

Character Home Retention Incentives

Welcome



This Character Home Zoning Review explores ways to encourage retention of pre-1940 character homes in single-family (RS zoned) neighbourhoods. City Council requested this work as part of the Heritage Action Plan (HAP), a comprehensive review of the City's Heritage Conservation Program.

In this phase, we are proposing retention incentives for character homes in all single-family (RS zoned) neighbourhoods across the city. We are seeking public feedback on these to inform and shape directions and recommendations to City Council.

The information is organized in the following categories:

- 1 Background
- 2 Proposed Directions
- 3 Frequently Asked Questions



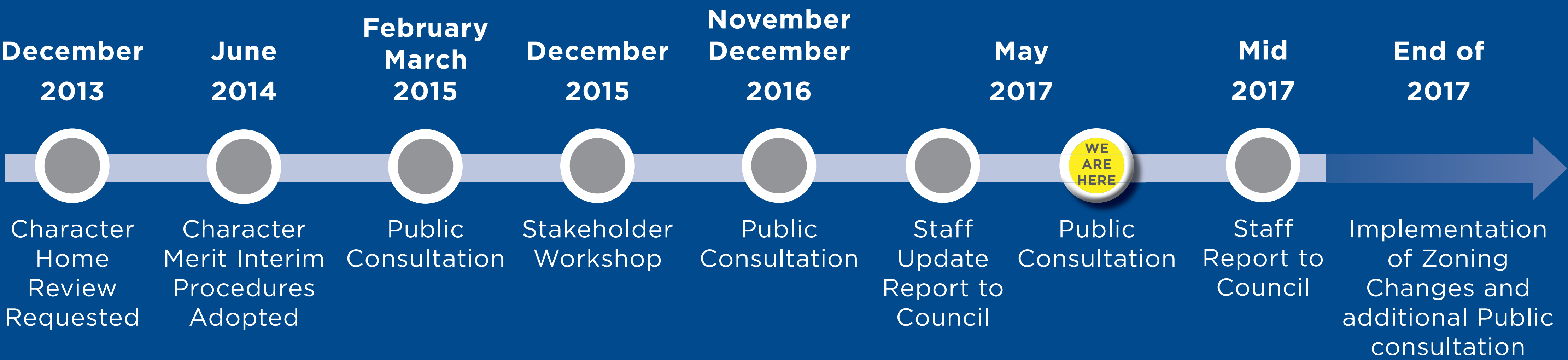
Character Home Retention Incentives



Community input is an important part of the Character Home Zoning Review. Please review the information boards, ask questions, complete a questionnaire and share your views.

The Information boards and questionnaire are available at vancouver.ca/characterhomereview

Review Timeline



Character Home Zoning Review Overview

The Review looked at how we can encourage the retention of pre-1940 character homes in single-family (RS zones) neighbourhoods.

A variety of options and ideas were presented through a public consultation process between November 2016 and Jan 2017.

Highlights include:

- Four open houses and a practitioners workshop
- Over **1,000** attended public consultation events
- Received over **3,300** completed questionnaires

In May 2017, we provided City Council with an update including a summary of public feedback and proposed directions for optional zoning incentives to encourage homeowners to retain their character homes.

What we heard

- 68% felt the City should encourage character home retention
- 67% agreed with the intent of the floor area options
- Two-thirds supported building design options to support character home retention, such as design guidelines (75%)

Summary of Proposed Directions

- Introduce optional zoning incentives to encourage character home retention, available to home owners in all single-family RS zones across the city, including increased floor area, new housing types, and the ability to strata-title.
- No changes to zoning for new house construction are proposed at this time.

Addressing Vancouver's Housing Crisis

As housing in Vancouver is increasingly unaffordable for our residents, the City is taking bold strides forward with new initiatives to serve the needs of our residents – now and into the future. *Housing Vancouver* will be the City's new 10-year strategy to improve housing affordability for every resident by creating the right types of homes to meet the needs and incomes of the people who live and work in Vancouver.

The Character Home Zoning Review aligns with the *Housing Vancouver* emerging directions by exploring more opportunities for rental housing and family-oriented housing in Single-family neighbourhoods.

To learn how the City is addressing housing affordability, please see the *Housing Vancouver* boards. Join the conversation and help shape the future of Housing Vancouver by visiting vancouver.ca/housing.



Character Merit Assessment

A house is considered a ‘Character Home’ if it was built before January 1, 1940 and still has original features that give it a distinctive quality or appearance. A set of criteria are used to determine character merit of pre-1940 homes. This assessment is usually done at the time of a development proposal.

Zoning incentives are available for homeowners who choose to retain their pre-1940 character homes.

NEW Character Merit Checklist

In May 2017, the Character Merit Checklist was updated as follows:

Must have:

- ☐ Original massing and primary roof form

Plus any four of the following:

- ☐ Entry: Original open or partially filled in front porch, veranda or other original entry feature
- ☐ Cladding: Original exterior wall materials or cladding consistent with pre-1940
- ☐ Window openings (50% or more): Original location, size and shape
- ☐ Period details or decorative elements: Two or more elements, e.g. brackets, beams or joist ends, half-timbering, stone or brick chimney, etc.
- ☐ Streetscape context: The house is part of 2 or more character homes on a street

Why Pre-1940?

- Many residential neighbourhoods were built before the start of World War II.
- Homes of this era were built by skilled craftsmen using high-quality materials.



What about Post-1940 Homes?

