

# Small Lot Sensitive Infill: A Neighborhood Concept Plan, South of the Hospital Lands

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# Executive Summary

- ORIGINS:** A comprehensive neighbourhood planning study of the two blocks south of the Peace Arch Hospital was requested by City Council in accordance with the 1995 OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN to investigate the feasibility and resident support for accommodating increased residential densities through subdivision and single-unit infill development. The OCP has been amended to recognize the potential for small lot, single-unit development in the area.
- POLICY:** Numerous regional and local planning policies support neighbourhood intensification as a means of generating more opportunities for affordable housing and providing a variety of housing types within White Rock. These policies express and promote the creation of a sustainable community in which there are a variety of ground-oriented housing alternatives.
- DEMAND:** The housing market continues to demonstrate the demand for small lot housing developments. While markets do fluctuate, the general trend is towards more efficient use of land. In terms the area's residents, extensive public input reflected this tendency and supported the move towards small lot subdivision and infill.
- DEFINITION:** A small lot is defined for the purposes of this Plan and for the proposed RS-7 ONE-UNIT RESIDENTIAL INFILL zone as having a minimum frontage of 9.1 m (30 feet) and a minimum depth of 35 m (114.8 feet). The minimum lot area is 333 m<sup>2</sup> (3585 square feet).
- IMPACT:** The South of the Hospital Lands is made up of 76 lots and 79 dwelling units (including 3 duplex lots). Permitting the minimum lot frontage outlined above would effectively allow 73 of the lots to subdivide without requiring any land assembly. Amenities, including local shopping areas, health services and schools are all within very short walking distances. The area is well served by public transportation, and the adjacent road network is capable of accommodating the increase in density. Upgrading of infrastructure and the creation of more parkland in the area is recommended.

IMPLEMENTATION: Neighbourhood intensification, through small lot subdivision and infill, requires that the Subdivision Bylaw be amended to include RS-7 minimum lot dimensions and area, and that the proposed RS-7 zone be adopted by Council.

## Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the South of the Hospital Lands Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan represents the completion of a local-area planning study undertaken to gain a better understanding of resident interests and to investigate alternatives for the intensification of the neighbourhood. As a result, the Plan represents an accumulated effort developed through considerable input from the neighbourhood's residents as well as the Mayor, Council and civic staff.

The City of White Rock has always sought to meet the present and future housing needs of its residents. Recent national social, economic, and demographic shifts however, have had a dramatic impact upon the nature of the family in Canada and as a consequence, local housing needs have also undergone a change. In general, smaller families, the rise the two-income household, and a proportional increase in the seniors population have influenced housing demand away from the traditional North American large-lot single-detached home towards alternative housing forms.

The City, however, finds itself in the increasingly

common situation of being limited in the amount of undeveloped land resources. In answer to this situation, many municipalities are investigating the feasibility of neighbourhood intensification. This refers to the process of increasing the number of units within established neighbourhoods by making better use of the land and housing stock.

A neighbourhood intensification plan based on small lot infill provides a very effective solution for meeting the new housing demand and providing a more sustainable and efficient land use pattern, while retaining the dominant single-family character of the area. For the purposes of this Plan, a single-unit detached, small lot infill house is defined by the following criteria:

### *Single-Unit Detached*

A stand-alone house (not attached to other homes) principally designed for use by one family or one group of occupants.

### *Small Lot*

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In terms of the Plan, a small lot is considered to have a minimum lot area of 333 m<sup>2</sup> (3585 square feet) with a minimum lot width of 9.1 m (30 feet) and a minimum depth of 35 m (114.8 feet). Typically, such small lots will be created through the rezoning and subdivision of an existing larger lot.

#### *Infill House*

The Plan proposes to "fill in" an established neighbourhood with new, smaller housing stock. Typically, this will involve the removal of an existing dwelling unit and the construction of two or more new homes on a cleared site. The result will modestly increase densities with minimal impact upon municipal services.

# Basic Goals

The basis of this Plan is found in several of the City's *Basic Principles* as set out in the 1995 OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN. The OCP contains the City's long standing policy of offering a variety of alternative housing options to its residents in an effort to meet evolving needs at all stages of life. The City is committed to building communities that promote enjoyable environments for all residents the redevelopment of the South of Hospital Lands neighbourhood provides the opportunity to build upon these principles.

