1.0 for a more detailed discussion of the Scope of Work and Approach.)*

### Vision

To ensure that West Vancouver regulations, guidelines and policies protect and enhance neighbourhood character for the benefit of current and future residents. We will put forth specific recommendations that we believe are achievable and that will address a variety of housing options, access to views, light and privacy, respect of scale to existing homes, as well as landscape requirements. These recommendations will aim to also support social interaction via the community's connections to the natural environment, fostering walkability and long-term livability within West Vancouver for current and future residents. *(As adopted by the Neighbourhood Character Working Group, December 2018.)*

## Principles

The following principles have guided the work of the NCWG:

- Encourage RS-Zoned (primarily single-family) neighbourhoods to maintain a detached-house/single-family appearance.
- Reflect the uniqueness of West Vancouver’s different neighbourhoods.
- Focus on houses as homes rather than development opportunities.
- Recognize the importance of natural landscape features and terrain to neighbourhood character.
- Support the economic and social sustainability of West Vancouver.
- Reduce negative impacts of construction on the environment.

## Defining Neighbourhood Character

Neighbourhood character is always difficult to define, all the more so in West Vancouver where there are over 20 named neighbourhoods, exhibiting many different characteristics.

Neighbourhood character is defined in the West Vancouver Official Community Plan (OCP) as:

*“Sense of place and its distinct aspects that cause a specific area to be familiar to the people associated with it and recognizable from other areas.”*

Other definitions include:

*The look and feel of an area;*

*Qualities that make one neighbourhood distinct from another;*

*A range of physical components including: the built environment, architectural style, street width and layout, vegetation, fence height and style, and so on.*

In our search for ways to preserve and enhance neighbourhood character in “single family” zones (a slight misnomer, since suites and coach houses are permitted in almost all West Vancouver neighbourhoods), the NCWG looked for common elements of character that could be found across the varied terrains, lot sizes, streetscapes and ages of homes in West Vancouver.

Our work identified two elements to be common to all West Vancouver neighbourhoods. We believe these should be protected and enhanced through bylaw and process improvements:

1. The built form consists almost exclusively of detached houses, even if those houses contain suites.
2. Greenery is abundant, and is an important component of the look and feel of the neighbourhoods.

In addition, we found the District’s zoning bylaw recognizes and drives much of the existing neighbourhood character, primarily by regulating lot sizes, lot coverage, and the size of houses that can be built.

## Engagement

The following main steps were taken to obtain feedback from the community to inform the NCWG's work:

- observational study of West Vancouver neighbourhoods
- online survey to identify problems perceived by West Vancouver residents and analysis of 200 completed responses
- four focus groups of West Vancouver residents and analysis of input
- six stakeholder meetings with 'industry' representatives (i.e. architects, landscape designers and architects, developers, realtors) to obtain feedback on initial recommendations, and
- meetings and discussions with District planning, permitting and communications staff, Heritage Advisory Committee, Design Review Committee, Community Engagement Committee, and District mayor and council.

Throughout this time, the NCWG reviewed prior West Vancouver reports, existing regulations and policies that concerned neighbourhood character. We then looked for ways to guide future development to best meet the community's concerns described below and the evolving needs and interests of both current and future residents, while meeting the goals set in the OCP.

## Community Concerns

Our outreach to the community and review of previous West Vancouver studies identified the following four common neighbourhood character concerns/issues which we have attempted to address:

1. the perceived bulk of individual houses that appear out of scale with the neighbourhood context (the "size" of new homes)
2. a lack of diversity of housing forms (*detached, duplex, coach house, townhouse*), including sizes, price points and liveable options for the community
3. an increasing use of hard landscaping, and a corresponding reduction in greenscapes, and
4. a lack of consideration for neighbours by builders and designers of new homes.

## Considerations and Constraints

In our discussions with residents and stakeholders, three topics were raised which we do not address in this report:

1. trees and tree removal for construction
2. construction-related disruptions (noise, parking, street damage, etc.), and
3. multi-family residences (other than suites and coach houses).

The NCWG chose not to specifically address these topics because the first, trees, was covered in depth by the Interim Tree Bylaw Working Group (with recommendations still being considered) and for the second, existing bylaws are presumed to adequately cover construction-related issues. Lastly, multi-family residences, currently, are not permitted in single-family zones and can only be built there following a re-zoning process; the NCWG believes this process is appropriate and should continue.

In addition, we took into consideration the following factors while making our recommendations to improve neighbourhood character:

- property values
- rights of property owners
- existing (and changing) streetscapes
- tastes and styles change, and cannot be legally regulated
- environmental concerns and the impact of climate change
- current municipal regulations (both planning- and engineering-related)
- pre-existing design guidelines and restrictive covenants on some neighbourhoods, and
- limitations imposed on municipalities by the (provincial) Local Government Act.

### **Market Influences**

Real estate, perhaps especially in West Vancouver, is heavily influenced by market forces. The value of our real estate has been lifted significantly in the recent past by the demand of offshore buyers and investors who have tended to build houses to maximize value without considering the impact on neighbours or neighbourhood character. Recent changes to tax and ownership rules, as well as limitations on foreign currency, have changed that market dynamic, resulting in an oversupply of large homes, which are as a result experiencing falling prices; the NCWG expects those changing market forces will help promote acceptance of our recommendations for slightly smaller homes.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic may also make seniors more determined than ever to stay in their homes for as long as possible. The NCWG believes this may help in the acceptance of our recommendations for easier permitting of coach houses – which offer alternatives for living that are attractive to seniors, including: income-assisting rentals, downsizing options and onsite caregiver accommodations.

### 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that follow are grouped in six categories:

1. Reduce Actual Building Size
2. Encourage Suites & Coach Houses
3. Limit Visual Impact of Buildings As Seen From the Street
4. Encourage Landscaping
5. Simplify Process
6. Encourage Neighbour Consideration

Some of the recommendations refer to bylaw and regulation changes, some to adopted policies (i.e. OCP) and some refer to departmental process and procedures that relate to permitting.

In the same way that neighbourhood character is the sum of many inter-connected factors, the recommendations on the following pages address the inter-connected aspects of building regulations in West Vancouver and are designed to work together to achieve the goal of maintaining and improving neighbourhood character.

We are proposing a number of rule changes that should meet our objective to make large houses appear less imposing from the street. These include recommendations concerning Floor Area Ratios (FAR) (*See Appendix 2.0 for a discussion of FAR*), rooflines, setbacks, and visible basements.

Because landscaping is so important to the overall character of West Vancouver's residential neighbourhoods, we are proposing several recommendations to enhance landscaping and soften our built environment as it evolves.

We also have a series of proposals with the objective of encouraging owners and developers to subdivide larger lots, but only where reasonable to support neighbourhood character and fit with the prevailing lot sizes, for example to produce two smaller, in-context homes rather than one overly large one. We have recommendations which encourage renovations of older homes rather than demolition and replacement with larger new houses, to support environmental sustainability as well as maintaining neighbourhood character.

As much as we would like to encourage smaller, and smaller-appearing, new houses, another objective is to encourage livable secondary suites and coach houses, which can enhance neighbourhood character by encouraging demographic diversity (for example a mix of young families and seniors) and adaptability of residences over time.

To accomplish these apparently conflicting outcomes we recommend a reduction of Floor Area Ratios (FAR) in addition to FAR reallocation and bonuses to encourage a shift of the allowable buildable space on a lot from a larger single-family house to a house that includes a suite, or to a smaller house with an adjacent coach house.

In summary, reducing the FAR allows us to add incentives for coach houses and suites while maintaining neighbourhood character; we believe that maintaining neighbourhood character is the best way to protect both quality of life and property values in West Vancouver.

The proposed rules meet these objectives:

1. smaller above-grade main houses on all lots larger than 4,500 sq. ft., and
2. on all lots up to 16,000 sq. ft. the reduced FAR will result in the same or more above-grade buildable area on the lot if a coach house is included.

We are proposing no changes to site coverage, garage exemptions or accessory building exemptions; on the smaller lots, applicants will have to choose how best to build out their property.

In several instances we propose the creation of Best Practices handouts to illustrate the results we would like to encourage. Best Practices handouts can offer a means to fine-tune recommendations (such as different boulevard treatments unique to each neighbourhood) and to define municipal expectations when bylaws alone would not be appropriate or effective.

Our final group of recommendations is to encourage neighbourly discussions before new house designs are cast in stone, in the hope that small design considerations might make a new development more readily acceptable by neighbours.

Perhaps our most important recommendation is to raise the profile of Neighbourhood Character in all District processes.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1) INCLUDE NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER CONSIDERATION IN MUNICIPAL POLICIES

Municipal policies and procedures should be updated to include consideration of neighbourhood character.

We recommend adding language to the District's OCP and review procedures so it is noted as an important consideration for any and all development in the District (*See Appendix 7.0 for more on Neighbourhood Character in the OCP*). Specifically add this clause to 2.1.8 of the OCP:

*c) Requiring all Development Permit applications, rezoning applications, and variance applications to include a section demonstrating how the proposed project respects or enhances existing neighbourhood character.*

The goal of this recommendation is that the impact of any development, whether as-of-right or through a variance, rezoning or development permit, should consider and answer the question "how will this development maintain or enhance neighbourhood character?"

### 2) REDUCE ACTUAL BUILDING SIZE by reducing FAR from .35 to .30

The substantial disparity in the apparent size of some new houses compared to their neighbours was a common theme among a large portion of respondents to our surveys as well as resident feedback from prior studies.

The allowed square footage of single family homes in West Vancouver is regulated by a Floor Area Ratio (FAR), which is the area of the house divided by the area of the lot.

The initial introduction of FAR in West Vancouver in the early 1980s was at 0.45 of the lot area.

This allowable buildable area was changed in the late 1980s to 0.35 **plus buried basement** (*See Appendix 2.2 for clarification of "basement" and "below grade basement" definitions.*) along with a number of other "bulk" modifications. An analysis of recent real estate ads showed that when including exempt basement area, the actual gross floor area for many new homes built in recent years is over .50 times the lot area, many approaching .60.

Where current regulations for most West Vancouver residential zones permit a FAR of .35 plus that portion of the basement which is buried, a 10,000 sq. ft. lot, for example, can have a 3,500 sq. ft. house plus the buried part of the basement.

Smaller lots, mostly in Horseshoe Bay and the RS5 zone in lower Ambleside and eastern Dundarave, which are the most urban neighbourhoods of the District, have different FAR rules. Building lots of less than 7,285 sq. ft. permit a house which is the smaller of .50 FAR or 2,550 sq. ft. So for example a 6,000 sq. ft. lot could have a 2,550 sq. ft. house, plus the buried part of the basement. (*See Appendix 3 for examples of house sizes.*)

The Working Group's recommendations are designed to limit the apparent above-grade, visible bulk of houses and more accurately meet the intent of previous regulations which was to:

- scale house square footage proportional to lot size; larger lots are allowed to have larger homes
- relate the allowable square footage to what could be seen above grade (on the theory that if you cannot see it, it does not increase bulk), and
- encourage some of the allowable square footage to be put in part of the basement level to reduce the size of the two storeys above.

NOTE that encouraging basements has the desired effect of reducing the visible, above-ground bulk of buildings, but comes with tradeoffs in that it may lead to more earth moving and possibly more blasting (although the working group is satisfied that the current regulations regarding blasting are adequate).

## Objectives

- Reduce the overall size of new houses and encourage smaller above-ground portions to reduce visible bulk.
- Maintain the incentive to encourage part of allowable FAR square footage to be built in the basement, so that the two very visible storeys above are moderately reduced.
- Compensate for the above-ground size reduction with a new bonus for building a secondary suite or coach house (*See Recommendations 2 a) and 2 b).*)

## Recommendation

*Note that the size limitation proposed by this recommendation is partially offset by the buildable area bonus proposals in the following section "Suites & Coach Houses."*

### **Reduce FAR (Floor Area Ratio) from .35 to .30 \***

The Floor Area Ratio signifies the above-grade buildable area. On lots larger than 7,285\*\* sq. ft., limit the floor area of new houses to .30 FAR (reduced from .35) **plus** the portion of the basement that is below grade.

On lots between 4,500 sq. ft. and 7,285 sq. ft., limit the buildable area of houses to a fixed 2,200 sq. ft. (reduced from 2,550) **plus** buried basement.

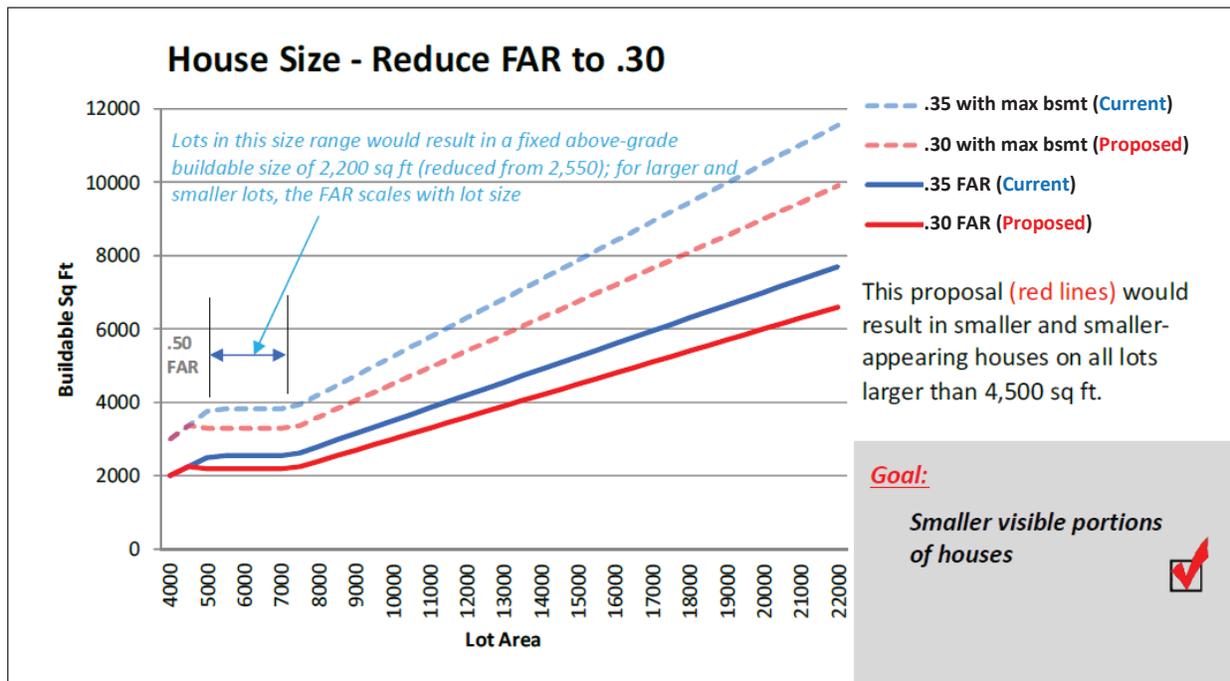
On lots smaller than 4,500 sq. ft. (only 130 such lots) no change to the FAR (remains at .50) **plus** buried basement.

- A house such as the one in Example 1 (see Appendix, 3.0) on a 12,000 sq. ft. lot would be reduced in size from a total of 6,300 sq. ft. (with 4,200 sq. ft. above grade) to a total of 5,400 sq. ft. (with 3,600 sq. ft. above grade).
- The house in Example 2 (see Appendix, 3.0), on a 9,180 sq. ft. lot, would be reduced in size from a total of 5,400 sq. ft. (with 3,212 above grade) to about 4,950 sq. ft. (with 2,754 above grade).
- \*Note that the exact values may change slightly in the final bylaws to more smoothly accommodate the transition from Floor Area Ratio to fixed buildable area. (See Appendix 11.0 for a more detailed look at the math behind the numbers.)

*\* (See Appendix 4.0 for an alternative recommendation.)*

*\*\* (See Appendix 11 for the logic behind the numbers.)*

The graph below compares the overall effect of the reduced FAR recommendation for building lots of different sizes.



Graph does not include exemptions for garages or accessory buildings.

**Notes:**

- In the graph, “max bsmt” assumes a typical home of two storeys above a basement, with approximately equal floor plates on each level. It is possible to have a larger basement if the main floor plate is larger than the top floor, and/or the garage is attached to the house and the basement extends below the garage as well as below the main floor plate.
- This recommendation would not change the existing regulations for site coverage, however staff may wish to adjust site coverage regulations to maintain proportion to the FAR.
- This recommendation would not change the existing regulations regarding FAR exemptions for accessory buildings or enclosed parking (whether an in-house or a separate garage), however the Working Group believes it may be worth considering a reduction in the garage exemption to 220 sq. ft. (from 440) to reduce bulk in houses where the garage is integrated into the house.

### 3) ENCOURAGE SUITES AND COACH HOUSES

One goal of the Working Group is to encourage livable suites and coach houses on properties suitable for them, in such a way as to maintain neighbourhood character (i.e. moderate density and an overall detached house feel to the streetscape). We also wish to compensate for reducing the buildable FAR as recommended above by encouraging the buildable area on a lot to include a coach house and/or suite. Note that in this report, the term “Coach House” is meant to include “Laneway House” and “detached secondary suite.”

The tool we have chosen to accomplish both the above goals is to add an incentive bonus of additional buildable area on a lot if a suite or coach house is included. The bonus is meant as an incentive, and does not suggest the size of the suite or coach house that is permitted.

The result should be, assuming a builder decides to add a coach house, that the total buildable square footage on most lots will be about the same, but we will see a smaller main house with a coach house behind. This would support our goals of diversity and smaller houses with minimal effect on overall value.

And if a builder chooses to add a secondary suite in the main house, the house may overall be about the same size as we are seeing now (although smaller above-grade because the suite bonus will only apply to suites built in the basement level) but the community will have the benefit of a secondary suite in the house.

The Working Group believes that coach houses should be encouraged in the urban areas (RS5 zones) even though the lots there are typically smaller than elsewhere in the District. Issues of site coverage and size may be different for these smaller lots, but perhaps more flexibility on parking requirements could help, since transit and shopping are closer to hand. A separate District initiative to study coach houses is underway and a Local Area Plan is coming for the area, both of which will provide an opportunity for more public input on this subject.

#### Objectives

- Incentivize legal secondary suites in new-build houses:
  - We recognize that some suites may not be used initially as rentals but as the market demand changes over time they will become part of the housing stock.
- Encourage coach houses for both new builds and existing housing stock:
  - Encourage **new builds** to put some of their square footage into a coach house, thereby reducing the main house size without diminishing value.
  - Encourage retention of **existing housing** stock by permitting the addition of coach houses on older properties that may be close to allowable FAR.
- Maintain a significant size distinction between the main house and its coach house.
- Streamline the permitting process for coach houses.

The mechanism we have chosen to incent suites and coach houses is to propose a bonus to the buildable area on a lot. Our recommendations as outlined below are for bonuses of a fixed size. We realize this approach leads to the potential for inequity as it is applied to the range of lot sizes available in West Vancouver but it has the advantage of simplicity, recognizes that slightly more density on smaller, more urban lots is appropriate, and that the desired size of both suites and coach houses is more related to their use than to the size of the lot or house they are part of.

Bylaw drafters may determine that it is more appropriate to scale the bonuses with lot size similar to the way FAR scales (ie. a suite bonus that increases FAR from .30 to .345) and the NCWG would not be averse to that approach as long as it meets the overall goal of reducing visible house size while incenting secondary suites, whether attached or detached.