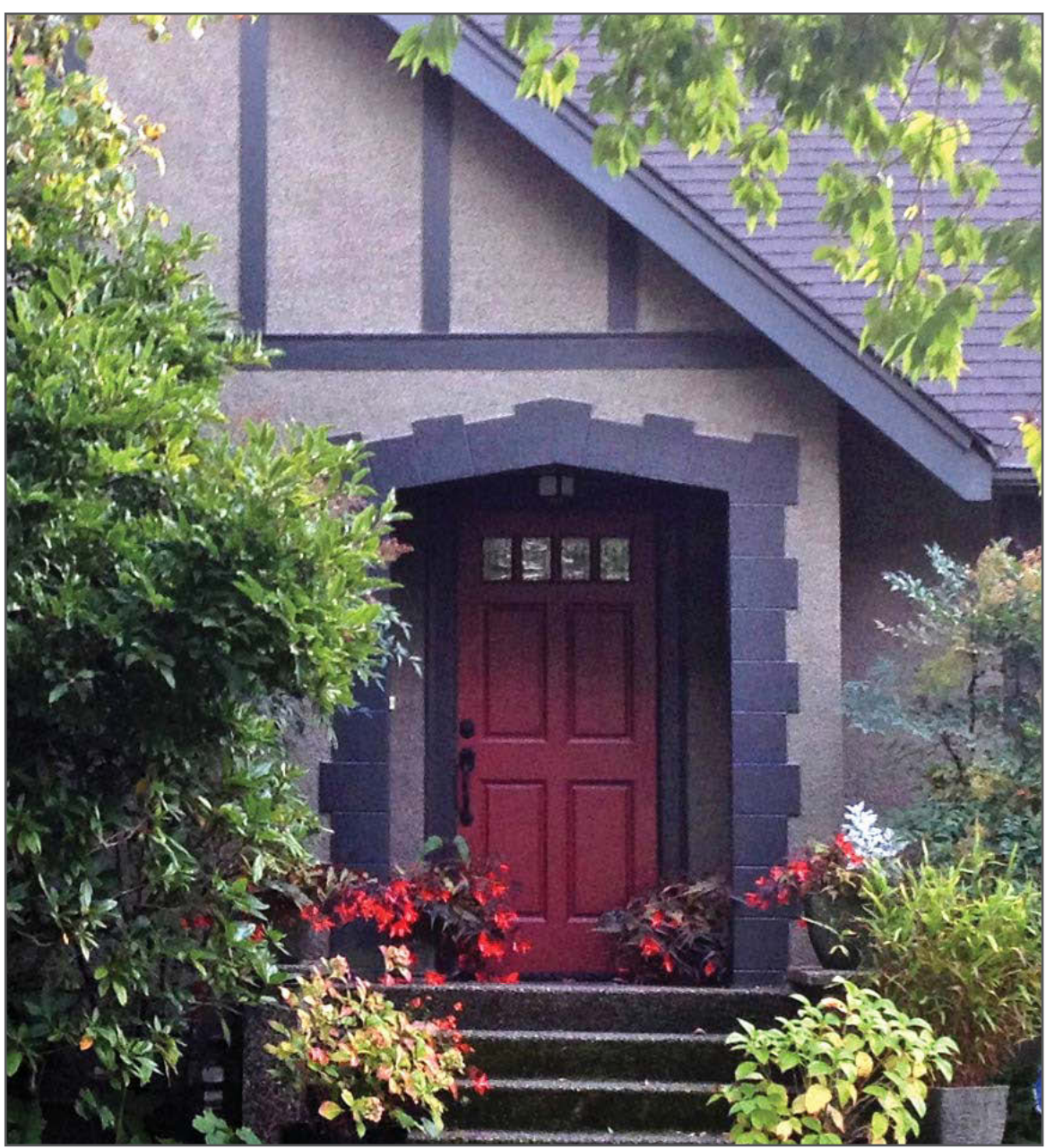
- Post-war homes were simpler in style and used lower quality materials.
- Some may have unique character worth conserving and could be candidates for heritage incentives.
- Buildings as young as 20 years old can be added to the Heritage Register.



NEW

Special considerations

- An altered pre-1940 home may qualify, if character elements are restored as part of a development proposal
- A house built in or after 1940 may qualify, if it has particular architectural merit and retains original and distinctive character features



Development Permit - The process through which a property can be approved for development under current zoning.

Outright approval - Land use and density permitted under the current zoning, provided that all the regulations and provisions of the Zoning and Development Bylaw and the Parking Bylaw are met.

Conditional approval - Land use and density may be permitted by the Director of Planning, typically with conditions, after considering the intent of the zoning and applicable policies and guidelines approved by Council.

Dwelling Uses - Includes the following uses:

Infill – A type of development permitted on the site of an existing heritage or character building to encourage its retention. Infill development may be strata-titled in some zones.

Laneway House – A Laneway House is a small, detached home built on a single-family lot at the lane. Laneway Houses are for rental or family occupancy and cannot be strata-titled.

Multiple Conversion Dwelling - A building converted to contain only two or more dwelling units. Can be strata titled.

One-Family Dwelling - A building containing one dwelling unit.

One-Family Dwelling with Secondary Suite - A building containing two dwelling units, a larger principal dwelling unit and a smaller secondary suite (rental, non-strata).

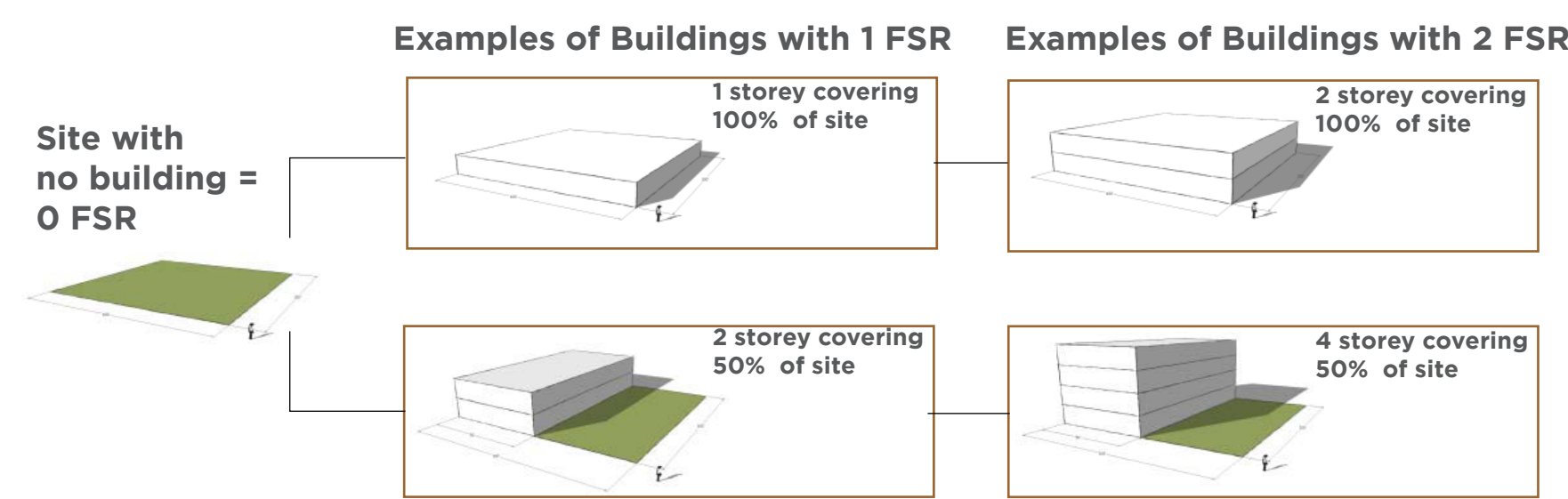
Secondary Suite - A smaller dwelling unit within a larger one-family dwelling, which must have a separate external access and may have shared internal access (rental, non strata).

