

From: ["Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca)

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

Date: 2/24/2022 9:55:20 AM

Subject: [Current Policy and Regulation on Dwelling Unit Sizes](#)

Attachments: [Memo to Mayor & Council - Current Policy and Regulation on Dwelling Unit Sizes.pdf](#)

Dear Mayor and Council,

The enclosed memo from Theresa O'Donnell is in response to Council questions during the January 18th, 2022 Public Hearing for 3305 Kingsway RTS #14751, and questions staff received following the January 25th, 2022 council meeting.

The memo includes information regarding:

- Secured Rental Policy (SRP) policy direction relating to unit size and what livability criteria exists in the Zoning and Development By-law
- An overview of minimum unit sizes
- Family housing unit mix requirements
- DCL waiver unit size requirements
- A summary of Unit Types in Purpose Built Rental Proposals from 2017 to 2021.

If there are any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact Theresa O'Donnell, (Theresa.O'Donnell@vancouver.ca)

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

**Refers to Referral Report Item #2
Public Hearing of January 18, 2022**

MEMORANDUM

February 23, 2022

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Maria Pontikis, Director, Civic Engagement and Communications
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office
Templar Tsang-Trinaistich, Issues Manager, Planning Urban Design and Sustainability
Dan Garrison, Assistant Director, Housing Policy and Regulation, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
Yardley McNeill, Assistant Director, Rezoning Centre, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
Pat Lau, Senior Rezoning Planner, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
Carly Rosenblat, Rezoning Planner, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

FROM: Theresa O'Donnell
General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Current Policy and Regulation on Dwelling Unit Sizes

RTS #: 14751

The following information is offered in response to Council questions during the January 18, 2022 Public Hearing for 3305 Kingsway RTS #14751, and questions staff received following the January 25th, 2022 council meeting.

1. Secured Rental Policy

Staff were asked if the Secured Rental Policy (SRP) stipulates unit size and what livability criteria exists in the Zoning and Development By-law related to Section 1.1 of the Secured Rental Policy (SRP).

Minimum Unit Sizes

Under Section 2.1 of the SRP, rezoning applications for 100% secured rental housing are eligible for a relaxation of studio unit sizes from 37 sq. m (398 sq. ft.) to a minimum of 29.7 sq. m (320 sq. ft.) provided the design and location of the unit meets the livability criteria as defined in the Zoning and Development By-law.

Zoning and Development By-law Section 11.10.2 requires a dwelling unit be at least 37 sq. m (398 sq. ft.), except that if the Director of Planning is satisfied that the design and location of the unit provides satisfactory living accommodation, having regard to the type of occupancy proposed, the Director of Planning may permit a dwelling unit area no less than 29.7 sq. m (320 sq. ft.). This regulation has been applied to studio units. Many rezoning projects enabled by the SRP have submitted a request for this relaxation and been supported by Council.

Adaptable design requirements in the Vancouver Building By-law (VBBL) sets standards that impact livability of units. Section 3.8.5 of the VBBL requires all new dwelling units to be adaptable. The intent of this requirement is to ensure sufficient space for the flexible use of living spaces for people with varying degrees of mobility. To note, the VBBL provides an exemption for units less than the minimum dwelling unit size of 40 sq. m (430.5 sq. ft.) from providing an adaptable washroom.

Staff have developed an Administrative Bulletin, *The Housing Design and Technical Guidelines, (last amended in 2021)*, which provides guidance on minimum standards for social housing projects secured by the City. Section 5.2. outlines a minimum unit sizes of 500 sq. ft. for one-bedroom units, 700 sq. ft. for two-bedroom units and 900 sq. ft. for three-bedroom units in an apartment building. The *BC Housing Design Guidelines Construction and Standards* also place similar limits for unit sizes for the projects funded or finances by BC Housing. These guidelines ensure a minimum standard of livability and flexibility for long-term tenures in a unit throughout the changes in a renter's situation. The *BC Housing Design Guidelines Construction and Standards* are not Council approved and do not apply to market-based projects such as strata, market rental, and moderate income rental housing units. Only social housing projects have unit size requirements.

