



City of Vancouver *Land Use and Development Policies and Guidelines*

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REZONING POLICY FOR GREENER BUILDINGS

Adopted by City Council on June 10, 2008

1 Policy

That it be Council Policy that all rezonings for buildings that meet the minimum requirements to participate in the LEED™ for New Construction (NC) program, be required to establish designs that would achieve a minimum equivalent of LEED™ Silver, with a minimum of 3 optimize energy performance points, 1 water efficiency point and 1 storm water point. Buildings that are not eligible to participate in LEED™ NC due to form of development shall achieve BuiltGreen BC Gold™ with a score of Energuide 80, or an equivalent achievement in green design.

The City will negotiate an equivalent green standard for buildings that are ineligible to participate in either LEED™ or BuiltGreen™ BC. The application of this policy shall emphasize approaches that use green design practices to reduce energy need before the application of green energy technologies.

This policy also applies to Heritage Revitalization Agreements (HRAs) where density is being increased. As with rezonings, HRAs often have both heritage aspects and new development aspects. For heritage components in either HRAs or rezonings, the LEED™ equivalency requirement will not directly apply, however reasonable design efforts shall be made to improve green performance where appropriate while respecting heritage aspirations and promoting heritage retention.

This policy will apply to any new applications for rezoning or HRA received after May 13, 2008.

Staff shall undertake consultation and education with the development industry, and report back to Council with recommendations, with the intent of raising the LEED™ and BuiltGreen BC equivalency requirements in this policy to LEED™ Gold and BuiltGreen BC Platinum on January 1st, 2010, with continued efforts to move to a more performance-based approach for green buildings policy.

In the EcoDensity public consultations, the majority of commentators told the staff team they would like to see green performance required, not bonused for. This Action puts this into effect by requiring rezonings and Heritage Revitalization Agreements (HRAs) to have higher green standards than buildings that do not go through rezoning. No corresponding increase in density is negotiated in return for this performance, and increases in density through the rezoning would be subject to all usual public benefits and Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) discussions.

Staff are also working on the Green Building Strategy to apply new requirements to all types of buildings (with or without a rezoning), including single family, through Vancouver's Building By-law. However this work is not currently anticipated to result in a green requirement as high as this policy for rezoning would require. Thus this policy is based on the principle that where a rezoning is requested, it is reasonable for Council to require a higher standard.

Over time, green standards and requirements will increase for all buildings. It will be important to raise requirements for buildings requiring rezonings and those that do not, in somewhat of a "lock-step" manner, to ensure a disincentive to rezone is not inadvertently created through too great a difference between the requirements. It is staff's recommendation that rezoning green standards continue to be higher than non-rezoning green standards, however that the gap between be kept workable and strategic.

At present, using green building rating systems such as LEED™ and BuiltGreen BC that are now easily available, although imperfect, represents an immediate start and a significant increase in green building requirements over the status quo. It is noted that these systems are constantly being updated and improved to address many recognized weaknesses. In the meantime, to make sure that this interim policy reflects City priorities around energy, water and storm water improvements, this Action specifies LEED™ points that must be met instead of earning rating points for less important green features. Thus it balances flexibility with clear minimal expectations for key environmental aspects, addressing one main weaknesses of LEED™.

Because green requirements are continually becoming more feasible, staff will also examine, in consultation with the building industry, increasing the rezoning standard. The development industry has suggested waiting to raise to LEED™ Gold equivalent to 2012 to provide more learning time for the industry. Staff believe two years of notice (2010) is sufficient to allow industry members to prepare and educate themselves.

It is recognised that the intent is to move to a performance-based, rather than a checklist-based, approach as rapidly as possible. If by 2010 a performance based goal is seen as a feasible alternative to raising the standard to LEED™ Gold, such an option will be presented to Council for consideration.

The evolving Green Building Strategy and this new rezoning policy take the City along the path toward its commitment to carbon neutrality for all new buildings by 2030. Staff investigations suggest that this policy would make Vancouver the first North American city to establish a policy for LEED™ for privately owned buildings as high as Silver, and note that the required points for energy, water and storm water further improve the performance beyond "base Silver".

This policy represents a new requirement of rezonings, and by itself does not enable rezoning considerations otherwise directed by existing policy.