Floor Area - Floor area is the total size or area of a building on all floors:

Above Grade Floor Area - The amount of floor area above the basement and/or cellar.

Basement-enabled - Policy approved in 2009 which increased the total floor area permitted in RS zones to allow development of full basements (not partial crawl space) to accommodate provision of basement suites.

Floor Space Ratio (FSR) - The ratio of the floor area of a building relative to the area of the lot on which it is located. In this manner, zoning regulations for FSR establish the size of a building based on the lot size. For example, a building with a density of 2.0 FSR has a floor area equal to twice that of the land on which it is located.



Floor Area Exclusions - Many district schedules allow exclusions from floor area calculations. Typically, exclusions are available for porches, sun decks and for thermal or building envelope performance. These spaces are not counted in the overall floor area of a building.

Principal Building - The building containing the primary land use on a site, as distinct from an infill or Laneway House, which can only be provided in conjunction with a principal building.

Relaxation - The City’s Zoning and Development By-Law and Parking By-Law allow for limited relaxations of certain regulations. Usually relaxations would be considered in the case of site specific hardships, such as irregularly shaped lots, or steeply sloping sites, where it may be difficult to comply with the regulations. Relaxations may also be considered for additions or alterations to existing buildings to facilitate retention. In some areas of the city, zoning regulations may also include the potential for increased building area, where certain guidelines are met, or where social or community goals are achieved.

Strata-titled - A form of ownership where multiple units on a site may be sold separately under the provisions of the provincial Strata Property Act.

Zoning Incentives for Character Home Retention

Character homes add definition and vibrancy to our neighbourhoods. The proposed optional zoning incentives encourage the retention of pre-1940 character homes in single-family (RS zones) neighbourhoods across the city. They introduce new types of housing and the option to strata-title. This improves affordability for residents by increasing rental and home ownership choices, and can increase value making the retention of character homes an attractive option.

1 Increased Floor Area

Floor area can be a factor in whether a character home is retained or demolished. Increasing allowable floor area for sites with a character home encourages the retention of these homes by providing opportunities to:

- Renovate and modernize by adding more living space, such as an addition or features like dormers;
- Build a second dwelling on a property, such as infill in the rear yard.



2 Multiple Conversion Dwelling

A multiple conversion dwelling is an existing house that has been divided into two or more dwelling units. They are currently permitted on larger lots in some RS zones. Multiple conversion dwellings could be allowed on smaller sites in RS zones when a character home is retained.

- Maintains the neighbourhood and streetscape character
- Can be strata-titled and sold separately, or rented



3 Infill

An infill is a second house built on a property with an existing house. They are currently permitted on larger lots in some RS zones. Infill could be allowed on smaller sites in RS zones when a character home is retained.

- Larger than a laneway house
- Can be strata-titled and sold separately, or rented



4 Strata-titling

Currently in single-family RS zones, only single-title ownership is permitted. This means a site, regardless of the number of units, can only be sold as whole. Infill and multiple conversion dwellings (but not laneway houses) can be strata-titled. This allows home owners to sell these dwelling units separately, or keep them as rental units.





Character Home Retention Incentives in RS Zoning

There are ten different single-family RS zones in Vancouver. Incentives for these zones can be broadly grouped into two categories based on how floor area is calculated.



| | Current Zoning | Proposed Zoning Incentives for Character Home Retention | | |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| | Existing Single Family Dwelling with Secondary Suite (rental) and Laneway House (rental) | Floor Area Same as existing | Multiple Conversion Dwelling Option Strata-titling permitted | Infill Option Strata-titling permitted |
| RS-1 RS-1A/1B RS-2 RS-4 RS-5 RS-6 RS-7 | 0.7 FSR Total | 0.75 FSR Total | 0.75 FSR Total | 0.83 FSR Total |
| RS-3 | Outright Above Grade: 0.16 FSR + 130m ² Conditional Above Grade: 0.2 FSR + 130m ² | Total Above Grade: 0.25 FSR + 130m ² | Total Above Grade: 0.25 FSR + 130m ² | Total Above Grade: 0.3 FSR + 130m ² |
| RS-3A | Outright Above Grade: 0.12 FSR + 130m ² Conditional Above Grade: 0.2 FSR + 130m ² | | | |