**Recommendations**

**a) Provide a 500 sq. ft. FAR bonus for a suite**

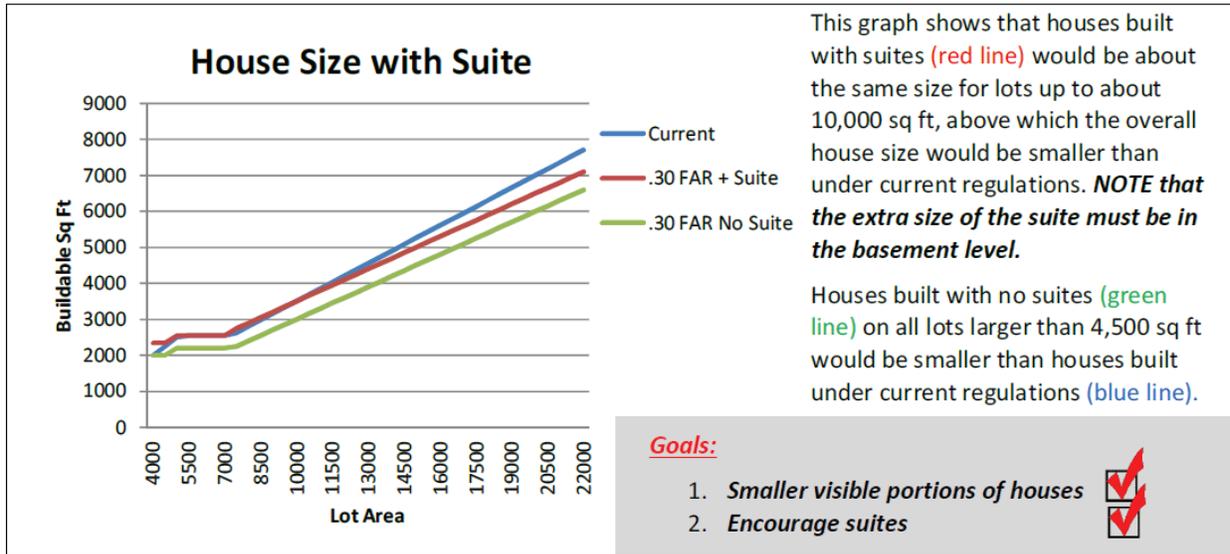
If a legal suite is built into a new home, the total allowable buildable area for the lot should be increased by 500 sq. ft. for lots larger than 7,285 sq. ft.; for lots smaller than 7,285 sq. ft. the incentive bonus should be 350 sq. ft. (and the bylaw writers may wish to consider scaling the bonus proportionately). This bonus square footage would go in the basement level, and because it is a bonus to the FAR for the lot, would not have to be buried below grade and could extend beyond the main floor plate. The maximum size of a suite should remain at the current 968 sq. ft. and all other regulations and guidelines for suites should remain in force.



In this house, the portion of the lowest level below the deck would normally be counted in the FAR of the house both because it is an unburied part of the basement level and because it extends beyond the building above footprint. Under this recommendation, if that part of the house was part of a legal suite, up to 500 sq. ft. could be excluded (bonused) from the FAR calculation.

So the suite bonus buildable area, even though it must be on the basement level, does not have to be buried, or covered by the main floor above. This provides the suite with the opportunity for more natural light to improve the livability of basement suites.

This graph shows the overall effect of the suite bonus when combined with the FAR reduction as proposed in Recommendation 1 above.

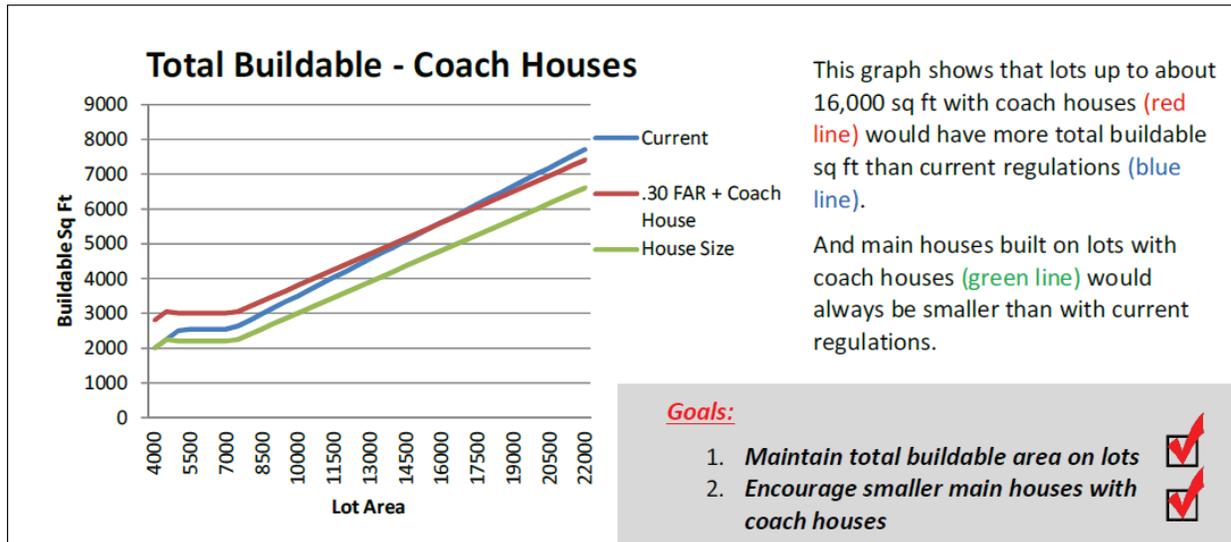


Graph does not include exemptions for buried basements, garages or accessory buildings.

**b) Provide a 800 sq. ft. FAR bonus for a coach house**

If a coach house is built on a lot the allowable buildable area on that lot should be increased by 800 sq. ft. with all such increased square footage or FAR allowance restricted to the coach house (no increase in buildable area of the main house size). To maintain a clear distinction from the main house, the maximum size of a coach house should be the larger of 1,200 sq. ft. or 0.10 of the lot area to a maximum of 1,600 sq. ft. All other rules and guidelines regarding coach houses (setbacks, finishes, total lot coverage, etc.) as they evolve should remain in force. The Working Group recognizes that staff is working on revised guidelines for coach houses and these recommendations could change and be adjusted to meet future guidelines

This graph shows the overall effect of the coach house bonus when combined with the FAR reduction as proposed in Recommendation 1 above.



### Bonusing Recommendations Limitations and Conditions

1. Only one bonus for a secondary suite (either the 500/350 sq. ft. for an in-house secondary suite or 800 sq. ft. for a coach house) should be permitted per property, although both a suite and a coach house should be permitted on a single property if the lot is large enough to meet the site coverage and non-bonused FAR requirements.
2. If a coach house larger than 800 sq. ft. is built, the additional area over 800 sq. ft. must come from that allocated to the main house (i.e. a reduction of FAR buildable area by an equal amount); similarly if a suite larger than 500/350 sq. ft. is built, the excess over the bonused amount must come from the buildable area of the house.
3. None of these recommendations should change the existing regulations regarding garage and accessory building FAR exemptions or overall site coverage. However, it may be prudent to limit the combination of accessory building exemptions and coach house bonuses on lots below a certain size, perhaps 12,000 sq. ft. In addition, it may be warranted to reduce the accessory building exemption of 220 sq. ft. if a coach house is built on a smaller lot.
4. A coach house bonus smaller than 800 sq. ft. might be more appropriate for lots smaller than 5,000 sq. ft.
5. This “bonus” of 800 sq. ft. for a coach house should apply to existing homes as well as to new builds. Where a coach house is added to a property with an existing house, the total allowable built square footage of the house and coach house together should be calculated as .30 of the lot area + 800 sq. ft. + buried basement (not 800 sq. ft. in addition to the current house size) and all other regulations for lot coverage, parking, etc. must be honoured.

## Recommendations (cont'd):

### c) Streamline the permitting process for duplex and coach house applications

The Working Group notes that a separate study is underway to make recommendations regarding duplexes and coach houses.

1. Coach houses are encouraged in this report because they are seen to enhance neighbourhood character.
2. The recommendations addressing coach houses are primarily designed to ensure their fit within the neighbourhood context.
3. Duplexes are not addressed in this report, as they require a rezoning process for inclusion in single family neighbourhoods and the Working Group agrees with this approach.
4. When considering a Development Permit for a duplex, duplexes that present to the street as detached houses would be best to maintain neighbourhood character (for example front/rear or up/down duplexes may present more like detached houses than the more typical side/side units in the current duplex zones).

### d) Relax some requirements and restrictions on coach houses

1. Current rules for a coach house over a garage require it to be smaller than the garage, complicating structural aspects. While this rule could be relaxed, the views of neighbours should be considered (perhaps the Development Permit process could be waived for one-storey coach houses, but retained for two-storey ones).
2. Similarly, a Development Permit should be required for a coach house with a basement, providing an additional layer of consideration and oversight for projects with more intensive use of the lot; alternatively, coach house basements should be included in FAR and maximum size calculations.
3. The parking requirement for coach houses could be eased when in proximity to transit without significantly compromising neighbourhood character; allow coach house parking within setbacks, especially on smaller lots.
4. It may be desirable to expand title options for coach houses (i.e. allow stratification/subdivision of coach houses, and bare-land strata). However the NCWG is concerned that this may have the unintended consequence of permitting subdivision of lots that would otherwise be too small; this may be better handled by the subdivision rules, more investigation is required.

#### 4) LIMIT VISUAL IMPACT OF BUILDINGS SEEN FROM THE STREET

The street face of some houses can appear plain and/or imposing. To address this concern, the current Highest Building Face (HBF) regulations are designed to force articulation\* (architectural detail/interest) on the tallest face of a house, including some setback of the upper floor from the main floor. While the Working Group notes that the HBF is not always the face visible from the street, our recommendations focus on the HBF when visible from the street.

It is possible under current regulations to have a basement which is fully exposed to the street, magnifying the apparent size of houses and giving the appearance of a three-storey house, which is technically not permitted. (Maintaining natural light and providing easy access for livable basement suites are factors that must be considered when addressing this issue.)

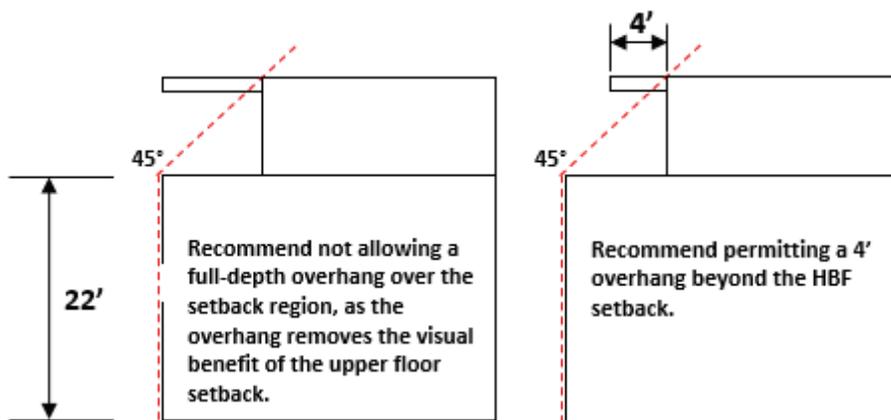
##### Recommendation Objectives

- The face of the house that presents to the street should be articulated (not a single flat plane).
- Houses should not present to the street as a full three storeys.

##### Recommendations

a) **Refine the Highest Building Face (HBF) Regulations.** The HBF rules are designed to force articulation of the highest building face, to provide architectural interest and make the building less imposing. Above 22 feet in height, at least 2/3 of the width of the building must be set back so it falls within a 45 degree plane, as shown in the diagram below.

- i. **When the HBF faces the street, overhangs beyond the HBF setback area should be limited to a maximum of 4'.** (See Appendix 5.0 for details on Highest Building Face)



When an overhang extends the full distance to the plane of the wall below, the articulation value of the setback is lost.

Note that this recommendation only applies to the HBF calculation and is not intended to otherwise limit overhang size.

\* In architecture, **articulation** refers to the fragmentation of form and surface in order to break large uninteresting or oppressive mass into more human size components. For example, a flat facade could be articulated with the use of indents and shadow.

- ii. When the highest building face is on the street side (i.e. the house is on the high side of the street, see Picture A below) a new regulation is recommended to **ensure that the basement storey is shielded from the street view** with permanent landscaping and/or design to discourage the full three-storey look of houses from the street (i.e. the apparent bulk of the building will be reduced)

If facing the street, exposure of the basement should be no more than 24 feet of its horizontal width or half of its vertical height. The basement may be hidden by a permanent landscaped berm or landscaped wall. It would be permitted to have a patio area in front of the basement face, provided the face itself is screened from the street.



*This house presents as 3 full storeys; we recommend this should not be permitted.*

Picture A



*For houses like this one, on the high side of the street with a garage integrated into the front basement level, the maximum recommended 24 feet of the horizontal width of the basement that is exposed to the street will allow vehicle access to the garage.*

Picture B

- iii. **The 1/3 exclusions to the 45 degree plane setback requirements for HBF should be contiguous** so the resulting setbacks will appear substantial. Most of the top floor of this home is set back from the lower floor, providing more architectural interest, as intended by the HBF rules. Per the rules, about 1/3 of the width of the upper floor is excluded from the setback requirement, (the orange section on the left in this case) adding to the visual interest.



*If the 1/3 exclusion is split into more than one piece of the upper floor (as is currently permitted) much of the positive effect of the regulation can be lost. For example, if the orange 1/3 exclusion was divided into 3 separated sections of 1/9 each, the sections would not have the same visual weight and the result would be less effective.*

- iv. **Provide a Best Practices guideline** illustrating good examples of articulation on the street face of two-storey houses in an effort to discourage large, flat, blank two-storey facades.

- b) **Reduce front yard setback by 10' if garage is oriented 90° from street** (setback would be reduced to 20' on most lots from the current 30'; to 15' on RS5 lots, down from 25'). This is meant to encourage fewer garage doors exposed to the street view (and will make it easier to have basements with more natural light). This relaxation of setback is only available on lots where street-entry driveways are permitted (i.e. lots without lane access), and should only apply to the garage itself. An uncovered deck should be permitted over the garage within the 10' relaxed setback area but any portion of the house built above the garage must conform to the unadjusted setback.



*The garage entry for this home is to the left, the garage door is hidden from the street.*

**c) Include over-height covered decks in FAR calculations**

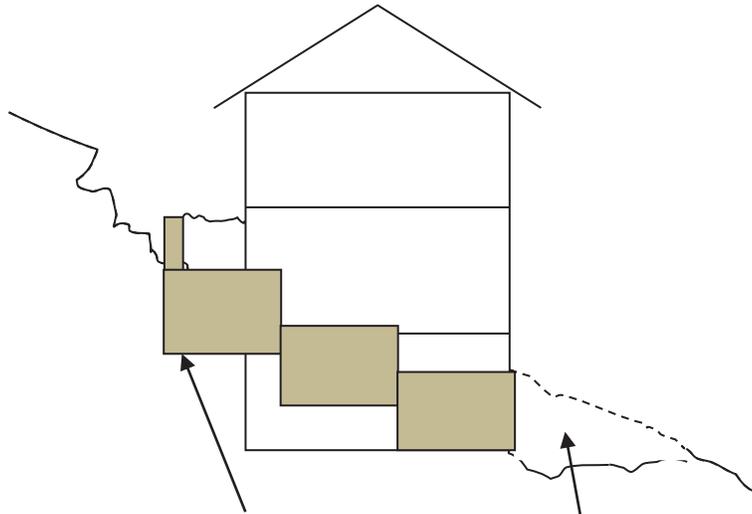
- i. Include in FAR calculations all covered deck areas (except the four feet closest to the building) regardless of the height of the roof above the deck. (Current regulations have this intent, but apparently only count second floor covered decks.)
- ii. For cases where the roof overhang is greater than 14.4' above the ground or main floor height, the FAR calculated below it should be doubled (to remain consistent with the handling of interior over-height spaces).



*Current regulations do not count the area below this roof deck as floor area because the roof height over the deck is more than one storey; if it was a second floor deck all of it would be counted except the 4' strip closest to the building face.*

**d) Eliminate manipulation of grade with planters** (which, under current regulations can be used to maximize building height and exposed building height) by:

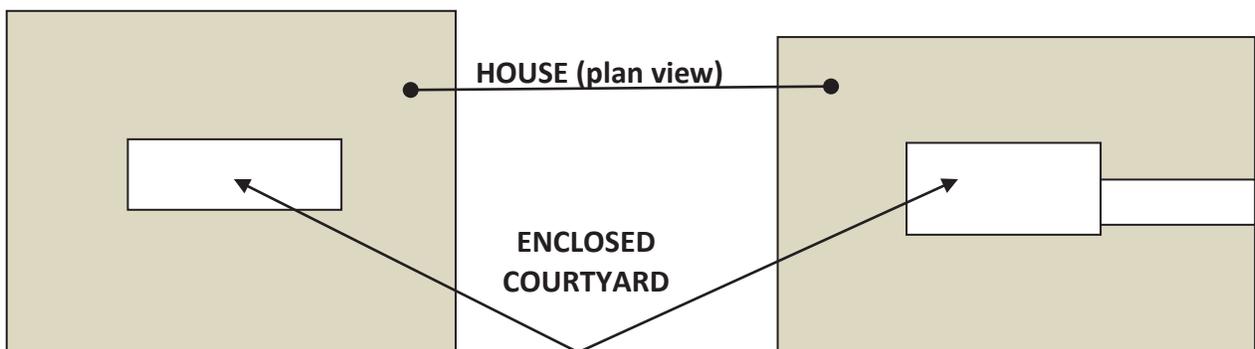
- i. ensuring only walls and slopes that are reasonably considered permanent are included in the calculation of finished grade, and
- ii. Increasing the minimum required planter dimension extending out from the building face in order for them to count as “grade.”



*Adding planters here and removing dirt here to maintain “average grade” makes the house look larger and can artificially increase the basement FAR exemption.*

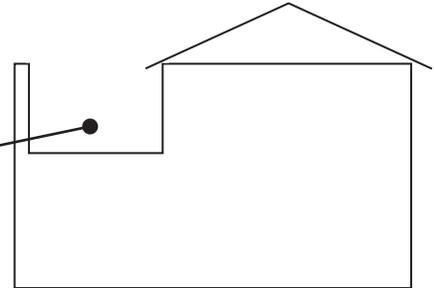
**e) Include all semi-enclosed spaces in FAR calculations** when they are integral to the interior of a house. *(To more accurately reflect the apparent **visible size of homes with interior unroofed courtyard space**; see diagram below.) Spaces such as these that would be included in FAR if they had a roof should not be excluded simply because they are unroofed.* Note that this change does not restrict the use of interior courtyards or privacy walls, it merely ensures their space is counted in FAR since from the outside it appears as part of the house volume.

- i. Interior Courtyards



- ii. Privacy Walls: Limit the height of exterior walls, typically at the second level of the house, that add to apparent building bulk. (*To more accurately reflect the apparent visible size of homes with privacy walls.*) For any such wall that is higher than required by safety codes, the enclosed space should be counted in FAR.

