



# MODUS

from insight to impact

## SMALL SCALE MULTI-UNIT HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA UPDATES

City of White Rock

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## 1 Introduction

In the Spring of 2023, the Province of BC introduced the Homes for People Plan which aims to increase housing supply and create more diverse housing options in BC. To implement the Homes for People Plan, the Province introduced sweeping legislative changes through a series of legislative bills. Among these is Bill 44 - Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act which requires municipalities to allow Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH) in zones that are otherwise restricted to single-family dwellings or duplexes.

To meet the new requirements of Bill 44, the City of White Rock recently updated its Zoning Bylaw with the applicable density requirements for SSMUH and explored other implementation factors outlined by the Province. As a next step, the City of White Rock has engaged MODUS to assist with updating its Development Permit Areas to reflect SSMUH development, provincial legislation, and zoning updates.

Specifically, MODUS is providing recommendations in three stages:

- Recommendations for Zoning Bylaw amendments to meet the June 30th requirements for Bill 44, including an approach to meet minimum densities, with a review of definitions, opportunities for zone consolidation, and updated parking requirements. (Complete)
- Reviewing how the proposed Zoning Bylaw amendments might impact the City's Development Permit Area guidelines, including providing recommendations to ensure DPAs do not unreasonably prohibit or restrict the use or density of use required under the provincial legislation.
- Reviewing White Rock's updated Development Procedures Bylaw for opportunities to strengthen alignment with Provincial requirements and expectations.

This report focuses on Stage 2: Recommendations on updates to Development Permit Areas; the third and final stage will be tackled following Staff & Council direction on these recommendations.

## 1.1 Bill 44 & Development Permit Areas

Adopted in December 2023, Bill 44: Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act requires local governments to allow for increased density in restricted residential zones. The increased density can include a mix of single detached homes, secondary suites, garden suites, carriage homes, duplexes, triplexes and/or rowhouses.

Specifically, the City's bylaws must:

- Permit up to 3 or 4 units (depending on the lot size) on lots currently restricted to single-detached homes or duplexes;
- Permit up to 6 units on single-detached and duplex lots within 400 m of frequent service bus stops;
- Remove minimum requirements for residential parking for homes within 400 m of frequent bus stops; and
- Consider reducing minimum requirements for residential parking for all properties affected by the legislation.

To meet the legislative requirements, the City must also ensure that its Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw are consistent and that they reflect the City's housing needs. Subsequently, these bylaws must be updated every 5 years.

Development Permit Areas (DPAs) remain an important tool available to local governments to establish the conditions under which land alteration and development can take place. Section 488 of the Local Government Act identifies four types of DPAs:

### 1. Protection of:

- The natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity
- Development from hazardous conditions
- Farming

### 2. Revitalization of an area in which a commercial use is permitted

### 3. Establishment of objectives for the form and character of:

- Intensive residential development
- Commercial, industrial or multi-family residential development
- Development in a resort region

### 4. Promotion of:

- Energy conservation
- Water conservation
- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

SSMUH legislation allows the continued use of DPAs, "provided they do not unreasonably restrict the ability to use land at the use or density prescribed by the new legislation" (Provincial Policy Manual & Site Standards). The Provincial SSMUH Policy Manual encourages local governments to use the following principles when developing DPA guidelines for SSMUH development:

- **Provide Clear Direction and Be Specific:** DPA guidelines should be clearly articulated to remove discretion over how they are interpreted and how the intent of the guidelines can and has been met.
- **Staff Delegation:** Authority to issue development permits should be delegated to staff under the provisions of LGA section 490(5) to improve consistency in the adjudication of applications and the timeliness of approvals.
- **Advisory Urban Design Panels/Commissions:** Ensuring SSMUH projects are not subject to review by advisory design panels or planning commissions will help ensure expedient and consistent approvals.
- **Recognize Constraints Through Permissive Requirements:** DPA guidelines should take into account the significant space-related constraints and limited financial viability for SSMUH housing forms and avoid the inclusion of requirements that are impractical due to these constraints.