* Existing houses
** RS-5 and RS-6 zones

Current Zoning

Typical Existing House

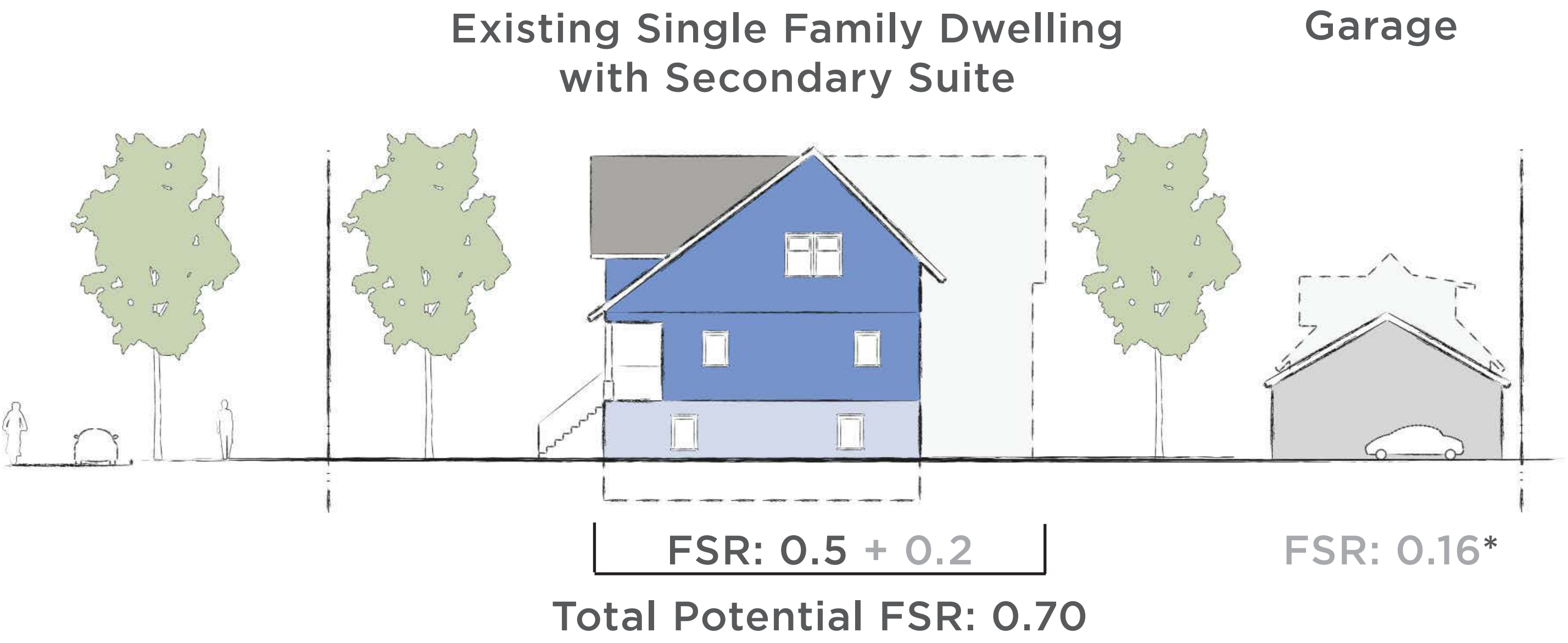
Existing FSR: 0.5

Allowable FSR: 0.7

Laneway House: 0.16

Home Owner

Rental Unit



Proposed Zoning Incentives for Character Home Retention (Examples)

