

Attachment 2

Summary of Heritage Revitalization Agreement Policy Refresh

SUMMARY OF HRA POLICY REFRESH

The HRA Refresh is intended to refine and update the City's Heritage Policy for the Use of HRAs (2011), building from the strong and long-standing existing framework. The policy would be updated to address those areas and building forms designated "Detached and Semi-Detached" and "Ground-Oriented Infill" in the Official Community Plan (OCP), commonly projects with less than six units.

On June 21, 2021, Council directed staff to prepare a work plan for an update to the 2011 policy for the use of HRAs in New Westminster. The update aimed to ensure alignment of the policy with the 2017 Official Community Plan and Queen's Park Heritage Conservation Area (adopted 2017). The HRA Refresh is focused on small-scale residential applications, the project types most common in the Heritage Conservation Area. Larger residential developments (six units and greater) or for other land uses (commercial, institutional, etc.) have continued per the existing policy framework. Goals, milestones and a work plan were endorsed by Council on August 30, 2021, with more detailed draft Principles endorsed on November 15, 2021.

The goals for the HRA Refresh, endorsed by Council are:

1. Increase clarity, certainty and expectations for applicants and the community;
2. Provide equitable incentives and requirements city-wide; and
3. Integrate with current City programs, policies, and Council priorities.

While each HRA is unique, specific to its site and not precedent-setting, an analysis of past HRA applications as part of the HRA Refresh work identified five categories of development incentives that have been included in HRAs to date:

1. Density
2. Subdivision
3. Stratification
4. Conversion (multiple units in a building)
5. Infill

The draft Principles for the refreshed HRA policy are organized in four key areas of heritage conservation, housing choice, community diversity and inclusion, and energy reductions and environmental sustainability:

Heritage Conservation

Recognize and protect

- Include a site with confirmed heritage value
- Protect the heritage elements with a Heritage Designation Bylaw

Conserve

- Not require major restoration (which incentivizes neglect for the purposes of unlocking development potential)
- Include a Heritage Conservation Plan and long-term Maintenance Plan
- Engage a heritage professional for guidance in both the application review and construction phases of the project

Incentivize

- Consider heritage as a community amenity contribution
- Create sufficient development benefit to incentivize conservation and retention
- Be comparable in time, cost, flexibility, and complexity to other application types

Housing Choice

Development

- Allow development and change on sites with heritage assets
- Be consistent with the existing OCP land use designation and related heritage incentive

Infill

- Focus on “missing middle” ground-oriented infill housing forms (family-friendly sized units preferred)
- Prioritize on-site space for living (e.g. housing, green-space, etc.) rather than for vehicle parking

Rental

- Encourage the creation of rental units (such as through suite readiness)
- Do not reduce the number of existing rental units

Community Diversity and Inclusion

Equity and access

- Consider physical accessibility in both building and site design
- Provide a range of tenure and affordability options to expand the housing continuum
- Have equitable eligibility, benefits, and requirements for similar projects city-wide

More diverse stories

- Support projects with histories that are not already represented in the program

- Broaden the definition of heritage value to include more diverse narratives (across economic, social, and cultural groups)

Expanded values

- Define “heritage” as historic significance, not as an aesthetic
- Consider intangible heritage values or non-building attributes and places (e.g. trees, views, uses etc.)

Energy Reductions and Environmental Sustainability

Green space

- Provide access to at-grade on-site outdoor space for each residential unit
- Achieve appropriate storm water management and permeable surface ratios, with an emphasis on natural rather than engineered systems

Tree protection

- Emphasize tree retention (on-site and in the public realm)
- Process a Tree Permit application concurrently with the HRA review process

Green building

- Apply Step Code for new construction
- Ensure access to “green building” incentive programs (e.g. thick wall density or Energy Save New West)
- Identify energy upgrades for the heritage building in its Conservation Plan

Sustainable transportation

- Provide secured, weather protected bicycle parking for each residential unit
- Support relaxations for on-site vehicle parking spaces where alternative transportation options exist

As part of the HRA Refresh work, on November 1, 2021, staff provided a report on the post-implementation evaluation of the Heritage Conservation Area and also on the final incentives program. Council endorsed the conclusion of the incentives program work and that incentives related to tenure and unit count be considered in the HRA Refresh work.

On May 30, 2022, Council received a report for information regarding adjustments to work plans due to staff resourcing challenges. This included putting on hold the HRA Refresh policy/implementation.

Some of the work was completed before the pause on the project. The next step for the program was to include further refinement of the Principles, creation of a draft policy document, and consultation with the broader community.