Increasing Housing *Options*



What's this all about?

Increasing Housing Options is a series of recommended changes aimed at making housing more attainable in Nanaimo.

These recommendations are in response to the *City Plan - Nanaimo ReImagined* process, where we heard the community's desire to prioritize, creating affordable housing. 'Increasing housing ***Options***' includes four sets of proposed changes to increase the types of housing options available to Nanaimo residents.

We are seeking your input on four initiatives:

Expanding Secondary Suite Regulations

Secondary suites are self-contained living units that are either attached to an existing dwelling unit (such as a single residential dwelling) or as a detached building (such as a coach house). Expanding secondary suite regulations means allowing more of them. To learn more, head to the **orange boards with the matching icon.**

Expanding Family-Friendly Housing Options

Family-friendly housing is dwelling units that have two or more bedrooms. Currently, most family-friendly units are single residential dwellings which remain unaffordable to many families in Nanaimo. To learn more, head to the **green boards with the matching icon**.

Adding Infill Housing in Existing Neighbourhoods

Infill housing adds modest density to existing neighbourhoods while respecting the neighbourhood's character. Infill housing can take a variety of forms such as duplexes, townhouses, rowhouses or "houseplexes" (triplexes or fourplexes). To learn more head to the **blue board with the matching icon**.

Creating More Adaptable Housing Units

Adaptable housing is designed to accommodate all community members regardless of their physical abilities. More adaptable units are needed for those who have a disability, illness, or for seniors, making it easier for them to function more independently in their own home. To learn more head to the **pink boards with the matching icon.**

In addition to these four initiatives, the City is currently working on various other actions to create more housing options. These will be presented to residents for feedback at a future date. They include:

1. **Tenant Relocation Policy Considerations**
2. **Building more supportive housing in partnership with BC Housing**
3. **Prezoning land in urban centre and corridor designations for affordable housing**
4. **Support to Rent Bank & Rent Supplement Programs in Nanaimo**
5. **A Woodgrove Area Plan**
6. **Short Term Rentals Review**

Project Timeline

September 1st	***September 12***	*September 29*	*October - December*
Survey Launch	**Public Open House**	**Survey Closes**	**Review, Refine & Report Back**

Increasing Suites

Expanding secondary suite & detached suite regulations



What is a secondary suite?

A secondary suite is a self-contained unit with a separate entrance, kitchen, living area, and one or two bedrooms, attached to a primary dwelling unit. They typically take form as a basement or ground-level unit within a single residential dwelling. Secondary suites are typically rented by homeowners and provide accommodation for one or more individuals. A detached suite is also known as a coach house, carriage house, laneway house, granny flat or garden suite. See Board #3 for more details on detached suites.

Background & Rationale

Secondary suites have been allowed in Nanaimo since 2005, and detached suites have been allowed since 2008. In 2022, 65% of new single residential dwellings were constructed with a suite. These types of homes play a significant role in Nanaimo's rental housing stock and can assist property owners as a mortgage helper. The City of Nanaimo is exploring opportunities to allow an additional suite on properties that meet a certain size, as one way to increase the supply of rental housing.

Existing Regulations - Number of Suites

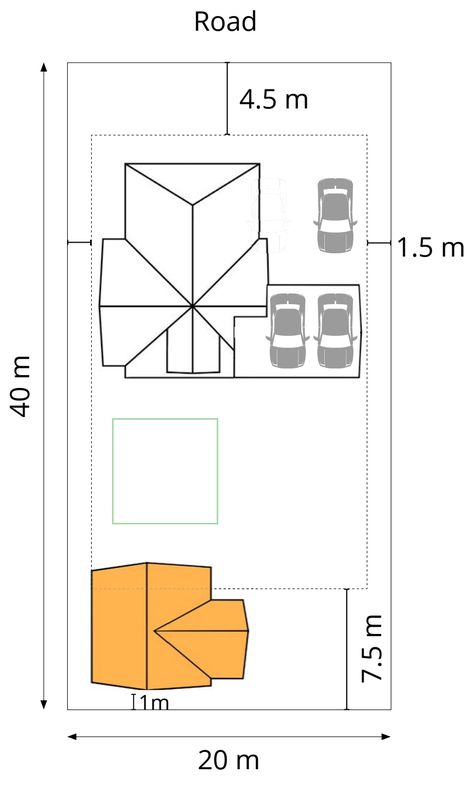
Under current zoning, a lot greater than 370 m² is eligible to have a secondary suite, where a single residential dwelling is a permitted use and the property is zoned:

- Residential;
- Agriculture Rural Residential;
- Corridor;
- Commercial Centre; or
- Downtown

Single Residential Dwelling lots are permitted to have **a detached** secondary suite if:

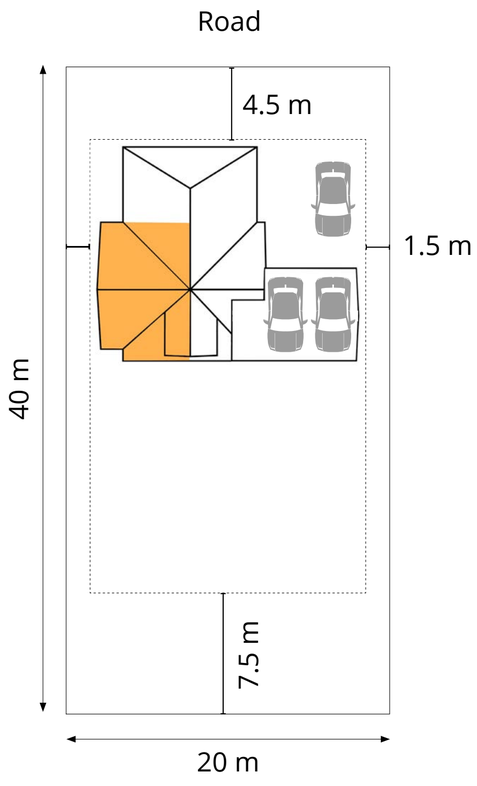
- The lot is 800 m² or larger; or
- The lot is a corner lot; or
- The lot is next to a lane; and
- The suite is no larger than 90 m²; and
- A maximum of 2 bedrooms.

