

Other Considerations



This section provides information on other ways the City could support retention of Character Homes, examples of what other cities are doing, and on economic, permit processing and building by-law considerations.

Key Questions:

- Do you support the other ideas presented for Character Home retention?
- Do you support the other ideas for replacement homes?



The City can support and encourage Character Home retention in a variety of ways. This could include special incentive programs, measures to discourage character home demolition and ensuring that replacement homes contribute to other City objectives.

Character Home Ideas

Energy Retrofit Grants

- Expand the existing Heritage Energy Retrofit Grant program offered in partnership with the Vancouver Heritage Foundation. This program supports character and heritage building retrofits aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and provides guidance and information on available rebate programs.

Maintenance Grants

- Create new grant programs aimed at supporting the rehabilitation and maintenance of Character Homes
- Examples of maintenance grant programs are the Vancouver Heritage Foundation's "Restore It" and "True Colours" programs



Processing Support

Other ways the City could support and encourage Character Home retention could include working with partners to provide:

- Combined development and building permits for small scale renovations of Character Homes
- Personalized coaching services to help with planning and implementing Character Home retention (e.g. connect to character experts to answer questions relating to choosing upgrades, finding contractors, technical questions, and eligibility for grants)

Replacement Home Ideas

When a Character Home is demolished the City could introduce special requirements aimed at meeting other City objectives.

Options for these requirements could include:

- Higher standard of energy efficiency
- Mature landscaping and tree retention
- Site character retention (e.g. setbacks and building footprint)
- Demolition and recycling requirements

Note: The City already requires that 90% of materials be recycled when a Character Home is demolished.





Brisbane, Australia (Policy Approach)

City Plan 2014

- Traditional Building Character Overlay - Blanket protection of pre-1946 suburbs introduced in 1995 after World Expo 88 development boom and demolition of large numbers of older homes.
- Overlay allows pre-1946 homes to be demolished in limited circumstances:
 - Proven to be structurally unsound;
 - No other pre-1946 homes within the streetscape;
 - And/or home has been irreversibly altered.



Auckland, New Zealand (Policy Approach)

Unitary Plan (Proposed)

- Identifies over 25 “Special Character Areas” where there is distinct residential character.
- Cumulative impact of demolishing a building is considered. Applications must demonstrate that loss of the building would not erode the identified special character values of the area or disrupt the cohesiveness of the streetscape.



Toronto, Ontario (Heritage Approach)

Heritage Conservation Districts (HCD)

- Adopted 16 HCD with eight new studies underway.
- Uses the HCD to protect Toronto’s cultural heritage values and characteristics of its distinctive neighbourhoods.
- Example: Cabbagetown–Metcalfe Area Heritage Conservation District
 - Relatively unchanged Victorian-era streetscapes and many single-family homes and row-houses with architectural forms and styles of the period.



Vancouver, British Columbia (Zoning Approach)

Retention Zones (RT)

- Many RT zones include floor area and dwelling unit type incentives to encourage retention of Character Homes.
- If a Character Home is demolished, the new home is smaller.
- Examples include Strathcona (RT-3), Mount Pleasant (RT-6), and Kitsilano (RT-7 and RT-8).
- Older homes that no longer have Character Merit can also be restored and receive incentives.

Questions have been raised about impacts to property value from this work. Concerns have also been raised regarding the unaffordability of our single-family neighbourhoods. To address these concerns a consultant study was commissioned and property value changes in RS zones have been examined in order to give a longer-term context to possible economic impacts.

Consultant Study: Coriolis Consulting Corporation

This study evaluated the Zoning Options being considered and how they might impact land value.