*This effectively enclosed area is currently not counted in FAR*

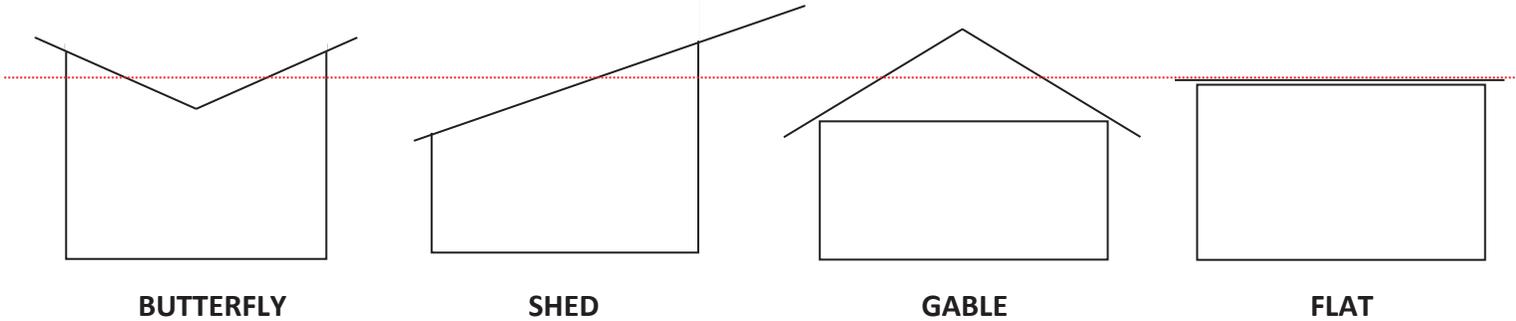


- f) **Limit the length and height of unarticulated (blank) side walls** (*To limit the size of imposing blank walls facing neighbours*); consider requiring a minimum window area in side walls.



**g) Limit the height of butterfly and shed roofs to match flat roofs, particularly those facing neighbours, to the height of an equivalent flat roof. (To lessen the visual impact of the higher walls that result from these roof styles.)**

**CURRENT RULES:**



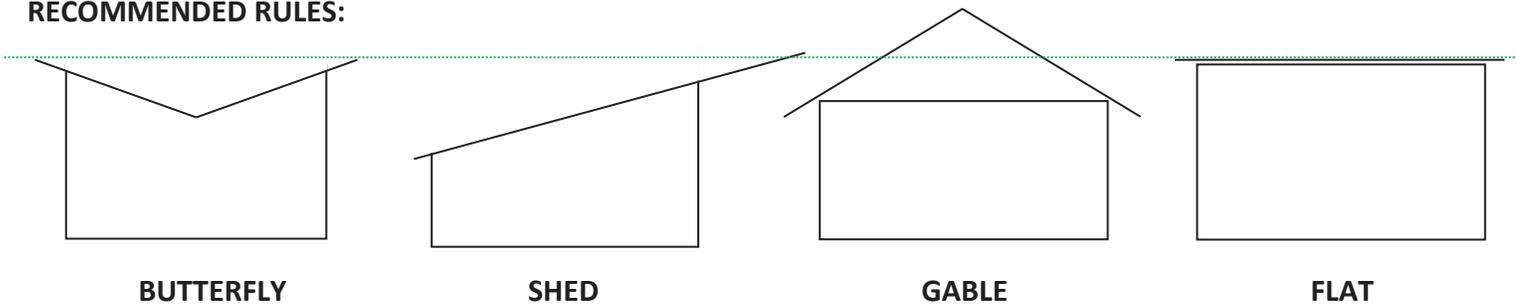
For sloped roofs, current regulations measure the roof height to a mid-point, as shown by the **red line**.



*Shed roofs, even on a smaller house, can dominate their neighbours.*

**We recommend that butterfly and shed roofs should be measured to their highest point (green line.)**

**RECOMMENDED RULES:**



## 5) ENCOURAGE LANDSCAPING

Landscaping and drainage are important components of neighbourhood character in West Vancouver; the District has a well-deserved reputation as a “visibly green” municipality.

Landscaping can mask and soften the built forms that make up our housing stock, and help provide a cohesive streetscape by visually linking the boulevards on a block. We would like to encourage significant and well-designed landscaping, including on the boulevards where practical.

(A boulevard is the area between the paved road surface and the homeowner’s property line. Boulevards are owned by the District of West Vancouver but homeowners have responsibility for their care and maintenance. While landscaping by the homeowner is encouraged, the Boulevard Bylaw dictates what can and cannot be done on boulevards.)

Drainage is particularly important in our community because of the mountainside terrain and the amount of rain we receive. Bylaws require property owners to provide proper drainage so as to not impact their downhill neighbours. Both soft and hard landscaping are factors that affect drainage as well as appearance. Many neighbourhoods in West Vancouver have open ditches for drainage, which contribute to the country lane feel while enhancing the environment by slowing and filtering ground water as it makes its way to the ocean.

### Objectives

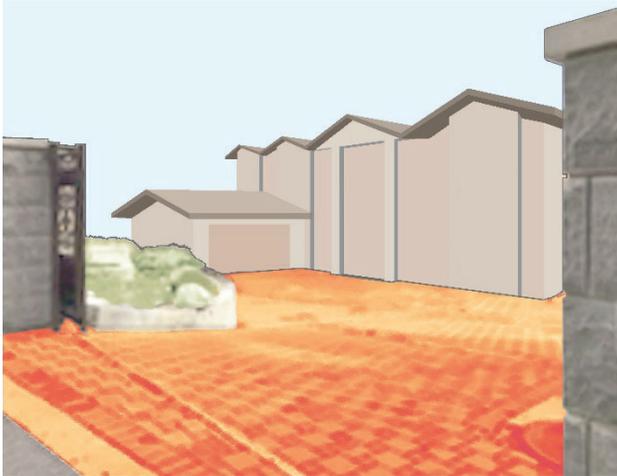
- Encourage a greener streetscape, with green landscaping used to partially screen houses, walls and fences from the street.
- Encourage boulevard designs that tie in to the lot and the neighbours.
- Encourage responsible site drainage.
- Discourage excessive hard surfaces visible from the street.

### Recommendations

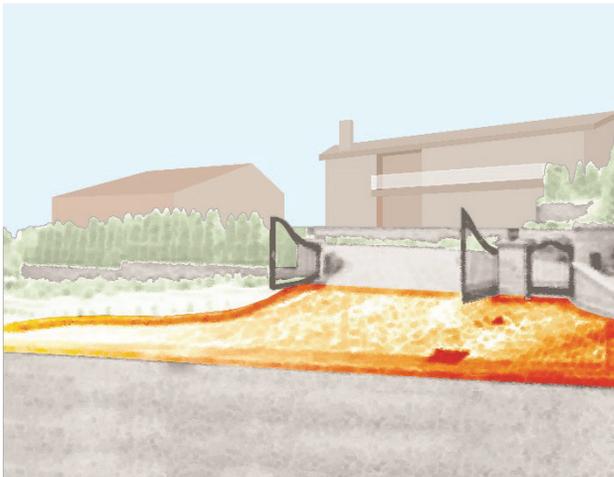
- a) Include boulevards in the landscape plan** which is required for a building permit. Including the boulevard as well as the lot itself, showing how the boulevard would visually connect the public and private spaces and tie into the adjacent streetscape will encourage developers to consider neighbourhood character. If the boulevard is not planned to change, the landscape plan should state “no boulevard changes planned” and a “before” picture should be included so that can be confirmed on completion.
- b) Cap the cost of the bond** required with a landscape plan at a maximum of \$25,000 so it does not discourage elaborate landscaping (a bond as a percentage of the cost of the landscaping can incent low-cost plans).
- c) Provide a Best Practices handout for boulevard landscaping.**

**d) Limit hard surfaces** visible from the street (even if they are permeable concrete pavers)

- i. Apply current front yard ground cover regulations (a maximum of 50% covered by hard surfaces) to all street frontages, including corner/flanking lots.
- ii. Include concrete pavers in the definition of hard surfaces.
- iii. In cases where more than 50% of the front yard can be hard surfaces (to allow for access and/or turning zones) the amount over 50% should be a softer/greener form of hard material, such as turf blocks.

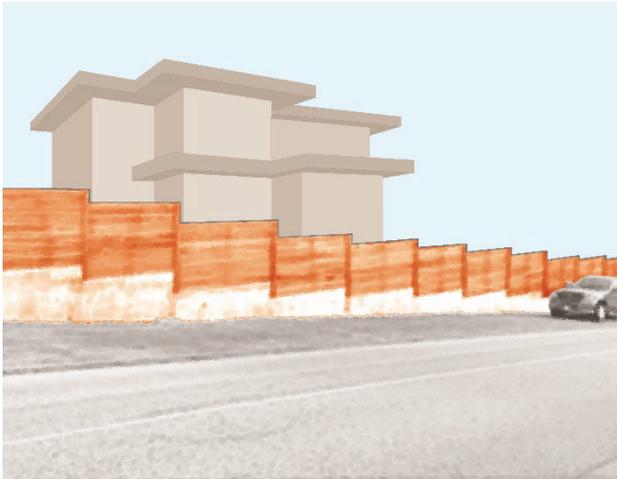


- iv. Boulevard parking should not appear as an extension of the property or the property's driveway.



- e) **Fine tune boulevard parking space rules:** in cases where boulevard parking is permitted, it should be offset by additional vegetation designed to tie into and/or soften the streetscape.

- f) **Limit the maximum height of a fence** or a combined fence and retaining wall as seen from the visible street side to six feet unless overruled by safety or code requirements.



- g) **Require softening of fences and retaining walls with landscaping** on the street face of properties with green landscaping; provide a “Best Practices” handout.

- h) **Provide a Best Practices handout for retaining wall treatments;** encourage the use of natural rock walls.

- i) **Limit extreme grade modifications through regulation:**

- i. encourage houses to follow the natural grade, and
- ii. limit grade modifications by excessive removal or importing of soil; possibly limit the amount of soil that can be added or removed from a lot; possibly limit grade changes to adjacent lots.



Significant grade modifications to create a flat lot from a natural hillside should be discouraged; better for character and for the environment to design a home that follows the natural contours.

- j) **Provide a Best Practices drainage handout.**

## 6) SIMPLIFY PROCESS

In some cases existing District bylaws appear to conflict with “maintaining and enhancing neighbourhood character.” The recommendations in this section are designed to help align regulations that have accumulated over many years with today’s sensibilities, with the expected benefits in italics.

Appendix 6 has a more in-depth discussion of each recommendation.

### Recommendations

- a) **Simplify subdivision of appropriately-sized lots** (where subdivision is more likely to support the neighbourhood context than a single out-sized home) *to encourage two smaller homes instead of one very large home.*
  - i. Reduce subdivision costs by removing Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) payments for single-lot subdivisions in established single-family-detached zones (CACs require an applicant for subdivision which requires rezoning to pay 75% of the value of the theoretical lift in value that results from the subdivision). *(See Appendix 6.1)*
  - ii. Reduce the minimum lot size (width and area) in all RS zones 5% to enable the Approving Officer to approve subdivision of large lots that are currently just below the threshold for subdivision in that zone *to encourage subdivision of large lots to a size still in keeping with neighbourhood character.* *(See Appendix 6.2)*
  - iii. Allow greater diversity of lots when considering sub-division (panhandles, corner/flanking lots, zero-lot-line duplexes.) *(See Appendix 6.3)*
- b) **Limit the maximum buildable sq. ft. for each RS zone** to 150% of the FAR of the target minimum lot size in the zone *(this is a similar size limit as exists for consolidated lots; would limit house size on the approximately 15% of lots in West Vancouver that are between 150% and 200% of target lot size; done in other municipalities).* *(See Appendix 6.4)*
- c) **Allow flexibility of front-yard setback where appropriate.** Create a simplified variance process for approval of modified front yard setbacks based on adjoining houses when approved by the neighbours. *(So in an established neighbourhood where the front yard setbacks have been changed and legal-non-conforming older houses are likely to stay, a new home could be sited to match the existing homes; significant setback differences in immediate neighbours can be very disruptive to neighbourhood character.)* *(See Appendix 6.5)*
- d) **Simplify and reduce permitting costs for renovations** *to encourage renovations rather than demolitions; to help maintain neighbourhood character, view lines, and the environment.*

- i. Relax the threshold for engineering utility upgrades (perhaps trigger on increasing the number of bathrooms or bedrooms rather than triggering at a renovation cost of \$100K).
  - ii. Relax regulations that complicate and add cost to simple renovations (such as for example, where updated bylaws regarding setbacks make a once-legal home now non-conforming, see 5c above).
- e) Remove the penalty to basement FAR exemption for having an exterior stair, path or door access, up to 3 feet wide, to the basement.** *(Simplifies calculations, enhances livability of basement suites; no adverse size implications.) (See Appendix 6.6)*
- f) Deter basement exemption gaming.** When calculating basement square footage size for the purposes of determining the basement exemption, the basement floor grade for FAR calculation purposes should be the higher of the actual basement floor or 9 feet below the main floor level of the home. This change is intended to deter falsely increasing the size of the basement exemption (and as a result allowing larger houses) by digging the basement floor deeper. *(See Appendix 2.2)*
- g) Investigate Development Permits:** Based on feedback from NCWG public engagement and from stakeholder groups we recommend staff investigate adding a requirement for a “Form & Character” Development Permit for:
- i. FAR between .30 and .35 (because we have seen examples of houses at .35 FAR that due to good design, good landscaping, sensitivity to neighbours and neighbourhood context are perfectly acceptable).
  - ii. Any house over 10,000 sq ft, regardless of lot size and FAR (because houses of this size can have a potentially large impact on any neighbourhood and could benefit from extra attention to design and context).

The Development Permit process would provide an extra level of review for larger houses such as these. We believe this may be accomplished using the “intensive residential” provisions of the Local Government Act and may require a clear definition of the specific conditions that would be required for approval.

## 7) NEIGHBOUR CONSIDERATION

### Objectives:

- Raise awareness of neighbourhood character and neighbour impacts on any new development.
- Encourage applicants and designers to consider the neighbours and neighbourhood character from the beginning of their planning.
- Ensure applicants are aware of Best Practices for character, boulevards, landscaping, heritage, etc. by producing handouts.
- Alert neighbours that construction is being considered, early enough in the process that they may have a chance to influence it (i.e. before permits and plans are cast in stone).

### Discussion:

Often, the first time neighbours hear of proposed construction coming next to them is when the construction sign goes up—after the plans have been finalized and approved, contractors are lined up and construction is imminent. At that point it is very difficult, expensive and time-consuming to have the applicant consider even the simplest change, even though it might have been technically easy for them to implement. We would like to encourage earlier conversations between residents and builders.

For major new developments that go to council for approval, applicants generally cite Official Community Plan (OCP) guidelines in their applications (riparian rights, housing diversity, etc.) to bolster their case. We believe that Neighbourhood Character should be at least equally valued and considered for all development.

### Recommendations

- a) **Provide a Best Practices handout** that outlines our expectations as to consideration of impact on neighbours when planning and building a new home.
- b) **Encourage discussions in the early stages of design** by creating a voluntary “pre-consultation” system for all permit and development applications so developers and builders will be encouraged to have a discussion with staff and get copies of the “Best Practices” handouts early in, rather than after, the planning process.
- c) **Notify neighbours when a permit application is received** by posting a notice and/or sending a letter to neighbours when an application is received for a building permit, development permit or subdivision.

The Working Group realizes that this recommendation is fraught with potential problems, among them:

- If consulted, neighbours may feel they have a ‘veto’ over as-of-right construction next door, which is clearly not the case.
- Neighbours would visit the permit desk to see possibly incorrect and/or non-conforming plans which have not yet been reviewed or approved.

- This process could eat up a lot of staff time, and put staff in the untenable position of interpreting or defending plans which have not yet been assessed or approved; they might be forced or expected to arbitrate disputes between neighbours.

In spite of these problems the Working Group found this draft recommendation to be one of the most popular with reviewers in our engagement process. The opportunity to talk to a builder before their plans are cast in concrete is very important to the community.

**So we ask staff to seriously consider any possible way that such early communications could be encouraged in such a way as to satisfy an important community need without leading to inordinate staff time and work.**

- d) **Building permit applications should include a site plan showing the adjacent properties** so the proposed structure can be viewed in context with the neighbours regarding setbacks, etc. (can be from GIS, not necessarily a full survey)
- e) **Demolition permits issued only after building permit for the same lot** so lots planned for redevelopment are less likely to sit empty or be cleared and unattended while the design and permit phases are underway; may incent rental of the house.

## **8) MEMBERS OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER WORKING GROUP**

### **Citizen Members:**

Russell Brink

Susan Chunick

Tom Dodd (Chair)

Louis Fourie

Herb Locke

Theodore Malapanis

Steve Nicholls

Nancy Smeal (Vice-Chair)

Patti Ulveland

### **Council Liaison:**

Councillor Peter Lambur

### **Staff Support:**

Courtney Miller

Maeve Bermingham

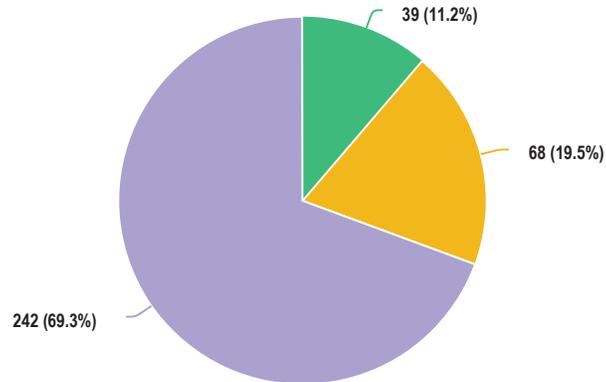
The NCWG met bi-weekly or weekly starting August 2018.

**Preserving & Enhancing Neighbourhood Character: Quantitative Results**

Neighbourhood Character Working Group Phase 1 Survey

April 3, 2019 - May 17, 2019

**Q2** Please rate your agreement with this statement:  
Neighbourhood character in West Vancouver is changing.

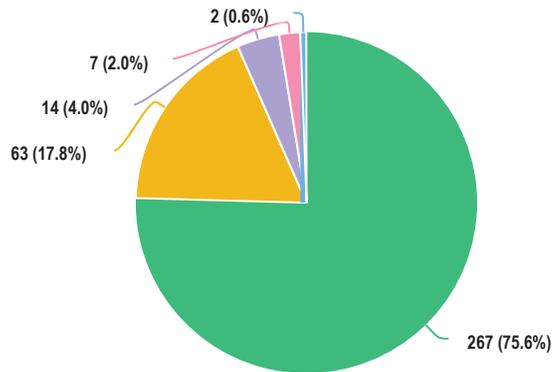


**Question options**

- Positively changing
- Not changing much
- Negatively changing

*Optional question (349 responses, 8 skipped)*

**Q4** To what extent do you agree/disagree that front yard and boulevard “green” landscapes affect the overall character of West Vancouver neighbourhoods?

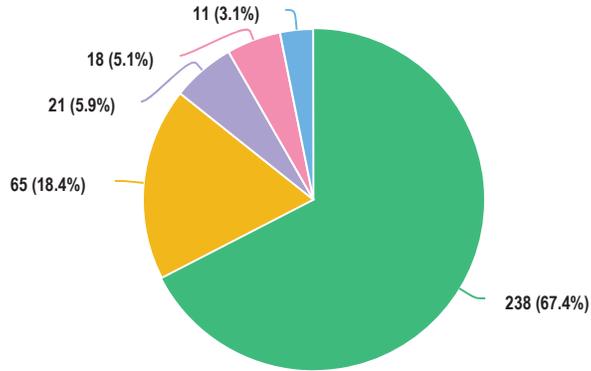


**Question options**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

*Optional question (353 responses, 4 skipped)*

**Q5** To what extent do you agree/disagree that the advance notification of neighbours regarding nearby construction would be beneficial?