Detached Suite



or

Secondary Suite



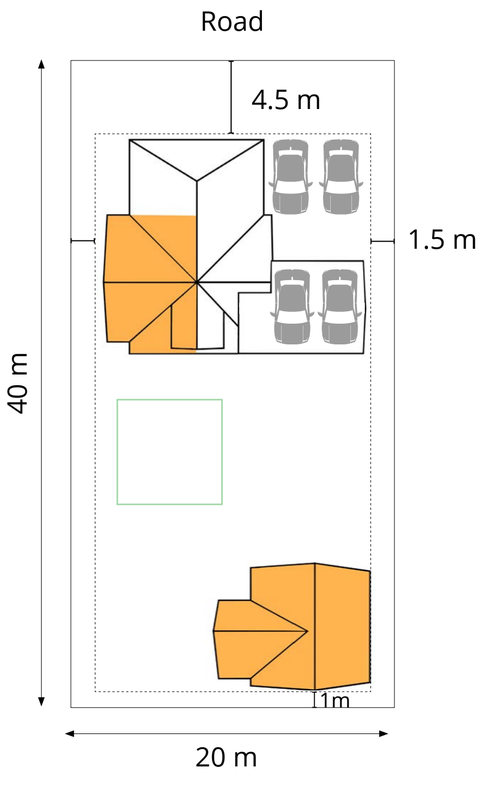
Proposed Changes - Number of Suites

The City is proposing that up to two suites (one attached and one detached) could be permitted on a lot, provided:

- The lot is 800 m² or larger;
- The lot has a minimum street frontage of 15 metres;
- The suite is no larger than 100 m²; and,
- A maximum of 3 bedrooms.

These changes will increase the number of secondary suites allowed on a "Residential" zoned lot.

Lots with an area of at least 800 m² will typically have the necessary area to accommodate both a suite and detached suite, with required parking, as shown in the conceptual site plan below. A minimum 15 metre lot frontage (width of the front of the lot) will ensure adequate space for vehicle parking and access from the street.

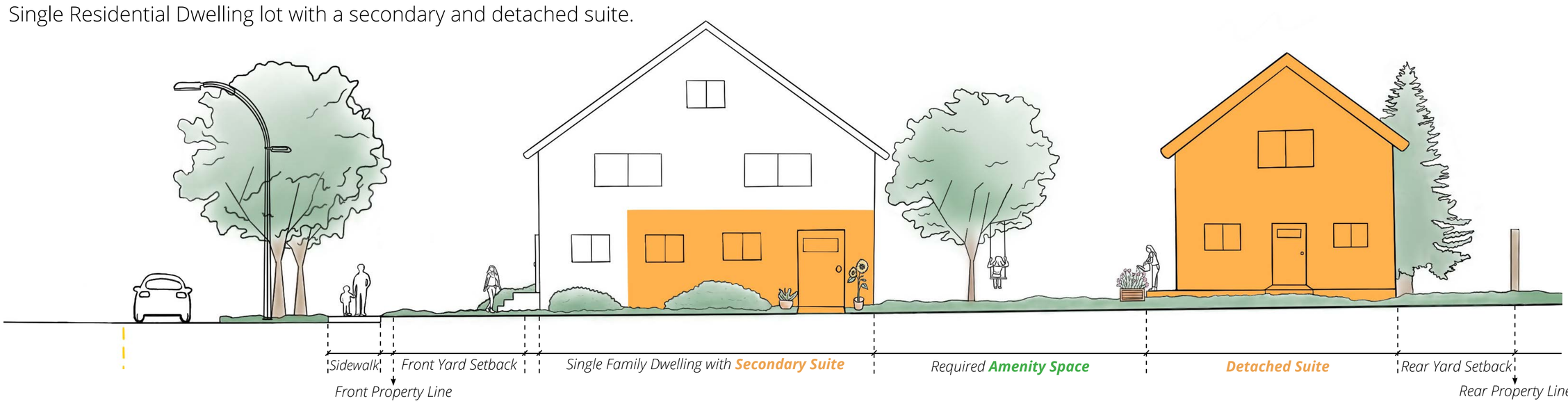


What about parking?

No reduction to the parking requirements is proposed at this time as part of the secondary suite or infill housing initiatives. On-site parking is regulated by the City of Nanaimo "Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266" and are as follows:

- *Single Residential Dwelling* – 2 parking spaces per unit
- *Secondary Suite* and *Detached Suites* – 1 parking space per unit

Single Residential Dwelling lot with a secondary and detached suite.



Legend

Plan view scale: 1 cm = 1 m

Lot Boundary | Building Placement Area | Primary Dwelling | Suite | Amenity Area | Required Setback

Increasing Suites

Expanding secondary suite & detached suite regulations



What is a detached suite?

A detached suite is a self-contained unit with a separate entrance, kitchen, living area, and one or two bedrooms that is situated on the same lot as a single dwelling unit. They may also be known as a coach house, carriage house, laneway home, granny flat, or garden suite. Detached suites are typically rented by homeowners and provide accommodation for one or more individuals.

Background & Rationale

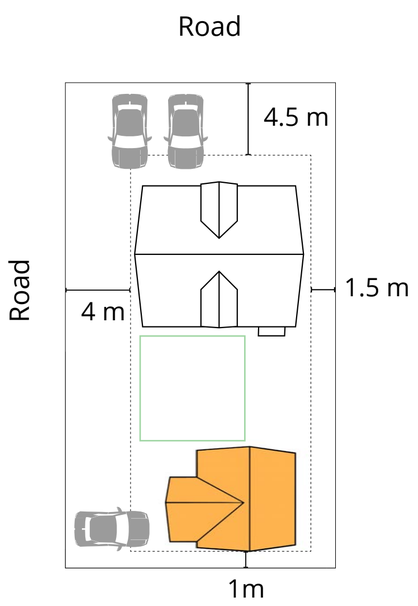
Currently, detached suites are only allowed on corner lots, lots next to a lane, and lots greater than 800 m² (0.2 acres) in area. The proposal is to expand the zoning to allow detached suites on through lots (lots with two front yards), and lots that are 500 m² or greater in area. By allowing more detached suites, we can increase the number of homes available to residents.

Existing Regulations - Detached Suite Eligibility

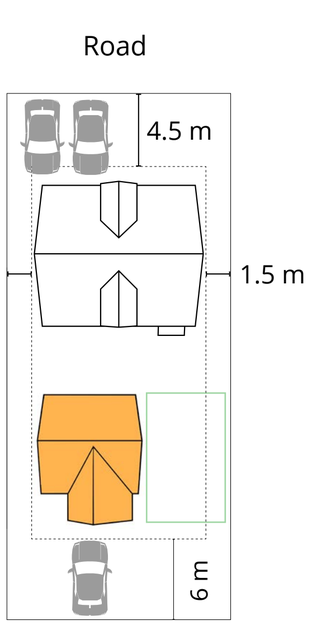
Detached Suites are currently permitted on:

1. Corner lots;
2. Lots next to a lane, and;
3. Lots greater than 800 m².

1. Corner Lot



2. Next to a Lane



3. Greater than 800 m²

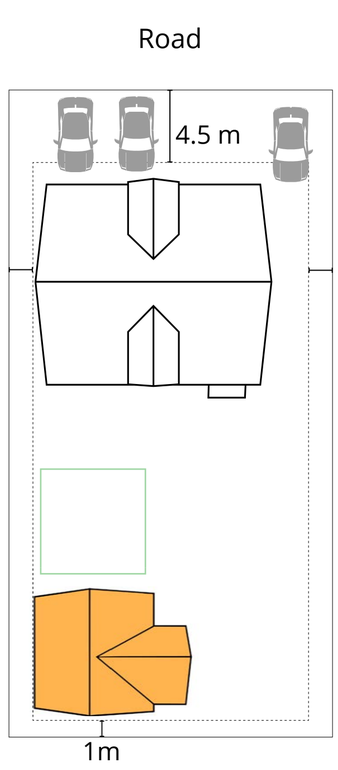




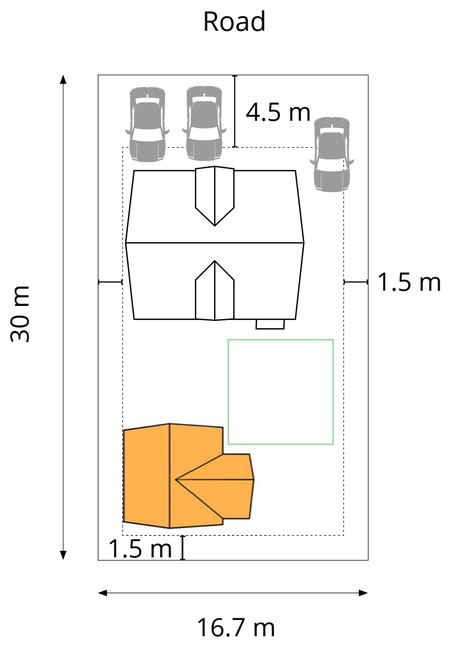
Image [above]: Single Residential Dwelling with Detached Suite in Nanaimo.

Proposed Changes - Detached Suite Eligibility

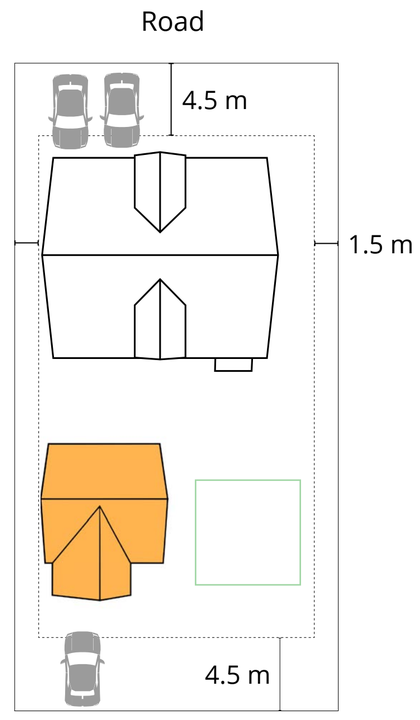
Expand the eligibility of detached suites to:

- Corner lots;
- Lots next to a lane;
- **Lots with an area of at least 500m²; and**
- **Through-lots (lots with two front yards).**

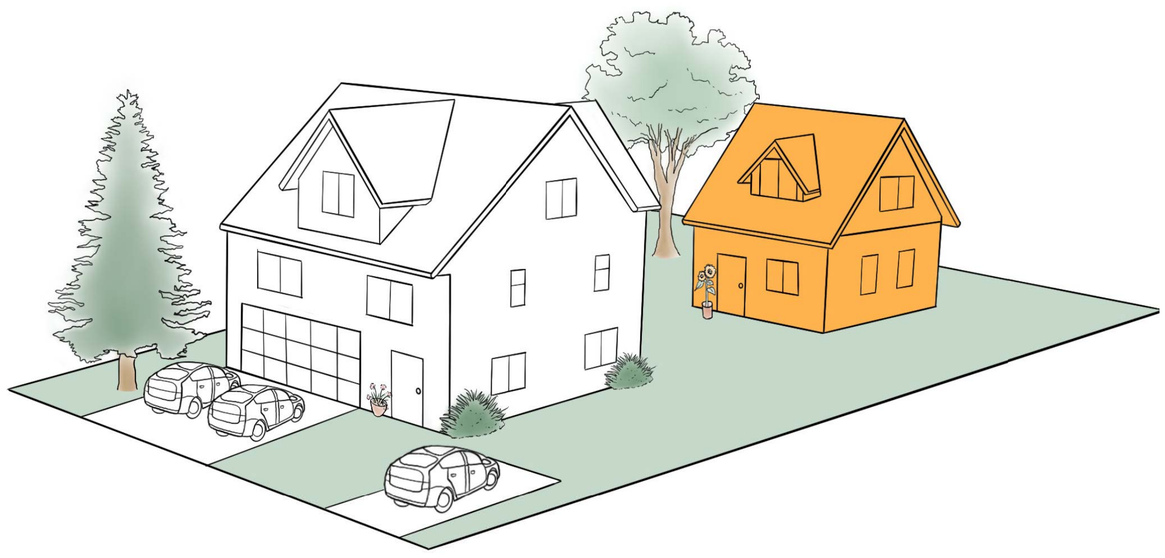
Lots 500m² or greater



Through-Lots



500 m² lot with a detached suite



For illustrative purposes only.

Legend

Plan view scale: 1 cm = 1 m

Lot Boundary | Building Placement Area | Primary Dwelling | Suite | Amenity Area | Required Setback

Duplexes & Townhouses

Expanding secondary suite & detached suite regulations



What are duplexes and townhouses?

A **duplex** is a residential dwelling that contains two dwelling units within one building located on a single lot and is intended to be used as the residence for two families.

A **townhouse** consists of multiple ground-oriented dwelling units within one or more buildings, either side-by-side or stacked. Ground-oriented means the unit is accessible with a private entry from the ground level.

Background & Rationale

Currently, secondary suites are only permitted where there is a single residential dwelling as the principal use. The proposal is to allow secondary suites in duplexes and townhouses, as is now permitted by the BC Building Code. By aligning these regulations, we can increase density within existing neighbourhoods without changing the look or feel of the neighbourhood.

Existing Regulations - Duplexes

City regulations do not permit secondary suites in duplexes.