The following background analysis and recommendations were completed with consideration of these principles.

## 2 Background Analysis

MODUS has worked closely with City staff to review and analyze the existing set of DPAs within White Rock's OCP. The background review and analysis focused on the OCP's "Part D: Development Permit Area Guidelines" including:

- Development Permit Area Exemptions
- East Side Large Lot Infill Development Permit Area
- Mature Neighbourhood Infill Development Permit Area
- Environmental Development Permit Areas
  - » Floodplain
  - » Ravine Lands & Significant Trees
  - » Watercourse

Other DPAs are either The analysis was specifically concerned with any guidelines or requirements that could be seen as an unreasonable barrier to SSMUH developments. It also sought to find gaps in the guidelines for housing forms that were not previously allowed (e.g. 3-6 plex units on a single property) and to establish clear, concise, and consistent language for ease of implementation.

## 3 Recommendations

The following recommendations for Development Permit Area updates are informed by the background analysis.

### 3.1 Development Permit Area Exemptions

With the allowance of new plex-home types up to six units on one lot, it is likely that the City will soon notice a greater amount of development applications in its single detached neighbourhoods. Common housing types like a single detached homes, secondary suites, duplexes, and triplexes are well documented throughout the Metro Vancouver region and can be regulated effectively using zoning provisions. Fourplexes up to sixplexes are much less common and introduce greater design complexity and variety in configurations, especially given the topographical challenges that exist in White Rock.

To ease the burden of reviewing and approving development permit applications for what are standard building types in most neighbourhoods, **it is recommended that White Rock exempt single detached homes, duplexes and triplexes from Form & Character DPAs.**

### 3.2 East Side Large Lot Infill Development Permit Area

The East Side Large Lot Infill Form & Character DPA covers a small cluster of properties contained by Finlay Street to the west, Kent Street to the east, North Bluff Avenue to the north and Russell Avenue to the south. Many of these properties have already redeveloped from single detached homes into multi-family residential buildings, and the remainder could simply be captured by existing Multi-Family DPAs.

While the East Side Large Lot Infill DPA provides some guidance on plex-home formats, **it is recommended this DPA be removed from the OCP and its subject properties be designated under the Multi-Family DPA category.**

### 3.3 Mature Neighbourhood Infill Development Permit Area

As the primary Form & Character DPA for intensive residential redevelopment, covering the large majority of SSMUH impacted lands, the Mature Neighbourhood Infill DPA is subject to the greatest amount of recommended changes.

The following recommendations are intended to adapt the Mature Neighbourhood Infill Development Permit Area guidelines for SSMUH development and create a more user-friendly and effective framework for implementing them:

- Rename to “Mature Neighbourhood House-Plex” DPA
- Update structure to follow a progression in scale:
  - » Site Context
  - » Site Layout & Landscape
  - » Building Design
- Provide a title and reference number for each guideline
- Use an action-oriented, imperative sentence for each guideline
- Remove references of “duplex/triplex” and updating language to reference “House-plex”
- Stronger guidelines to reflect new house-plex typologies, notably:
  - » Shared access for vehicles and pedestrians
  - » Outdoor stairs
  - » Parking
  - » Access to common green space
  - » Permeable space
  - » Balconies, patios, and rooftops
  - » Flat and peaked roofs

The new comprehensive set of recommended DPA guidelines are provided in Appendix A. While the scope of this work only covered DPAs that are impacted by SSMUH legislation, it is recommended that the new format and structure of the guidelines be adopted for other DPAs at a later date, as part of a comprehensive review of White Rock’s OCP and/or DPAs.



### 3.4 Environmental Development Permit Area

Review of the Environmental Development Permit Areas (EDPA) was conducted to assess their alignment with SSMUH legislation. Overall, our analysis concludes that while improvements could be made — particularly to administrative and procedural requirements — the current guidelines and requirements are justified and do not pose an unreasonable barrier to SSMUH densities.

The following recommendations could strengthen White Rock's EDPAs.