Together with the proposed RS-7 ONE UNIT RESIDENTIAL INFILL zone, the Plan is directed toward the creation of a community strong in image and identity. The principles described in the Plan should, therefore, be applied to any small lot infill proposal. Below are four goals that form the basis of this Plan.

- ◆ That a balanced housing stock, capable of meeting the needs of various age groups, family types, lifestyles and income groups, be provided;
- ◆ That all infill housing be designed so as to contribute to the overall livability, visual quality and enjoyability of the neighbourhood;
- ◆ That cohesive and harmonious developments provide for individuality and variety;
  - ◆ That all development and local improvements contribute toward a safe and pedestrian friendly environment.



# Housing Policies

Regional and local planning policies support the implementation of a small lot infill program.

## *The Livable Region Strategic Plan*

The Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) has been endorsed by all GVRD member municipalities. The LRSP is intended as an alternative vision for the future of the region, moving away from the pattern of urban sprawl toward a future where growth is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. Two LRSP strategies that affirm the intentions of the South of Hospital Lands Neighbourhood Concept Plan are:

- (1) Achieving a compact metropolitan region by concentrating future growth in established urban areas
- (2) Building Complete Communities by offering a wider range of opportunities for day-to-day living; balancing the distribution of jobs and housing; providing a wider choice of affordable housing types; and making better use of public services.

## *Housing Within the Community*

Locally, as set out in Policies 3.1 and 3.2 in the 1995 Official Community Plan, the City of White Rock is committed to providing a range of housing types that would address the housing needs of people of different backgrounds, age groups and incomes. The City is also dedicated to providing its residents with an environment that is safe, attractive, and enjoyable so that it will continue as a desirable place of residence. These directions are reflected in Housing Policy 8.1:

- (1) that the community attempt to maintain a land division of multiple unit housing an ground oriented low density housing in equal balance;
- (2) that a variety of housing alternatives be provided;
- (3) that White Rock encourage provisions for affordable housing;
- (4) that the City will be supportive of regional growth objectives through its housing policies.

## *The Community Land Use Plan*

The intensification of the South of Hospital Lands is consistent with the objectives set out in the Community Land Use Plan. The Land Use Plan designates this two-block area for low density detached or attached residential uses. The Land Use Plan also specifically recognizes the potential for smaller lots in the South of Hospital Lands.

## Design Principles

Small lot homes often require that special consideration be given to the many elements that are unique to this form of development. Two in particular – the relatively small outdoor space and proximity of dwellings – necessitate that care be given to design and lot layout in order to maintain the desired qualities of more “standard size” subdivision layouts. Furthermore, good infill development must enhance neighbourhood image.

To this end, the Plan proposes a set of design principles to be considered in the design of a small lot infill home. The design principles are intended to encourage good overall design, ensure unifying design characteristics, while providing flexibility to ensure vitality, creativity, and individual expression.

The design principles are intended to provide guidance in achieving the goals of the Plan and are supplemental to the RS-7 zoning standards.

### The Dwelling

#### *Streetscape*

An attractive streetscape is an fundamentally important element in any neighbourhood. Infill housing should make a positive contribution to the image of the neighbourhood. More specifically, infill housing should reinforce or establish neighbourhood patterns, through appropriate building scale, siting and design.

Identical unit types or models should be discouraged if occurring within three lot widths of each other. Designs should incorporate a variety of façade treatments, colours, and cladding materials.





*Mass and Proportion*

Building mass has to do with the overall bulk of a building and how it is distributed. Proportion has to do with how the parts or elements of the building dimensionally relate to one another.

Narrow houses tend to have a much stronger vertical massing and proportions than home that present a wide frontage to the street. Due to these fundamental differences, it is not usually possible (or necessarily desirable) to fully integrate the design of infill housing with existing housing. However, using features with horizontal elements, stepping back the second storey from the front façade, and using other design features such as front porches and dormers, can reduce the visual contrast between a new infill home and is older neighbours. Over time, as the neighbourhood redevelops, the infill pattern will become the predominant one.

