

welcome

**Basements in
Single Family Houses**

Open House

welcome

Basements in Single Family Houses

Let us know what you think!

Come in and speak with staff.

Please record your comments on a Comment Form and deposit it in the box provided before you leave.

BASEMENTS IN SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES

Why are we concerned about basements?

Vancouver residents have told us that single family zoning does not permit enough floor area for a suitable size house that also includes a full basement.

Many families would prefer a house with a full basement, but not if this means they have to give up a lot of floor space above ground level.

As a result, many houses have a partial basement or no basement at all, especially on smaller lots.

Why are we here to talk about basements?

Providing more affordable housing choices throughout the City is a top priority of Council. Facilitating basements in houses helps to meet this goal by providing more opportunities for rental secondary suites in single family areas.

On June 10, 2008, Vancouver City Council instructed staff to report back on “Enabling basements that can accommodate suites ...” as part of EcoDensity Action C-6: “More Options for Rental Secondary Suites.”

BASEMENTS IN SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES

What is the City proposing to do about basements?

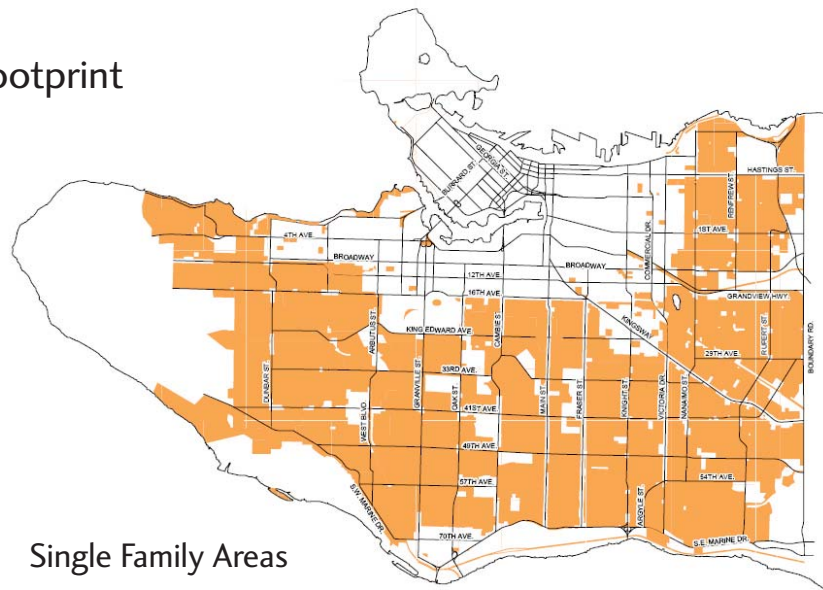
In Single Family Areas:

1) Continue to permit houses that can be built now under current zoning

AND

2) Add an option to single family zoning to permit a house with:

- A full-size basement
- More total floor area
- All additional floor area located in the basement
- A smaller house footprint



Single Family Areas

BASEMENTS IN SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES

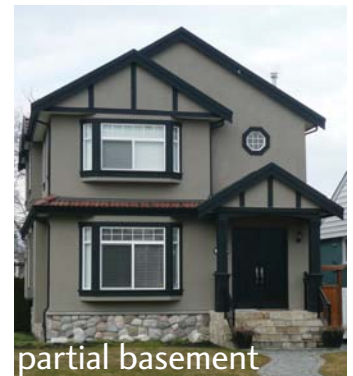
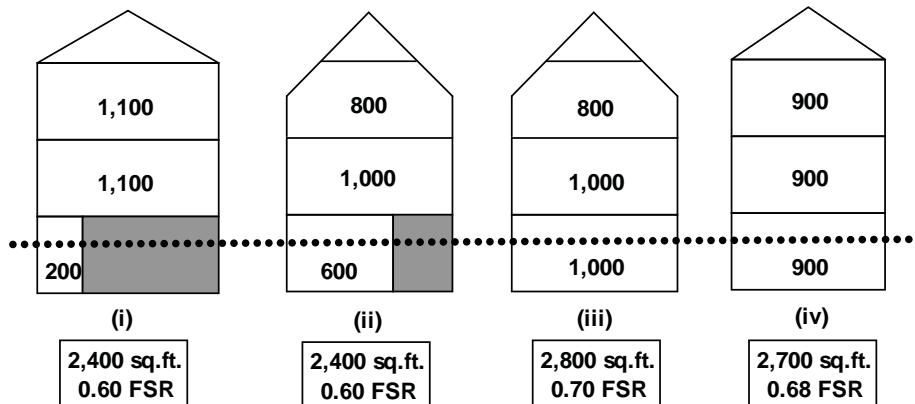
Example:

House on a **33 foot lot** in the **RS-1** zone

What could this house look like?

