

# Guide: Townhouse Program

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## Introduction

The City of New Westminister (the “City”) permits the use of townhouses on a number of properties across the city. Townhouse development increases homes and housing choices in the city, specifically in the form of ground-oriented family friendly housing.

This guide applies to Mainland properties only. While townhouses are permitted in Queensborough, it is guided by a separate [Queensborough Community Plan](#) due to its unique development needs as this area is geographically separated from the city and located in the floodplain.

## Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to provide development applicants with information on navigating the City’s approval process for projects under the **Townhouse Program**.

Townhouse developments must meet OCP policies, [zoning regulations](#), [development permit area design guidelines](#), and [building code regulations](#).

Other regulations and policies to be aware of include, but are not limited to, the [Subdivision and Development Control Bylaw](#), [Tree Protection and Regulation Bylaw](#), [Heritage Revitalization Agreements](#), and the [Streets and Traffic Bylaw](#).

## How to Use the Guide

The How to Guide (“Guide”) is divided into three sections to provide information on the approvals process:

1. Considerations for Townhouse Development
2. Development Approval Process
3. Frequently Asked Questions

Note: this guide summarizes some of the applicable regulations for townhouses, using metric and imperial measurements. In the case of a difference between this guide and a City bylaw, the City bylaw shall prevail.

## What is a Townhouse?

Townhouses are a “ground oriented” type of housing, with a row of homes connected by shared walls. Each home has its own exterior entrance.

Townhouses provide a denser form of development than single detached dwellings and duplexes, but with similar features including entrances directly accessible from a street or open space, and often front or rear yards.

Townhouses allow for more diversity and availability of ground oriented housing that are compatible with areas of other lower density housing.

Townhouse types can take shape as a **traditional townhouse** or **rowhouse**.

Required off-street parking stalls can be provided in the form of surface level parking pads, carports, an attached garage or potentially as underground parking in unique circumstances.

## Traditional Townhouse



## Rowhouse



Stacked townhouses are when one townhouse is stacked on top of another, and often rely on exterior stairwell access from a central courtyard.

Stacked townhouse **are not** permitted on (RT) Residential – Townhouse designated sites.

### Stacked Townhouse



## 1.0 Considerations for Townhouse Development

There are a number of factors that should be considered when planning a townhouse development project in New Westminster. These include, but are not limited to, the following land use policies and regulatory considerations.

### Zoning

The [Zoning Bylaw](#) regulates aspects of townhouse development, such as required bicycle stalls, required vehicle parking stalls, and location of parking stalls in Section 100 of the Bylaw.

The Townhouse Residential Districts (e.g., RT-A and RT-B) in the Zoning Bylaw regulate aspects of development such as density, floor area, lot coverage, pervious site coverage, and setbacks.

### Development Permit Area

Townhouse applications will be subject to a Development Permit process. Applications will be reviewed for conformance with the [Townhouse Development Permit Area guidelines](#).

### Lot Consolidation

The goal of the townhouse program is to facilitate the consolidation and redevelopment of more than one lot. In most scenarios, for sites designated RT, a consolidation of two standard sized lots would be required to meet the minimum site area requirements (836.1 sq. m. or 9,000 sq. ft. in area, and minimum frontage of 65.6 ft. or 20 m) in the townhouse zones (RT-A and RT-B). Please contact City Planning staff for questions related to lot consolidation.

### Road / Lane Dedications

Vehicle lane access is required per the Zoning Bylaw with a minimum width of 6.0 metres. If the lane is provided as a dedication of land, then a width of less than 6.0 m (19.7 ft.) is required. A road frontage dedication is also required if the fronting road is below the City's acceptable roadway width.

For sites that are designated RT, but not zoned for townhouse yet, the City will be undertaking further city-wide analysis to determine the lane dedications that are required as there are no existing lanes in these blocks.

## Secondary Suites

Secondary suites in townhouses are a rental dwelling unit that is accessory to the main dwelling and is contained within the same structure and has separate exterior access. It includes cooking facilities, a bathroom, and a sleeping area.

Under the Zoning Bylaw, off-street parking must be provided for secondary suites in townhouses. All properties with secondary suites are subject to secondary suite utility charges (e.g. water and sewer charges).