#### Overview & Authority

- **Consider making more explicit the trigger for requiring an EDPA by adding “subdivision and rezoning” to the second sentence in the last paragraph as follows:**

The following Sections outline the information that is required to be submitted by a property owner or applicant prior to any development on a property, including **rezoning, subdivision**, demolition, excavation, tree removal and construction.

- **Consider allowing Council to vary property line setbacks or building heights, where necessary, to protect environmental features. Consider moving and amending the following clause from Section 23.4 to 23.1 or creating a new section after 23.1 that reads as follows:**

Council may, as part of a development permit, vary the property line setback or building height requirements of the Zoning Bylaw where it can be demonstrated that such variance is needed to facilitate the development proposal while attempting to satisfy the objective of preserving steep slopes, significant trees or environmentally sensitive features. Innovative site designs which are in harmony with existing healthy, mature trees and other natural features are encouraged.

#### Environmental (Floodplain) Development Permit Area

- **Consider requiring a more detailed site plan that coordinates all aspects of the application. Add a new clause (#5):**

5. The applicants must submit a plan showing the Environmental Development Permit Area in accordance with OCP Schedule C, along with any protected trees or environmental features on site, and detailing satisfactory building envelopes, with consideration of setback requirements, access, parking and circulation, and existing/ proposed rights-of-way, easements, and restrictive covenants. The plan must be reviewed and signed by the applicant and all consultants or qualified professionals completing components of the application.

#### Environmental (Ravine Lands & Significant Trees) Development Permit Area

- **Consider adding a new condition #2 that notes securities may be required (in accordance with section 23.5):**

2. The applicants may be required to provide securities to prevent an unsatisfactory landscaping condition, an unsafe condition and/or damage to the natural environment as a result of a contravention to a condition in the Development Permit. The amount of securities will be equal to the estimated cost of rehabilitating and/or restoring the environmental area. The securities may be withheld by the City in the event that the Riparian Assessment Area is damaged due to a contravention of a Development Permit. The applicant(s) may be required to submit a cost estimate of required landscaping from a qualified professional to assist in the determination of the amount of securities required.

- **Consider requiring a more detailed site plan that coordinates all aspects of the application. Amend #4 as follows:**
  4. The applicants must submit a plan showing the Environmental Development Permit Area in accordance with OCP Schedule C, along with any steep slopes, protected trees, tree protection measures, replacement trees and any other environmental features protected on site, and detailing satisfactory building envelopes, with consideration of setback requirements, access, parking and circulation, existing/proposed rights-of-way, easements, and restrictive covenants. The plan must be reviewed and signed by the applicant and all consultants or qualified professionals completing components of the application.
- **Consider removing condition #5 (variances for property line setbacks or building height requirements in the Zoning Bylaw) in favour of a higher level statement under 23.1 “Overview and Authority”.**

## Environmental (Watercourse) Development Permit Area

- **Consider broadening condition #5 to include securities for a wider range of landscaping activities, beyond just trees and vegetation as follows:**
  5. The applicants may be required to provide securities to prevent an unsatisfactory landscaping condition, an unsafe condition and/or damage to the natural environment as a result of a contravention to a condition in the Development Permit. The amount of securities will be equal to the estimated cost of rehabilitating and/or restoring the environmental area. The securities may be withheld by the City in the event that the Riparian Assessment Area is damaged due to a contravention of a Development Permit. The applicant(s) may be required to submit a cost estimate of required landscaping from a qualified professional to assist in the determination of the amount of securities required.
- **Consider requiring a more detailed site plan that coordinates all aspects of the application. Amend #7 as follows:**
  7. The applicants must submit a plan showing Environmental Development Permit Area in accordance with OCP Schedule C, along with the protected watercourse, SPEA as determined by a qualified environmental professional, steep slopes, and any other environmental features protected on site, erosion and sediment control measures, and detailing satisfactory building envelopes, with consideration of setback requirements, access, parking and circulation, existing/proposed rights-of-way, easements, and restrictive covenants. The plan must be reviewed and signed by the applicant and all consultants or qualified professionals completing components of the application.