A summary of the Coriolis report is available on the City's website at:
vancouver.ca/characterhomereview

Study Approach

- Financial analysis of six illustrative examples from the study areas
- Looked at zoning options for both Character Homes and new home construction
- Factored in construction cost premiums for retention projects

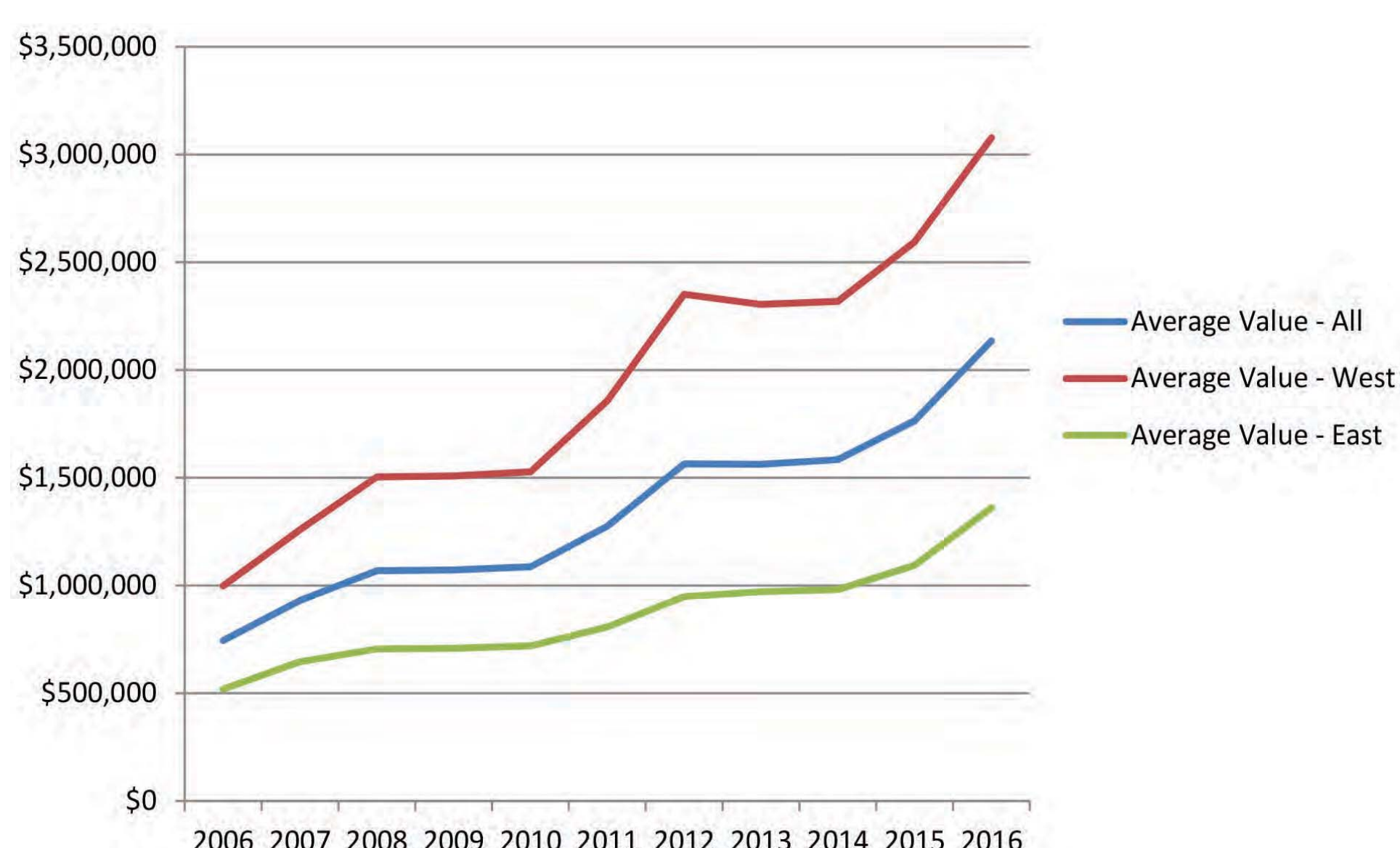
Study Findings

- Incentives for Character Home retention may not be attractive if new homes can build to the same total floor area
- Adding new dwelling unit types alone would not likely be enough of an incentive for retention
- Incentives for Character Homes would be most attractive if combined with a reduction in floor area for new homes
- Partial Character Home renovation projects (where only 75 percent of home is subject to renovation) perform better financially than full renovation projects
- Reducing floor area for new homes may lead to an increase in retention of all homes with >0.5 FSR (not just Character Homes)
- Reduction of floor area for new homes may have downward influence on current single-family land values by 5-10%, but it is unlikely to drop below 2015 values