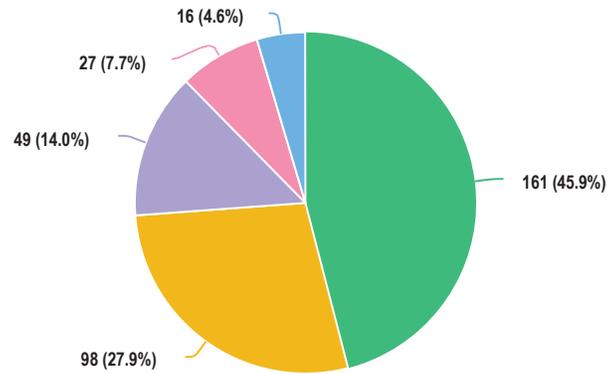


**Question options**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

*Optional question (353 responses, 4 skipped)*

**Q6** To what extent do you agree/disagree that the amount of hard surfaces affects the character of West Vancouver neighbourhoods?

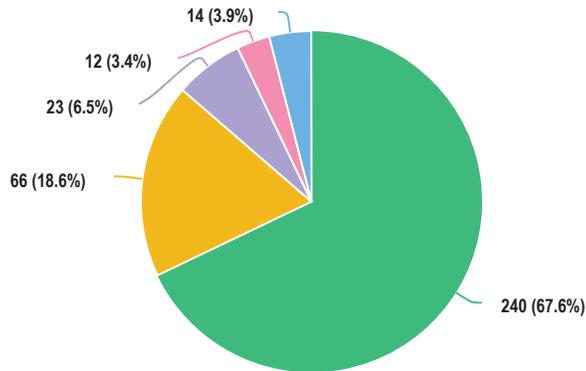


**Question options**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

*Optional question (351 responses, 6 skipped)*

**Q7** To what extent do you agree/disagree that building size, in relation to nearby homes, affects the character of West Vancouver neighbourhoods?

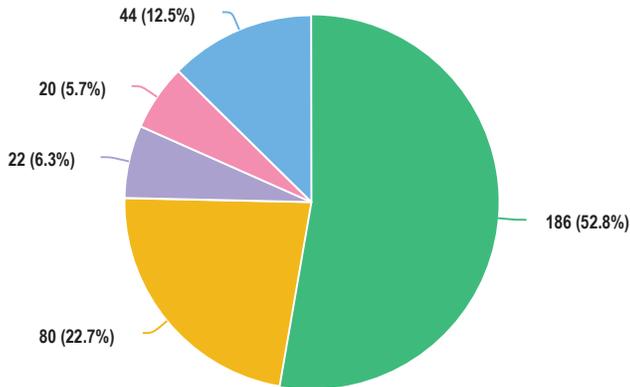


**Question options**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

*Optional question (355 responses, 2 skipped)*

**Q8** To what extent do you agree/disagree that encouraging more diverse housing can create a more vibrant community that can contribute to the character of your neighbourhood?

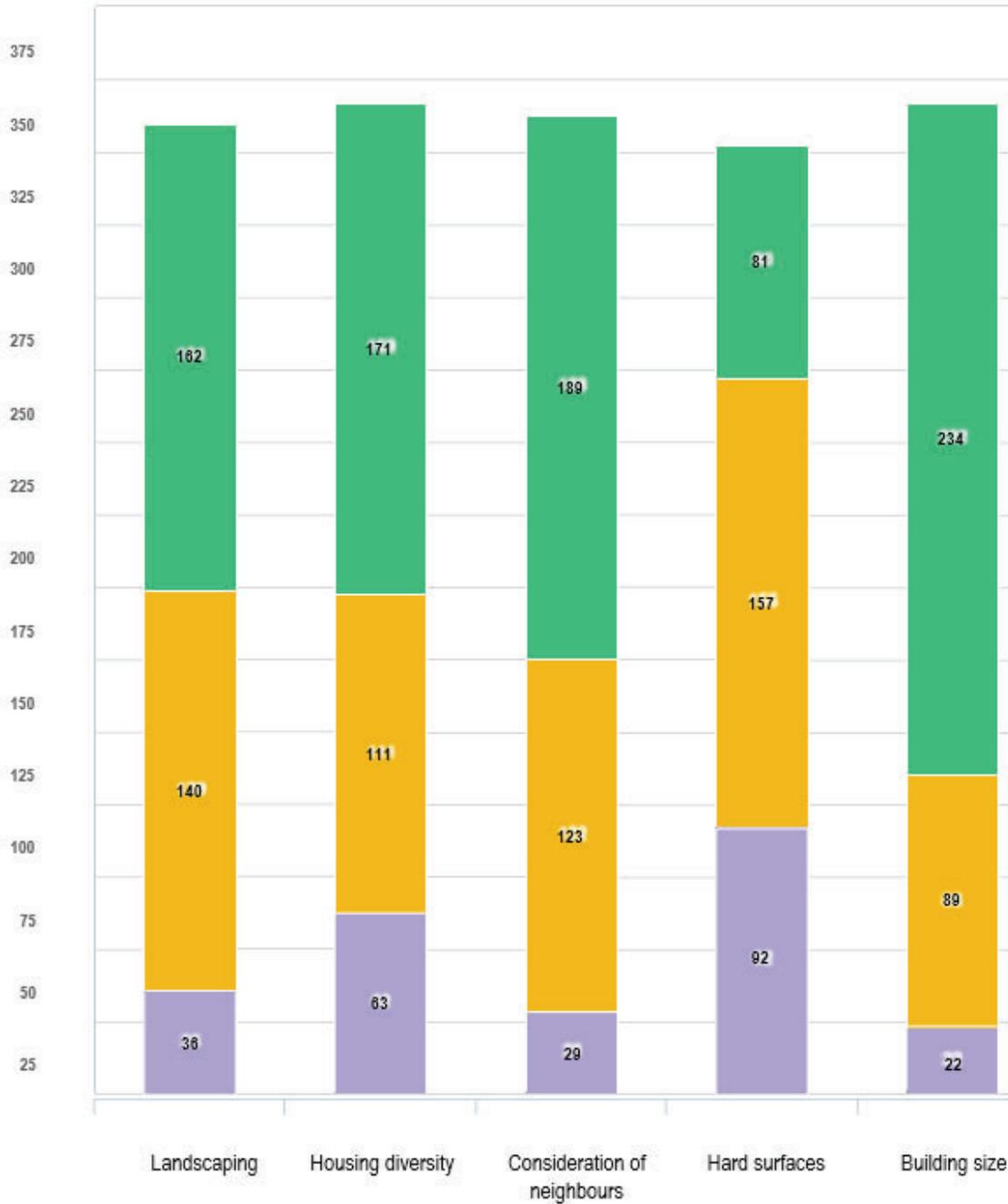


**Question options**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

*Optional question (352 responses, 5 skipped)*

**Q10** Please number the issues to indicate their relative priority, with 1 being the most important, 2 being moderately important and 3 being the least important. You can repeat numbers (i.e. all can be #1 if that's what you feel).



**Question options**

1 (most important)    2 (moderately important)    3 (least important)

Optional question (353 responses, 4 skipped)

**Preserving & Enhancing Neighbourhood Character: Qualitative Results**  
 Neighbourhood Character Working Group Phase 1 Survey  
 April 3, 2019 - May 17, 2019

**Overall Response Count**

	<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Total</b>
Neighbourhood		340	
Change	349	257	
Attribute		318	
Landscape	353	158	
Notice	353	176	
Surfaces	351	156	
Scale	355	184	
Diversity	352	192	
Other		192	
Importance	353		
Add issues		134	
Anything else		150	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,466</b>	<b>2,257</b>	<b>4,723</b>

## Q2 CHANGING?

346 responses, 7 skipped

2. Please rate your agreement with this statement: Neighbourhood character in West Vancouver is changing.

Positive	11%
Not much	19%
Negative	69%

## Q3 COMMENT

### References

	257	100%
<b>House too large, excessive coverage or monster home</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Architectural style, conformity or quality</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Uninhabited homes, seasonal occupancy, or vacant neighbourhood</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>19%</b>
Natural environment, sustainability or climate change	29	11%
Reduced social interaction or community participation; increased language barriers	25	10%
Vehicle traffic, congestion and parking; need for transit investment	24	9%
Impacts due to developer, realtor or municipality	24	9%
Reduced soft landscaping or more extensive paving	24	9%
Concerns about rezoning generally or specific developments	23	9%
Reduction of tree canopy or removal of trees	23	9%
Streetscape; boulevard maintenance; walls, hedges and gates	21	8%
Limited change has occurred	21	8%
Balanced response; both positive and negative impacts	20	8%
Reduced families, children and youth; limited housing choices for seniors	20	8%
Natural light, view, noise, lighting or privacy impacts	18	7%
Limited housing range or variety	18	7%
<i>Perfect or there should be no change</i>	14	5%
<i>Business and economic concerns; need for neighbourhood retail</i>	13	5%
<i>Limited housing affordability</i>	12	5%
<i>Building height or manipulated grade</i>	9	4%
<i>Construction impacts</i>	9	4%
<i>Excessive number of tenants; short-term rentals</i>	7	3%
<i>Community spaces and parks</i>	7	3%
<i>Trails and paths; need for sidewalks</i>	7	3%
<i>Heritage and historic character</i>	6	2%
<i>Ambleside Town Centre or Marine Drive concerns</i>	6	2%
<i>Deteriorating infrastructure</i>	4	2%

## ATTRIBUTES

3. Please tell us what attributes you believe are important to neighbourhood character that you would like to see preserved or enhanced and any suggestions on how that would be achieved.

Q4 COMMENT	References	
	316	100%
<b>House size or monster home</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Soft landscaping, boulevards or excessive paving</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Architectural style, heritage, conformity or quality</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>28%</b>
Walkability, sidewalks, ROW access or off-street trails	61	19%
Sense of community, sociability, or neighbourhood events	57	18%
Reduction of tree canopy or removal of trees	52	16%
Housing diversity	46	15%
Natural environment, outdoors, mountains or shoreline	41	13%
Increased parks, greenspace or facilities	35	11%
Preference for more growth	33	10%
Preference for less growth	32	10%
Increased demographic mix, seniors, families	31	10%
Improved housing affordability	30	9%
Retail, local stores or cafes	26	8%
Natural light, view, noise, lighting or privacy impacts	24	8%
<i>Uninhabited homes or short-term rental</i>	20	6%
<i>Increased transit provision</i>	19	6%
<i>Traffic congestion or calming</i>	16	5%
<i>On- and off-street parking</i>	15	5%
<i>Houses should be adapted to the site</i>	13	4%
<i>Imposing walls, fences or gates</i>	12	4%
<i>Additional services or enforcement through fines</i>	12	4%
<i>Less restrictions on tree cutting</i>	12	4%
<i>Additional street lighting or undergrounding utilities</i>	11	3%
<i>Climate change and other environmental impacts</i>	10	3%
<i>Reduced civic infrastructure or taxes</i>	8	3%
<i>Character is specific to neighbourhood</i>	6	2%
<i>Increased cultural facilities or resources</i>	3	1%
<i>No issues raised</i>	3	1%
<i>Expectation to provide input on permits</i>	3	1%
<i>Reduced demolition impacts</i>	3	1%
<i>Less commercial signage</i>	2	1%

**Q5 LANDSCAPE**

350 responses, 3 skipped

4. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:

Vegetation and other site features create the transition between private properties and the street, while allowing buildings to fit into their surroundings. To what extent do you agree/disagree that front yard and boulevard “green” landscapes affect the overall character of West Vancouver neighbourhoods?

Strongly agree	75%
Somewhat agree	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%
Somewhat disagree	2%
Strongly disagree	1%

**Q6 COMMENT****References**

	158	100%
<b>Maintain / enhance streetscape (aesthetics, greenery, foliage)</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Maintain / enhance environment (climate, drought, herbicides / pollutants, wildlife, fruit, green infrastructure, shade, safety)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>28%</b>
Maintain / enhance public use (biking / walking, social interaction / health / well-being, assembly spaces / resting spot / pocket parks)	34	22%
Preserve trees / tree canopy / strengthen tree regulation	33	21%
Decrease building envelope / size	24	15%
Reduce hard surfacing, storm water run off, impermeable surfacing and/or cement	23	15%
Strengthen landscaping regulations / yard maintenance	22	14%
Strengthen boulevard regulations / maintenance	22	14%
Encourage use of native species / natural / wild landscaping	20	13%
Increase ratio of landscaping to lot size	15	9%
Lower fence / hedge / gate height	15	9%
Reclaim park land	12	8%
Provide additional privacy and views	12	8%
<i>No jurisdiction on private land</i>	6	4%
<i>Provide higher density to protect green spaces</i>	4	3%
<i>Increase neighbour consideration</i>	2	1%
<i>Remove water charges for maintaining landscapes</i>	1	1%

**Q7 NOTICE**

350 responses, 3 skipped

5. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:

Single-family residential construction can affect immediate neighbours in regards to privacy, enjoyment of property and the impact of the finished project.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the advance notification of neighbours regarding nearby construction would be beneficial?

Strongly agree	67%
Somewhat agree	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	6%
Somewhat disagree	5%
Strongly disagree	3%

**Q8 COMMENT****References**

	176	100%
<b>Shorten construction periods / reduce impact</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Neighbours should receive notice / be considered / provide input / influence, protect property value / views</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>No public notice, current bylaws are sufficient / should be enforced, do not provide false expectations</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>35%</b>
Strengthen tree bylaws, no clear cutting, maintain mature landscaping	19	11%
Neighbours should be considered, protect property value / views	18	10%
<i>Shorten permit times</i>	7	4%
<i>Incentivise renovations, retain heritage</i>	7	4%
<i>Discourage empty / vacant homes</i>	5	3%

**Q9 SURFACES**

348 responses, 5 skipped

6. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:

Retaining walls, planters and fencing can reduce green space; extensive horizontal ground coverage (such as driveways, walkways and other surface paving) can limit plantings and affect natural drainage.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the amount of hard surfaces affects the character of West Vancouver neighbourhoods?

Strongly agree	46%
Somewhat agree	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	14%
Somewhat disagree	8%
Strongly disagree	5%

**Q10 COMMENT**

	References	
	156	100%
<b>Increase landscaping / vegetation (natural drainage / rain garden / bioswale, tree preservation, wildlife, drought resistance, GHG mitigation)</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>Limit concrete / hard surfaces / surface parking / basements</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>19%</b>
Build to natural terrain / limit grading (reduce presence of large houses, decrease environmental impact)	27	17%
Address impacts of hard surfaces (concrete use / production, drainage disruption / storm water run off / flooding / erosion / pollutants)	25	16%
Increase landscaping / public use of boulevard (trees, safety, side walks / bike lanes)	25	16%
Limit retaining wall height / extent of hard surfacing based on lot size / topography	21	13%
Steep sites require retaining walls for access / privacy, planters increase greenery	20	13%
No jurisdiction over private land	16	10%
Encourage hard surfacing / easy maintenance	12	8%
<i>Decrease housing size</i>	8	5%
<i>Remove public / private parking on boulevards</i>	6	4%
<i>No high fences, gates, hedges</i>	5	3%
<i>Protect views / limit tree height</i>	2	1%
<i>Count hard surfaces towards FAR / provide tax incentive for permeable surfacing</i>	2	1%

**Q11 SCALE**

352 responses, 1 skipped

7. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:

As the average size of single-family homes continues to grow, new larger houses may be out of proportion to existing homes in the neighbourhood.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that building size, in relation to nearby homes, affects the character of West Vancouver neighbourhoods?

Strongly agree	68%
Somewhat agree	19%
Neither agree nor disagree	7%
Somewhat disagree	3%
Strongly disagree	4%

**Q12 COMMENT**

	References	
	183	100%
<b>Limit size, decrease density, no more monster homes, require SFD amenity contribution</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Increase density for housing diversity / smaller homes, enable subdivision / duplex / coach house / triplex</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>23%</b>
Landscape for better integration / build with nature, preserve trees / streetscape / setbacks / lot size / height	33	18%
Allow people to build what they want / respect current bylaws, land prices are too high / tax vacant homes	31	17%
Increase affordability - rezoning, rental, downsizing / live in place, socioeconomic diversity / demographic range, multi generational living / young families	22	12%
Protect environment - increase density / build higher to reduce urban sprawl / decrease environmental footprint, sustainable building forms	18	10%
Regulate architectural style / incentivize renovation	11	6%
<i>Urgent action required</i>	6	3%
<i>Protect light and privacy / landscape boulevards</i>	6	3%
<i>Retain single family style / ground-orientated typology</i>	3	2%
<i>No parking on boulevard</i>	1	1%

### Q13 DIVERSITY

349 responses, 4 skipped

8. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:

Consideration of laneway/coach houses, smaller homes on smaller lots and duplexes is supported by the Official Community Plan.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that encouraging more diverse housing can create a more vibrant community that can contribute to the character of your neighbourhood?

Strongly agree	53%
Somewhat agree	23%
Neither agree nor disagree	6%
Somewhat disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	13%

### Q14 COMMENT

	References	
	190	100%
<b>Allow / facilitate / increase housing diversity - smaller house, coach house, duplex, triplex</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Increase young families / affordability / down-sizing options, facilitate socioeconomic diversity</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>29%</b>
Reduce environmental footprint, stop urban sprawl, higher density / townhouses / high-rises close to amenities & transit	35	18%
Protect single-family, no higher density / affordable housing, traffic / vegetation impacts	35	18%
Regulate parking, increase landscaping / green spaces / trees	21	11%
Regulate architectural style / retain character / maintain architectural context of house	15	8%
Neighbourhood-specific, neighbour consultation / should approve projects	14	7%
<i>No monster homes</i>	6	3%
<i>Improve transit service</i>	6	3%
<i>Retain ground-oriented housing forms</i>	5	3%

### Q15 OTHER ISSUES

9. Are there any other issues not included above that should be investigated to enhance or protect neighbourhood character in West Vancouver?

	References	
	191	100%
<b>traffic calming / parking restriction, improve transit / car-share / cycling / pedestrian</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>integrate nature, protect trees / streams, limit impacts to grade / water table</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>24%</b>
increase housing diversity / flexibility / infill	24	13%
encourage social interaction, community spaces / parks, beach / trail access / signage	23	12%
design controls / review board, limit size / height / density, improve materiality	23	12%
improve maintenance of buildings / yard / boulevard	17	9%
improve street presence, remove ditches / encroachments, reduce hedge height	13	7%
address vacant homes, tax speculators	12	6%
improve bylaw enforcement, limit variances	12	6%
increase parking, remove traffic calming features	12	6%
limit / stop growth, no high-rises / rezonings, specific site proposal	12	6%
<i>increase regulations, improve consistency, make neighbourhood specific</i>	8	4%
<i>increase consultation, improve definitions, WG ineffective form</i>	8	4%
<i>protect heritage, utilize HRAs, blend old and new, encourage renovation</i>	8	4%
<i>reduce noise, provide waste bins, police panhandling</i>	8	4%
<i>limit construction times / trucks / impacts</i>	7	4%
<i>encourage home-based business, support businesses / restaurants / retail</i>	7	4%
<i>prioritize owner input, do not consult children</i>	7	4%
<i>expedite permitting</i>	5	3%
<i>prevent rooming houses / short-term rentals, protect home owners' rights / privacy</i>	5	3%
<i>remove trees to improve cell reception / views</i>	4	2%
<i>use existing infrastructure, align with ferry terminal plans</i>	2	1%

## Q16 IMPORTANCE

353 responses, 0 skipped

10. Please number the issues to indicate their relative priority, with 1 being the most important, 2 being moderately important and 3 being the least important.

