Amenities in multifamily buildings are typically furnished rooms with loose programming elements. These spaces are often underutilized by building inhabitants and could achieve a higher purpose as a community facing public resource. Selective placement in neighbourhoods as resource or emergency gathering hubs in times of need could be achieved without impacting the utility of the building inhabitants overall. Security and time management is paramount to the success of this concept.

Ground level living spaces-turned-cafe are staples in vibrant neighbourhoods of cities like Montreal, allowing the neighbourhood the ability to keep their historic character or unique charms while adding vibrancy, activity, and commercial activity to the streetscape. Creating commercial districts limits the impact to the neighbourhood, and maintains the “feel” of the community.

Laneway homes are currently restricted to residential uses only. The pandemic has illustrated the substantial need for dwellings and work spaces to be more flexible. Allowing mixed-use laneway buildings reduces the barriers to economic activity, encourages entrepreneurs, and facilitates new ways to work from home.

Cohousing and non-profit societies are typically distinguished from forprofit developments in the development process. Typically, they bring tangible and intangible benefits to neighbourhoods through outreach services and affordable housing. Allowing mid-block rezonings for these projects reduces the barriers to their development.

POLICY PROTOTYPES

This proposal intends to introduce prototypes to be used as ‘leverage points’ within residential zones to foster neighbourhood-level resilience. These prototypes are represented as mid-block cohousing or non-profit buildings (A), mixed-use laneway buildings (B), commercial districts (C), and community-use agreements for private amenities (D). These ‘leverage points’ give the neighbourhood the ability to change, evolve, and self-organize during shifts in the local and/or global systems.

POLICY PROTOTYPES

A. Allow mid-block Cohousing and Non-Profit projects in low density residential neighbourhoods

B. Permit laneway buildings to be mixed-use or contain non-residential uses

C. Permit non-residential uses of residential buildings in designated areas (commercial districts)

D. Require new projects to negotiate community use agreements for public use of their amenity spaces

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?


INTENTIONS

This proposal has been guided by the following principles:

1. Resilient neighbourhoods are safe, inclusive, diverse, and vibrant
2. Housing quantity or quality cannot be compromised or negatively impacted
3. Private building amenities can benefit the community by hosting managed public uses
4. Integrate eco-centric management of resources and infrastructure
5. Local production + local transportation + local transactions = local resiliency

“Resilience refers to the amount of change or disturbance that can be absorbed by a system before it is reconstituted into a different set of processes and structures. Resilient systems have the capacity to buffer against minor changes and respond to major perturbations. When change occurs, resilience allows a system to either renew itself or undergo reorganization so that essential components are maintained.”

Laneway looking South towards E.30th avenue
Many Canadian Cities such as (Ottawa and Montreal) have found great success integrating retail or lifestyle uses in residential structures. While housing should not be replaced with other uses, commercial activity can often complement residential buildings while inviting investment and restoring life to aging character homes. Kensington Village in Toronto is an excellent example of this. These structures may see their ground floors converted into restaurants, quaint shops, or art galleries which allows the neighbourhood to maintain its original character and charm, while re-invigorating the structures and re-imagining streetscape.

Located within the Pacific flyway, Vancouver’s green spaces serve as both temporary and permanent residence to a diverse range of birds and pollinators. Maximizing and connecting green space serves to improve biodiversity and provides a variety of ecosystem services (e.g. reduced pressure on stormwater infrastructure, improved community health).

In alignment with City of Vancouver Climate Emergency Action Plan objectives, priority of local transportation modes is reordered to favour pedestrian and microtransportation modes so daily trips can be made by foot, cycle, scooter, or mobility-aid. Microtransportation hubs (e.g. bike share) are scattered at convenient points in the neighbourhood to facilitate short local trips.

Street parking is optimized, while the lanes become green boulevards of activity and nature. Loading and truck movements are centralized, encouraging smaller loads and localized production of goods. Streets are one-way traffic only.

Non-residential uses in the laneways and in residential buildings serves to activate these corridors by offering low-risk economic opportunities for entrepreneurs and work-from-home employees. Paired with public-facing amenity hubs in community-oriented developments such as cohousing, these potentially public spaces facilitate the adaptability of the urban environment and thereby increases the resiliency of the neighbourhoods social fabric.
RE-INVENTING THE LANELSCAPE

Laneways in the Lower Mainland typically serve as utility and vehicular corridors. While this pragmatic existence has served its function over the past century, we need to ask more of these spaces in the future. This proposal imagines a pedestrian and active transportation corridor weaving between pockets of green space and rainwater infrastructure. Native vegetation and soils are reintroduced, encouraging pollinators and other fauna to permeate deeper within the urban fabric. Tangible infrastructure benefits of this landscape proposal include a more substantial tree canopy which damps heat island effects, and substantially increases stormwater detention and filtration.

TYPICAL RAIN GARDEN SECTION

Native vegetation
Cobble substrate
Growing medium
Filter media
Native subsoils

TYPICAL SECTION AT LANE

0.75m 0.75m PATH 1.0m 3.0m 0.5m

PUBLIC SPACE

• DISASTER SHELTER • TOOL LIBRARY

• COOLING CENTRE • COUNSELING DROP-IN

• NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE • POP-UP RETAIL / FOOD • CENTRAL DELIVERY

NATURALLY LANDSCAPED BIOSWALES are proposed mid-block of each street to capture and treat road runoff and seepage from permeable pavement. When paired with additional green rainwater infrastructure, they work to achieve the City of Vancouver’s Rain City Strategy 2022 and 2050 objectives and targets and help to buffer against deleterious substances (e.g. 6-PPD-quinone) from reaching downstream fish-bearing watercourses.