Family Units

The SRP requires 35% of all units to be delivered as family housing. Family housing is defined as units with two or more bedrooms and designed to meet the *High Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines (1992)*. The Guidelines provide guidance on location, building design, amenity space and unit design, but do not prescribe minimum unit sizes for family units. Introducing minimum unit size requirements would require further policy work and consultation with the development industry, stakeholders and the public.

- Section 4.1.1 sets the objective of unit layout to meet the needs of families with children.
- Section 4.1.2., specifies that a family unit requires a minimum of two bedrooms and that each bedroom be large enough to accommodate a single bed, a dresser, a desk or table, and in children's bedrooms, some floor space for playing.
- Section 4.3. regulates the minimum dimensions for private open space.
- Section 4.4 requires sufficient bulk storage for all units.

The Planning By-law Administrative Bulletin, *Access to Daylight, Views, and Ventilation in Dwelling Units*, specifies that access to adequate daylight, external views, and ventilation are basic requirements for habitable rooms in residential developments and this standard of livability is expected for dwelling units in an application for conditional approval. Applicable development is required to meet these objectives through the Horizontal Angle of Daylight requirements, contained within the Bulletin.

Development Cost Levy (DCL) Waivers and Unit Size

In addition to starting rent requirements, there are also maximum unit size requirements for rental projects requesting a DCL waiver. Maximum unit sizes can contribute to affordability, as larger units can be more expensive to rent compared to smaller units, notwithstanding other factors, such as location, tightness of rental market, etc. The maximum average unit sizes stipulated under the DCL By-law are as follows:

Table 1. Maximum Average Unit Sizes for DCL Waiver by Unit Type

Unit Type	Apartment Units	Townhouse Units
Studio	42 sq. m (450 sq. ft.)	-----
1-bed	56 sq. m (600 sq. ft.)	56 sq. m (600 sq. ft.)
2-bed	77 sq. m (830 sq. ft.)	90 sq. m (969 sq. ft.)
3-bed	97 sq. m (1,044 sq. ft.)	112 sq. m (1,205 sq. ft.)
4-bed	-----*	125 sq. m (1,345 sq. ft.)

*The DCL By-law does not regulate maximum average unit sizes for apartment units with 4 or more bedrooms.

2. Unit Types in Purpose Built Rental Proposals

Staff were asked how residential unit types have changed over the past four years for applications approved by Council for purpose-built rental. Annual purpose-built rental approvals since 2017 have continually surpassed the *Family Room: Housing Mix Policy for Rezoning Projects* target of 35% family units. From January 1, 2017 to September 30th, 2021, purpose built rental projects delivered 39% of the total unit count, as family units containing two or more bedrooms,(see Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2. Annual Purpose-built Rental Approvals by Bedroom Type: Number of Units

Year	Micro	Bachelor	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed+	Total
2017	0	185	308	248	81	822
2018	0	271	345	285	130	1,031
2019	0	270	384	425	159	1,238
2020	0	557	1,030	689	197	2,473
Q3. 2021	0	413	563	373	127	1,476
5 Year Total	0	1,696	2,630	2,020	694	7,040

Table 3. Annual Purpose-built Rental Approvals by Bedroom Type: Share of Units

Year	Micro	Bachelor	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed+	Total
2017	0%	22%	38%	30%	10%	100%
2018	0%	26%	33%	28%	13%	100%
2019	0%	22%	31%	34%	13%	100%
2020	0%	23%	42%	28%	8%	100%
Q3. 2021	0%	28%	38%	25%	9%	100%
5 Year Total	0%	24%	37%	29%	10%	100%

As noted earlier, the City currently regulates minimum unit sizes for studio units through the *SRP* and the *Zoning and Development Bylaw*, and for social housing developments under the Administrative Bulletin, *The Housing Design and Technical Guidelines*. Maximum unit sizes are regulated for secured rental projects, seeking a DCL waiver.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.



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