	Weighted*	Most	Moderate	Least
Building size	2.9	232	88	22
Consideration of neighbours	2.4	188	122	28
Housing diversity	2.1	169	111	62
Landscaping	2.0	161	139	35
Hard surfaces	1.0	80	155	92

\*ratio of "Most" compared to lowest ranked

## Q17 ADDITIONAL ISSUES

11. Please write in your own issues if you feel we have missed any issues that are not covered by the list above.

### References

134 100%

## Q18 ANYTHING ELSE

12. Is there anything else about neighbourhood character in West Vancouver single-family neighbourhoods that you would like to tell us?

### References

150 100%

<b>Increase housing diversity, allow subdivisions, encourage smaller homes on smaller lots</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Improve architectural design, no monster houses, encourage renovations</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>14%</b>
Build sidewalks and traffic calming, reduce auto dependence, improve transit, walking and cycling	16	11%
Increase environmental standards - EV, solar, water, light pollution, waste reduction	16	11%
Increase affordability	16	11%
Increase tree protection, improve landscaping	14	9%
Preserve single-family neighbourhoods, no condominiums	14	9%
Improve permitting process, listen to residents, reduce red tape, offer incentives	13	9%
Increase housing density	12	8%
Importance of natural environment, proximity to outdoors and trails	12	8%
Policies are beyond local control, too late to address changes	10	7%
Improve maintenance of landscaping and buildings	10	7%
Support families, children and seniors	10	7%
Prevent / tax empty homes	9	6%
Adapt to changing conditions, increase vibrancy	8	5%
<i>Maintain character, protect heritage</i>	5	3%
<i>No change should happen</i>	5	3%
<i>Improve retail and businesses</i>	5	3%
<i>No complaints</i>	5	3%
<i>Remove trees</i>	4	3%
<i>Expand community facilities and programming</i>	4	3%
<i>Underground utilities, repair pavement</i>	4	3%
<i>Address garbage and rubbish</i>	4	3%
<i>Too much traffic, remove traffic calming</i>	4	3%
<i>Focus on District overall</i>	3	2%
<i>Focus on distinct neighbourhoods</i>	2	1%
<i>Restrict children as nuisances</i>	1	1%

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## APPENDIX C

### NCWG Finalize Recommendations Engagement Summary (2020)

#### Phase 3 Comment Form Responses on Draft Recommendations

Neighbourhood Character Working Group

July 24, 2020 – September 20, 2020

#### # and % of responses to NCWG Public Survey Sept 2020

Total # Responses = 121

	Q 1		Q2		Q3		Q4		Q5		Q6	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Agree</b>	40	33	32	26	32	26	25	21	31	26	31	26
<b>Agree with Caveats</b>	35	29	52	43	40	33	52	43	41	34	42	35
<b>No Comment</b>	18	15	21	17	30	25	32	26	33	27	24	20
<b>Disagreed</b>	27	22	15	12	16	13	11	9	14	12	21	17
<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	2	2	3	2

% are rounded up

## NCWG Feedback Summary (consolidated)

### 1. Reduce Building Size

- Overwhelming support for reducing FAR
- General agreement, two concerns to preserve some estate sized lots. (Final report might note British Properties not impacted by our recommendations)

2 agreed with caveats: non-enclosed covered decks, especially in back should not be included in total gross area; extensive blasting to take advantage of 'free' basement space should not be allowed.

1 - no comment.

6 - disagreed: allow big houses; no suites other than for family members; reduction in FAR would be inequitable; consider FAR reductions in context of COP; larger home can be built if up higher on lot; 500 sq' bonus will add to house size and not be used for intended purpose; population will increase without required additional infrastructure; make maximum FAR of new builds no more than the FAR of x adjacent houses on each side.

Most respondents agree with the proposals

12 agree; 4 no comment; 1 disagrees that it is necessary, but particularly with large lots

A comment that increased setbacks may reduce house size without reducing FAR (note: side yard increases alone would just increase length)

Two respondents suggested FAR should include basements

mostly supportive; some concern that the issue is more of style than of FAR

- overwhelming support for reducing FAR, one respondent suggested it's not the size but the design (need better architecture)

Agree with reduction of FAR to 0.30. Residents have voiced concerns for many years on the impact of very large new homes that are out of proportion of most homes in the neighborhood. There is too much site coverage, reduction of natural vegetation, loss of privacy, views and sunlight by affected neighbours.

Couple of minor disagreements with FAR reduction.

- Overwhelming opposition to reduced FAR (8 respondents opposed, 2 'likes', 1 no comment)

- Reasons against a reduced FAR were varied: unreasonably restricts built form expression; livability of spaces forced below grade; a general reluctance to reduce what is considered a reasonable density allowance; impact on tax revenues(?); better methods(?) to control manipulation of basement exemptions and / or street-facing building bulk
- Suggestions: consider a base .3 FAR with bonuses to .35 FAR for meeting neighbourhood specific character objectives as determined by a Design Review Panel

## 2. Encourage Suites & Coach Houses

- Concerns: too much coverage on 33' lots; parking
- Will encourage blasting and tree removal
- Suggestions for scaled down lot sizes. Also support for increased density on lots to accommodate suites and coach houses and one suggestion to support cluster housing. Concerns to regulate height to preserve views, privacy.

4 agreed with caveats: allow coach house/ suite to existing houses as well; neighbourhood feel should not be changed with overflow of coach houses/ suites; concern 500 sq' will cancel out reducing FAR; concern about ensuring suite is used for rental.

2 - no comments

4 disagreed: wants big houses; need to investigate density already occurring due to illegal suites; embodied carbon issue needs to be resolved first; lane houses remove green space; make it easier to have suites in existing homes; single family homes only.

Most respondents agree with proposals

15 agree

2 have no comments

One mentioned concern about gaming the system if there was no requirement to use the suite

One mentioned that some Heritage bonuses resulted in too much density on the site and concern if this occurred with the bonusing.

One mentioned care for privacy of neighbours' privacy

generally very supportive but several concerns about parking, driveways

-suggestions for coach houses: allow basements; allow strata title; allow to be built closer to road allowance; offer special consideration to heritage houses

-encourage taller slimmer houses

- mostly supportive however one person raised traffic as a concern

-Parking is a major concern when looking to increase density. Parking should be provided for additional accommodation on the property as opposed to the street. The assumption that those occupying suites and coach houses will not have cars, in our view, is naive.

-We propose that under a certain lot size, there be no coach houses, ie lots below 5000 SQUARE FEET. At a point there would be too much building site coverage, which we would not see as a positive benefit to a neighbourhood.

-Encourage built-in suites over secondary detached suites (coach houses) as less impact on a neighbourhood and greenspace.

-Coach Houses do not necessarily enhance neighbourhood character, ie potential loss to neighbours of privacy, views and sunlight, increased site coverage.

-Agree that stratification/subdivision of coach houses may have unintended consequences of permitting subdivision of lots that would otherwise be too small.

Only give suite bonus if the suite is rented.

One disagree with suites and coach houses – WV is and should remain single family

- Unanimous support for the idea of bonusing suites / coach houses and streamlining the approvals process with some debate regarding FAR e.g. relax requirements on locations near transit in lieu of reducing FAR (11 of 11 respondents)
- Suggestions: increase coach house bonus for larger lots to 1000 sf to 1200 sf; consider levying a registration fee for a suite bonus; include duplexes (to be considered on a case-by-case basis); exempt coach houses from fees (in lieu of density bonuses); consider a 'tree fee' as an offset to tree canopy loss
- Question: what are the restrictions on coach houses in the British Properties?

### 3. Limit Visual Impact from Street

- Limit blank walls to one storey
- Encouraging basements will encourage blasting
- Various opposition to over sized houses, houses out of character for the neighbourhood.

General support for Working Group recommendations, some lack of understanding re basements

4 agreed with caveats: concern for older homes as driveway leads directly to garage; dislikes metal awnings/sunrooms; allow planters to help deal with grades.

2 - no comments.

4 - disagreed. Wants luxury homes; no objection to 3 stories; too complex- use geodetic elevation of current structure; house design should be compatible with 3 nearest neighbours on each side.

General support, some known technical points acknowledged in report.

10 agree or agree with some exceptions - - As a whole, recommendations seem supported

7 have no comments

A few have mentioned concern about getting close to design regulation

One disagreed on overhang restrictions giving our wet climate

Height and width restrictions supported by one but other proposals restrictive

Another though "semi-enclosed" should be clearly defined to allow perimeter planters etc. on decks without being considered part of FAR

many comments regarding style as main issue instead of restrictions

- much in favour of streamlining process
- almost universal support for subdivision
- need to articulate need for respect for view obstruction
- new addition of rooftop decks are obtrusive to neighbours; should they be included in FAR?
- discriminatory to include inner courtyards as they can be an asset to design

overwhelming support, although again same person that suggested design as the issue not FAR, also stated that it's again poor architecture that's the issue when what's being presented to the street is visually unappealing.

Agree with the two stated objectives. There are a few bad examples of the visual impact of buildings in the 1100 block Keith Road , 3000 block Mathers and 2200 block Lawson.

Disagree with forcing articulation on front of houses; will limit design unnecessarily.

Limit obstruction of neighbour's view should be primary. Overhangs should be accommodated as much as possible due to rainy climate

- Support for vs. opposition to recommendations split among respondents split 7 to 4
- Overarching opposition - recommendations do not contribute to better architecture, inhibits design expression – strongly expressed by 3 respondents
- Oppose restrictions to roof overhangs, butterfly / shed roofs (2 respondents)
- Oppose restrictions to HBF exclusions to 45 degree plane (1 respondent)
- Suggestions: customize recommendations to neighbourhoods (vs. one size fits all); require large houses (>10,000 sf) submit to Design Panel review; building height and FAR should be based on natural grade

#### **4. Encourage Landscaping**

- One concern about reducing landscape bond
- 6' fence + wall too restrictive
- General support. Some opposition to parking on boulevards; preserve walking, biking, traffic safety. Two supportive references to Kitsilano re parking, neighbourhood character, smaller lots.

5 agreed with caveats: encourage green but not trees blocking views; likes retaining walls; West Van should maintain sidewalks/ blvds; need proper standards for yard care- compliance officer and fines; need fences for privacy; does not like too tall hedges and trees; doesn't see his problem if hard surfaces is resolved.

2- no comments

4 - disagree: one size fits all rule if 6' for fence and retaining wall not realistic; concern about fence height if 4' retaining wall needed; maintain grade modifications, elevation changes according to current standards; fences covered with vegetation are better than too tall trees.

Most agree

10 agree with some concerns

1 disagrees

6 no comment

One thought gates, and those opening onto street particularly, were contrary to neighbourhood character

One concerned over restriction to follow grade was difficult on some terrain

Untidy lots concern a problem not dealt with

Best practices “encouragement” not going far enough

One prefers to have option of a low maintenance landscape for future, another wants concrete prohibited

One says having green requires watering

One thinks streets should have a 4 hour parking limit and residents should have to pay \$150/month for on-street parking space

much agreement to not allowing grade manipulation

-concern of fence height on sloped lots where privacy is an issue

-boulevards: limit tall cedars which can be too high or not maintained; incentivize maintenance and enhancement of boulevards  
again overwhelming support

- Disagree with lowering the cost of the Bond that builders must provide but encourage a prompt reimbursement of the Bond once the builder has complied by completing the agreed landscaping.

Don't reduce the landscape bond.

Fence height is not a problem as long as they are landscaped.

Landscaping should be encouraged but limited to not impact neighbour's views or sunlight, and require maintenance/pruning

- General agreement / support for recommendations (10 respondents w. 1 no comment)
- Oppose lower cost for landscape bond (2 respondents)
- Suggestions: calculate building height from natural grade; engage experts to advise re. retaining wall best practices; articulate fences and walls; reduce max. fence height to 1.2 m; landscape street side of property fences; include sidewalks in boulevard plans; reduce hard surface driveway width across boulevard (property line to street); declassify permeable pavers as hard a hard surface; prohibit fake grass

## 5. Simplify Process

- No subdivision, ever! (two respondents)
- Removing CAC's might incent tear-downs
- Strong support. Reduce costs. One concern that Council making exceptions to the OCP.

2 agreed with caveats: requires more clarity if smaller lots created; concern about congestion; assumes multiple lots cannot be combined into one large lot.

2 - no comments.

6 - disagreed: maximize lot size; Does not agree with 2 small houses instead of 1 large house, removing CAC, allowing subdivision of lot when below approved threshold, limiting house size based on other lot sizes; recommendations contradict previous recommendations; applications will be more difficult; charm of west Van is its larger lot sizes; West Van is a bedroom community.

Most agree

9 agree

5 no comment

3 disagree

One thought limiting homes on larger lots to 150% considered punitive to owners – another thinks it may still be to large

split reaction to neighbour consultation: can be productive or detrimental

again more overwhelming support

Recommend further study of removal of CAC's for single-lot subdivisions in established single-family-detached zones as it could produce unanticipated speculation by developers which could drive up the value of single family lots making housing more expensive.

One disagree with subdivision of lots.

- General agreement / support for recommendations (9 respondents w. 2 x no comment)
- Oppose front yard variation – unintended consequences (1 respondent)
- Oppose limitations to max home size @ 150% x min lot size (2 respondents)
- Oppose recommendation re. size of basement exemption (2 respondents incl. 1 who didn't understand the recommendation)
- Suggestion: relax minimum lot widths to facilitate outright subdivision (1 respondent)

## 6. Neighbour Consideration

- Strong support
- Find a way to force a pre-design meeting/consultation

7 agreed with caveats: as long as no additional time and expense to builder; notes cases where neighbours have been supportive but neighbours have voted against; notify neighbours in writing within 1000 m. when application received; distribute sketches by registered mail within 1.2 km. and need 60% of neighbours to endorse; automatic notification of x neighbours with copies of plans- formal consultation process; notification only; neighbour input only for variance; wants neighbourhood meeting before construction.

2 - no comments

2 - disagree: wants 2 parking spots for every home/ condo; not sure recommendations will change anything if not mandatory.

Most agree but some question as to how it would effectively work

12 agree

3 no comment

2 disagree

One feels it will create a nightmare of fights between neighbours

One supports but concerned about staffing, and another about staff enforcing any neighbour/contractor agreement during construction

One thinks best practices not enough and another thinks neighbour should have to approve or have arbitration

somewhat split, a healthy amount that think it's fantastic but others that are concerned that it gives too much power to the neighbours aka "busy bodies"

Ensure that neighbours affected by rezoning be notified early in the process by creating a MANDATORY "preconsultation system" for all permit and development applications. This will prevent neighbours from being "blind-sided". Neighbours have a right to know. We also believe notification of neighbours should exceed the existing 100 metres. Renderings of appearance of proposed developments should be required to be posted on site and be included in notification to neighbours.

- General agreement / support for recommendations (8 respondents)
- Posting a building permit sign should be sufficient (1 respondent)
- Effort will create more problems than it will solve e.g. raise expectations re. design influence (1 respondent)

#### **General themes:**

- Trees should be included in our recommendations
- Incentives for retaining trees
- Stop clear cut of lots
- Consider the impact of suites and coach houses on trees and blasting

2 respondents of 14 thought the report was terrible (the rest generally supported it strongly); both want way more density, and much larger, multi-family houses are needed everywhere

General Concerns: Favour green development, reduce hard surfaces, landscape. One strong concern about view obstruction by way of over-grown hedges.

2 Other - increase fines for work done outside hours and need guards for 'Stone slingers'; bigger penalties.

In summary, the responses strongly support our recommendations. There is some concern with the potential staff workload involved if neighbours interpret notice as being meaningless without a mandate for change. In addition, there are some concerns about the "density" impact of suites and coach houses if parking is insufficient and privacy is affected. One valid technical issue is the definition of what is considered "semi-enclosed" re: FAR inclusion.

most comments are supportive and several are obviously from builders or architects, which I think is a good thing. I've also pertinent comments from the 2 virtual meetings. One common theme is to allow/encourage individual style as opposed to conformity. Maybe we need to state this more overtly in our intent??

We support, the reduction of housing size, the appearance of bulk and recognize the value of landscaping (more garden and natural vegetation, less concrete). The provision for more diverse housing to provide for a broader demographic should be done in a manner that does not adversely affect neighbours and neighbourhoods. Maintenance of privacy, views and sunlight are important and new developments need to respect this.

Parking needs must be part of the planning process. We already have a great deal of on street parking in certain neighbourhoods of West Vancouver.

West Vancouver needs to address the needs of an Age-Friendly Community.

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The recommendations by the NCWG cover a lot of ground and fall into three broad categories as broken out in the summary below (recommendations for: Policy Oriented changes, Regulation changes, and “Best Practices” information handouts). Policy is more general and typically involves implementation via a bylaw or by a resolution of Council. Regulations are quite specific and involve implementation by bylaw, most often the Zoning Bylaw. Best Practices Handouts usually supplement Council or Staff practice policies.

The Recommendations and Appendix documents provide more detail and nuance to the recommendations, and in some cases offer alternative approaches. In those main documents we have attempted to provide a description of each problem and the desired outcome to help guide implementation.

### Summary of Recommendations

#### **Policy Oriented:**

- Include neighbourhood character in District policies, starting with the OCP.
- No DP required for coach house if single storey and no basement
- Fine-tune boulevard parking space requirements
- Allow flexibility in front-yard setback where appropriate
- Simplify and reduce costs for renovation permits
- Investigate Development Permits for intensive development (over 10,000 sq ft or over .30 FAR)
- Encourage builder/neighbour discussions early in the process
- Building permit site plan should show immediate neighbours
- Demolition permits issued only after building permit for same lot

#### **Best Practices Handouts\***

- Street face articulation
- Boulevard landscaping
- Retaining wall treatments
- Drainage
- Neighbour consideration

\* Best Practices handouts may be good candidates to involve local neighbourhood associations in their development and review.

