



# **R4.1 Single-Family – 350 m<sup>2</sup> Parcel new zone in the Town of Comox**

**This Information package is for convenience purposes only**

**For more information please contact:  
Town of Comox Planning Department at 250-339-1118,  
or in person at 1809 Beaufort Avenue, Comox BC**

<http://comox.ca/hall/departments/planning-and-building-inspection>

## BACKGROUND

The creation of the R3.2 Single-Family/Secondary Suite – 450 m<sup>2</sup> Parcel zone in November 2005, marked the beginning of Town efforts to increase affordability by allowing for a reduction in minimum parcel size from 650 m<sup>2</sup> to 450 m<sup>2</sup> and in minimum parcel frontage from 20 metres to 15 metres. The R3.2 zone was successfully applied in developments in the McDonald Road and Lancaster Way areas (Lancaster Heights), followed by the Forrester and Gardener Road area.

This approach to addressing housing affordability was affirmed with the adoption of the Town's Housing Affordability Strategy in November of 2007. A key component of the Strategy is the removal of regulatory barriers to the development of more affordable market housing through small lot subdivision with narrow frontages<sup>1</sup> and legalization of secondary suites.

The approach was further affirmed in 2011 with the adoption of the new Official Community Plan (OCP), which supports a 350 m<sup>2</sup> parcel size in relation to sustainability and infill constraints: increased infrastructure efficiency; reduced servicing costs; increased public transit, local commercial and public service viability; and reducing Green House Gas emissions in a housing form compatible with existing single family neighbourhoods.

Households are getting smaller and housing demand is changing. Currently, the average Comox household size is 2.3 persons and the Comox Valley population's median age is approaching 50. This age coincides with the time when children start leaving the family and establishing their own households. It also coincides with the period when aging parents start planning their retirement and often wish to downsize - but remain within the same communities. For both cohorts, provision of appropriate housing forms and sizes could solve some of the affordability and accessibility issues.

It is anticipated that demand for accommodations suitable for 2 or 3-persons households, will increase, including demand for small single-family dwellings.

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<sup>1</sup> Market home ownership may be made more affordable for more people by introducing zoning that allows smaller lots. Narrower road frontages reduce per-lot infrastructure costs.

# INFORMATION ABOUT R4.1 ZONE

The new R4.1 zone is responding to the changing residential market by:

- Providing wider housing choice within the same community;
- Allowing the downsizing or upsizing within the same neighbourhood;
- Being more affordable – including the initial investment and the future maintenance of the property; and
- Presenting opportunities for infill within the established neighbourhoods, while retaining the existing character homes.

It is anticipated that the existing housing stock will continue to be the dominant form, servicing those who prefer larger homes on larger lots. Furthermore, the R4.1 zone does not have a maximum lot size; larger lots can be provided within this zone. The focus is to allow for choice and remove road blocks to provide housing forms people may want or need.

## R4.1 – SINGLE FAMILY 350 M<sup>2</sup> ZONE

The Town's Official Community Plan sets out the community objectives and broad statements of the policy to guide decisions about future land use, zoning, development and servicing. In contrast, the Towns Zoning Bylaw regulates current land use.

OCP Ground Oriented Infill Housing Policy 2.1.1.5(d) supports subdivisions for detached houses on parcels 350 m<sup>2</sup> in area, where proposals have appropriate site and design controls, including orientation toward the street.

Zoning controls on building height, setbacks and lot coverage are typically sufficient to address site and design issues, provided the lot fronts a public road. For non-typical developments, the site and building design is regulated through the development permit guidelines of Development Permit Area (DPA) 2 – Ground Orientated Infill.

The new R 4.1 zone incorporates the site and building design standards of the existing R3.2 Single Family 450 m<sup>2</sup> zone:

- second storey floor area is limited to 75% of the first storey area, to encourage tapering of building mass from the street and reduce the appearance of height;
- setbacks and building scale (maximum height and parcel coverage) are compatible with the other single-family zones in Comox; and
- setbacks ensure sufficient open space is available to accommodate two side-by-side parking spaces in the front yard.

### For More Information:

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## INFORMATION ABOUT R4.1 ZONE

The new R4.1 zone is suitable for infill within established neighbourhoods, as well as “greenfield” developments. To address neighbourhood compatibility and alleviate the effect of reduced parcel frontage and parcel area, the following new initiatives have been incorporated in the R4.1 zone:

- Bed & Breakfast is not a permitted use;
- minimum parcel frontage of 15 metres is required for corner lots;
- maximum parcel coverage for one storey buildings is reduced from to 35%, as compared to 40% in R3.2 zone;
- interior side setback is reduced from 2.0m to 1.8m, which still allows for 0.6 m roof overhangs without triggering a higher building code requirement;
- maximum building height is reduced from 9.0m to 8.0m, to maintains building proportions in relation to narrower frontage, but still allows for 2 storeys;
- minimum rear setback of 7.5 metres, or 25% of the parcel depth (whichever is greater), to provide streetscape consistency for deeper lots;
- accessory building gross floor area is reduced to 40 m<sup>2</sup>, as compared to 60 m<sup>2</sup>;
- maximum one driveway per lot, not exceeding 5.5 metres in width;
- the attached garage, or carport width is limited to 3.5 metres or 25% of the parcel frontage (whichever is lesser); and
- front yard fence height limited to 1.0 metre, in conformance with DPA #2 guideline.

For information on how to apply for rezoning to the R4.1, please contact the Town of Comox Planning Department at 250-339-1118, or in person at 1809 Beaufort Avenue, Comox BC.

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