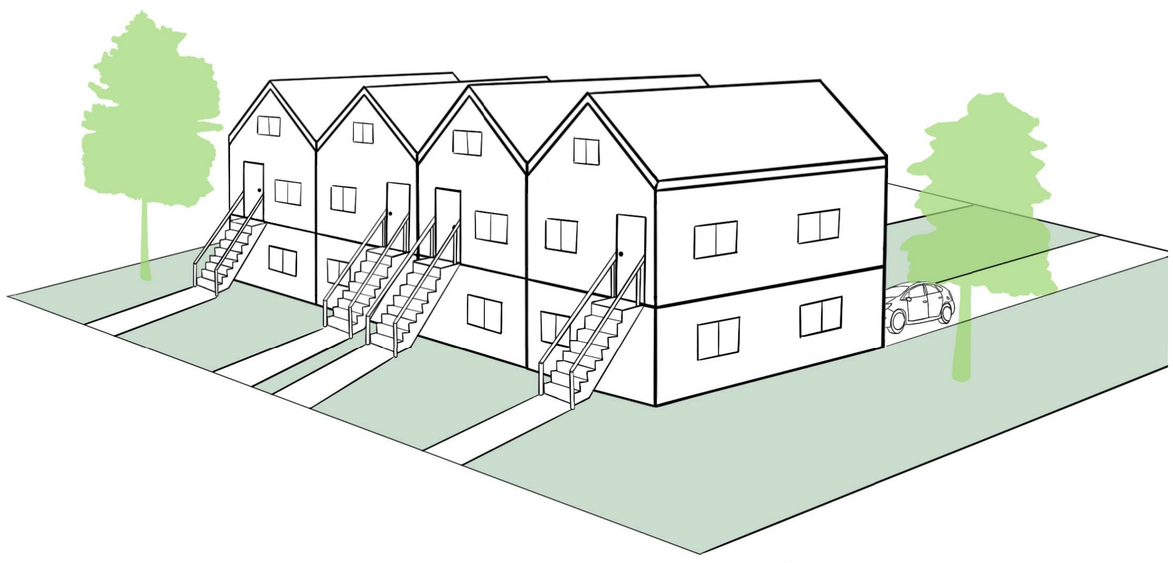
Proposed Changes - Duplexes

Allow **one secondary suite** in a side-by-side or detached duplex, as permitted by the BC Building Code.



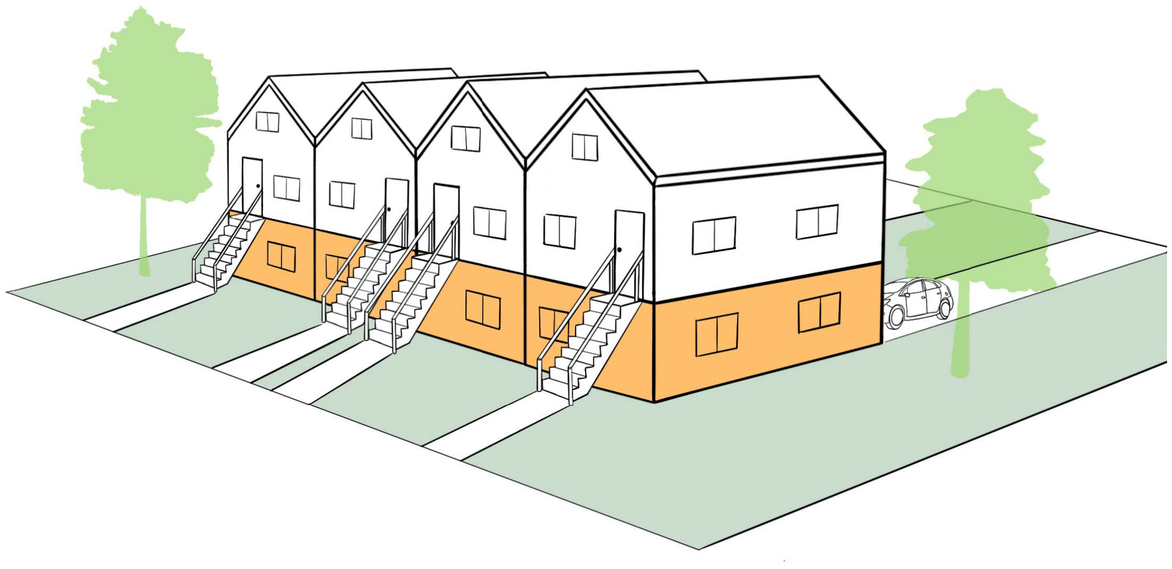
Existing Regulations - Townhouses

City regulations do not permit secondary suites in townhouses.



Proposed Changes - Townhouses

Allow one secondary suite per side-by-side townhouse.



For illustrative purposes only.

What about parking?

No reduction to the parking requirements is proposed at this time as part of the secondary suite or infill housing initiatives. On-site parking is regulated by the City of Nanaimo "Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266" and is as follows:

- *Duplex* – 4 parking spaces
- *Townhouse* – Variable, between 0.45 and 2.00 parking spaces per unit depending on the number of bedrooms in the dwelling and the location in the city

Triplexes & Fourplexes

Infill housing in existing neighbourhoods



What does the R5 zone allow?

The **R5 - Three and Four Unit Residential Zone** allows for the development of small-scale multi-unit residential dwellings of up to four units on a single lot. These buildings are intended to be compatible with the scale and architectural style of single residential dwellings in the neighbourhood. These buildings are often called houseplexes (**Triplexes** or **Fourplexes),** and while they look very similar to a single residential dwelling, they contain three or four units. Triplexes and Fourplexes provide gentle density in established neighbourhoods because they use a similar amount of square footage compared to a single residential dwelling, but can allow for three or four separate housing units on one lot.

Background & Rationale

The existing R5 – Three and Four Unit Residential Zone allows three or four units on a single lot. There are, however, few properties within the city that are zoned R5. To increase the supply of triplexes and fourplexes, a much needed housing form, the city is proposing to prezone key sites across the city. Prezoning means that three or four units could be constructed on a lot without going through a rezoning process. The City is proposing to prezone existing single family (R1/R1b) and duplex (R4) lots within a 1km buffer from the downtown, and within the 'Neighbourhood' designated areas in City Plan. This move is intended to encourage infill development in key areas as envisioned in City Plan, without compromising the character of existing neighbourhoods. **See map titled "Lots under consideration for rezoning to the R5 (Three and Four unit Residential) zone" on page 5a for more details.**

Existing Regulations - R5 Zone

The R5 Zone allows for up to 3 dwelling units on a lot with a minimum size of 800 m². Up to 4 units are permitted if the following conditions are met:

1. The lot is a corner lot;
2. The lot is next to a lane, or;
3. The lot is a minimum of ***1200 m².***

Proposed Regulations - R5 Zone

To expand the eligibility of lots that can build a fourth unit, the following criteria is proposed:

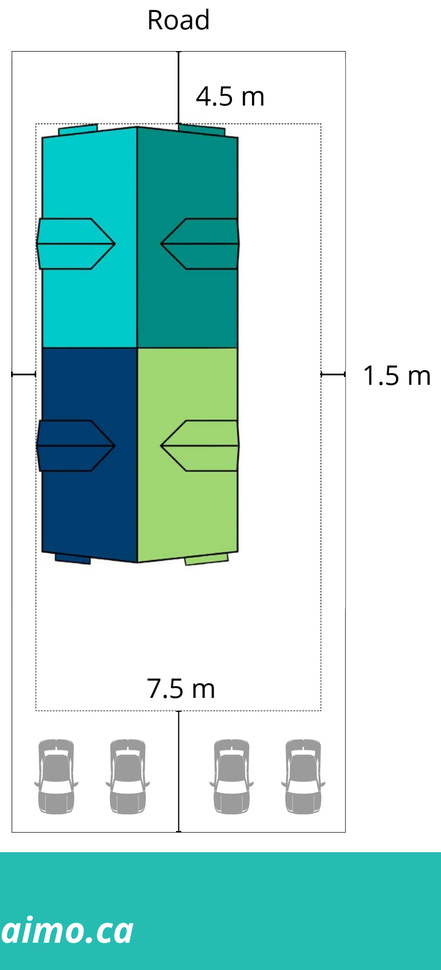
1. The lot is a corner lot;
2. The lot is next to a lane, or;
3. The lot is a minimum of ***800 m².***

Additionally, the R5 zone is proposed to be revised to require that all dwelling units be in a single building (e.g. a houseplex).