## Regulation:

Reduce FAR:

- Lot > 7,285 sq ft, FAR = .30
- 7,285 < Lot < 4,500 sq ft, buildable area = 2,200 sq ft
- Lot < 4,500, FAR = .50 (no change)

Suite bonus

- Lot > 7,285 sq ft, bonus = 500 sq ft
- Lot < 7,285 sq ft, bonus = 350 sq ft

Coach House bonus = 800 sq ft

Relax some requirements for coach houses

Refine the Highest Building Face regulations (including shielding street-exposed basements)

Reduce the front yard setback if garage is oriented 90° to the street

Include over-height covered decks in FAR

Eliminate manipulation of grade with planters

Include semi-enclosed spaces in FAR (see main report for “semi-enclosed” intent)

Limit the length and height of unarticulated side walls

Limit the height of butterfly and shed roofs to match flat roofs

Further limit hard surfaces visible from the street

Limit the maximum height of a fence and a fence + retaining wall

Further limit extreme grade manipulation

Deter basement exemption gaming by calculating basement floor at max. 9’ below main floor

Include boulevards in the landscape plan

Cap the cost of the landscape plan at \$25,000

Simplify subdivision of “oversized” lots into appropriately-sized lots

Limit the maximum buildable sq ft for each RS zone

## **Neighbourhood Character Working Group**

### **Appendix to Recommendations**

**December 7, 2020**

- 1.0 Scope of Work & Approach
- 2.0 Floor Area Ratio (FAR) & Basement Definitions
- 3.0 Property Examples
- 4.0 Alternative House Size Recommendation
- 5.0 Highest Building Face
- 6.0 Process Changes Recommended
  - 6.1 Subdivision, CACs
  - 6.2 Reduce minimum lot size
  - 6.3 Diversity of lots
  - 6.4 Limit Buildable to 150% of typical
  - 6.5 Setback Flexibility
  - 6.6 Basement stair
- 7.0 Neighbourhood Character in the OCP
- 8.0 Zoning Map
- 9.0 Zoning Overview
- 10.0 Comparison of FAR for a Variety of Lot Sizes
- 11.0 The Math Behind the Numbers

# 1.0 Scope of Work & Approach

## Definition of Success

The success of the Neighbourhood Character Working Group (NCWG) will be evident by the implementation of practical recommendations that aim to reduce and manage the impacts of development in detached home neighbourhoods and result in the protection of neighbourhood character and heritage.

Actionable recommendations are intended to be:

- representative of the wishes of a majority of residents
- politically supportable by Council
- technically feasible
- implementable by staff, and
- easily understood by builders, architects and the public.

## Scope of Work

The scope of the NCWG's mandate is defined here:

### Included for Consideration:

- Uses allowed in RS (single-family and single-family + suite) zoned areas only
- Recommendations or suggestions that affect neighbourhood character.

### Excluded from Consideration:

- Uses that are not permitted in RS zones (e.g. apartments or townhouses)
- Ideas that are valid but unrelated to character (e.g. technical amendments that improve enforcement or deal with drainage)
- Taste and style of detached houses, as these generally cannot be regulated by local government
- Annoyances arising from the construction process that can be handled by bylaw enforcement
- Regulations regarding trees on private property; for an in-depth analysis refer to the Interim Tree Bylaw Working Group report (June 2018).
- Existing and newly developed subdivisions that have design guidelines or covenants.

## Assumptions

The following assumptions have been noted by the NCWG.

- Proposals that the NCWG believes are implementable and can be supported by Council, staff and the majority of the community will be prioritized.
- The focus of the NCWG's proposals is to make RS-zoned neighbourhoods attractive for residents, to encourage positive change and discourage negative change.
- Change will occur over time, and the needs of the community will change as well. Our recommendations are not designed to maintain the status quo, but to manage such changes to ensure a positive living environment consistent with a detached-house/single-family feel, and the adaptation of housing to meet community needs.
- Renovations and new home construction will affect the living environment of neighbours; recommendations attempt to manage these impacts.
- Where legislative authority is not evident, the Working Group may still recommend policies or administrative practices to encourage positive results.

## Limitations

The following factors have been identified as limitations that were taken into account when developing the NCWG's recommendations:

- A number of properties and neighbourhoods have private or public covenants that may limit or add to the application of Municipal bylaws.
- "Regulations" must deal with matters that are legally enabled and enforceable (have legislative authority).
- New subdivisions being developed (ie. BPP and above the highway) do not have an existing 'character' to be protected, and generally achieve cohesion and context through design guidelines imposed by the developer.

## Approach

The approach selected by the NCWG is to make recommendations that balance the inevitable evolution of neighbourhood character with the constraints identified above on the one hand and the desires of the citizens on the other:

- Encourage the types of developments and behaviours we want to see more of.
- Discourage those the community has identified as inappropriate.
- Specifically encourage new houses that appear smaller while improving the livability and adaptability of accommodation (e.g., suites, coach houses).
- Apply a combination of small changes that individually may not show results, but collectively will drive positive change.

## 2.0 Floor Area Ratio & Basement Definition

### 2.1 Floor Area Ratio - FAR

Floor Area Ratio (FAR), sometimes known as Floor Space Ratio or FSR, is the ratio of the building floor area compared to the lot area:

$$\frac{\text{Building Area (sq. ft.)}}{\text{Lot Area (sq. ft.)}} = \text{FAR}$$

FAR is used in bylaws to define the square footage of buildings that can be built on a given property. For example, the RS-4 Zone currently has a maximum FAR of .35, so on a 9,000 sq. ft. lot in that zone a house (and included portions of other buildings) equal to  $.35 \times 9,000 = 3,150$  sq. ft. can be built. (The NCWG recommendation is to reduce FAR to .30)

There are a number of “exclusions” to FAR, among them:

- A garage up to 440 sq. ft.
- An accessory building up to 220 sq. ft.
- Uncovered decks, porches and internal patios
- 100% of the part of the basement that is 3 feet or less above the lower of natural or finished grade at the perimeter walls
- A portion of the remainder of the basement that is partially “below grade” as calculated with the formula below.

$$\frac{\text{Lowest avg. grade – basement floor elevation}}{\text{Main floor elevation – basement floor elevation}} \times 100 \times \text{Remaining basement floor area}$$

That calculation approximates the percentage of the basement’s volume that is below average grade and applies that percentage to the floor area. So if for example a house has 40% of the included basement below average grade, then 40% of the basement floor area would not be counted in FAR.

The logic behind this is that if the basement is buried then it is not visible and does not add to the apparent size or bulk of the building, so it need not count as part of the permissible FAR. It also has a desired effect of encouraging some of the counted floor area (included in the FAR) being included in the overall basement, thereby reducing the size of the more visible part of the house in the two storeys above.

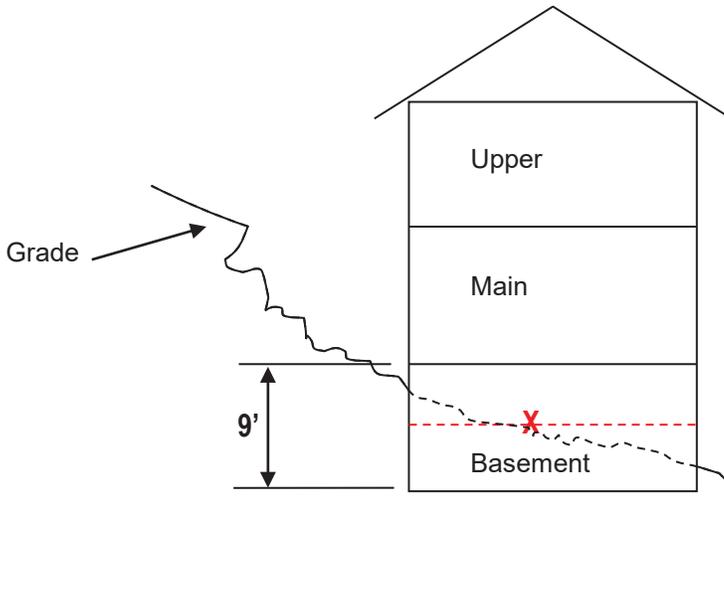
Under this regulation, it is possible for a house to have up to 100% of its basement excluded from FAR, even if one wall is totally exposed. (see “Basements” below)

Builders typically wish to maximize the overall size of house they can build on a given lot, so the more of the basement that is exempted from the FAR calculation, the larger the house that can be built.

## 2.2 Basements

A basement is the level of a house that is below the main floor. The basement floor must be at least 1' below "grade" otherwise it is counted as the Main Floor.

A basement is "buried" (i.e. exempt from being counted in the floor area of the house for FAR calculations) when the main floor of the house is less than 3 feet above the lower of the abutting natural or finished grade (so, accounting for the framed depth of the main floor, the top 2 feet or so of a basement can be exposed and it still be classed as "buried").



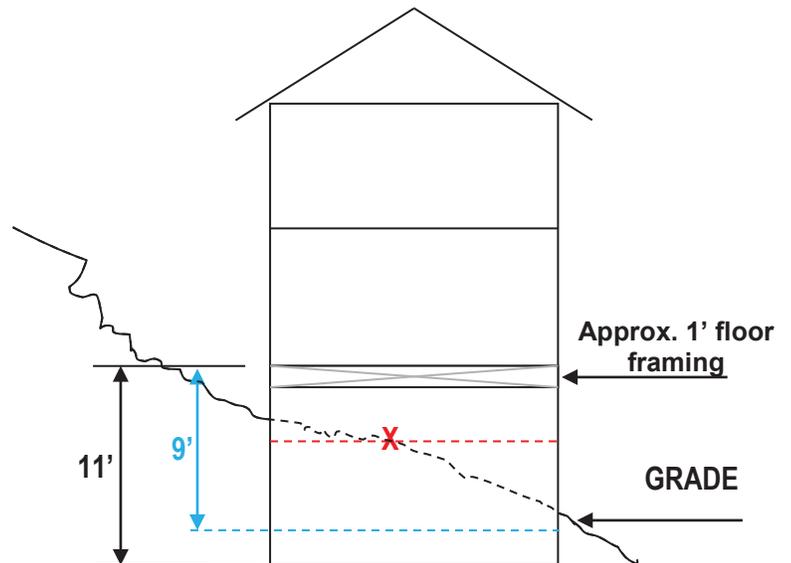
For sloping lots, the "buried" portion of the basement is calculated using the formula above.

In this example, approximately half the basement volume is below the average grade (the "X") and so half the basement floor area would be exempt from (not counted in) the FAR calculation for the house.

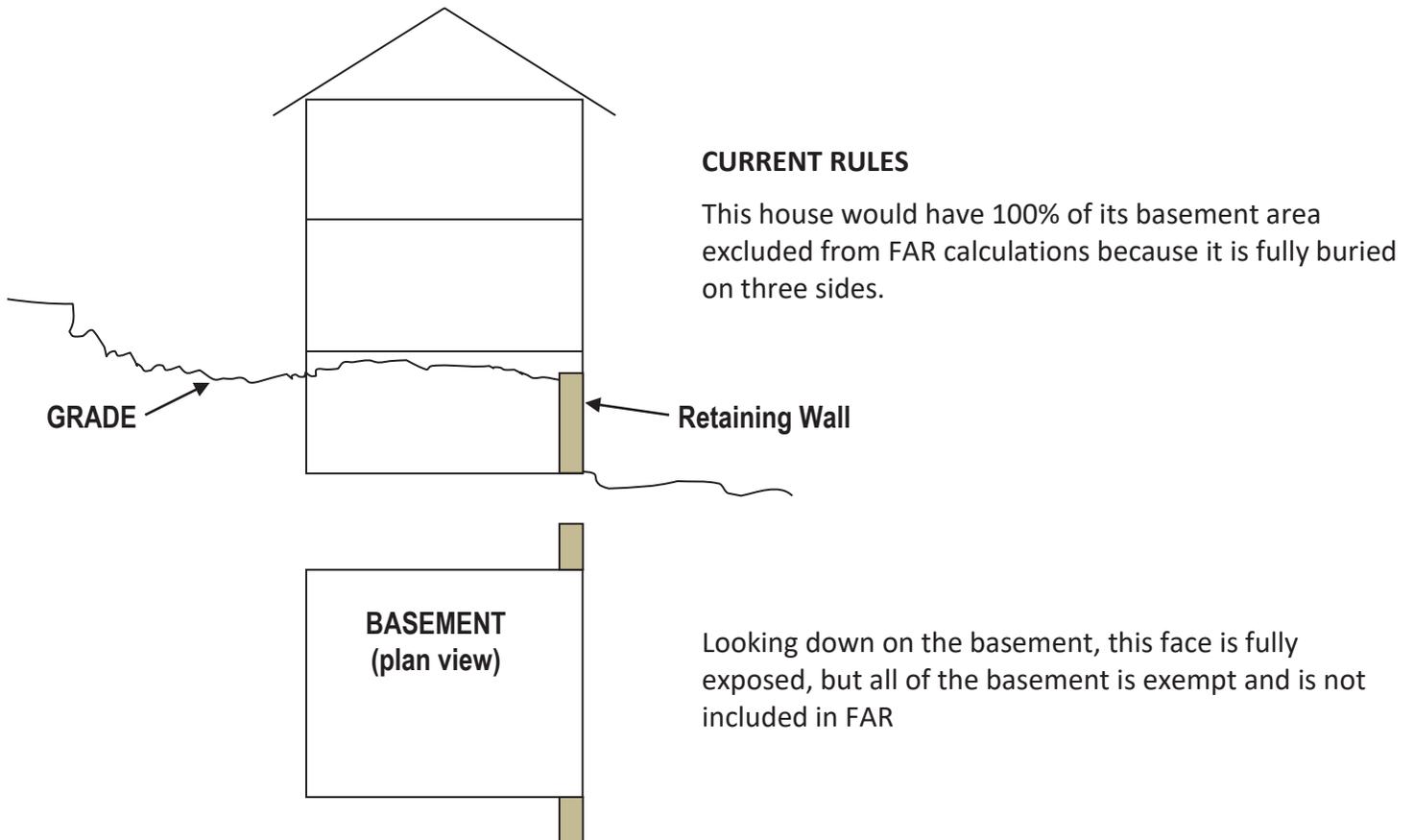
In this example, where the basement has been dug deeper (11'), more than half the basement volume is below the average grade (the "X") and so a larger amount of the basement floor area would be exempt from (not counted in) the FAR calculation for the house – permitting a larger above-ground portion of the house.

We recommend the FAR basement exemption should use the higher of actual basement floor or 9' (blue line) below the main floor level for the calculation, to minimize the potential for manipulation.

Note that the basement floor may be at any desired depth to allow a higher ceiling, but the calculation should take place at 9' below the main floor.



## Basements (Cont'd)



### RECOMMENDATION

The Working Group studied several approaches to minimizing the visual impact and the potentially large amount of floor space that is exposed at walk-out grade but not counted in the home's buildable floor area.

Our recommendation 3.a) ii regarding shielding exposed basements from the street view (Page 20 of the report) is the solution we settled on.

However, more study may be required for a true solution, perhaps to include some portion of the basement in the allowable floor area if it has a fully exposed or full-height walk-out section.

### 3.0 Example Properties

#### EXAMPLE 1

For a 12,000 sq. ft. lot a Floor Area Ratio of 0.35 permits:

- 4,200 sq. ft. permitted above grade (.35 \* 12,000)
- Up to 2,100 sq. ft. below grade,(based on a home with a fully-buried, i.e. fully exempted, basement and two roughly equal-sized storeys above)

Roughly 50% of new houses have at least a portion of the basement included in the permitted FAR, but some could have up to 100% exempted if it is fully below grade. When maxed out, this has the potential for a 6,300 sq. ft. house (4,200 + 2,100) on a 12,000 sq. ft. lot if the house is built with 3 equal-sized storeys, resulting in a Gross floor area ratio of .53.

#### EXAMPLE 2

Example conforming house plan:

- Lot size: 9,180 sq. ft.
- House: total 5,400 sq. ft.
  - 1,700 sq. ft. main, 1,512 sq. ft. upper, 2,188 sq. ft. basement
- Calculated FAR (main + upper): .35
- Actual Gross floor area ratio: .58

In this case, because the garage is attached to the house on the main floor level, the basement can extend larger than the main floor, going below the garage, resulting in a total FAR (and proportionate house size) even larger than shown Example 1, which assumes 3 equal-sized storeys.



	<u>Sq. Ft</u>
Lot Size	9180
Main	1700
Above	1512
Below	<u>2188</u>
Total	5400

## 4.0 Alternative “House Size” Recommendation

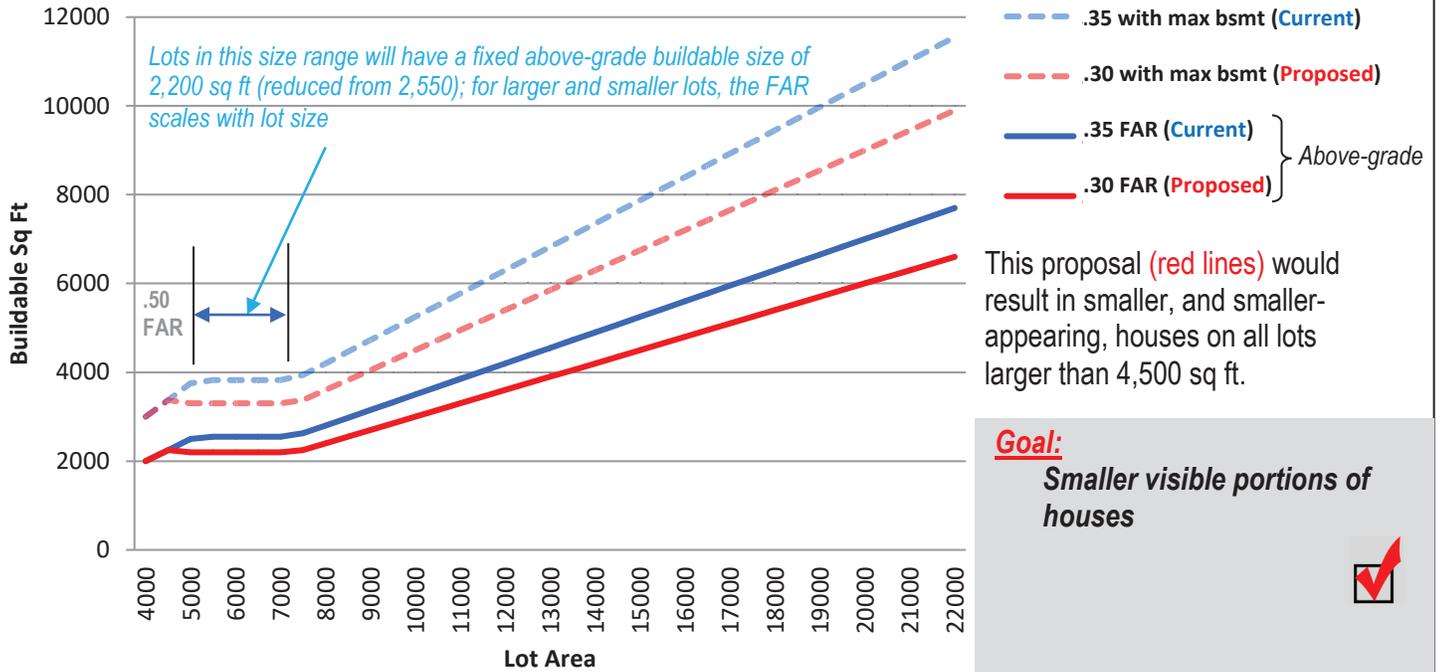
If for any reason the NCWG Recommendation 1 (reduce FAR to .30 from .35) is unable to be implemented, we propose this alternative approach to reducing house size.

Maintain the current above-grade building size maximums but **limit the below grade basement exemption to 800 sq. ft.**

- Reduces the overall house size
  - for lots over 7,285 sq. ft. the buildable area will be 0.35 of the lot area plus 800 sq. ft. of the below-grade basement (versus current 0.35 plus the buried portion of basement up to 100% of house footprint)
  - for lots between 5,000 sq. ft. and 7,285 sq. ft. the buildable area will be 2,550 sq. ft. + 800 sq. ft. of the below-grade basement
  - for lots smaller than 5,000 sq. ft. the buildable area will be .50 of the lot area plus 800 sq. ft. of the below-grade basement
- Eliminates need to use complicated formulae to calculate basement exemptions and, by allowing an 800 sq. ft. partial exemption, will still encourage, although not force, some additional portions of the basement to be built larger than the 800 sq. ft. resulting in smaller above-grade portions of the house.
- Does not limit the size of a basement – it can still be up to the same size as the main floor plate – but any floor area beyond 800 sq. ft. must come from the overall FAR (i.e. must reduce the above-grade portions of the house).
- The house in Example 1 above would be reduced in size from a total of 6,300 sq. ft. (with 4,200 sq. ft. above grade) to a total of 5,000 sq. ft. (with 4,200 sq. ft. above grade).
- The house in Example 2 would be reduced in size from a total of 5,400 sq. ft. (with 3,212 above grade) to about 4,000 sq. ft. (with 3,212 above grade).
- However in both Examples, we would expect that a prudent builder would decide to put some of the buildable area in the basement (for more efficient building and cost reduction), reducing the above-grade building size by perhaps 10-20%.