## 4 Conclusion

The City of White Rock must align its Development Permit Areas and associated guidelines with Bill 44 and its recently updated Zoning. It also must consider other implementation factors outlined by the Province. While many of White Rock’s existing Development Permit Areas and associated guidelines do not appear to impose unreasonable barriers to SSMUH development, changes are needed to improve the development permitting process and adapt guidelines to new plex-housing designs and configurations. The recommendations provided in this report suggest a path for these changes that reflect the City’s unique context, and clarify and simplify the subject DPAs to better enable plex-housing development.

Next steps include identifying updates and amendments to the City’s Development Procedures in order to streamline the delivery of plex-housing.



# APPENDIX A

## MATURE NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE-PLEX DPA



# Mature Neighbourhood House-Plex Development Permit Area Guidelines

## Site Context

### 1. Neighbourhood Connectivity

Design the site to enhance the pedestrian connections in the area. Site buildings to create through-block walking connections where appropriate. Incorporate shared pedestrian accesses where possible to minimize impervious areas

### 2. Streetwall Continuity

Avoid visually impermeable fencing, high fencing or other monolithic features along publicly visible edges of the site.

### 3. Natural Features

Integrate the development with existing natural features like topography and vegetation.

### 4. Habitat Connection & Preservation

Connect new landscaped areas and fragmented habitat to networks of open space and larger habitat corridors wherever possible.

### 5. Climate & Comfort

Maximize the benefits of sun exposure to public open spaces, nearby buildings, and dwelling units, while providing some shade for respite from heat. Limit building element projections into setback areas, streets, and amenity areas to protect solar access.

## Site Layout & Landscape

### 6. Relationship to Grade

Limit the height and use of retaining walls, particularly along street frontages, parks, open spaces, ravines and other areas of the public realm. Site and orient buildings in a way that respects and works with topographical features.

### 7. Hierarchy of Spaces

Define the spaces that are public from those that are private with elements such as: grade changes, fencing, landscaping, and other features.

### 8. Private Common Spaces

Integrate usable private outdoor common spaces into the site layout for gardens and other activities that promote sociability and neighbourliness between residents. Provide generous and well-designed open spaces that balance screening for privacy, while maintaining sightlines to the street and attractive interfaces with the surrounding spaces.

### 9. Walking Connections

Connect main entrances to house-plex units to public sidewalks, trails, and parking areas.

### 10. Separate Access

Consider separate accesses for house-plexes that are located on corner lots or that have street and lane accesses.

## **11. Rear Access**

For rear-facing units, clearly identify the location of the rear entrance with a walkway that incorporates a landscape border, distinct surface treatments, and/or an entry trellis or gate.

## **12. Vehicle Access**

Minimize paved areas with narrow, shared vehicular accesses. Separate accesses are considered for house-plexes that are located on corner lots or that have street and lane accesses.

## **13. Safe Vehicle Movement**

Consider the design and layout of driveways to ensure safe and efficient vehicle maneuvering.

## **14. On-site Parking**

Promote the use of on-site parking and garages over street parking by providing adequately sized parking spaces for residents' vehicles at or above minimum Zoning Bylaw requirements, ensuring they are well-designed and easily accessible.

## **15. Siting Parking**

Provide access to parking from a secondary street or lane, wherever possible. Incorporate parking into the natural landscape where feasible to reduce the need for lot grading.

## **16. Parking & Pervious Areas**

Minimize paved areas with narrow, shared vehicular accesses.

## **17. Stormwater Management**

Site design should incorporate stormwater runoff mitigation features. This may include elements like raingardens, landscape strips for parking areas and permeable surface treatment, that are consistent with approved city policies and practices.

## **18. Low Impact Development**

Use Low Impact Development Techniques for stormwater management, where appropriate, in accordance with the City's Integrated Storm Water Management Plan (ISWMP). This includes but is not limited to bio-swales, cisterns, and permeable paving. Design for narrower lanes, access roads, and driveways.

## **19. Tree Health & Preservation**

Preserve existing trees — especially those that are large, mature, and healthy — wherever possible and incorporate them into the landscape design. Ensure all new trees are planted with sufficient soil volume, using soil cells where appropriate, and incorporate diverse native shrub layers below trees to intercept stormwater.