Comparison table between the existing Single Residential Dwelling (R1) zone, the existing R5 zone, and the proposed R5 zone:

Zoning Regulation	Existing R1 (Single Dwelling Residential) Zone	Existing R5 (Three and Four Unit Residential) Zone	Proposed R5 (Three and Four Unit Residential) Zone
Density (units)	1 + suite; or 2 (single residential dwellings)	3 or 4	**3 or 4**
Eligibility for additional unit	Corner lot over 700 m² without subdivision potential	Corner lot, lot next to a lane, or lot greater than 1,200 m²	**Corner lot, lot next to a lane, or lot greater than 800 m²**
Density (Floor Area Ratio)	N/A	0.55	**0.55**
Building Height	7 m to 9 m	8 m to 9 m	**8 m to 9 m**
Lot Coverage	40%	50%	**50%**
Front Yard Setback	4.5 m	4.5 m	**3 m**
Side Yard Setback	1.5 m	1.5 m	**1.5 m**
Rear Yard Setback	7.5 m	7.5 m	**7.5 m**
Building Form	Single residential dwellings	Attached or detached units	**Attached units (houseplex)**

Existing - R5 (1,200 m² lot)



Proposed - R5 (800 m²)

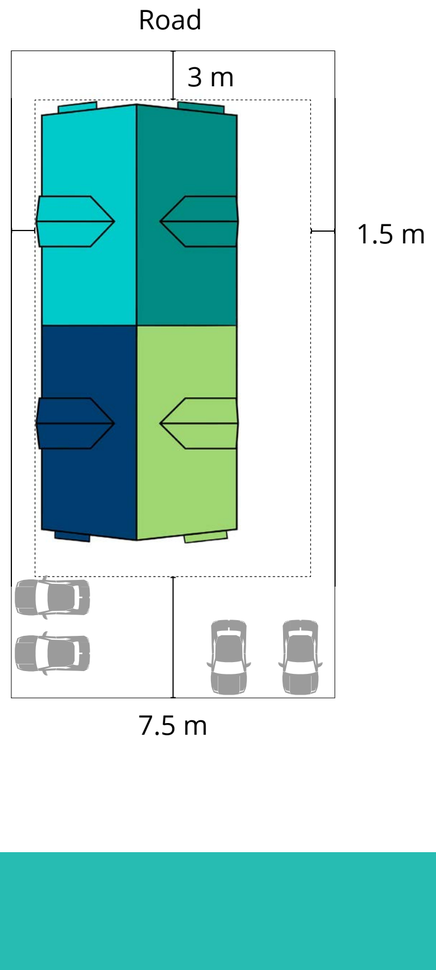
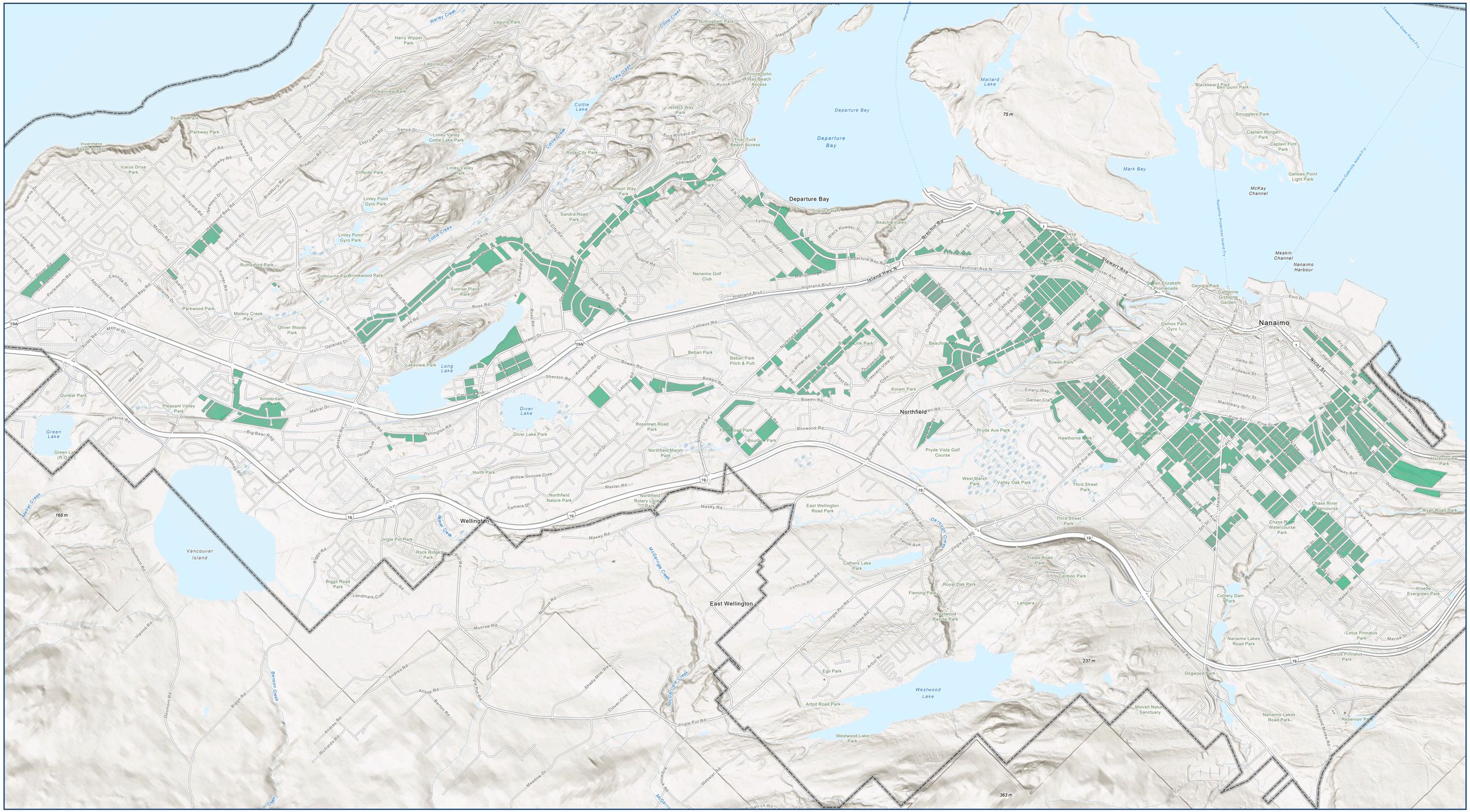




Image [above]: Fourplex home in Nanaimo.