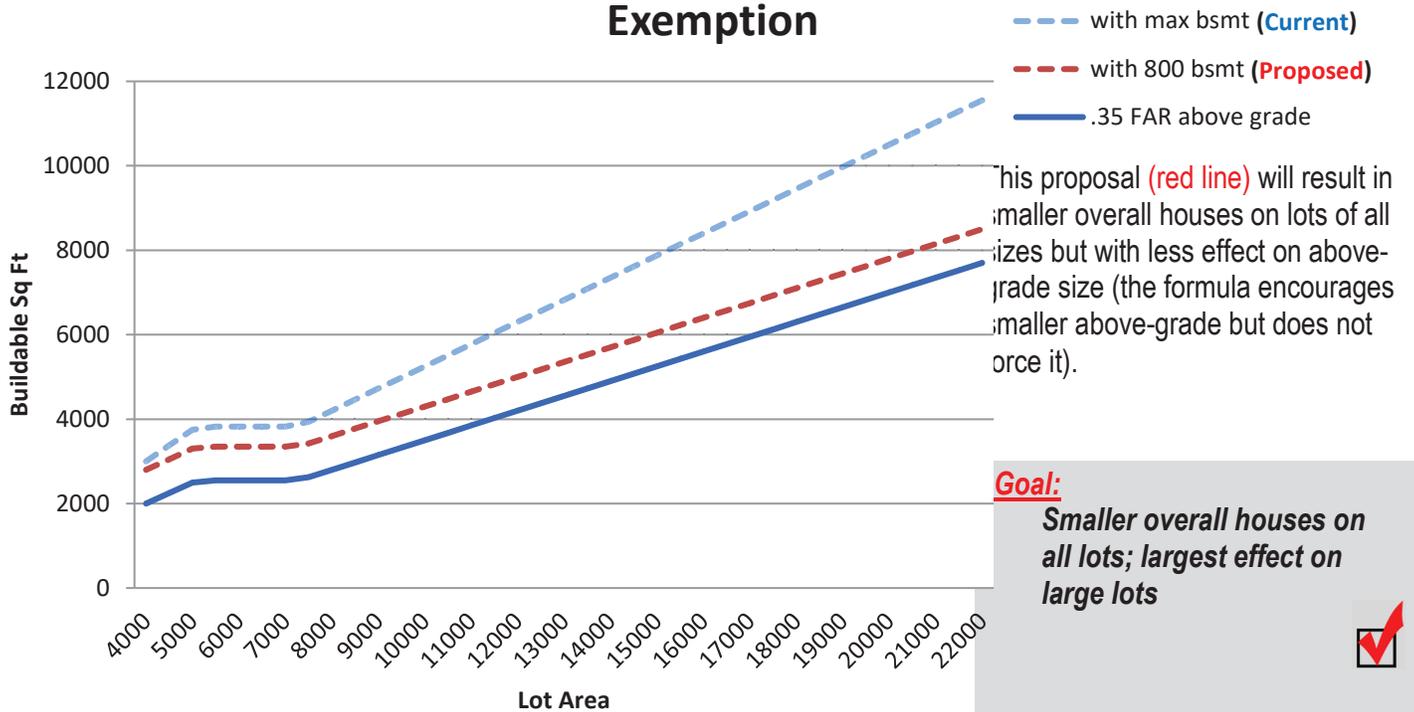
*The graphs on the following page compare the effect of the preferred Recommendation 1 (reduce FAR to .30 from .35) to this Alternate Recommendation for building lots of different sizes.*

## House Size - Recommendation 1: Reduce FAR to .30



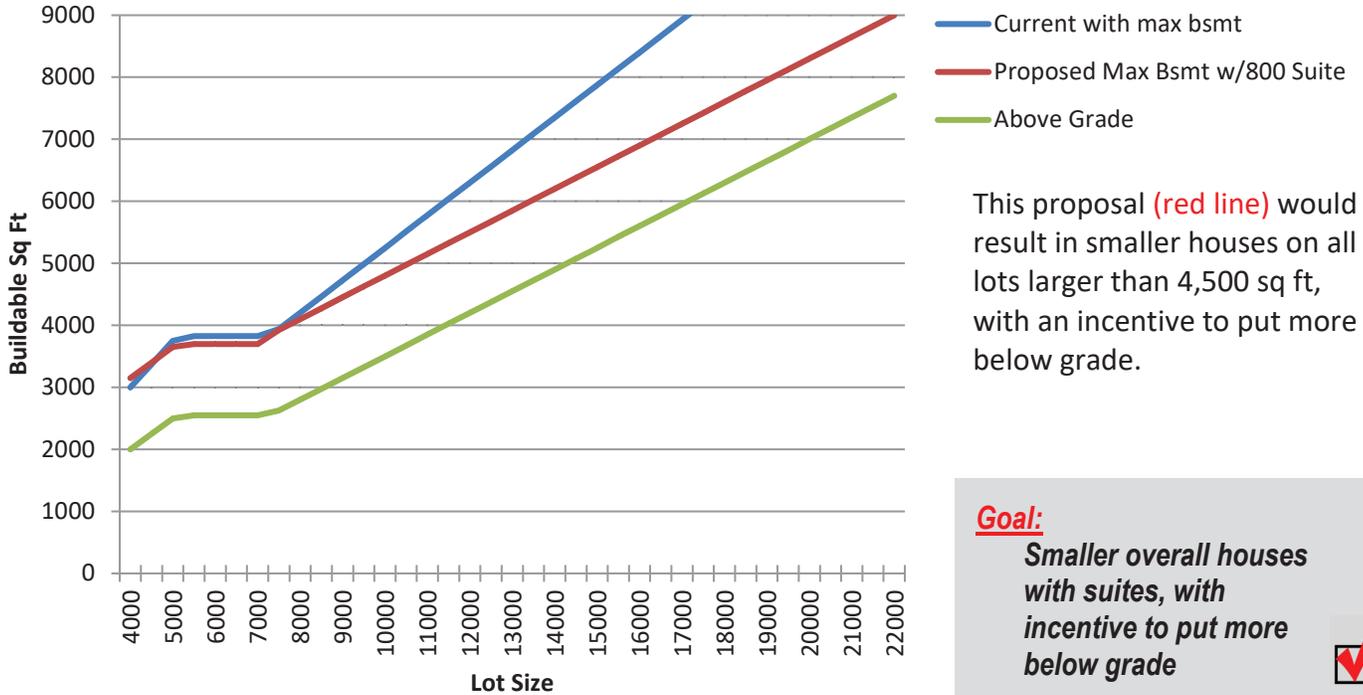
Graphs do not include exemptions for garages or accessory buildings.

## House Size - Alternate Recommendation: Limit Basement Exemption

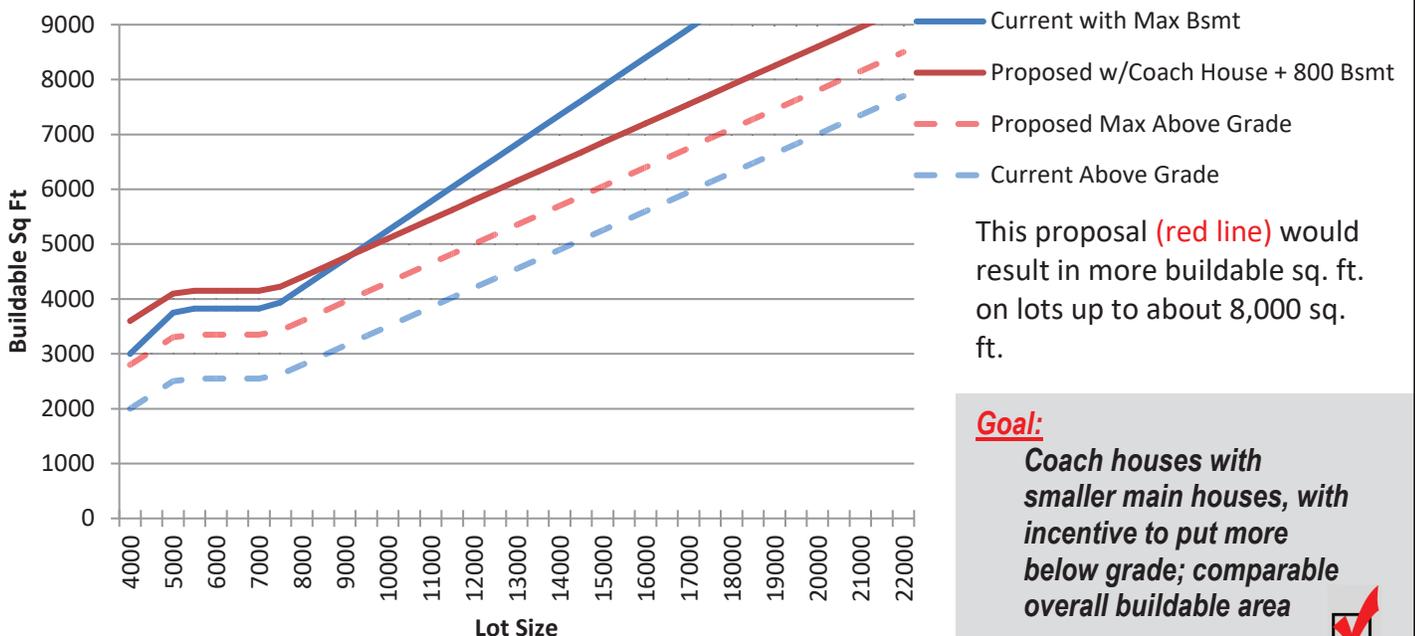


These graphs illustrate the overall effect of the **Alternative Recommendation** when combined with the suite and coach house bonuses for building lots of different sizes.

### Alternative: 800 sq ft Bsmt - House Size With Suite



### Alternative: max 800 sq ft Bsmt - Total Buildable With Coach House



# 5.0 Highest Building Face

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
 750 17<sup>th</sup> Street West Vancouver BC V7V 3T3  
 t: 604-925-7055 f:604-925-6083



DECEMBER 2015

**THIS BROCHURE IS INTENDED TO GIVE GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE PRELIMINARY PREPARATION OF PLANS FOR SINGLE FAMILY AND DUPLEX DWELLINGS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WEST VANCOUVER ZONING BYLAW 4662, 2010, AS AMENDED. REGULATIONS CAN VARY WITH LOT CONDITIONS AND CONSTRAINTS. THE ZONING BYLAW MUST BE REFERRED TO FOR EXACT REGULATIONS PRIOR TO PREPARATION OF DETAILED PLANS FOR BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION.**

This regulation is intended to reduce apparent building size and to encourage variety in elevation design by preventing flat 3 storey building facades. It is distinct from and in addition to Building Height regulations as described in the GUIDELINE TO BUILDING HEIGHT REGULATIONS Brochure.

The Highest Building Face Envelope regulation applies to all single family (RS) and duplex (RD) zoned properties, other than RS1, RS9 and RD3. It applies only to one elevation on the house - the Highest Building Face.

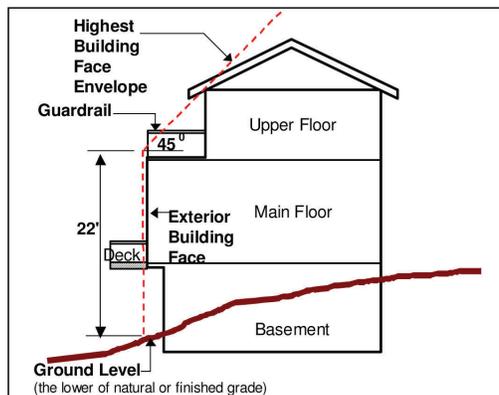
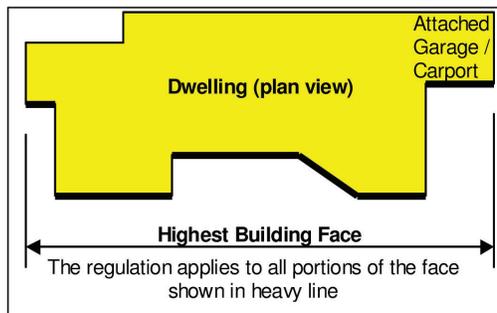
**HIGHEST BUILDING FACE:**

In order to apply this regulation, you must first determine which of the building's facades is the Highest Building Face. Of the four building elevations, the one which has the lowest average natural or finished grade along that face is the highest building face.

The Highest Building Face is, therefore, usually the facade at "downhill", side of the property, but is not always the face with the most exposed area.

The **HIGHEST BUILDING FACE ENVELOPE** is established by drawing a series of lines up 6.7m from ground level (lower of natural or finished) at each point along the exterior building face, and then in towards the building at a 45° angle. A series of simple cross sections at each change of ground level elevation may be required to determine conformance.

Ground level is the **lower** of natural or finished grade at each point along the (projected) exterior building face, excluding exterior

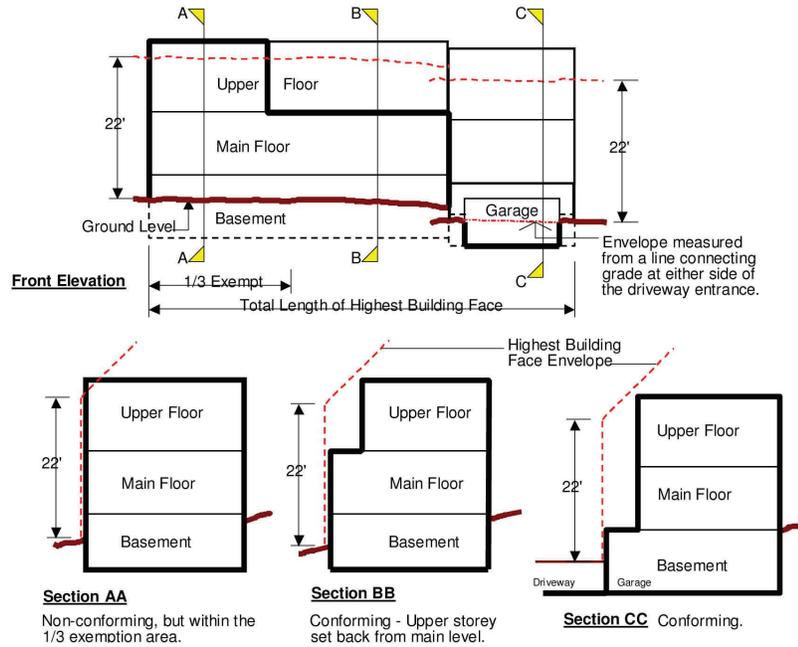


Contact the Planning (604-925-7055) or Permits Department (604-925-7040) if you have any questions. File # 22660

# Highest Building Face (cont'd)

A GUIDELINE TO ZONING BYLAW HIGHEST BUILDING FACE ENVELOPE REGULATIONS

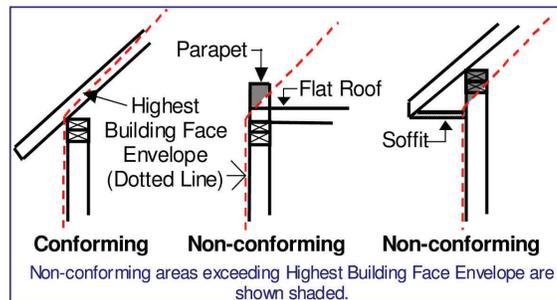
decks, guard rails required by the building code, eaves and other decorative features not enclosing the interior of the dwelling. Ground level in front of a garage door is defined as a line joining the ground level at each side of the door.



**EXEMPTIONS:**

- This regulation does **not** apply to houses in the RS1, RS9 and RD3 zones.
- 1/3 of the length of the building face can be exempt from this regulation. Different parts of the building face can be exempt, provided that the sum of their lengths does not exceed 1/3 of the total length of the elevation.
- Roof eaves, decks, decorative features, and the pitched roof portion of gable ends and dormers are exempt.
- Any portion of the roof structure above the top plate is exempt from this calculation.

For clarification, the top plate of the wall must be within the envelope. The addition of a soffit does not alter this requirement.



Contact the Planning (604-925-7055) or Permits Department (604-925-7040) if you have any questions.

Page - 2 of 2

## **6.0 Process Changes Recommended**

### **6.1 Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) can be a disincentive to subdivision**

#### **Objective**

More subdivisions of appropriately sized lots.

#### **Discussion**

Current rules request a contribution to the District of 75% of the estimated value increase when a lot subdivision requires re-zoning. (“As of right” subdivision does not require a CAC.) So if a lot such as, for example Lot E in the following graphic, is subdivided, and the value of the two lots is deemed to be \$250,000 more than the value of the single lot, then the applicant would be required to pay 75% of that “lift” (\$187,500) to the District at the time of the sub-division, before the gain is even realized.

Clearly, that would be a disincentive to subdivide, even though subdivision would be desirable in terms of the result the community would like to see – two smaller homes in context with their neighbours rather than one outsized home.

#### **Recommendation**

Remove Community Amenity Contributions for minor subdivision within existing single-family zones.

### **6.2 Reduce minimum lot size**

#### **Objective**

Encourage owners of atypical large lots to subdivide before development to encourage housing diversity and smaller houses.

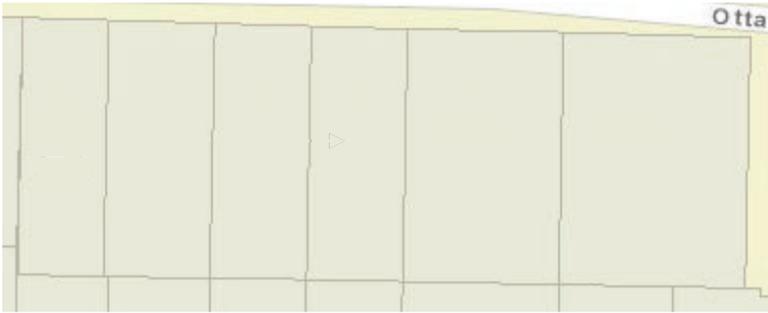
#### **Discussion**

Encouraging smaller houses, especially in neighbourhoods of existing smaller homes, leads to enhanced neighbourhood character (by maintaining scale and context with neighbours) and a smaller environmental footprint. One way to encourage smaller homes is to encourage smaller lots – while keeping within the neighbourhood lot size context. Atypical large lots enable construction of homes that are out-of-scale with those existing on the block and encourage large homes while discouraging housing diversity.

Our suggestion would be to allow discretion by the Director of Planning to sub-divide lots that are just below the threshold for “as of right” subdivision (see the image below for an example), but the Local Government Act does not permit such discretion.