Floor Area

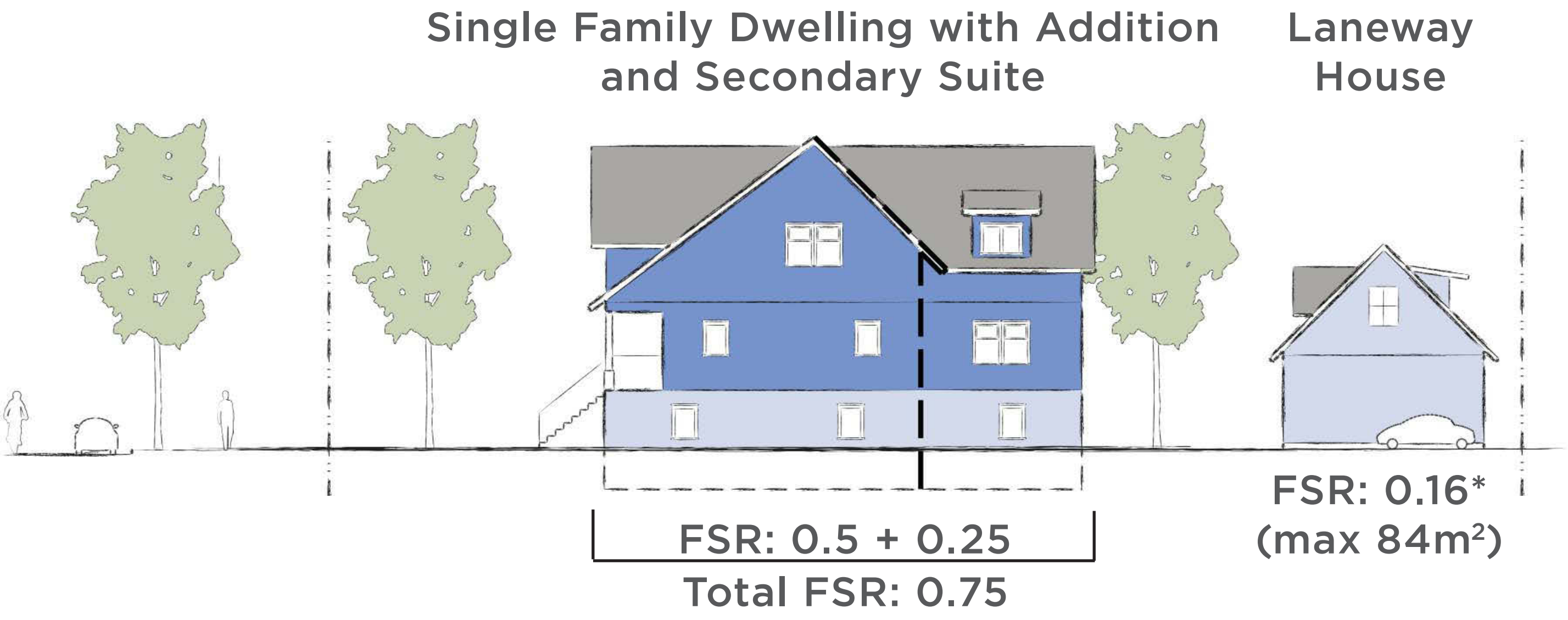
Proposed FSR: 0.75

Laneway House: 0.16

5% Additional Floor Area

Home Owner

Rental Unit



Multiple Conversion Dwelling (MCD) Option

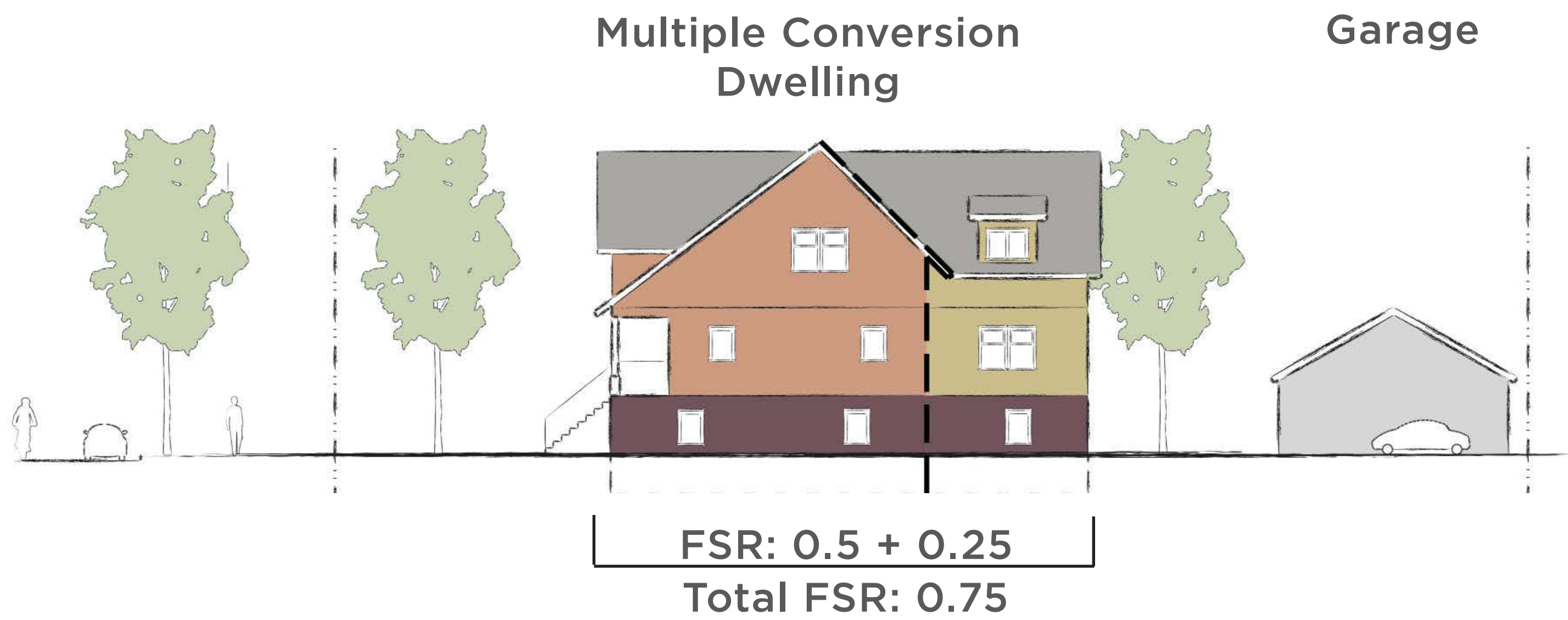
Proposed FSR: 0.75

5% Additional Floor Area and Strata Permitted

Unit 1

Unit 2

Unit 3



Infill Option

Proposed FSR: 0.58

Infill: 0.25 (max 186m²)

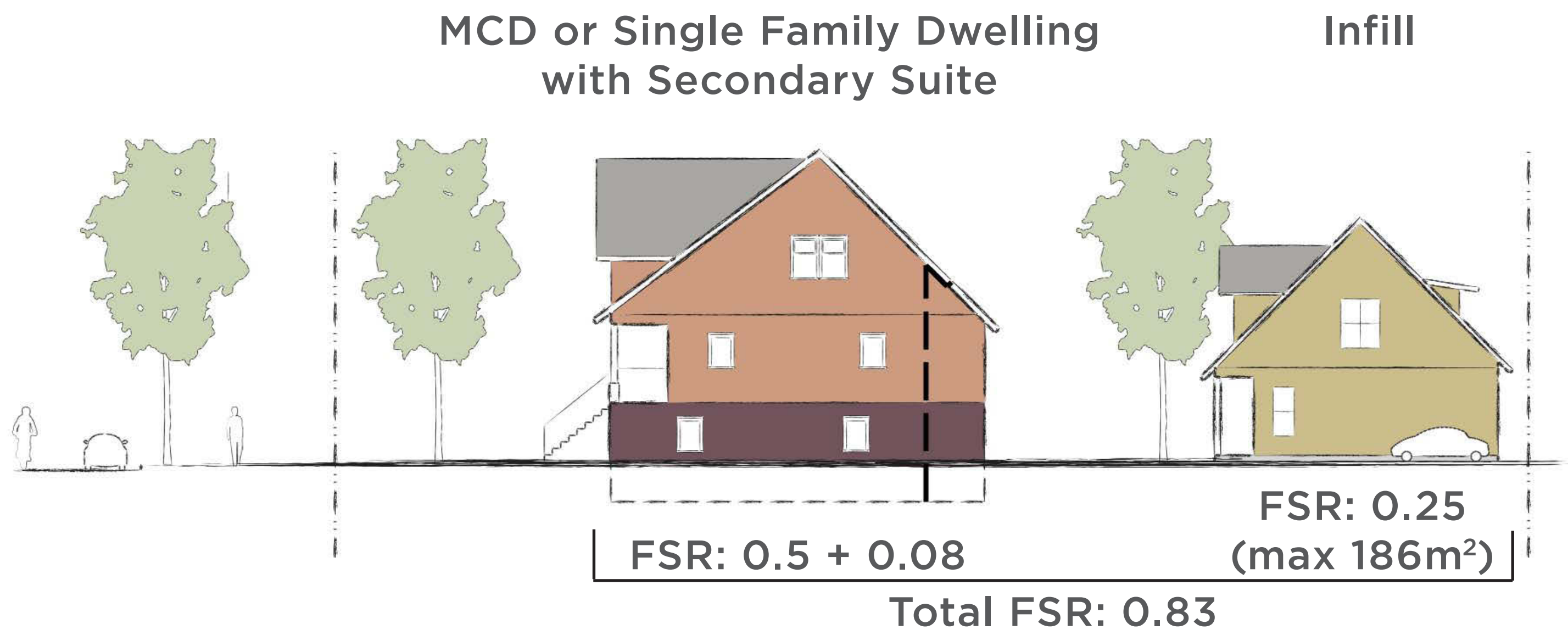
Proposed Site FSR: 0.83

13% Additional Floor Area with Infill and Strata Permitted

Unit 1

Unit 2

Unit 3



* As per existing Laneway House regulations and guidelines, up to 0.16 FSR is allowed in addition to that of the principal building.