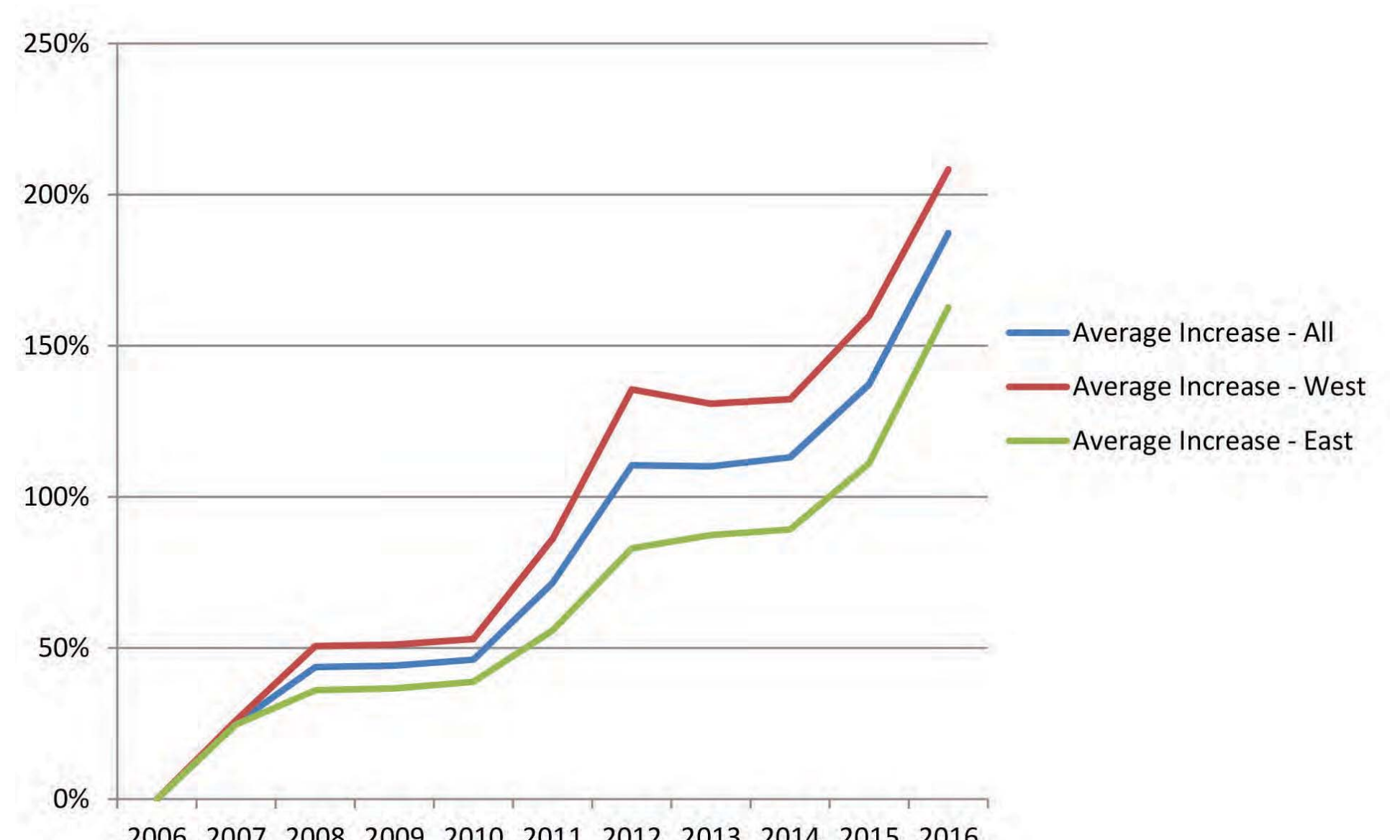
Market Changes Over Time

Single-family properties are in limited supply and have experienced significant growth in value over time. In the last year alone, average residential property values increased 25-35 percent. Zoning Options that may impact property value must be considered in light of recent increases, and the consistent growth in value this form of housing has experienced over the last decade.