## Tree Protection

The City has a [Tree Protection and Regulation Bylaw](#) which regulates the cutting or removal of **protected trees and hedges** on private property. When reviewing a site for townhouse development potential, it is important to identify which trees would be considered protected under the bylaw. These trees, include:

- Trees with a diameter of  $\geq 20$  cm (7.9 in.) when measured at 1.3 m (4.3 ft.) above grade;
- For trees with more than one stem, the combined diameter of its two largest trunks or stems is  $\geq 20$  cm (7.9 in.) when measured at 1.3 m (4.3 ft.) above grade;
- Trees with evidence of nesting birds;
- Trees planted as a condition of a plan or permit approval, regardless of size (e.g. a replacement tree); or
- A hedge that is  $\geq 5$  m (16.4 ft.) in height.

A tree replacement plan needs to be prepared by an arborist or landscape architect as per the bylaw. A protected tree that is removed needs to be replaced by two trees for example.

## Heritage

If the development site been assessed as having heritage value, townhouses may be supportable through a Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA) instead of a rezoning. Through an HRA, the development may be eligible for relaxations of zoning requirements and Townhouse development permit area guidelines. Depending on the OCP land use designation of the subject site, eligible incentives may include stacked townhouses, an increase in density or reduced parking requirements, which would make it viable to conserve assets with heritage merit. A Heritage Assessment written by a member of the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals (CAHP) will be required in order to determine the heritage value of the building and how the proposed changes

would affect it. More information can be found on the [City's Heritage Protection and Development website](#).

Properties located in the [Queen's Park Heritage Conservation Area](#) are required to obtain a Heritage Alteration Permit when renovating, demolishing, or building a new house, including redevelopment into townhouses.

## Professional Consultants

There are a number of professional consultants typically required for rezoning, development permit, and building permit applications as listed below. Their involvement varies by discipline and depends on the size and characteristics of the development, along with requirements of the BC Building Code and provincial Architect's Regulation. Please consult a professional engineer consultant to understand potential off-site infrastructure costs as part of site acquisition due diligence.

The below list is general in nature and subject to change based on the requirements of the specific development project.

### *Consultant Checklist*

- Registered architect\* or design professional (necessary for rezoning and/or DP and BP)
- Landscape architect or designer (necessary for DP)
- Arborist (necessary for DP and Tree Permit)
- Civil engineer (necessary for DP and BP)
- Structural engineer (necessary for BP)
- Geotechnical engineer (necessary for BP)
- Certified energy advisor (necessary for BP)
- Member of Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals (if applicable, for Heritage Assessment)

BP = Building Permit

DP = Development Permit

\*Please note that a registered architect is required for buildings that are greater than or equal to 600 sq. m. (6,458 sq. ft.), greater than 3 storeys in height, and/or contain 5 or more dwelling units.

## 2.0 Development Approval Process

### Development Pathways

As part of the preliminary considerations for pursuing a townhouse development in New Westminster, consider the **development pathway** that your project is eligible for.

Where properties are designated for townhouse development through the OCP, a number of development approvals will be required. Which types of approvals are required depends on the existing zoning of the property, and there are generally two primary paths of approval as shown below.

#### Pathway 1: Zoned Properties

Properties that have the Residential Townhouse (RT) designation and are **zoned for townhouse**. An OCP amendment is not needed.

To proceed with development, two applications are required:

- Development Permit; and
- Building Permit.

#### Pathway 2: Designated, Not Zoned

Other properties have the Residential Townhouse (RT) designation that permits townhouse as a use, but are **not zoned** for townhouse. An OCP amendment is not needed.

To proceed with development, three applications are required:

- Rezoning;
- Development Permit; and
- Building Permit.

## Approval Process

This section outlines the approval process for a townhouse development application for projects in **Pathway 1** and **Pathway 2**.

### Preliminary Inquiry (Pathway 1 and Pathway 2)

1. Applicants are encouraged to contact the Planning Division for preliminary inquiries about their development site. The Planning Division will provide information on whether the subject site is designated for townhouse development through the OCP, if townhouses are permitted through existing zoning (e.g. pre-zoned), or if a rezoning would be required. The Planning Division will confirm whether the development application will progress through **Pathway 1** or **Pathway 2** based on eligibility, including meeting minimum site size and frontage requirements in RT-A or RT-B.
2. Potential applications must consider off-site infrastructure costs for development, as upgrades to existing infrastructure are anticipated, including electrical upgrades. Townhouse developments are a more intensive use as it converts single-family home(s) to multi-unit developments.
3. **(Optional Step)** If City feedback is needed on a critical question, [a Pre-Application Review \(PAR\)](#) may be appropriate prior to proceeding with a formal application. Through the PAR, the Planning Division and other City departments (such as Parks and Engineering) will provide early feedback on the application. The feedback provided will vary depending on the level of detail and completeness of the applicant's submission.