Current Zoning

Basement Option



Note: The dotted line in the diagram represents finished grade.
FSR (Floor Space Ratio) is used to determine how much floor area may be built.
Floor Area = Lot Size x FSR

How is the floor area calculated?

	Current Zoning		Basement Option	
	Square Feet	Formula	Square Feet	Formula
Lot Size	4,000	33' x 120'	4,000	33' x 120'
Maximum Total Floor Area	2,400	0.60 FSR	2,800	0.70 FSR
Maximum Above Grade Area*	2,200	0.2 + 1,400	1,800	0.45 FSR
Basement Area	200	(2,400 minus 2,200)	1,000	0.25 FSR
Maximum Building Footprint	1,100	28% of Lot Size	1,000	25% of Lot Size

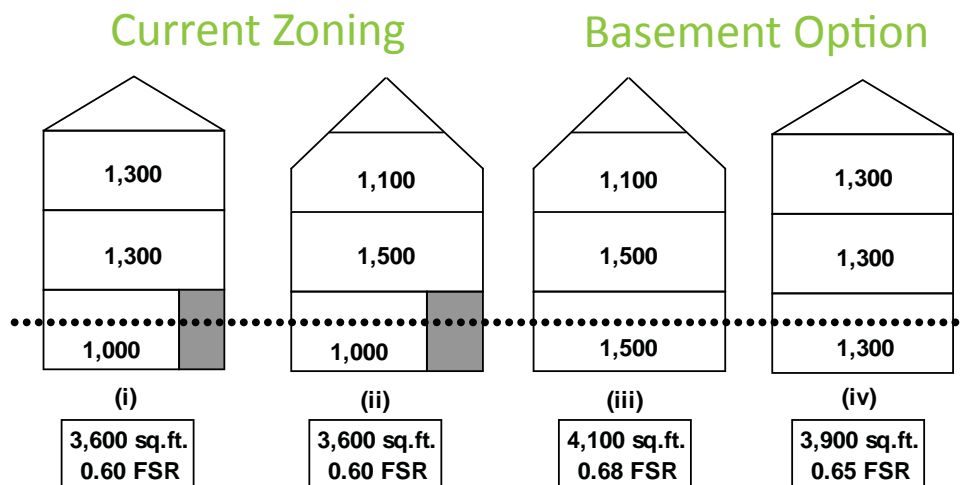
Note: * With the basement option, maximum above grade floor area equals 0.45 FSR or (0.2 FSR + 1,400 sq. ft.), whichever is less.

BASEMENTS IN SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES

Example:

House on a **50 foot lot** in the **RS-1 zone**

What could this house look like?



Note: The dotted line in the diagram represents finished grade.
 FSR (Floor Space Ratio) is used to determine how much floor area may be built.
 Floor Area = Lot Size x FSR

How is the floor area calculated?

	Current Zoning		Basement Option	
	Square Feet	Formula	Square Feet	Formula
Lot Size	6,000	50' x 120'	6,000	50' x 120'
Maximum Total Floor Area	3,600	0.60 FSR	4,100	0.68 FSR
Maximum Above Grade Area*	2,600	0.2 + 1,400	2,600	0.43 FSR
Basement Area	1,000	(3,600 minus 2,600)	1,500	0.25 FSR
Maximum Building Footprint	1,680	28% of Lot Size	1,500	25% of Lot Size



Note: * With the basement option, maximum above grade floor area equals 0.45 FSR or (0.2 FSR + 1,400 sq.ft.), whichever is less.