Average Property (RS) Value Change (\$) 2006 - 2016



Average Property (RS) Value Change (%) 2006 - 2016



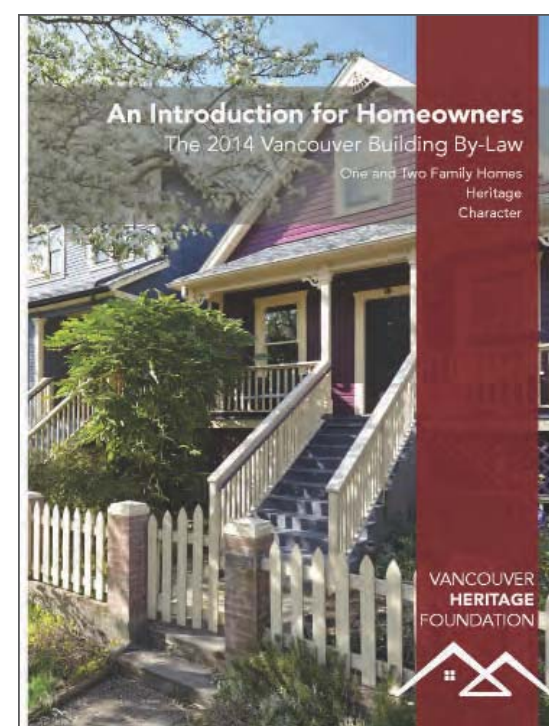
Permit Processing

The time and complexity of processing development and building permit applications is a major concern and is not unique to Character Home projects. The City is taking the following steps to address the issue:

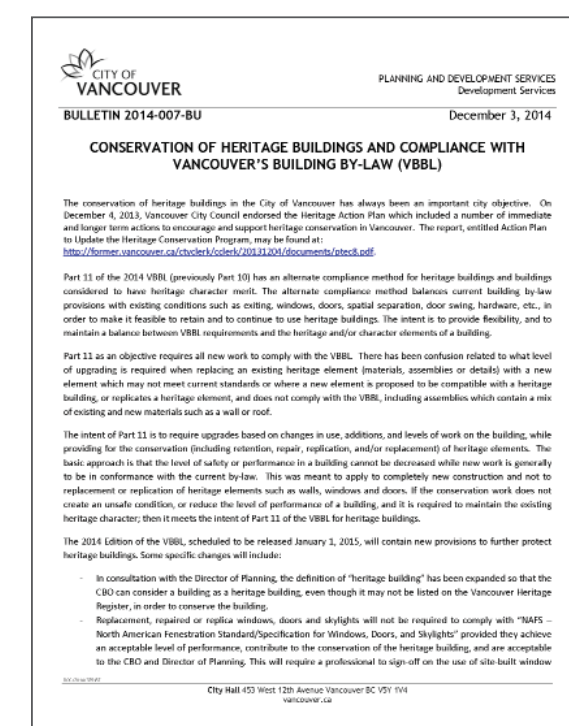
- The City Manager established a Development Processing Advisory Group to examine issues and identify solutions
- Explore a re-invigorated Housing Renovation Team to ensure continuity with application requirements, communications, and procedures
- Develop internal and external education on the new permitting system (POSSE)
- Support and staff education on alternative solutions for Heritage and Character homes in the Vancouver Building By-law
- Explore a streamlined enquiry process and Enquiry Centre counter for housing renovation projects

Building By-Law

Concerns have been raised that the Vancouver Building By-law (VBBL) is a barrier to Character Home retention. While the VBBL has high standards for energy efficiency and accessibility, it also provides flexibility for Heritage and Character buildings. See these resources online:



An Introduction to Homeowner's to the 2014 Vancouver Building By-law



Conservation of Heritage Buildings and Compliance with Vancouver's Building By-law

Certain types of projects, such as moving a Character Home or converting it to a stratified Multiple Conversion Dwelling, may require higher building code standards be met.

For a Character Home being renovated in place as a single-family home, alternative solutions to code requirements can often be found allowing for less intrusive renovations.

