



Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing

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Purpose

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide information to the public on what small-scale multi-unit housing is, how to determine if a lot has been rezoned to allow multiple dwelling units, how to determine the number of units permitted, and to outline some basic rules of development.

Background

In December 2023, the Province of British Columbia made changes to the way municipalities manage land use planning, including enacting Bill 44, which aims to increase housing supply in single-family and duplex neighbourhoods. On June 24, 2024, Richmond Council rezoned almost 27,000 single-family and duplex lots throughout the City to permit small-scale multi-unit housing, as required by Bill 44.

What is Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing?

Small-scale multi-unit housing is generally:

- **Small:** A lot may contain a maximum of 3, 4 or 6 dwelling units, depending on lot size and proximity to frequent transit service.
- **Ground-oriented:** Every dwelling must have direct access to the outdoors by way of its own exterior "front door".
- **House-like:** Small-scale multi-unit housing will have a house-like form and character, including building heights, front and rear yards, and sloped roofs like those of Richmond's existing single-family and duplex neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, just as house designs vary depending on lot sizes, trends and owner preferences, small-scale multi-unit housing designs will also vary.
- **Single-lot development:** Maintaining current lot sizes helps to respect neighbourhood character and provide for housing diversity. Development comprising more than one lot would typically trigger the need to rezone to an alternative multi-unit housing zone (e.g., townhouse or apartment).

How do I know if my lot was rezoned?

- Visit the Richmond Interactive Map at maps.richmond.ca/rim/ and enter your address in the search bar. See the attached flow chart for additional information.

Why wasn't my lot rezoned?

As per the Province's Bill 44, lots were exempt from rezoning if they were:

- within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR);
- protected by bylaw as heritage properties;
- zoned for a minimum lot size of 4,047 m² (1 acre);
- larger than 4,047 m² (1 acre);
- without access to water and/or sanitary services;
- within a Transit Oriented Area (TOA), subject to the Province's Bill 47;
- subject to a hazardous condition that cannot be mitigated; or
- zoned to permit 3 or more units.

See over →

How many units are permitted on my lot?

The number of units permitted on a lot is:

- up to 3 dwelling units on lots that are 280 m² (3,013 ft²) or less;
- up to 4 dwelling units on lots that are larger than 280 m² (3,013 ft²); and
- up to 6 dwelling units on lots that are larger than 281 m² (3,024 ft²) and are within 400 m (1,312 ft.) of designated “prescribed bus stops” providing frequent transit service (i.e., daytime service every 15 minutes).

To determine if a lot is within 400 m (1,312 ft.) of a “prescribed bus stop”, visit the Richmond Interactive Map at maps.richmond.ca/rim/ and enter your address in the search bar. Turn on the “Provincial Bill 44 (Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing)” layer under the “Development List”. For clarity, turn off all layers within the “Provincial Bill 44 (Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing)” layer except for “Within 400m of Prescribed Bus Stop”.

Prescribed bus stops were determined based on information provided by TransLink as to be consistent with the requirements of the Province and Bill 44.

Note: for development involving six dwelling units, the owner will need to contribute to the affordable housing reserve, or provide at least one affordable housing unit.

Do I have to build 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 units on my property?

No. Neither the Province’s Bill 44 nor the City’s new zoning regulations require a property owner to redevelop or build additional dwelling units on their property.

Note: the approval process for one unit dwellings, or two unit dwellings where one unit is a secondary suite remains the same.

What are the basic rules for development?

Richmond’s Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing (RSM) zone generally provides for three building types, including a single building, a courtyard arrangement and rear yard infill. The rules for development are generally consistent across all lot sizes, but include variations depending on lot width and proposed layout (e.g., single building, courtyard or rear yard infill). See Attachment 1 for the basic rules of development, and Attachment 2 for illustrations of various development options.

Do I require a permit to build on my lot?

In most cases, a property owner will only require a Building Permit. However, in some situations, the development of small-scale multi-unit housing comprising 2 to 6 units may also require Development Permit. This includes development that:

- is located in an environmentally sensitive area (ESA);
- encroaches into a lot’s required rear yard setback area on a RSM-zoned lot; and/or
- involves an irregular-shaped lot (i.e., non-rectangular lot).