Current Zoning

Typical Existing House

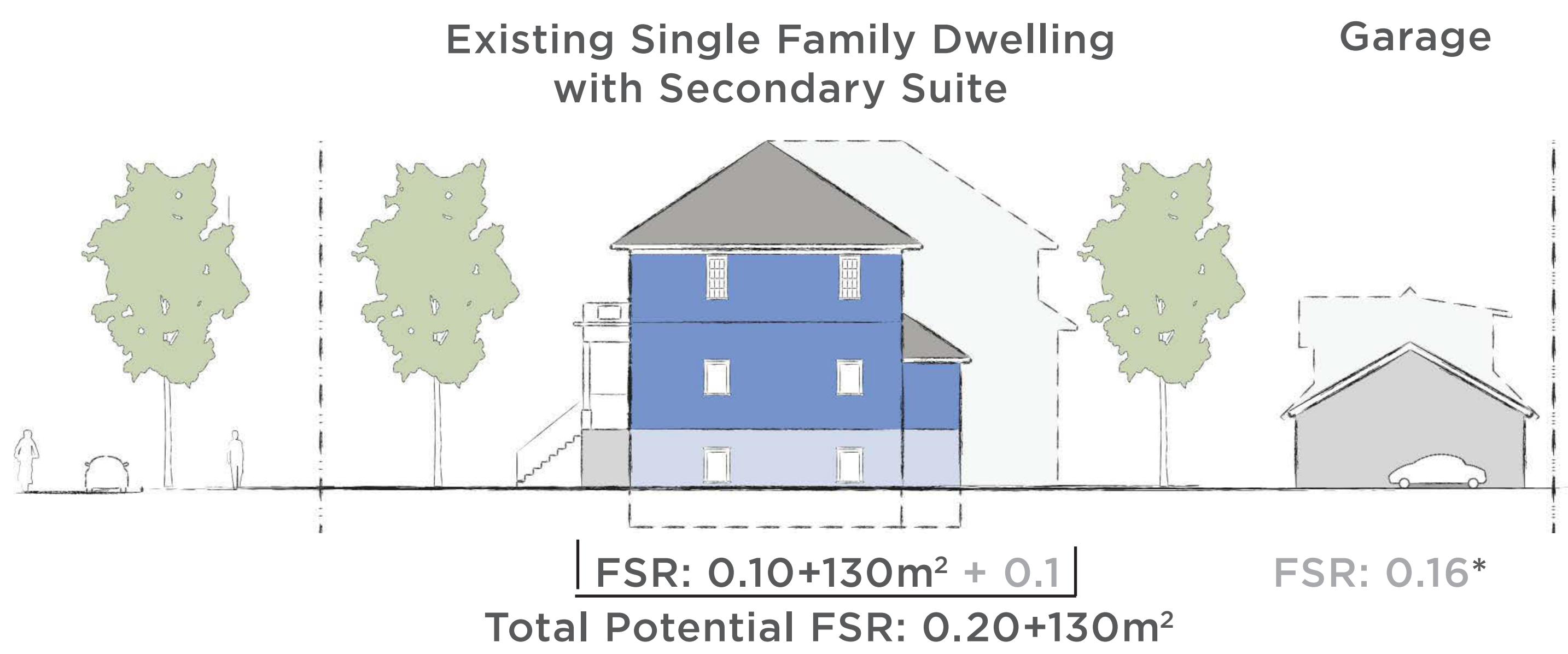
Existing FSR: 0.1+130m²

Allowable FSR: 0.2+130m²

Laneway House: 0.16

Home Owner

Rental Unit



Proposed Zoning Incentives for Character Home Retention (Examples)