**Note: If your land parcel is zoned for townhouse (Pathway 1) and meets the RT-A or RT-B requirements, the application can proceed to the development permit process.**

### Rezoning Application (Pathway 2)

1. A **rezoning application** is required to permit townhouses as a use and to change the density on the proposed development site. The application allows City staff to analyze the potential influences of a proposed development and ensures it is aligned with the Zoning Bylaw. Rezoning applications are approved or rejected by Council once staff brings forward a report. More information on the rezoning process can be found [here](#).

2. Prior to submitting a formal rezoning application, review of the City's [Application Submission Materials](#) will be required. All applications will be reviewed for completeness and incomplete applications will not be accepted.
3. Complete rezoning applications should be sent to [plnpost@newwestcity.ca](mailto:plnpost@newwestcity.ca). Once submitted and confirmed to be complete, application forms and invoices will be provided. Fees payable are per the [Planning and Development Fees and Rates Bylaw](#).
4. **Consultation** with the community is required of all rezoning applications. Depending on the scale of project, the applicant may be required to develop a project website and online survey, and host a public open house. Additional or alternative City-led consultation may also be required prior to Council consideration of the project.
5. Once all City inter-departmental requirements have been met through the application process, a staff report to Council is prepared with recommendations on the proposed project.
6. All rezoning applications must be reviewed and considered by **Council**. Once a substantial review of the proposed rezoning is complete, a report will be advanced to Council for consideration of First, Second and Third Readings. Should Council give these readings, the applicant will be required to satisfy any and all adoption requirements. The timeline for this process varies depending on the complexity of the application and the applicant's readiness to complete all application requirements.
7. Once all adoption requirements have been met, the project will be considered by Council for Fourth Reading (adoption).

### **Development Permit Application (Pathway 1 and Pathway 2)**

1. A **development permit application** shows what the building and landscaping will look like. City staff will review the application using the City's development permit area design guidelines and other relevant municipal regulation. More information on the Development Permit process can be found [here](#).
2. Prior to submitting a formal Development Permit application, review of the City's [Application Submission Materials](#) will be required. All applications will be reviewed for completeness and incomplete applications will not be accepted.

3. Complete Development Permit applications should be sent to [plnpost@newwestcity.ca](mailto:plnpost@newwestcity.ca). Once submitted and confirmed to be complete, application forms and invoices will be provided. Fees payable are per the [Planning and Development Fees and Rates Bylaw](#).
4. Once all City requirements have been met and the architectural and landscape plans have been finalized, a refundable landscape deposit must be submitted in accordance with the Planning and Development Fees and Rates Bylaw. The Development Permit will be issued by the Director of Planning and Development at this stage.



**Note: Pathway 2 applicants can submit a rezoning application and Development Permit application concurrently.**

### Building Permit Application (Pathway 1 and Pathway 2)

1. A **building permit application** is required for City staff to ensure that the proposed buildings meet the requirements of the BC Building Code, which sets standards for safety, health, accessibility, fire and structural protection, and energy and water efficiency.
2. The applicant must apply for a Building Permit and pay any associated Building Permit fees.
3. Under the City of New Westminster [Subdivision and Development Control Bylaw No. 7142, 2007](#) and amendments thereto, the applicant will enter into a Works and Services Agreement with the City addressing off-site servicing requirements prior to issuance of a building permit. The off-site services shall include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:
  - Reconstruction of the existing road(s) structure
  - New curb and gutter
  - Sidewalks
  - Trees
  - Landscaping (including irrigation)
  - Street lighting
  - Signage
  - Street furniture
  - Underground electrical and telecommunication servicing
  - Integrated Storm Water Management

## Tree Permit Application (Pathway 1 and Pathway 2)

1. A **tree permit application** is required for City staff to ensure trees are protected during all phases of construction. A tree permit is required even if there are no “protected” trees on the property.



