

From: ["van Dyk, Donny"](#)

To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)

Date: 12/10/2025 6:48:05 PM

Subject: Upcoming news release: New Vancouver building rules aim to improve safety and housing supply

Dear Mayor and Council,

The City will be issuing the news release below regarding new Abandoned and Vacated Buildings By-law and space-saving stair designs.

Please keep this news release embargoed until it goes live from the City media email account.

Maria will reply to this email with the relevant Vancouver.ca link and social media links, once these are live.

Thanks,
Donny

Donny van Dyk (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver

City of Vancouver
News Release
December 10, 2025

New Vancouver building rules aim to improve safety and housing supply
Vancouver approves new space-saving stair designs and Abandoned and Vacated Buildings By-law

Today, to support safety and improve housing supply Vancouver City Council approved the [Abandoned and Vacated Buildings By-law](#) (AVBB) and [new space-saving stair designs](#).

"Vancouverites deserve buildings and neighbourhoods that are both safe and full of possibility," said Mayor Ken Sim. "Modernizing our building rules is about making practical, forward-thinking changes that protect people and support more housing options."

Abandoned and Vacated Buildings By-law (AVBB)

The AVBB sets clear maintenance standards for vacated buildings and strengthens the City's ability to intervene early and act when a property poses safety or health risks.

"Neglected, vacant buildings are more than an eyesore, they threaten the safety, health and well-being of nearby residents and anyone who might take shelter inside," said Saul Schwebs, Chief Building Official. "The AVBB provides the tools we need to secure or remove unsafe buildings, uphold community standards, and protect potential long-term housing units in Vancouver."

Poorly maintained vacated buildings can become fire hazards, attract unsafe activity, and remove potential long-term homes from Vancouver's housing stock. Once a building falls into disrepair, it often requires significant, costly upgrades or demolition. The AVBB will help prevent buildings from becoming derelict, protecting public safety, reducing the burden on City resources and helping ensure sites can return to housing use more efficiently.

New space-saving stair designs

City Council unanimously approved with an amendment new space-saving stair designs will create more flexible apartment layouts, improve access to natural light and fresh air, and make it possible to build homes on smaller sites, while still prioritizing the safety of residents, visitors and first responders. They were developed following a comprehensive review of the latest research and consultation with the Vancouver Fire Rescue Services, industry experts and building officials from other municipalities.

"During a fire or emergency, stairwells are the critical lifelines for residents and first responders," said Karen Fry, Fire Chief and General Manager of Vancouver Fire Rescue Services. "The two new stair design options maintain a good level of protection needed to keep those pathways safe while supporting new housing options for Vancouver."

As approved additions to the [Vancouver Building By-law](#) (VBBL), the new space-saving stair designs can be used in buildings up to six storeys and include:

- External single egress stairs: A single exterior stair and corridor that maximizes space efficiency, enabling more housing options such as family-sized, multi-bedroom units on smaller lots in low-density neighbourhoods.
- Scissor stairs: Two staircases within a single enclosure, separated by fire-proofed walls, providing two pathways while saving space. A key improvement removes the minimum distance requirement between exit doors, making it more space efficient.

Next steps

Amendments to the VBBL to allow new space-saving stair designs and the new Abandoned and Vacated Buildings By-law are expected to be enacted at the next City Council meeting on January 20.

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Media contact:

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Note to editors: Please see amended motions below. This is a draft copy provided for your understanding and the published minutes are the official record of the meeting.

THAT Council approve, in principle, proposed amendments to the Building By-law regarding Single Exterior Exit Stair and Passageway and Space Efficient Scissor Stairs provisions as set out in this report and generally in accordance with Appendix A;

FURTHER THAT Council instruct the Director of Legal Services to bring forward the necessary by-law amendments for enactment by Council, generally in accordance with Appendix A;

AND FURTHER THAT Council directs staff to explore and report back on work that may help to

implement this new typology of building in conjunction with zoning to unlock new opportunities for low-rise apartment construction in Vancouver.