BASEMENTS IN SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES

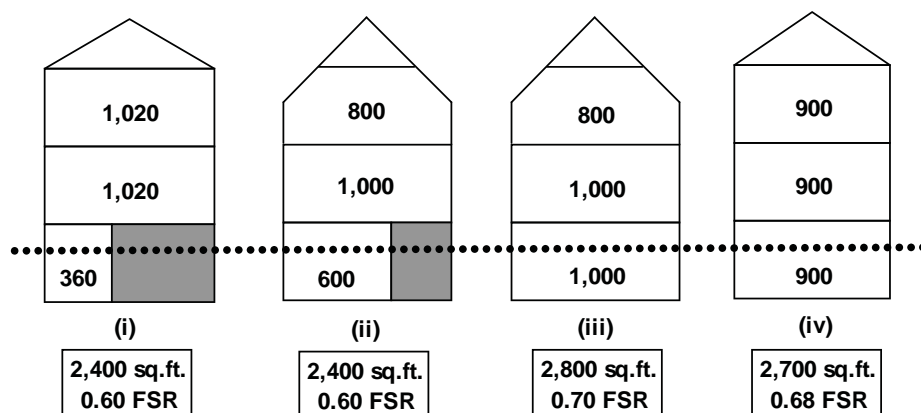
Example:

House on a **33 foot lot** in the **RS-5** zone

What could this house look like?

Current Zoning

Basement Option



Note: The dotted line in the diagram represents finished grade.
 FSR (Floor Space Ratio) is used to determine how much floor area may be built.
 Floor Area = Lot Size x FSR

How is the floor area calculated?

	Current Zoning		Basement Option	
	Square Feet	Formula	Square Feet	Formula
Lot Size	4,000	33' x 120'	4,000	33' x 120'
Maximum Total Floor Area	2,400	0.60 FSR	2,800	0.70 FSR
Maximum Above Grade Area*	2,040	0.16 + 1,400	1,800	0.45 FSR
Basement Area	360	(2,400 minus 2,040)	1,000	0.25 FSR
Maximum Building Footprint	1,200	30% of Lot Size	1,000	25% of Lot Size

Note: * With the basement option, maximum above grade floor area equals 0.45 FSR or (0.16 FSR + 1,400 sq.ft.), whichever is less.

BASEMENTS IN SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES

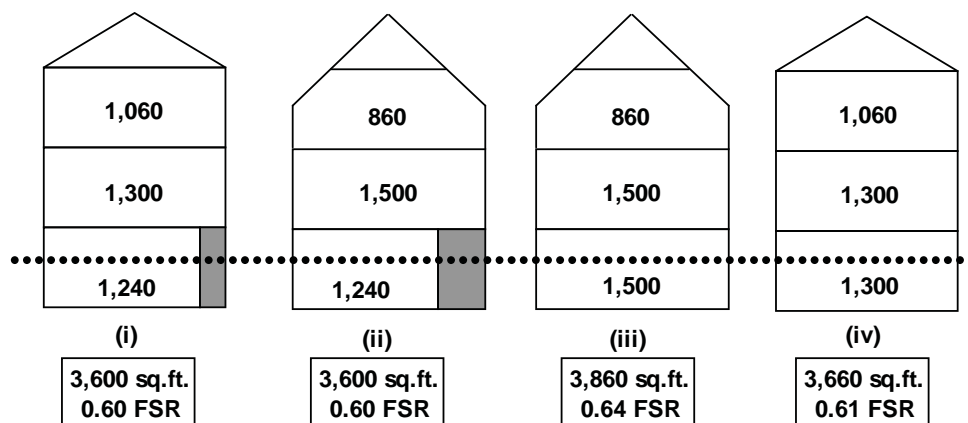
Example:

House on a **50 foot lot** in the **RS-5** zone

What could this house look like?

Current Zoning

Basement Option



Note: The dotted line in the diagram represents finished grade.
 FSR (Floor Space Ratio) is used to determine how much floor area may be built.
 Floor Area = Lot Size x FSR

How is the floor area calculated?



