

From: **"Mochrie, Paul"**

To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**

Date: 2024-06-11 7:38:36 AM

Subject: Council Memo - Rainwater Management to Facilitate New Housing - RTS#16151

Attachments: Memo to Mayor and Council - Rainwater Management to Facilitate New Housing.pdf

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Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached memo from Corrie Okell. A short summary of the memo is as follows:

- This memo is a report back regarding Council's request for a rainwater management regulation for multiplexes ([RTS 15854](#)).
- Subsequent to Council's approval of the "missing middle" initiative, the Province has enacted additional legislation to further expand housing development.
- Considering the recent pace of change, staff are cognizant that a phased implementation of rainwater-related regulation may add confusion for industry and impede the efficiency of permit processing.
- As such, staff will return to Council in 2025 with a straightforward and comprehensive recommendation for rainwater management, applicable to all buildings through the Vancouver Building Bylaw.

If you have any questions, please contact Corrie Okell at [corrie.okell@vancouver.ca](mailto:corrie.okell@vancouver.ca)

Best,  
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)  
City Manager  
City of Vancouver



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x m k y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and s lilw ta (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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## MEMORANDUM

June 10, 2024

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager  
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager  
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk  
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC  
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office  
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Josh White, General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability  
Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering Services

FROM: Corrie Okell  
General Manager, Development, Buildings and Licensing

SUBJECT: Rainwater Management to Facilitate New Housing

RTS #: 16151

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This memo is a report back to Council's request for rainwater management requirements for multiplexes ([RTS 15854](#)), to facilitate new housing while helping to reduce the risk of sewer back-ups, overland flooding and combined sewer overflows.

### Background

In response to Council's instruction, a simple regulation with minimal permit processing implications has been developed. As structured, a plumbing contractor can pick from a menu of detention tanks available off-the-shelf, without requiring a professional engineer. Consultation was conducted in late 2023 - early 2024, and the proposals were refined with feedback.

Succeeding Council's "missing middle" initiative and creation of the R1-1 zone for multiplexes, however, the Province enacted legislation to expand small-scale multi-unit housing, which impacts certain RT zones and the First Shaughnessy District, and created "transit-oriented areas" ([RTS 16232](#)). As housing density increases, the infiltration area for rainwater shrinks, and more sewage and rainwater runoff are conveyed to an already strained system. In this context and complementing public sewer system improvements, rainwater management regulations are needed for all of these new development forms. This memo introduces a pathway for new rainwater management regulations for *all* new developments as of July 2025.

## Discussion

Staff are concerned that repeated regulatory change in rapid cadence will compromise industry understanding and the efficiency of permit processing. Instead of a piecemeal approach, staff will return to Council in 2025 with one, simple, prescriptive, affordable and easily implemented Building By-law regulation for rainwater management addressing *all* new low-density developments, proposed to come into effect on July 1, 2025. The working model builds upon the regulation prepared for multiplexes (Appendix A).

This approach allows time for the new housing legislation to stabilise, for Engineering Services to assess the sewer system's needs and refine specifications, and for fulsome consultation with homeowners, small homebuilders, architects, plumbing contractors, suppliers and other stakeholders. It reduces the frequency of change and applicant frustration, with a single regulatory transition that is more clearly understood and administered. Because new developments may generate increased rainwater runoff, this approach may assume some incremental risk as new multiplex projects are accepted in the interim without additional rainwater management controls. To provide context for the scope of this risk, as of April 25, 141 multiplex applications have been accepted, 71% of which are for 3 or 4 units and none of which exceeds 6 units.

In the realm of complex buildings, Council had expanded rainwater management requirements for new, complex buildings (so-called "Part 3 buildings" in the Building By-law) as of January 1, 2024 ([vancouver.ca/rainwater](https://vancouver.ca/rainwater)). Engineering Services foresees that constraints in certain "transit oriented areas" will necessitate private-property rainwater management controls that go beyond those requirements. Presently, site-specific rainwater management requirements can be placed by Engineering Services as conditions on Referral Reports, in CD-1 by-laws, or through District Schedules. This is administratively cumbersome and such information is not easily accessible. With the report back to Council in 2025, staff would present a proposal for regulatory simplification and transparency. It would propose a centralised "hub" for area-specific rainwater management parameters, eliminating today's regulatory diffusion of rainwater requirements, and would be accompanied by a map like the [Digital Zoning Map](#).

In summary, staff will bring forward in 2025 a Council Report with proposals for simple and complex buildings (Part 9 and Part 3 buildings) that would apply rainwater management requirements to all new developments in the City of Vancouver as of July 1, 2025, in a manner consistent with Council's objectives.



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## APPENDIX A

### Proposed Concept for Rainwater Management Requirements in the Building By-law

Rainwater management requirements for private properties are presently in place for all new Part 3 (complex) buildings, except those used exclusively for residential occupancy with up to 8 principal dwelling units (summary at [vancouver.ca/rainwater](http://vancouver.ca/rainwater)).

With Council’s approval of “missing middle” housing in September 2023, staff were instructed to develop a “simple and prescriptive regulation for managing rainwater through a detention tank” ([RTS 15854](#), Recommendation I and Appendix K). Subsequent provincial legislation further expanded development opportunities. To be refined with public feedback, the proposed concept for city-wide rainwater management requirements would be as follows:

**Table 1: Rainwater Management Compliance Pathway for New Developments (DRAFT)**

Site Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Floor Space Ratio (FSR)	Compliance Pathway
Up to 1,000	Up to 1.0	Simple and prescriptive
	Greater than 1.0	Engineered
Greater than 1,000	Any	Engineered

Where:

- The “Simple and prescriptive” pathway refers to **Table 2**, below.
- The “Engineered” pathway means the present by-law requirements.

**Table 2: Simple and Prescriptive Pathway (DRAFT)**

For eligible properties identified by **Table 1**, a detention tank would be installed to meet the following specifications:

Site Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Minimum Working Storage Capacity (L)	Orifice Plate Diameter (mm)
No greater than 400	<i>Specifications to be developed by Engineering Services, accounting for industry supply and site constraints</i>	
400 - 500		
500 - 750		
750 - 1,000		

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