City of Nanaimo

Lots under consideration for rezoning to the R5 (Three and Four unit Residential) zone.

5a

Legend

Eligible Lots

City Boundary

Published: August 14, 2023

0 0.375 0.75 1.5

Kilometers

1:16,000

Reducing Lot Sizes & Setbacks

Infill housing in existing neighbourhoods

Background & Rationale

Reducing lot sizes can incentivise infill housing by allowing the subdivision of more properties in those zones. By reducing required front yard setbacks we can allow for larger functional rear yard spaces while fostering greater street presence. The existing front yard setbacks in the infill housing zones are between 4.5 m and 6.0 m and can be prohibitive to development, often leading to front yard setback variance requests.

What do the R4, R5, & R6 Zones allow?

The **R4 - Duplex Residential Zone** allows for two dwellings in one or two principal buildings on a residential lot.

The **R5 - Three and Four Unit Residential Zone** allows for small-scale multiple family residential dwellings, of up to four units on a single lot. These buildings are intended to be compatible with the scale and architectural style of single family homes within the area.

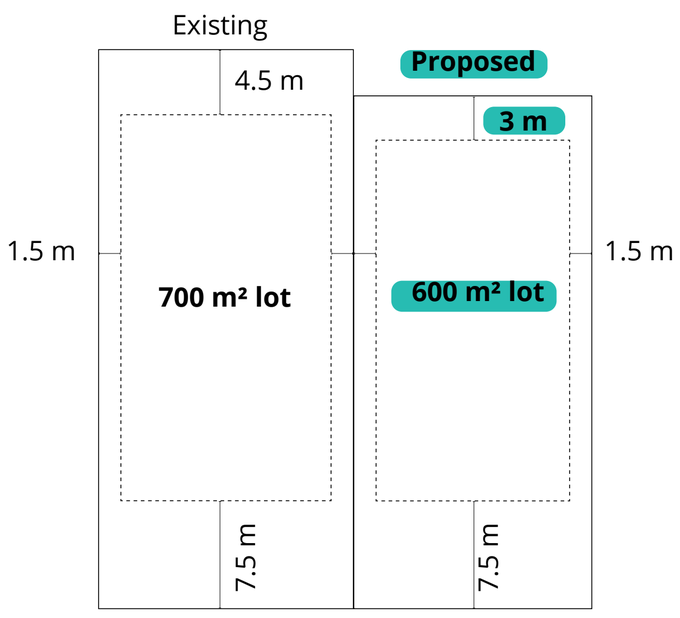
The **R6 - Low Density Residential Zone** allows for a mixture of low density, ground-oriented multiple family developments that are compatible with other residential homes in the area.

Existing Regulations & Proposed Changes

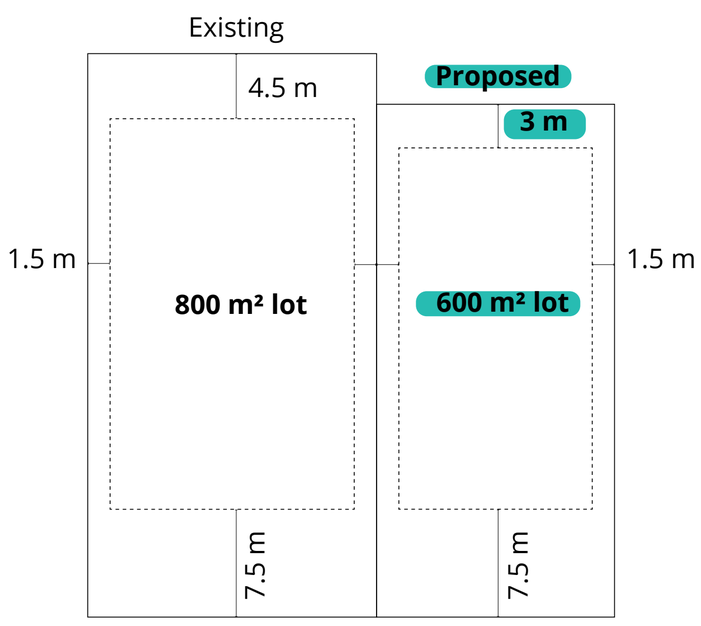
The current minimum lot size, front yard setbacks and the **proposed changes** can be seen in the table below:

Zone	Current Minimum Lot Size	Proposed Minimum Lot Size	Current Minimum Front Yard Setback	Proposed Minimum Front Yard Setback	Minimum Garage Setback
R4 - Duplex Residential	700 m²	**600 m²**	4.5 m	**3 m**	6.0 m
R5 - Three and Four Unit Residential	800 m²	**600 m²**	4.5 m	**3 m**	6.0 m
R6 - Low-Density Residential	1,500 m²	**1,200 m²**	6.0 m	**3 m**	--
R13 - Old City Duplex Residential	750 m²	750 m²	4.5 m	**3 m**	6.0 m
R14 - Old City Low Density Residential	750 m²	750 m²	6.0 m	**3 m**	--
R15 - Old City Medium Density Residential	750 m²	750 m²	6.0 m	**3 m**	--