	Current Zoning		Basement Option	
	Square Feet	Formula	Square Feet	Formula
Lot Size	6,000	50' x 120'	6,000	50' x 120'
Maximum Total Floor Area	3,600	0.60 FSR	3,860	0.64 FSR
Maximum Above Grade Area*	2,360	0.16 + 1,400	2,360	0.39 FSR
Basement Area	1,240	(3,600 minus 2,360)	1,500	0.25 FSR
Maximum Building Footprint	1,680	28% of Lot Size	1,500	25% of Lot Size

Note: * With the basement option, maximum above grade floor area equals 0.45 FSR or (0.16 FSR + 1,400 sq.ft.), whichever is less.

BASEMENTS IN SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES

What are the potential benefits of the proposed basement option?

■ More Basements

Basements provide opportunities for a secondary suite, family room, utility room, workshop, and storage space. Secondary suites provide more affordable housing choices.

■ More Traditional House Form

A two storey house with a basement is more typical of the houses that were built before the 1950's.

■ More Housing Choices

The basement option, when added as an option to the zoning, provides more opportunities for different types of houses.

■ More Renovations / Fewer Demolitions

The basement option makes it possible to add a larger second storey to an existing one storey house with a basement. This could provide an incentive to retain an existing house.

■ More Green Space

With the basement option, the house footprint is reduced. A smaller building footprint leaves more open yard space.

■ No Impact on Land Values

With the basement option, houses would have more total floor area, but with all the additional floor area located in the basement. On smaller lots, these houses would also have less floor area located above ground level. Staff have been advised that this trade-off between above grade and basement space would not increase land values.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q Why can't basements just be "free" floorspace under the house?

A Allowing a "free" basement would increase floor area by a significant amount, depending on lot size and zoning. On a 33 foot lot in RS-1, total floor area would increase by 38%, from 2,400 to 3,300 square feet. In other zones, total floor area could increase by 50%.

A large floor area increase provides a strong incentive to redevelop existing single family houses. One objective of the proposed basement option is to meet the need for basement space in a way that does not increase the rate of house demolitions.

Q Will the basement proposal result in larger houses?

A Yes and No. With the basement proposal, total floor area increases by up to 17%. However, all of the increase is in the basement. In addition, some floor area is moved from above grade to the basement level. As a result, houses will not appear to be larger and in some cases could even look smaller. This increase is referred to as "invisible" density.

Q Does the basement proposal mean the City is allowing more suites?

A No. All the single family zones already permit a house with a secondary suite. However, the basement option may make it easier to provide a suite in a house.

Q If the City is going to enable more suites, will there be parking?

A Yes. The Parking By-law sets the required number of off-street parking spaces. For a newer house with a suite, a minimum of two parking spaces must be provided.

Q Will I be required to build a secondary suite in my basement?

A No. The choice of providing a suite is entirely up to the owner of a single family house.

Q Will my house be made non-conforming?

A No. The basement option will be available as an option. Any house that conforms to current zoning by-laws will remain conforming and will continue to be permitted in the zoning.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q I have a one storey house with a basement. How does the basement option help me if I want to add a second floor?

A Many one storey bungalows on a 33 foot lot have a full basement, with about 1,000 square feet on each level. Under current zoning, about 400 square feet could be built in a second floor addition. With the basement option, up to 800 square feet could be built.

Q Will the basement proposal increase my property taxes?

A Property taxes are based on two components: land value and building or improvement value. The basement option allows more floor area in the basement, which is less desirable than above grade space. This trade-off between above grade and basement space means that land values should not increase.

Any property tax increase will depend on the improvement value of the house, which depends on factors such as size, age, overall condition of the house, and construction costs. If the value of a house increases more than neighbouring houses, then property taxes for that house could increase.

Q How much more does a new house with a basement cost to build?

A Construction costs were estimated for two single family houses (without a suite) using a program called the Marshall-Swift calculator.

1) 33 foot lot, two storey house with no basement, 2,200 square feet:
Cost: \$244,560 Cost per sq.ft.: \$111.

2) 33 foot lot, two storey house with a finished basement, 2,700 square feet:
Cost: \$266,300 Cost per sq.ft.: \$99.

Adding a suite increases total cost by about \$6,000.

Q What's next for the basement option work program?

A Staff expect to present single family zoning amendments to Council in May, 2009 with a recommendation for referral to Public Hearing in June, 2009.

Q What is happening with Laneway Housing?

A Staff are developing regulations to permit Laneway Housing for family members or rental accommodation, in a way that maintains backyard open space.