## **20. Tree Selection**

Select tree species that will maximize passive solar gain, natural ventilation, and natural cooling. Prioritize the selection of native tree species such as Western Red Cedar, Common Douglas Fir, and Bigleaf Maple.

## **21. Plant Selection (Smart Landscaping)**

Maximize the use of drought tolerant species that can withstand the seaside setting and require minimal irrigation. Avoid planting invasive species.

## **22. Shrubs & Hedges**

Use only small shrubs, ornamental and turf grasses, herbaceous perennials, and groundcovers on city property and in areas within 2.0 m from the sidewalk, street curb, or road edge to maintain clear sightlines. Avoid the use of tall hedges, especially in areas adjacent to public property.

## **23. Passive Solar Design**

Follow passive solar design principles for the orientation and siting of buildings. Maximize passive ventilation and passive cooling through building orientation.

## **24. Cool Materials**

Where impermeable materials are used, select light coloured reflective paving materials such as white asphalt or concrete for paths and driveways to reduce heat absorption and urban heat island effect.

## **25. Signage Clarity**

Provide visible and legible signage identifying building addresses at all entrances in a colour contrasting with the building, and either illuminated in periods of darkness or reflective for easy visibility at night. When building addresses are not visible from the street frontage, use directional address signs.

## **26. Mailbox Siting**

Consider the siting of mailboxes during site design so that a front-loading lockbox is easily accessible for mail delivery and complies with Canada Post standards.

## **27. Space for Waste**

Provide sufficient on-site space for garbage, recycling, and composting where appropriate. These areas are to be located so that they are convenient for users and accessible for waste / recycling / compost collection and removal.

# **Buildings**

## **28. Varied Configurations**

Consider alternatives to the traditional side-by-side and mirror-image house-plexes, such as front/rear and top/bottom layouts. Avoid repetition of plex-house designs and incorporate variations in massing from one building to the next and throughout a neighbourhood.

## **29. Visual Interest**

Create visual interest with a variety of cladding colours, materials and architectural details that break up the mass of the building and give each dwelling unit in a plex-house development its own visual identity. Open verandas and peaked roofs are encouraged.

## **30. Roof Design**

Ensure that roof elements do not dominate the building, particularly on larger buildings. Where possible, minimize the visual impact of rooftop railings, screens, and accesses.

## **31. Roof Orientation & Rooflines**

Orient the slope of the roof in the same direction as the natural slope of the lot. Avoid roof and dormer pitches steeper than 4/12 for a gentle slope that helps protect views.

### **32. Decks, Balconies & Patios**

Create meaningful, private outdoor environments that respect the privacy of surrounding neighbours and are sensitive to the local context through features like decks, balconies, and groundfloor/rooftop patios

### **33. Weather Protection**

Incorporate weather-protection to all main entrances. This may take the form of overhangs, recesses, or awnings. A covered entry is not required to have posts or a traditional porch appearance and should fit with the architectural style of the development.

### **34. Garage Design & Placement**

Ensure that garages do not dominate the front face of a building. If a garage faces a street, design it to be subordinate to the pedestrian entrance in terms of size, prominence on the streetscape, location, and architectural emphasis. Use landscaping to screen and soften the appearance of a garage.

### **35. Stairs**

Design outdoor stairs with similar materials as the main building and integrate them with the building's architecture so they do not dominate the face of a building. Encourage stairs with offset runs and wider landings to break up the run's length. Use plantings and furnishings on the landings to create visual interest.

### **36. Efficient Homes**

Design roofs to maximize opportunities for solar collection in winter and control solar gain on south-facing facades by blocking high-angle sun in summer.

### **37. Building Materials**

Incorporate west coast design elements with the use of natural materials, including brick, stone, concrete, exposed heavy timber, and/or steel. Avoid vinyl siding and stucco for cladding. Use rich natural tones which reflect the natural landscape and seascape as the dominant colours, with brighter colours used only as accents.