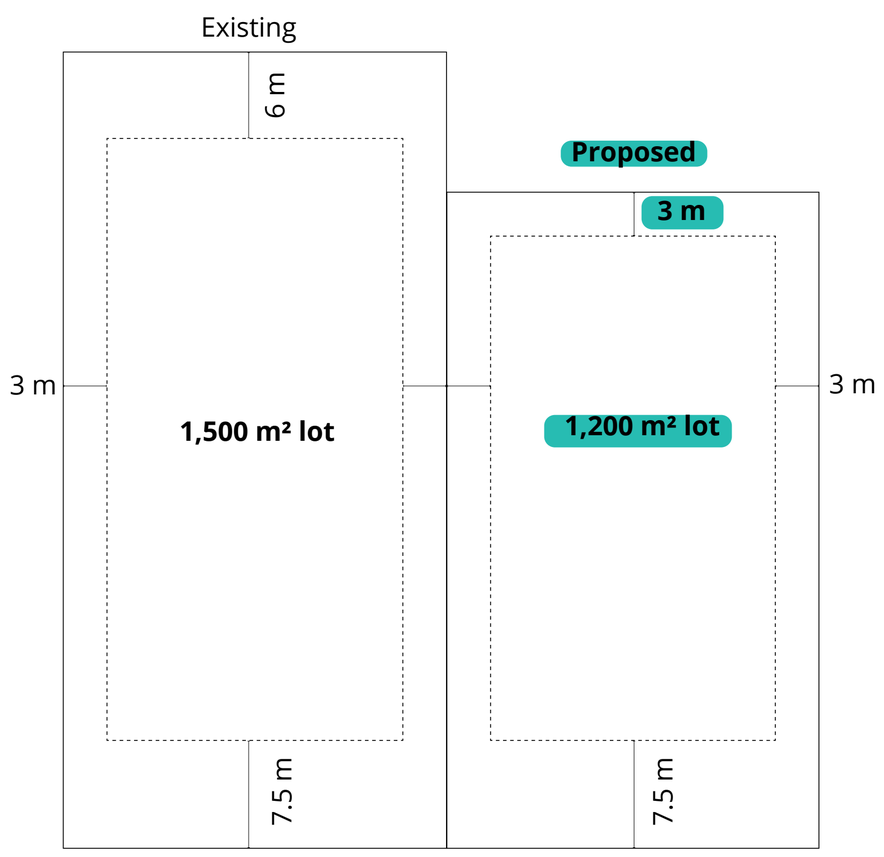
Duplex Residential Zone (R4)



Three & Four Unit Residential Zone (R5)



Low Density Residential Zone (R6)



Legend

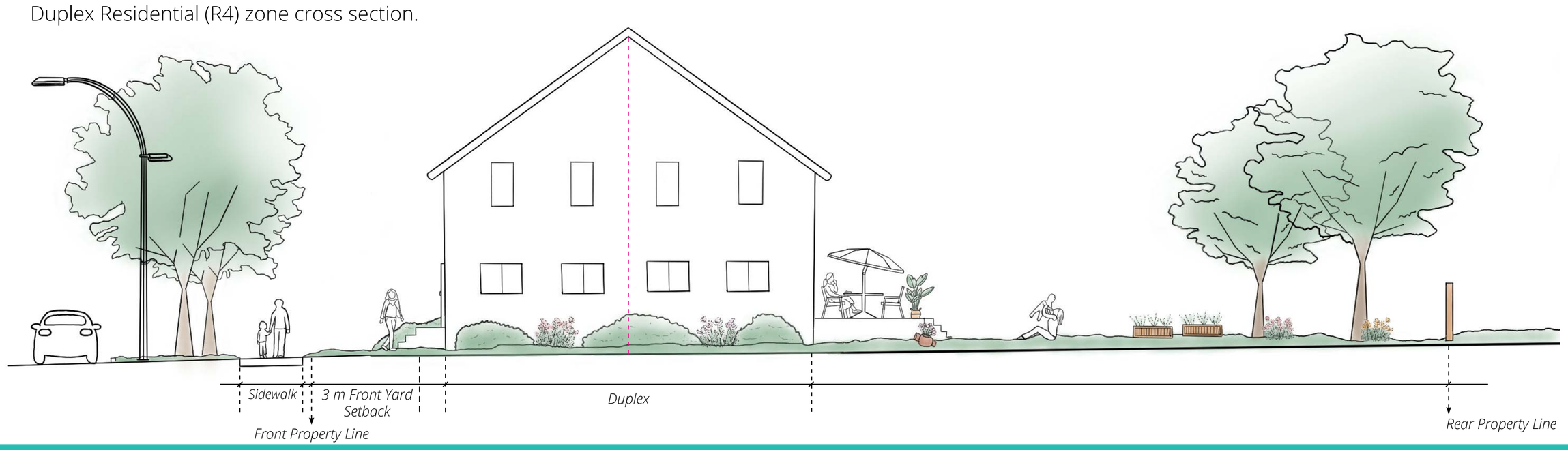
Lot Boundary

Building Placement Area

Required Setback

Plan view scale: 1 cm = 1 m

Duplex Residential (R4) zone cross section.



Additional Infill Initiatives

Infill housing in existing neighbourhoods

Background & Rationale: Conversion of Older Homes

The use of older homes as residences can provide relatively affordable housing when compared to new housing. Allowing for the conversion of existing houses to have more housing units can incentivise both the protection of older neighbourhood homes as well as provide additional gentle density.

Existing R13, R14 & R15 Zones

There are three zones that aim to preserve the historic and architectural character of the Old City Neighbourhood:

R13 - Old City Duplex Residential zone allows for the rehabilitation of older homes, and the development of ***new single residential and duplex*** residential dwellings that are consistent with the historic architectural style of the area.

R14 - Old City Low Density (Fourplex) Residential zone allows for the rehabilitation of older homes and the development of new ***small-scale*** multiple family residential dwellings that are consistent with the historic architectural style of the area.

R15 - Old City Medium Density Residential zone allows for the rehabilitation of older homes, and the development of ***new medium density*** multiple family residential redevelopments that are consistent with the historic architectural style of the area.



Image [above]: Older home in Nanaimo.

Proposed Changes to R13, R14 & R15 Zones

Proposed changes to the R13, R14, and R15 zones would permit additional units and floor area, on a lot where a house built before 1975 is preserved, as outlined in the table below:

Zone	R13	R14	R15
Proposed density	One additional dwelling unit	One additional dwelling unit and an additional 0.15 of Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	An additional 0.15 of Floor Area Ratio

Background & Rationale: Amending the R7 Zone

Currently in the R7 zone, only fee simple rowhouse lots are permitted. Fee simple lots are individually owned, with rowhouse units attached on one or both sides with another unit. Allowing multiple types of residential tenure (e.g. both fee-simple and strata units) will provide flexibility to accommodate different housing tenures.

Existing R7 Zone

The R7 – Row House Residential zone allows for street-oriented, attached, medium density (fee simple) rowhouse dwelling units. Rowhouses are two or more residential units that share a common party wall or are connected at the side lot line; however, they individually occupy their own lot and are considered “fee simple” lots because they do not form part of a strata. This is contrasted with townhouses where units are either on a shared strata plan or are purpose-built rentals on a lot with multiple units.

Proposed Changes to R7 Zone

Zone Regulation	Existing R7 Zone	Proposed R7 Zone Changes
Maximum Density	One fee simple dwelling unit per lot	One fee simple dwelling unit on lots less than 1,500 m²; A maximum base Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.70 on lots 1,500 m² or greater.
Minimum Lot Area	150 m²	150 m² for rowhouse units; 1,500 m² for multi-unit townhouse (strata or rental)
Maximum Lot Coverage	70%	70% on lots less than 1,500 m²; 50% on lots 1,500 m² or greater
Maximum Building Height	9 m for flat roof buildings; 10.5 m for sloped roof buildings	No proposed change.



Image [above]: Completed rowhouse development in Nanaimo.

Family-Friendly Housing

Expanding family-friendly housing options

What is family-friendly housing?