Do I require an architect?

An architect will be required if you plan to construct five (5) or more dwelling units.

See attached →

How much parking is required?

The minimum number of parking spaces per dwelling unit is dependant on the location of your lot, as well as the frontage of your lot. See the following table for clarity:

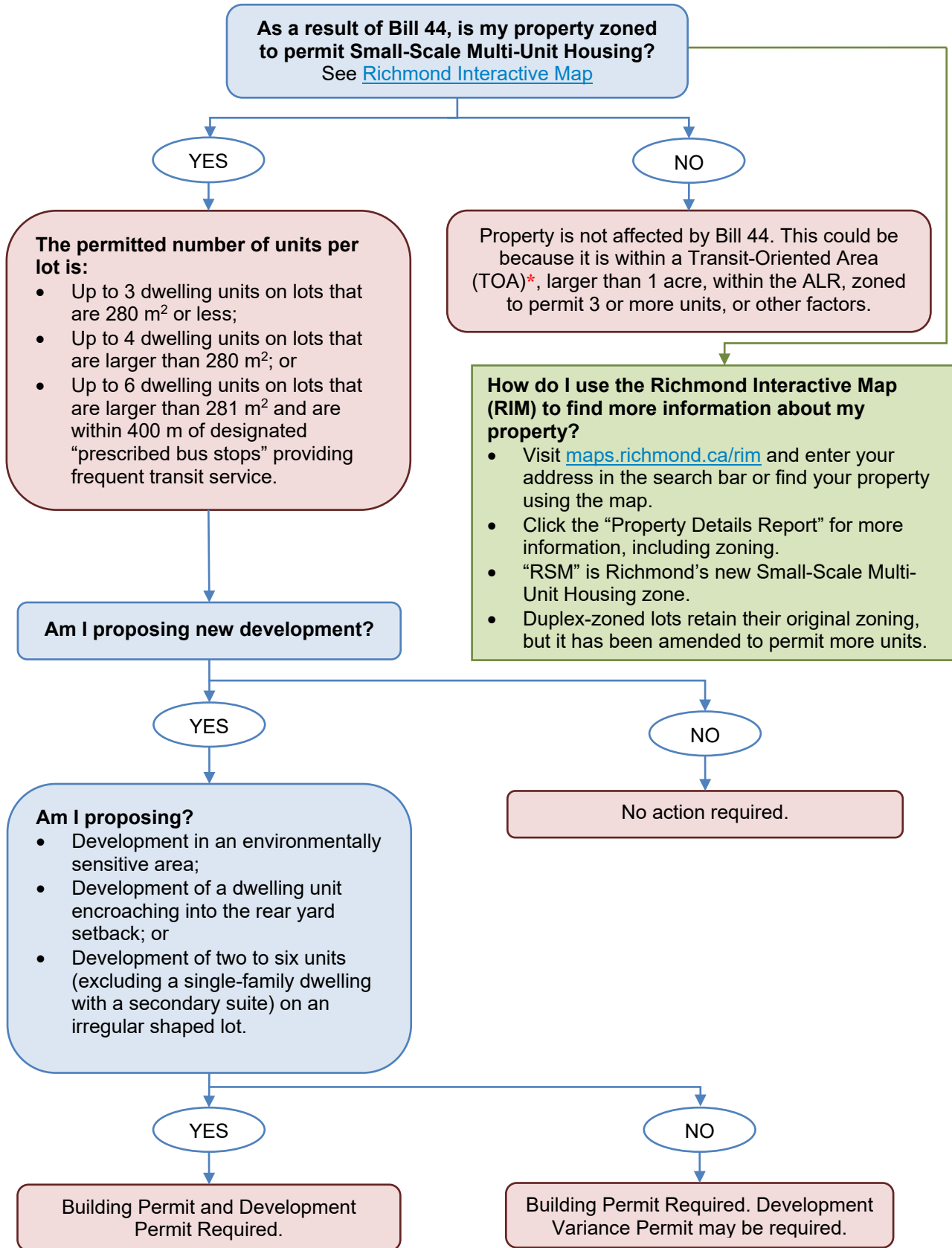
Site Location	Lot Frontage	Minimum number of Parking Spaces Required per Dwelling unit	
		Basic Requirement	Visitor Parking Requirement
Greater than 400 m from a prescribed bus stop	Less than 15 m	0.5 space	Not applicable
	15 m or greater	1.0 space	Not applicable
Within 400 m of a prescribed bus stop	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

What else do I need to consider?