#### **Recommendation**

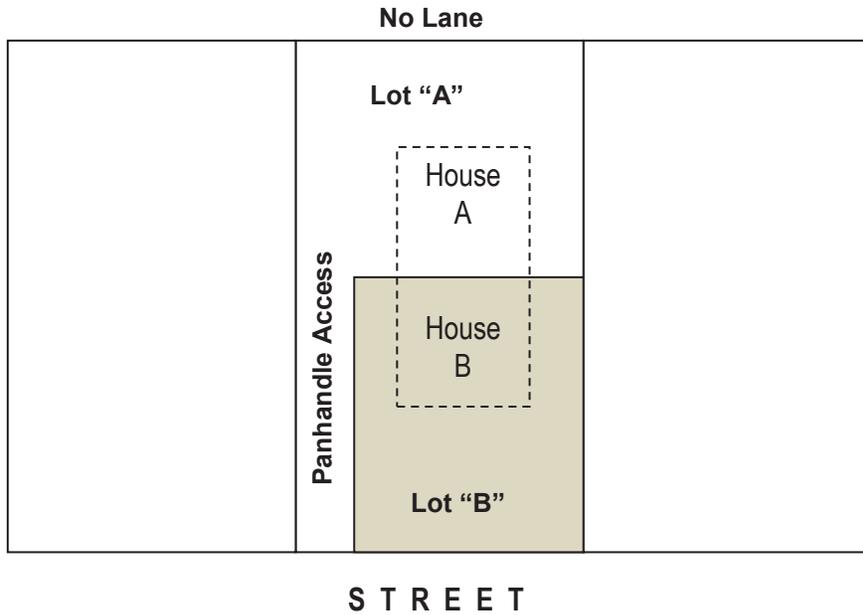
That the “minimum lot size” and “minimum frontage” for all RS zones in the District be reduced by 5%, which would have the effect of permitting as of right subdivision of lots that are large for their neighbourhood but not quite large enough for subdivision under the current rules



*Under current regulations in an RS-4 zone with a minimum lot size of 9,000 sq. ft. it is difficult to sub-divide Lot E because it is smaller than twice the minimum lot size for the zone although not by much. If the RS-4 zone minimum lot size was reduced by 5% to 8,550 sq. ft. (in fact more typical of the lots that are actually in that zone today) then the 17,000 sq. ft. lot would be easily sub-dividable, resulting in two smaller homes more in context with their neighbours, rather than one larger home.*

### 6.3 Allow greater diversity of lots when considering sub-division

Allow easier subdivision where flag/panhandle lots result, to encourage housing diversity while maintaining “detached house” streetscape.



When subdividing large lots with no lane access, permitting a “panhandle” can provide the necessary access to the rear lot; simplifying the process for this type of subdivision may encourage smaller lots (with proportionately smaller houses).

In particular consider this in conjunction with “zero lot line” (party wall) houses as shown.

**NOTE:** Panhandles require re-evaluation of setback and FAR calculations for the resulting lots.

Allow subdivision and infill opportunities including corner/flanking lots.



This corner lot, if larger than a minimum size, could be subdivided and still present to the street as single-family homes. So we might accept smaller lot sizes for subdivision on corner/flanking lots if we can still keep the detached house “look” of the neighbourhood.

**NOTE:** May need to relax the “flanking rule” on one street otherwise the required setbacks may be too large to allow a practical house to be built.

## 6.4 Limit FAR on over-sized lots

### Objective

Level the playing field for newly consolidated lots and historically large lots and incent subdivision rather than a single large house where subdivision would suit the neighbourhood character.

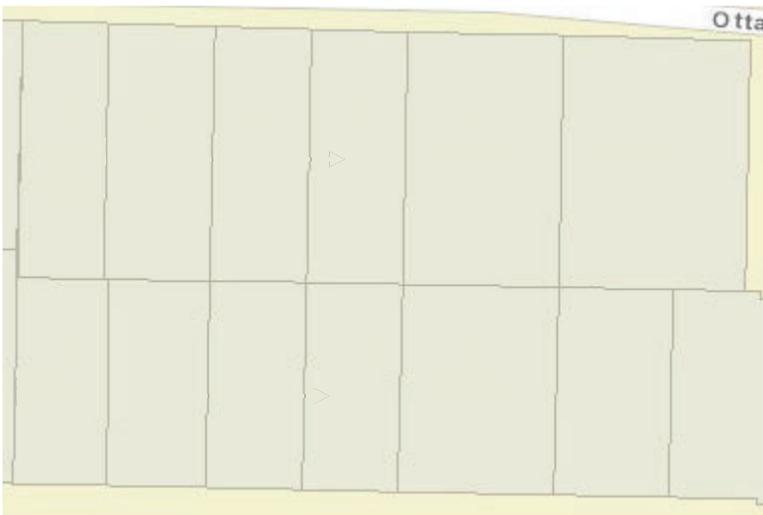
### Discussion

Current regulations limit the FAR when adjoining lots are consolidated (the resultant lot is limited to 150% of the FAR of the largest pre-consolidation lot), but in those cases where historically large lots exist, the FAR is not similarly limited, leaving an opportunity for houses that are out-of-scale with those in the neighbourhood.

### Recommendation

Limit lots larger than 150% of the typical lots on the street to 150% of the buildable sq. ft. on a typical lot in that neighbourhood.

- In the example below, at current .35 FAR, Lots A, B, C and D could each have a 3,500 sq. ft. home. **Under current regulations** if lots A and B are consolidated, the maximum house size that could be built is  $3,500 \times 1.5 = 5,250$  sq. ft. (not  $3,500 \times 2$ ). But on Lot F, smaller than A+B, a house of  $.35 \times 19,000 = 6,650$  sq. ft. could be built. (Note the NCWG recommends reducing FAR to .30.)
- So we recommend Lot F would be limited to 5,250 sq. ft. buildable (150% of the “typical” buildable in the neighbourhood) and Lot E the same, 5,250, down from 5,600 sq. ft. This ensures existing large lots do not enjoy any advantage over created (consolidated) large lots.
- Similarly, on the street below, where the typical lot size is 8,000 sq. ft., Lot K would be limited to 4,200 ( $.35 \times 8,000 \times 1.5$ ), down from 4,550.
- This should result in smaller homes more in context with their neighbours, and more incentive to subdivide large lots rather than build monster houses on them.



- **ALTERNATIVELY:** Consider a maximum buildable sq. ft. for each RS zone (may be simpler to implement and done in other municipalities).

NOTE: Approximately 15% of the single family lots in WV are between 150% and 200% of the nominal lot size for their zone.

So if some version of these recommendations is NOT adopted, we should expect over time that 15% of the homes in any given neighbourhood will be significantly larger than their neighbours.

## 6.5 Front yard setback flexibility

### Objective

Retention of neighbourhood character; allow new homes to be sited in context with neighbouring properties (recognizing that neighbourhood context is constantly changing).

### Discussion

Many neighbourhoods in West Vancouver consist largely of homes built many decades ago when zoning rules were different or non-existent. Later introduction of new zoning rules has resulted in all older houses being “non-conforming” and forces new houses to be sited differently to the older homes resulting in major disruption to the streetscape, view lines and mature landscaping.

For example, in a neighbourhood where the older houses are all lined up at 12’ setback from the front property line, a new house would have to be sited 30’ from the property line under today’s bylaws. The result of this is:

- The new house does not line up with its neighbours on the street.
- The new house is more likely to intrude on its neighbour’s views, especially if on the low side of the street.
- Any existing landscaping or retaining walls must be demolished and replaced with new to accommodate the new house siting.
- Because the old house is now non-conforming, even the most minor change to its front face must go through an onerous and unpredictable process before approval, discouraging retention and renovation of older homes.

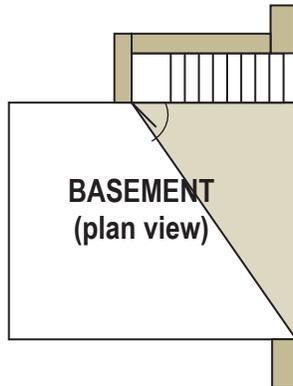
### Recommendation

For the benefit of current residents, establish limited flexibility to front yard setback based on the adjacent houses

- Suggest discretion on the part of the Director of Planning (or an expedited variance procedure) to permit exemptions to setback regulations that would site the proposed building more comfortably with adjacent homes (i.e. if all homes on the street are older and non-conforming, and likely to stay that way, a new home might be less disruptive to the neighbourhood if its setback is closer to the older homes than if it was forced to the newer/larger setbacks); particularly if the adjacent neighbours agree.

**6.6 Remove the exemption penalty for having an exterior stair, path or door access, up to 3 feet wide, to the basement. (Simplifies calculations; no adverse “size” implications.)**

Having a door to access a basement that is otherwise below grade can unfairly reduce otherwise acceptable basement exemptions. While indirectly related to Neighbourhood Character, the WG recommends this be corrected because the result may help discourage grade manipulation, and could improve access to basement suites.



Simply by adding a path or stairwell and door for outside access to the basement, the shaded portion of the basement area would be included in the FAR calculation, reducing the basement exemption and penalizing the owner, even though the basement appears essentially the same as if the stairs weren't there.

## 7.0 Neighbourhood Character in the OCP

The Official Community Plan (OCP) mentions neighbourhood character a number of times, among them these examples that reinforce the intentions of the NCWG as captured in this report:

2.1.8 Ensure that new single-family dwellings respect neighbourhood character by:

- a) Reviewing regulations controlling the scale of new single-family dwellings; and
- b) Applying and updating built-form guidelines, as relevant, in regards to neighbourhood context and character, streetscape and natural features.

From the OCP alignment with Metro 2040 Strategies:

encourage a diverse range of housing options respecting neighbourhood character by controlling the scale of new single-family dwellings ...

In addition, the Neighbourhood Character Working Group recommends an OCP amendment to add to Section 2.1.8 (above):

and

- c) Requiring all Development Permit applications, rezoning applications, and variance applications to include a section demonstrating how the proposed project respects or enhances existing neighbourhood character.

Neighbourhood Character should be factored in from the initial design, so the trade-offs can be weighed by staff and Council with all other factors in the application.

Every street and neighbourhood may have different aspects that are worth considering when change occurs, and those do not have to be the same in every street. Considering Neighbourhood Character means considering whether the proposals maintain or improve the valued qualities of a street, and do not diminish them:

*Will the building as proposed fit in the context of the existing neighbourhood, or set a positive direction for a changing neighbourhood? How?*



## 9.0 Zoning Overview

### WEST VANCOUVER ZONING BYLAW 4662, 2010

#### Summary of regulations for SINGLE FAMILY Zones

**NOTE: THIS CHART IS FOR GENERAL REFERENCE ONLY.**

Exact regulations may vary due to lot configuration, watercourses on or adjacent to the site or the presence of covenants, easements or right-of-ways registered against the property. The Zoning Bylaw **MUST ALWAYS** be consulted for exact interpretation and additional information. These figures are METRIC and subject to change.

	RS1	RS2	RS3	RS4	RS5	RS6	RS7	RS8	RS9	RS10
Min. Lot Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	8,094m <sup>2</sup>	1,858m <sup>2</sup>	1,115m <sup>2</sup>	836m <sup>2</sup>	558m <sup>2</sup>	Existing	929m <sup>2</sup>	929m <sup>2</sup>	371.5m <sup>2</sup>	1,115m <sup>2</sup>
Min. Lot Width (m)	61m	24.4m	24.4m	22.9m	15.2m	Existing	21.3m	21.3m	10m	24.4m
Min. Flanking Lot Width (m)	n/a	30.4m	29m	26.8m	20.7m	Existing	24.3m	24.3m	16.2m	30.4m
Max. Site depth	4X width	Min 39.6m, 3.5X width	4X width	4X width	4X width	Existing	3x width	3X width	4X width	3.5X width
Density	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.5 units /0.4ha	1.5 units /0.4ha	n/a	n/a
<b>Site Coverage:</b>										
• >885 m <sup>2</sup>	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%
• 664 to 885 m <sup>2</sup>	266m <sup>2</sup>	266m <sup>2</sup>	266m <sup>2</sup>	266m <sup>2</sup>	266m <sup>2</sup>	266m <sup>2</sup>	266m <sup>2</sup>	266m <sup>2</sup>	266m <sup>2</sup>	266m <sup>2</sup>
• <664 m <sup>2</sup>	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%
<b>Floor Area Ratio (FAR):</b>										
• >677 m <sup>2</sup>	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35
• 474 to 677 m <sup>2</sup>	237m <sup>2</sup>	237m <sup>2</sup>	237m <sup>2</sup>	237m <sup>2</sup>	237m <sup>2</sup>	237m <sup>2</sup>	237m <sup>2</sup>	237m <sup>2</sup>	237m <sup>2</sup>	237m <sup>2</sup>
• <474 m <sup>2</sup>	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Max Height (m)	7.62m	7.62m	7.62m	7.62m	7.62m	8m	7.62m	7.62m	7.62m	7.62m
Max Storeys (plus bsmt)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Highest Building Face (m)	n/a	6.7m	6.7m	6.7m	6.72m	6.7m	6.7m	6.7m	n/a	6.7m
Front Yard Setback (m)	10.7m	9.1m	9.1m	9.1m	7.6m	9m	9.1m	9.1m	7.6m	9.1m
Rear Yard Setback (m)	10.7m	9.1m	9.1m	9.1m	9.1m	9m	9.1m	9.1m	9.1m	9.1m
<b>Side Yard Setbacks:</b>										
• Dwelling <2 full storeys	10.7m	1.52m	1.52m	1.52m	1.52m	1.52m	1.52m	1.52m	1.52m	1.52m
• Dwelling 2 full storeys*	10.7m	10% width, 1.52m min, 3 m max	10% width, 1.52m min to 3m max	10% width, 1.5m min to 3m max	10% width, 1.52m min to 3m max	10% width, 1.52m min to 3m max	10% width, 1.52m min to 3m max	10% width, 1.52m min to 3m max	10% width, 1.52m min to 3m max	10% width, 1.52m min to 3m max
<b>Combined Side Yards:</b>										
• Dwelling <2 full storeys	n/a	20% width, min 4.9m to 12.1m max	20% width, 4.9m min to 12.1m max	20% width, 4.5m min to 12.1m max	20% width, 3m min to 12.1m max	20% width, 3m min to 12.1 m max	20% width, 4.9m to 12.1m	20% width, 3m min to 12.1m max	20% width, 3m min to 12.1m max	20% width, 4.9m min to 12.1m max
• All other dwellings, 2 full storeys*	n/a	25% width, 4.9m min to 18.2m max	25% width, 4.9m min to 18.3m max	25% width, 4.57m min to 18.2m max	25% width, 3m min to 18.2m max	25% width, 4.9m min to 18.2m max	25% width, 4.9m min to 12.1m max	25% width, 6.7m min to 18.2m max	25% width, 3m min to 18.2m max	25% width, 4.9m min to 18.2m max
Corner-flanking Side Yard	10.7m	9.1m	9.1m	9.1m	7.6m	9m	9.1m	9.1m	9.1m	9.1m
Min # off-street parking	1	1	1	1	1	-	2	2	1	1

\* Where the upper storey width is greater than two thirds (2/3) the minimum main storey width

# 10.0 Comparison of FAR for a Variety of Lot Sizes

Comparisons of FAR Alternatives for Sample Sized Lots										
Zones	Lot Area	Current		Recommendation		Alternate		Suite	Coach House	Old 0.45
		FAR	Sq. Ft.	FAR Above Grade		0.35	Above Grade	Bonus	Bonus	
Lot Dimensions			Total 1		Total 1		Total 2			Total
RS5	4,500	0.50	2,250	0.45	2,025	2,250	2,033	350	800	
45 x 100			3,375		3,038		3,050			not app.
RS5	5,100	0.50	2,550	0.43	2,200	2,550	2,233	380	800	
50 x 102			3,825		3,300		3,350			2,295
RS5	6,000	0.43	2,550	0.37	2,200	2,550	2,233	430	800	
50 x 120			3,825		3,300		3,350			2,700
RS5	7,290	0.35	2,550	0.30	2,200	2,550	2,233	500	800	
60 x 121.5			3,825		3,300		3,350			3,281
RS5	7,332	0.35	2,566	0.30	2,200	2,566	2,244	500	800	
60 x 122.2			3,849		3,299		3,366			3,299
RS5	7,500	0.35	2,625	0.30	2,250	2,625	2,283	500	800	
60 x 125			3,938		3,375		3,425			3,375
RS5	8,250	0.35	2,888	0.30	2,475	2,888	2,458	500	800	
66 x 125			4,331		3,713		3,688			3,713
RS5	8,500	0.35	2,975	0.30	2,550	2,975	2,517	500	800	
66 x 128.79			4,463		3,825		3,775			3,825
RS7/8	8,642	0.35	3,025	0.30	2,592	3,025	2,550	500	800	
70 x 123.45			4,537		3,889		3,825			3,889
RS7/8	9,000	0.35	3,150	0.30	2,700	3,150	2,633	500	800	
70 x 128.57			4,725		4,050		3,950			4,050
RS4	9,750	0.35	3,413	0.30	2,925	3,413	2,808	500	800	
75 x 130			5,119		4,388		4,213			4,388
RS3	12,000	0.35	4,200	0.30	3,600	4,200	3,333	500	800	
80 x 150			6,300		5,400		5,000			5,400
RS2	20,000	0.35	7,000	0.30	6,000	7,000	5,200	500	800	
100 x 200			10,500		9,000		7,800			9,000
RS1	90,000	0.35	31,500	0.30	27,000	31,500	21,533	500	800	
200 x 450			47,250		40,500		32,300			40,500
Headings:-		Total 1		Includes fully exempt basen		Total 2		0.35 + 800 Bsmt Exemption		
Red numbers reflect fixed FAR sq. ft. values transitioning from 0.50 to 0.35 currently and for the Recommendation from 0.35 to 0.30										
Boxed Lot Areas reflect transition from Fixed to Variable FAR calculations for Current and Recommended Option										
Suite bonus above FAR		350.00	base plus an incremental		0.30	to a maximum of		500		
Coach House bonus of					800					

# 11.0 The math behind the numbers

**BACKGROUND:**

The current bylaw regarding buildable area for different lot sizes works like this:

Lot Size (sq. ft.)	Buildable
> 7285	0.35 of Lot Area
5100 - 7285	2550 Sq. ft.                      .35 x 7285 = 2550 .5 x 5100 = 2550
< 5100	0.5 of Lot Area

The NCWG Recommendation reduces the larger lot FAR from .35 to .30, which has this effect if we keep the same transition point from calculated FAR to fixed buildable area (lots of 7285 sq. ft.):

Lot Size (sq. ft.)	Buildable
> 7285	0.3 of Lot Area
4500 - 7285	2200 Sq. ft.                      .3 x 7285 = 2185.5 (rounded up to 2200) .5 x 4500 = 2250 (rounded down to 2200)
< 4500	0.5 of Lot Area

For more accurate math and a cleaner transition from calculated FAR to fixed buildable area, the transition point should change from the current lot size of 7285 to 7333 sq. ft.:

Lot Size (sq. ft.)	Buildable
> 7333	0.3 of Lot Area
4400 - 7333	2200 Sq. ft.                      .3 x 7333 = 2200 .5 x 4400 = 2200
< 4400	0.5 of Lot Area

For the sake of simplicity and comparison with the current regulations, this report has chosen to keep the transition point the same (7285 sq. ft. lots) and round the other numbers to accommodate that; if the NCWG recommendation is adopted, the bylaw writers may choose a different method, or perhaps even a different transition point in their effort to meet the intent of the recommendations.

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