Floor Area

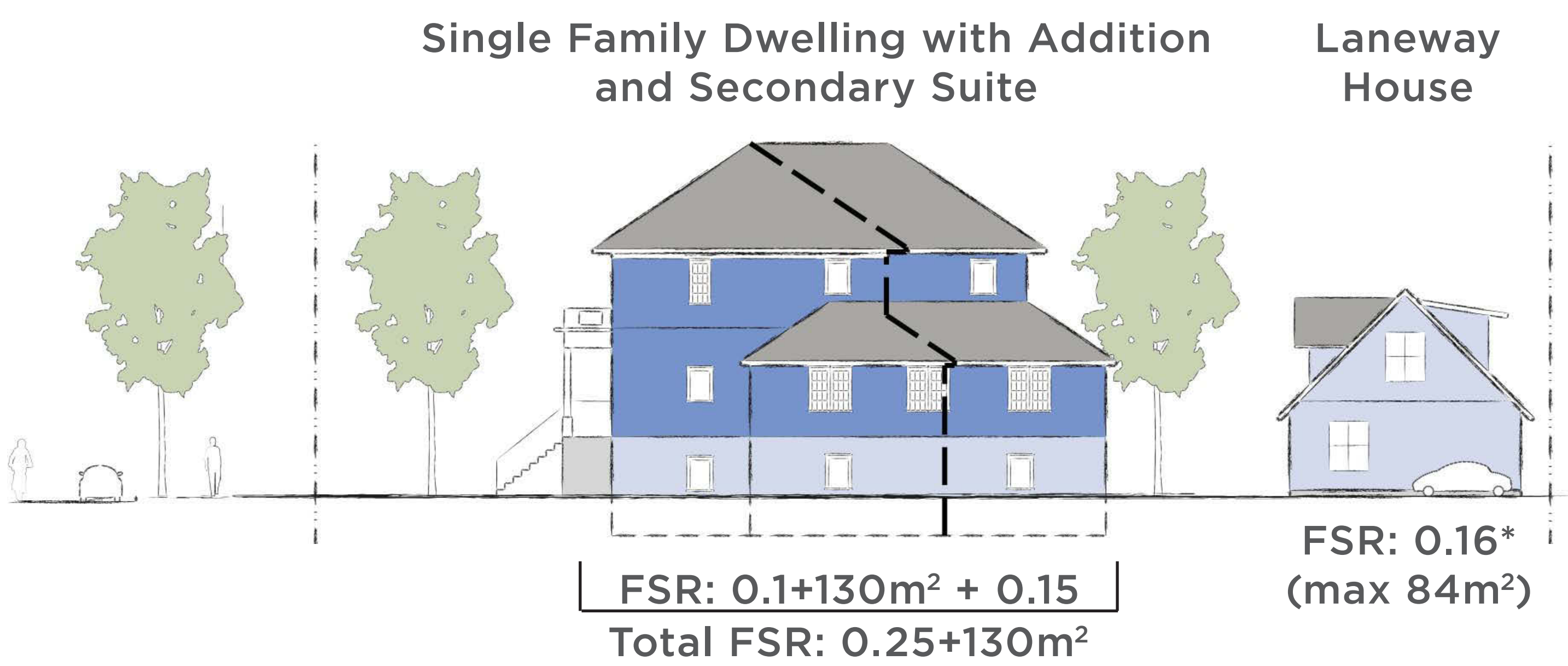
Proposed FSR: 0.25+130m²

Laneway House: 0.16

5% Additional Floor Area

Home Owner

Rental Unit



Multiple Conversion Dwelling (MCD) Option

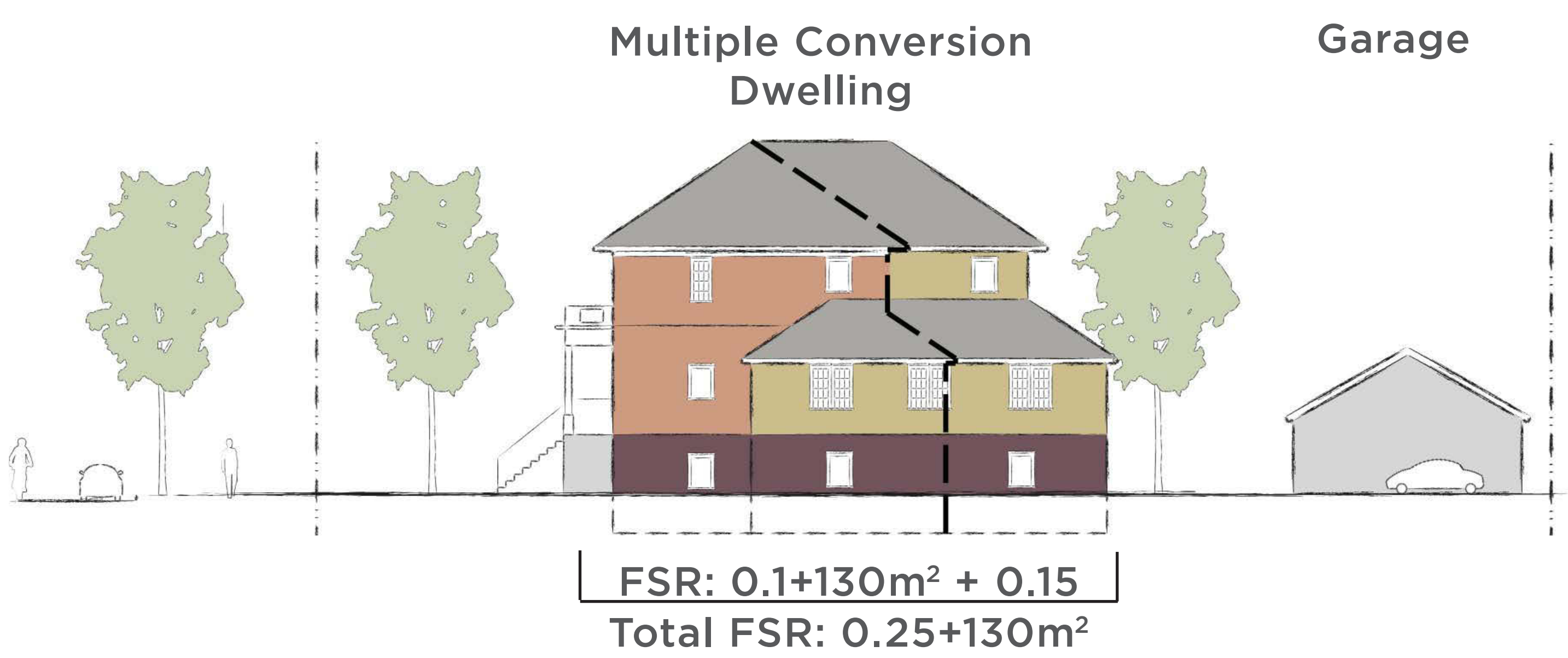
Proposed FSR: 0.25+130m²

5% Additional Floor Area and Strata Permitted

Unit 1

Unit 2

Unit 3



Infill Option

Proposed FSR: 0.10+130m²

Infill: 0.25 (max 186m²)

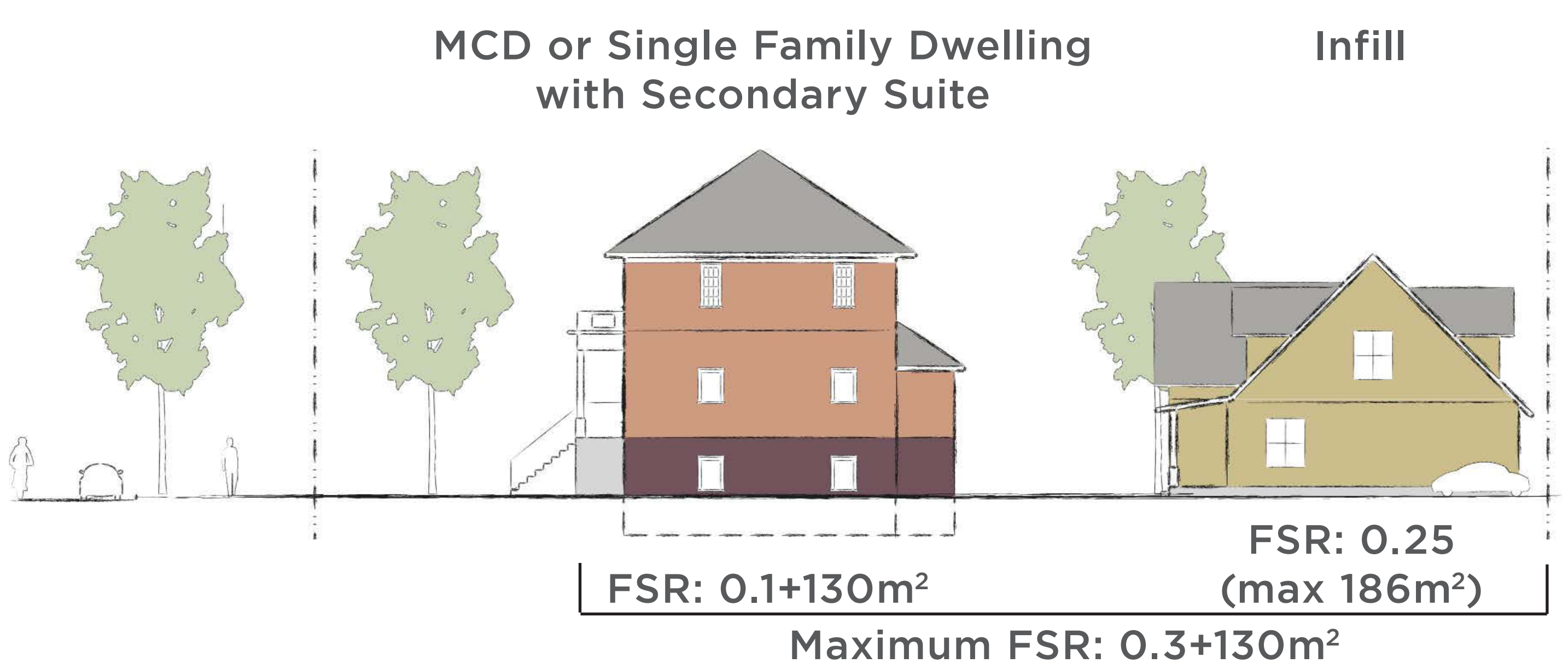
Proposed Site FSR: 0.3+130m²

10% Additional Floor Area with Infill and Strata Permitted

Unit 1

Unit 2

Unit 3



* As per existing Laneway House regulations and guidelines, up to 0.16 FSR is allowed in addition to that of the principal building.