Your property's title can include important information affecting what you may be able to construct. Among other things, this may include utility right-of-ways and covenants restricting building size. For more information, visit ltsa.ca.

See over →

Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing Flow Chart



* See [Bulletin Planning-08 Transit-Oriented Areas](#) for more information.

Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing in Richmond



What are the basic rules for development for 3 to 6 units?

RSM Zone		A. Single Building	B. Courtyard	C. Rear Yard Infill
Buildings (max.)				
No. of buildings per lot		1	2	2
Density (max.)				
For up to 464.5 m ² (5,000 ft ²) of lot area		0.6 FAR	0.6 FAR	0.6 FAR
For additional lot area		0.3 FAR	0.3 FAR	0.3 FAR
"Flex space" for living space and/or parking		Up to 80 m ² (861 ft ²)	Up to 80 m ² (861 ft ²)	Up to 80 m ² (861 ft ²)
Height (max.)				
Front building		9.0 m (30 ft.) 2 ½ storeys	9.0 m (30 ft.) 2 ½ storeys	9.0 m (30 ft.) 2 ½ storeys
Rear building	Without a lane	N/A	9.0 m (30 ft.) 2 ½ storey	4.0 m (13 ft.) 1 storey
	With a lane	N/A	9.0 m (30 ft.) 2 ½ storeys	7.5 m (25 ft.) 2 storeys
Yards (min.)				
Front		6.0 m (20 ft.)	6.0 m (20 ft.)	6.0 m (20 ft.)
Rear	Without a lane	6.0 m (20 ft.)	6.0 m (20 ft.)	3.0 m (10 ft.)
	With a lane	6.0 m (20 ft.)	6.0 m (20 ft.)	1.5 m (5 ft.)
Side	Lots less than 15.0 m (49 ft.) wide	1.2 m & 1.2 m (4 ft. & 4 ft.)	1.2 m & 1.2 m (4 ft. & 4 ft.)	1.2 m & 1.2 m (4 ft. & 4 ft.)
	Lots 15.0 m (49 ft.) wide or wider	1.2 m & 4.0 m (4 ft. & 13 ft.)	1.2 m & 4.0 m (4 ft. & 13 ft.)	1.2 m & 4.0 m (4 ft. & 13 ft.)
Building separation		N/A	Not specified	6.0 m (20 ft.)
Lot Coverage (max.)				
For buildings		45%	45%	45%
Tree Preservation				
For all developments		Tree removal is discouraged. Tree replacement is required.		

FAR (Floor Area Ratio) is a measure of the floor area of a building relative to the area of the lot it is on. For example, 0.6 FAR means that the permitted floor area equals 60% of the lot area.

Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing in Richmond



Illustrated Examples of Development

Small-scale multi-unit housing dwelling units may:

- be arranged above, below or beside each other, and may include detached units; and
- vary based on lot width and depth, total floor area, whether a lot has a rear lane, market demand, and developer preferences.



Conceptual
images for
illustration
purposes only

Larger units (shades of blue) have 2, 3 or more bedrooms. Other units are studio and 1 bedroom units.

A. Single Building

The illustration shows:

- **3 units in 1 building**
- a duplex-type layout with one unit behind the other
- the rear unit has a garden-level suite
- a shared parking garage and driveway are entered from the street

B. Courtyard

The illustration shows:

- **6 units in 2 buildings**
- each building contains 2 smaller garden-level units and a larger unit above
- a driveway along the side of the lot provides access to parking

C. Rear Yard Infill

The illustration shows:

- **5 units in 2 buildings**
- a duplex-type layout with one unit behind the other
- each unit has a smaller garden-level suite
- the fifth unit is located over the garage (entered from a rear lane)