Family-friendly housing is a dwelling unit that contains 2 or more bedrooms and supports households with more than 2 persons.

Background & Rationale

Increasing housing costs has made finding housing challenging for families requiring multiple bedrooms. While the ***supply*** of family-friendly units is generally being built, there is **a lack of *affordable* family-friendly units**. Single-detached houses in Nanaimo are often no longer affordable for families, and there is a need for more attainable alternatives, such as 2 and 3+ bedroom strata units, rental apartments, and townhouses. Both *City Plan - Nanaimo Reimagined* (2022) and the City's *Affordable Housing Strategy* (2018) recommend that the City of Nanaimo explore options to increase family-friendly housing.

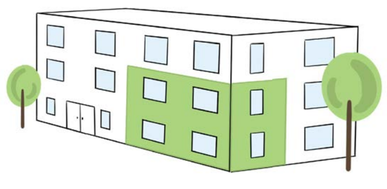
Proposed Changes for Family-Friendly Housing in Nanaimo

To encourage more affordable family-friendly housing in Nanaimo, the City is proposing the following changes:



1. Zoning Bylaw Amendments

The change: For zones in which a multi-unit development is already a permitted use, it is recommended that:



*Where a multi-unit development has 10 or more units, **a minimum of 30% of the units** **must be 2+ bedrooms**, and **10% of those must be 3+ bedrooms**. Thus, a maximum of 70% of the units can be one bedroom or bachelor units.*

Why: This change will gently increase the amount of 2 and 3+ bedroom units in multi-unit housing developments, creating more family-friendly housing options.

2. Amendments to Schedule D of the Zoning Bylaw

The change: It is recommended to amend Schedule D (Amenity Requirements for Additional Density) in the Zoning Bylaw to allow for a density bonus (on parcels zoned for multi-unit use) as follows:

- *When family-friendly units are proposed within **400 metres of a public school**; and,*
- *When family-friendly units are **ground-oriented**, such as on the first storey of a multi storey building.*

What is a density bonus? A density bonus in the Zoning Bylaw is an increase to the allowable density on a parcel when certain amenities are achieved in accordance with Schedule D.

Why: This change will support family-friendly units close to schools and create more family-friendly units on the ground floor of multi-unit buildings.



Image [above]: Multi-storey ground oriented development in Nanaimo.

3. Amendment to "City of Nanaimo Policy for Consideration of a Parking Variance"

The change: Amending the evaluation criteria in the City of Nanaimo Policy for Consideration of a Parking Variance.

- *The amendment would allow **reduced parking to be considered** for underground parking spaces for **3-bedroom units in a multi-unit development.***

Why: This change will act as an incentive to support more family-friendly housing in multi-family developments and reduce additional costs associated with underground parking.



Image [above]: Multi-unit development with underground parking in Nanaimo

Adaptable Housing

Creating more adaptable housing units



Background & Rationale

The *Canadian Survey on Disability* (2017) reports that 22% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and over have one or more disability, and for those aged 75 years and over, 47% have one or more disability. **Adaptable housing refers to housing with the potential to accommodate all community members regardless of their physical abilities**. Adaptable units can benefit anyone whose mobility is limited due to age, disability, or illness, making it easier for them to function more independently in their own home and age in place over time. Nanaimo's aging population is growing, and there is an increased need to accommodate adequate housing for seniors, as well as for people with disabilities.

What is an Adaptable Unit?

In accordance with the *BC Building Code*, a basic adaptable unit allows for a future conversion and individualized upgrades to meet the specific accessibility needs of a tenant, resident, or owner. An adaptable unit is designed and built so that accessibility features (to meet a specific need) can be added more easily and inexpensively after construction. They often include features like:

- Wider doorways;
- Maneuvering room at dwelling unit entries and corridors;
- Access to a main floor bathroom;
- Access to a kitchen on the main floor;
- Reinforcement of bathroom walls for future installation of grab bars;
- Accessible door handles, switches, and outlets;
- Powered lifts or elevators;
- Access ramps;
- Lowered cabinetry, shelves, and cupboards; and
- Roll-in shower and roll-under sinks.

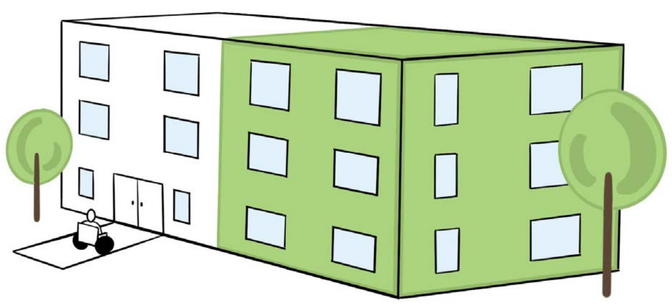


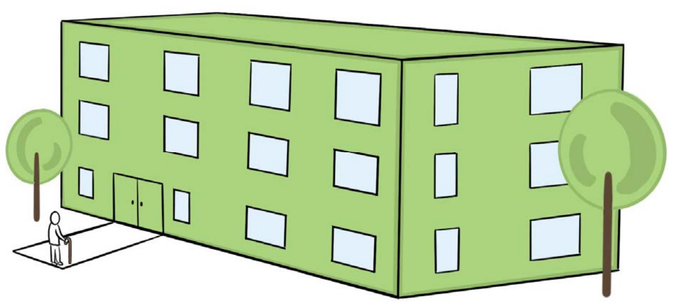
Proposed Changes for Adaptable Housing Regulation and Policy in Nanaimo

To enable more adaptable housing units in Nanaimo, the City is proposing the following Zoning Bylaw Amendment Recommendations:

1. Requiring more adaptable units in multi-family buildings

In a multi-unit development of **10 or more units**, require **50%** of the residential units to meet the basic adaptable unit standard in accordance with the *BC Building Code*.





2. Requiring adaptable units in Seniors Housing

Require that **100% of the housing units** in a "Seniors Congregate Housing" development meet the basic adaptable unit standard in accordance with the *BC Building Code*.

"Seniors' Congregate Housing" means a residential or institutional facility which provides sleeping units or dwelling units for persons all of whom are aged 65 or older, one or more meals per day and housekeeping services, contains a common dining area with a capacity sufficient to accommodate all residents of the residential facility, and may contain accessory personal service and accessory convenience store uses.

3. Incentivising additional adaptable units through density bonusing

A density bonus in the Zoning Bylaw allows for additional density on a parcel when certain amenities are achieved in accordance with Schedule D of the Zoning Bylaw. Currently, Schedule D includes density incentives when at least 10% of the residential units within a building meet the basic adaptable standard.

The City is proposing that the **required minimum number of adaptable units be increased from 10% to greater than the base amount of 50%** in order to achieve the density bonus on parcels in which multi-use development is already a permitted use. This would be in addition to the required units outlined in #1.