*Facades*

Proper treatment of the front façade improves the streetscape and the overall quality of the neighbourhood. Special attention should be given to the use of quality materials and the use of colour, fenestration, design of entryways, porches, eaves, and ornamentation. Standardization can be avoided and individuality emphasized when these elements are used in a variety of



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combinations and arrangements.

#### *Roofs*

Sharply contrasting roof styles can be disruptive to the streetscape. One principal roof form should be used for the main body of the house. Use of character elements such as dormers and secondary roof elements over porches, bay windows, etc. is encouraged in order to provide for design variety and to break up the massing of the house.

#### The Lot

##### *Parking and Driveways*

The guiding principle respecting parking and driveways is that infill housing will promote the development of a pedestrian friendly neighbourhood, not a neighbourhood that is dominated by the automobile. Garages and driveways should be dealt with so that they have the minimum impact upon the character of the street. Paved areas should consume the least amount of land necessary to provide access to the garage. On the public right of way, only shared driveway access will be permitted, to reduce the number of driveway letdowns required to service the lots. Where parking is incorporated into the front façade, only single-width garages will be permitted. For a few larger lots or corner lots with adequate space, individual or shared driveways to a garage located at the rear of the lot can be accommodated.

##### *Fences*

The materials, colour and design of any front yard fences should be considered in terms of their visual impact on the street and neighbouring properties.

##### *Private Space*

Outdoor private space is one of the main attractions of single-unit detached housing. Houses should be sited to provide as much of this space as possible. The orientation and heights of balconies and decks should be considered in terms of respecting the privacy of neighbours.

##### *Landscaping*

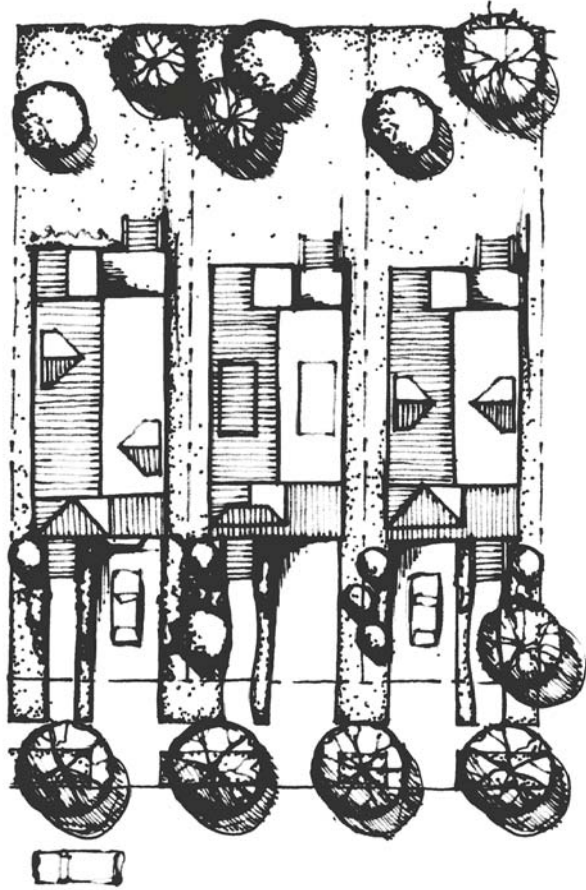
Front yard landscaping enhances street character and can be a unifying feature of a neighbourhood. Landscaping adds colour and texture to the streetscape while softening the visual impact of the built environment. It can be used as an effective and attractive screen for living spaces located close to the ground. Consideration should be given to providing additional landscaping to screen driveways, having regard for safe sightlines to and from oncoming vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

##### *Corner Lots*

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Many corner lots vary from the norm respecting size and dimensions. These provide a unique opportunity for alternative lot layouts, siting of homes, and vehicular access arrangements. These can be dealt with on an individual basis, having regard for the overall design principles of the Plan.



### Infrastructure Improvements

#### *Roads*

Capacity on the four major streets surrounding the area (Best St., Russell Ave., Finlay St., and Thrift Ave.) will satisfy any increase in traffic volume created by infill development. All-way stops are in place at the four major corners and traffic signals are not considered a requirement in the foreseeable future.