Intent

- Ensure that renovations and additions to existing character houses maintain a form and character consistent with the original house.
- Ensure that infill and conversion developments are compatible with adjacent properties and provide a good fit with the overall neighbourhood.
- To be considered for the incentives, restoration of certain aspects of a character house may be required based on the assessed condition.

Multiple Conversion Dwelling

Conversion of an existing character house to contain more than one dwelling unit (strata)

- Consider suitability of the building for conversion (re: age and size) and quality and livability of the resulting units
- Consider effect of the conversion on adjacent properties and on the form and character of the existing house
- Additions above grade should be compatible with the form and character of the existing house, noting that it utilizing basement floor area would be encouraged.
- To improve head room in existing basements, floors may be lowered, or the house may be raised a modest amount if traditional proportions are maintained, and existing stone or brick foundations or pillars are not affected.
- Minimize impact where additions project into rear yards beyond neighbouring buildings

Infill

A second residential building (strata) on the site of an existing character house

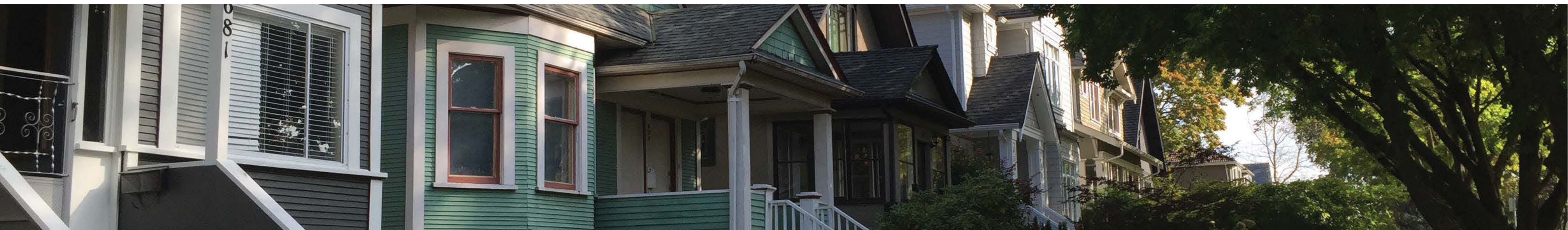
- Floor Space Ratio 0.25 FSR up to 186 m² (2000 sf)
- Minimum separation between the existing building and the infill building: 4.9 m (16 ft)
- Site coverage: 45% of the site area maximum
- Height: Limited to one and a partial upper storey: up to 25 ft permitted for a pitched roof, and up to 18 ft permitted for flat roof.
- A variety of architectural styles may be considered for infill development, so that neighbourhoods may continue to evolve, as well as maintain the character of existing streetscapes.
- Infill should be located and designed to preserve existing trees where possible. Relaxations of the regulations for infill location may be considered to support tree retention.

Parking

- One parking space per unit is required. Director of Planning relaxation may be approved due to site constraints, i.e. smaller lots.

Dwelling Unit Density

- Generally allows for 3 units on standard 33 ft wide lots, or 4 units on lots 50 ft and wider.



1. Will homeowners be required to retain their character home?

- Character home retention is not required. The proposed zoning incentives are only available to homeowners who choose to retain a character home.
- A character home can be demolished and a new house built under current zoning regulations.

There are no changes to zoning proposed for new house construction at this time.

2. What building code upgrades will be required?

- A new infill must comply fully with the Vancouver Building By-law. If the site is not to be strata-titled, upgrades to the existing single-family home are based on work proposed or required in order to qualify for incentives. For example, if the work to the existing house (i.e. renovation and addition, or restoration of character elements) is valued at 50% of replacement value, sprinklers will be required.
- If the site is to be strata-titled or the character home is converted to contain 3 or more units (i.e. multiple conversion dwelling), then the existing house must fully comply with the Vancouver Building By-law. Some exemptions are possible for existing character and heritage buildings. There are no exemptions from life-safety requirements, meaning sprinklers would be required.

Project ideas should be reviewed early on with City staff and a building code professional to clarify requirements and options under the Vancouver Building By-law.

3. Why are additional secondary suites not proposed as an incentive for Character Home retention?

- Vancouver has relaxed building code requirements for secondary suites. The Vancouver Building By-law does not permit these relaxations for more than one secondary suite.
- In a single-family house, once there are three or more units, the Vancouver Building By-law requires the entire house to meet higher building code standards.

Three or more units may be possible in a retained character home as part of a multiple conversion dwelling, if the higher building code upgrades are met.

4. Can an existing laneway house of a character home be converted to infill, and strata-titled?

- Laneway houses are permitted through relaxations to the Vancouver Building By-law. As laneway houses are not required to be built to building code standards required of strata-titled dwellings, a covenant on the title restricts future strata-titling.
- Significant upgrades to both the character home and existing laneway house are likely needed to meet the higher building code standards, i.e. life safety and energy requirements.

Restoration and building code upgrades to a character home will be needed before an existing laneway house can be strata-titled.

5. How do the incentives affect property value assessments?

- Many different factors are taken into consideration by the BC Assessment Authority when they assess property value.
- It is anticipated that incentives, if offered across a large geographic area would have a similar affect to overall RS property values as the introduction of the laneway house program.

Character Home Retention Incentives

Thank You!



We want your opinions on the options to encourage Character Home retention in RS zones. Please take a few minutes to complete a questionnaire or complete it online by June 18, 2017.

Speak to staff to get questions answered and let us know what you think.

Ways to Stay in Touch:

- Join our email list:
vancouver.ca/heritage-action-plan
- Contact us by email:
heritageactionplan@vancouver.ca
- Spread the word:



#HeritageActionPlan

All information presented is available online at:

vancouver.ca/characterhomereview