**Note: Submission of a tree permit application will be required to be submitted concurrent with the rezoning for Pathway 2 projects and Development Permit application for Pathway 1 projects.**

## Application Review and Circulation

Upon acceptance, all rezoning and/or Development Permit applications are assigned a Planning File Manager. The File Manager will complete a detailed review of the application and initiate referrals to internal City departments for review and comment; they may request additional documents if required, prior to circulation. In some cases, the application may also be sent to external agencies such as the Ministry of Transportation and Transit for review.

Once all referral comments have been received, the File Manager will provide the feedback to the application to update the submissions as necessary.

### *Tips for Efficient Permitting*

- Check to see if your property is zoned for townhouse developments and able to move straight to the development permit process.
- Hire experienced consultants, including design professionals.
- For shortest review timelines, ensure the proposal complies with all **Townhouse Development Permit Area design guidelines** listed as “must be met”.

## Additional Approval Processes

Additional approvals may be required if the development site being considered for townhouse development has heritage value or is a Protected property within the Queen's Park Heritage Conservation Area. The details are provided below.

### Heritage Revitalization Agreements

Where redevelopment of a site with heritage value is contemplated, a Heritage Revitalization Agreement, rather than a rezoning, is often the most appropriate tool to facilitate the project. Similar to a rezoning, a Heritage Revitalization Agreement process a public process and must ultimately be approved by Council, and would apply to Townhouse (RT) designated development sites. More information on Heritage Revitalization Agreements can be found [here](#).

### Heritage Alteration Permit in Queen's Park Heritage Conservation Area

A townhouse development project located in the Queen's Park Heritage Conservation Area may require a Heritage Alteration Permit. A property in the designated area can be categorized as Protected or Non-protected. More information on the Queen's Park Heritage Conservation Area can be found [here](#).

### 3.0 Frequently Asked Questions

This section contains frequently asked questions and answers regarding the Townhouse Program.

#### **What are rowhouses and how are they different from townhouses?**

Townhouses and rowhouses are both attached, ground oriented units but with different types of ownership. Rowhouses are fee simple developments with parking on each fee simple lot. Townhouses are strata titled developments which may have joint parking or shared amenity areas on common property. Rowhouses are permitted in the same areas where townhouses are permitted in the Official Community Plan (OCP).

#### **What is a stacked townhouse and how is it different from a townhouse?**

A stacked townhouse is a multi-unit residential building where homes are stacked on top of each other, often in two or three stories. Unlike traditional townhouses that share only side walls, stacked townhomes share both walls and floors with neighbours and have their own separate entrance, unlike condo buildings with common hallways. Stacked townhouses are not permitted on Townhouse (RT) designated sites.

#### **How is a townhouse different from infill housing?**

Infill housing is permitted through the Residential Ground Oriented (RGO) OCP land use designation. The RGO designation differs from the RT land use designation in that it allows for a wider range of infill housing forms. This is intended to provide flexibility and allow for creative design and housing solutions.

Examples of possible housing forms supportable under the RGO land use designation are single detached dwellings (houses), detached accessory dwelling units (laneway or carriage houses), multiplexes (e.g. duplex, quadraplex), cluster houses, rowhouses, townhouses, and other equivalent ground oriented housing. Dwelling units may also include a secondary suite. Under the RGO land use designation, this type of housing can be developed on a single or multiple lots.

The RT land use designation differs from RGO in that the RT designation supports only townhouses and rowhouses as principle building forms. Development in accordance with the RT land use designation will typically require consolidation of two or more lots in order to achieve the minimum site size required in the Townhouse District zones (RT-A and RT-B).

### Why do some areas allow for townhouses but not infill housing?

Some areas of the city are well-suited for townhouse development due to existing site conditions. These can include: slope, lot depth, access, and proximity to local amenities and transit, along with whether existing land uses can accommodate lot consolidation and other townhouse requirements, including lane dedication for traffic circulation.



## Bylaw Resources

- Building Bylaw No. 8125, 2019
- Development Approval Procedures Bylaw No. 5658, 1987
- Planning & Development Fees And Rates Bylaw No. 7683, 2014
- Street and Traffic Bylaw No. 7664, 2015
- Subdivision and Development Control Bylaw No. 7142, 2007
- Tree Protection and Regulation Bylaw No. 7799, 2016
- Zoning Bylaw No. 6680, 2001

For more information about the Townhouse Program, visit [newwestcity.ca/townhouse](https://newwestcity.ca/townhouse)  
Questions, email [plnpost@newwestcity.ca](mailto:plnpost@newwestcity.ca) or call 604-527-4532.