Goggs Avenue is in need of reconstruction to local road standards. The redevelopment of the neighbourhood is an opportunity to complete this work, with amenities appropriate to the neighbourhood – curb and gutter, a sidewalk on at least one side of the street, a landscaped boulevard with street trees, and upgraded street lighting. Electrical, telephone and cable services could also be placed underground, removing unsightly wires

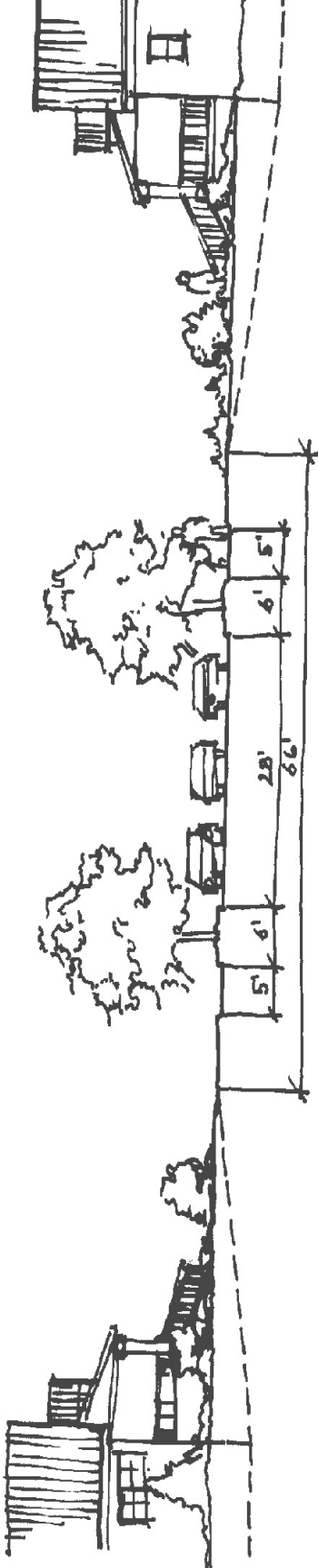
from the street.

The reconstructed street would comprise an 8.5m (28 feet) pavement width, providing for parking on both sides of the street with one lane for traffic, or alternatively parking on one side of the street with two travel lanes. Also within the road right-of-way would be a 3m landscaped boulevard on both sides, with street trees, and on one side a 1.5m concrete sidewalk. The street will be designed with the objective of calming traffic and creating a safer, quieter, child-friendly neighbourhood

Service connections for sanitary and storm will require upgrading at the time of redevelopment.

#### *Other Infrastructure*

Improvements and upgrading is also required for certain sections of sanitary and storm sewers within the study area. Some of these works will be completed as part of the upgrading of Goggs Avenue; other will be implemented as required. The City will work with White Rock Utilities Ltd to ensure that any required upgrades to water mains are accommodated, in coordination with other infrastructure improvements.



Costs for infrastructure improvements will be assessed against future development in the area. This includes Development Cost Charges, as well as additional costs of local improvements necessary to improve neighbourhood services and amenities. Costs may be imposed as a condition of rezoning or subdivision approval. The City will endeavor to ensure that development costs are kept as low as possible, while ensuring that development contribute toward needed improvements.

## Parkland Improvements

The availability and quality of parkland is a key measure of the livability of a neighbourhood. It is expected that with any intensification of the area, the neighbourhood will need additional parkland for its residents. Through its open space acquisition program, the City strives to provide a variety of open spaces, from small “pocket parks” to playgrounds, fields, and natural areas.

This Plan proposes that lands be secured within the South of Hospital Lands for a new parkette. This space will provide a local commons for people to gather, and may include children’s’ playground facilities. The parkette can function as a neighbourhood focal point, allowing local residents opportunities to build and strengthen community ties. The parkette would be primarily “passive” in character and landscaped so as to provide an attractive, safe amenity that does not negatively impact adjacent properties.

The acquisition of parkland in this area is consistent with the policies contained in the 1995 Official Community Plan.

