

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is Density Bonus Amenity Zoning?

- A. The *Local Government Act* allows municipalities in British Columbia to permit density bonuses in their zoning in exchange for the provision of amenities or affordable housing. This means that in designated zones, a developer can build to higher density if a community amenity contribution is provided to the municipality. The density bonus zone sets out the type and value of amenities expected in return for the bonus density. Landowners and developers of sites with density bonus zoning have the choice to develop at the base density and make no amenity contribution or to make the required contribution and develop at the higher bonus density.

Q. What is Density?

- A. Density is the amount of floorspace, or the number of units allowed on a site. The City of New Westminster generally uses floorspace as measure of density. The amount of floorspace permitted for a project is described as Floor Space Ratio (FSR). The floorspace ratio is determined by dividing the total floor area by the total site area as shown in the following formula:

$$\text{FSR} = \frac{\text{Total Floor Area}}{\text{Total Site Area}}$$

Q. Why does New Westminster use Density Bonus Amenity Zoning?

- A. New Westminster's *Official Community Plan* sets a vision for the City to grow from approximately 60,000 people in 2008 to 84,000 people by 2021. The Official Community Plan identifies areas where redevelopment at higher densities will be allowed in order to provide more housing to accommodate this population growth.

Density Bonus Amenity Zoning is meant to implement the Official Community Plan while ensuring community amenities such as community centres, recreations facilities, affordable housing initiatives and child care are adequately funded. This helps to ensure that the needs of the growing population are met without negatively impacting the existing residents.

Q. Where does Density Bonus Amenity Zoning apply? What Zoning Districts are eligible?

A. Density Bonus Amenity Zoning has been, to date, implemented in two phases. Phase 1 of Density Bonus Amenity Zoning applies to townhouse and low-rise multiple unit residential districts across the City. The following zoning districts include Density Bonus Amenity provisions: RT-2, RT-2A, RT-2B, RT-2C, RM-1, RM-1A, RM-1B, RM-2, RM-2A, RMW-2, RMW-2A and RM-5A. These zoning districts can be seen on the [Density Bonus Amenity Zoning - Phase 1 map](#). Phase 1 has been in effect since 2010.

Phase two of the density bonus program is in the Downtown Community Plan area and effects properties zoned RM-4, RM-6, C-4. Phase 2 of Density Bonus Amenity Zoning was adopted by Council in September of 2014 and applies to high density residential and mixed use zones in the Downtown area.



Q. What community amenities would the City get in exchange for bonus density?

A. Community amenities are anything from which the community can benefit (e.g., open space, childcare, civic & recreation facilities, waterfront access, affordable housing, public art, etc.). Developers who want to build projects that take advantage of the density bonusing system will make a cash contribution to the City. These cash contributions will be used to build community amenities. Density bonus revenues are allocated as follows:

- 10% Child Care;
- 10% Public Art (added November 5, 2012)
- 30% Affordable Housing;
- 50% General Amenities (civic & recreation facilities,

Q. How much of an amenity contribution is required for Density Bonus Amenity Zoning?

A. The amount of the contribution is required by the [Zoning Bylaw](#), specifically section 190.49. The cost of additional density is dependent on the building form proposed (e.g. Townhouse, low rise, high rise, etc.).

Q. What approvals would be necessary before a potential development could begin construction with Density Bonus Amenity Zoning?

A. It depends on which phase of Density Bonus Amenity Zoning the development is subject to.

For development under phase 1, the project would only be required to make a building permit application and make payment of the required amenity contribution. In some areas a Development Permit for building and site form and character design may also be necessary.

For development under phase 2, if the applicant wishes to use bonus density, a rezoning process is still required to go from a base density district (i.e. C-4) to a bonus density district (i.e. C-4(DB)). The graphic below illustrates the necessary steps required to use Bonus Density Amenity Zoning.



The rezoning process requires public consultation and Council approval. Once rezoned to a Bonus Density District, the site would be entitled to use bonus density *if* the required amenity contribution is received.

Q. What about Parking? How much parking will be required?

A. Parking demand for any development is meant to be accommodated within the development itself. All necessary parking will be required to be provided on-site.

Q. What if buildings are proposed which are taller or larger than Density Bonus Amenity Zoning would allow?

A. For phase 1, any buildings over density would require a rezoning, and over height would require a Development Variance Permit. Normal public consultation required for these types of applications would be required.

For phase 2, additional height and density are not permitted except where “unique and exceptional circumstances warrant additional density” as per the Density Bonus Phase 2 Council Policy. In these unique and exceptional circumstances, a rationale must be

provided as the unique circumstances and will be reviewed by Council in their consideration of the application.

Q. What are the advantages of a Density Bonus Amenity Zoning over other Methods of collecting amenity contributions?

A. Advantages to using density bonus zoning for obtaining amenity contributions are:

- It is more transparent as information and requirements are clearly laid out within a bylaw.
- It is easier to understand for all parties (community, developer, land owners) as all the requirements are simplified.
- It is consistent and predictable as all development will be required to comply with the same bylaw and contribute equitably to future growth.
- It reduces costs and saves staff time as it eliminates the requirement for outside consultants, negotiations and additional reports for each project.

Q. I still have questions about Density Bonus Amenity Zoning, who can I call?

A. For more information about this Density Bonus Amenity Zoning, contact Mike Watson, Planning Technician at 604-527-4519 or by email at: mwatson@newwestcity.ca.



@NewWestPlanning



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