HUMAN SCALE LOADING AND TRANSPORTATION

Public loading curb cuts are located at the periphery of the blockface, reducing the need for vehicular access to retail uses in the lane. Goods are loaded using hand carts on the permeable pavement pathway in the lane.

INTERDEPENDENT AND CONNECTED LAND USES

Allowing a mix of uses in residential neighbourhoods establishes an interdependency which encourages residents to shop and live locally. Addressing the needs of residents within a short walking radius is a core component of sustainability.

OPTIMIZED STREET NETWORK AND VEHICLE PARKING

Street parking is optimized to allow for 90 degree parking on one side of the one-way street, resulting in a higher parking yield than typical street parking arrangements and incorporated green space.

STORMWATER TREATMENT AND DETENTION

Naturally landscaped bioswales are proposed mid-block of each street to capture and treat road runoff and seepage from permeable pavement. When paired with additional green rainwater infrastructure, they work to achieve the City of Vancouver’s Rain City Strategy 2022 and 2050 objectives and targets and help to buffer against deleterious substances (e.g. 6-PPD-quinone) from reaching downstream fish-bearing watercourses.

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Laneway homes in Vancouver are currently considered a conditional use, and are restricted to residential uses only. Retail and office space is currently prohibitively expensive within the City, which deters individuals from embarking on innovative commercial ventures. Allowing mixed-use laneway buildings reduces the barriers and risk to economic activity and encourages entrepreneurial activity within neighbourhoods.

**POLICY SUGGESTIONS**

1. Add “Laneway House” to Outright Approval Use within applicable district schedules. Remove conditional approval and design review for Laneway Buildings.
2. Add office, retail, food / service, counseling services, package storage, transportation rental uses to Outright Approval Use within Laneway Buildings.
3. Remove density penalty for flat roofed Laneway Buildings.
4. Remove mandatory parking minimums for Laneway Buildings.
5. Allow subdivision of parcels to allow for sale and ownership of Laneway Buildings.

**MODEL ZONE:** RS-1  
**SITE AREA:** 3,630 SF  
**MAX HEIGHT:** 9.5m (31'-0")

**Setbacks (house):**  
*Front:* 20% of lot  
*Sides:* Min. 10% of lot  
*Rear:* Min. 45% of lot

**Setbacks (laneway):**  
*Front:* 10'-0" min.  
*Sides:* Parking stall (9'-0" min.) + 3’7” for firefighting access  
*Rear:* 3'-0"

Blue text denotes variance from existing schedule

**MODEL ZONE:** CD-1  
**SITE AREA:** 6,600 SF  
**MAX HEIGHT:** 4 storeys (as defined by the building code)

**Setbacks:**  
*Front:* 10'-0"  
*Sides:* 8'-0"  
*Rear:* 10'-0"

The need for increased density in residential neighbourhoods and a creative, inclusive approach to affordable housing in Vancouver is apparent. To achieve the above, we propose that grassroots and citizen-led developments be given favourable zoning conditions to encourage their undertaking and relaxations commensurate with their future contributions to the neighbourhood.

**POLICY SUGGESTIONS**

1. Allow mid-block rezonings of one or two lot proposals for Non-Profit housing or Cohousing projects.
2. Allow increased height and density for cohousing and non-profit projects in residential neighbourhoods.
3. Waive DCL’s and other requirements which add undue costs to cohousing and non-profit projects.
BUSINESS CASE(S)

The economic reality of the cost of land in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland excludes many from home ownership or from entrepreneurs starting a business. The economic potential of these policy prototypes to overcome this economic reality is substantial.

Cohousing allows households to participate in innovative approaches to home ownership. Amenity rentals and laneway business have the potential to generate funds for homeowners to cover repairs and upgrades. Allowing small-scale non-residential uses in laneways creates opportunity and reduces risk for those starting a business. Lastly, locating small businesses in residential neighbourhoods establishes a dependable market with supportive foot traffic.

Presented below is a business case for renting the amenity room on a monthly basis for a public facing neighbourhood use 25% of the time.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Land reflects approved use value
2. Includes administration fee for BC Housing Housing Hub
3. FFE budget not included
4. GST passed through to purchasers at time of unit sale
5. Construction costs for wood frame apartment < 6 storeys = $290/ sf
6. No underground parking proposed
7. *Market rate of land based of off ZOLO realty average sale price for Vancouver in January 2022
8. **BC Housing Housing Hub’s Affordable Home Ownership Program (AHOP) contribution, in return for equity on individual units as per program details

FINANCING

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PROTOTYPE “A” 05
In a community where people know their neighbours, there is considerable opportunity for natural connections and support that reduce the need for external resources and infrastructure, thereby providing a rich social life and promoting neighbourhood resiliency.

The cohousing built form intentionally fosters an intergenerational and diverse group of people, where neighbours can collaboratively plan and participate in community activities. This two-lot design encourages social interaction of inhabitants by creating opportunities for spontaneous encounters, and allows existing residents to participate.

Cohousing on a neighbourhood level creates micro-hubs of community stewards who are receptive to providing public-facing amenities and are motivated to participate in neighbourhood planning. As building amenities in new developments are often only used to host annual or seasonal events (e.g. Christmas parties), the general anecdote is that they are unused the majority of the time. By designing amenities to be public facing 25% of the time or during critical times (i.e. cooling centre during a heatwave), there is a benefit to inhabitants to potentially generate a small amount of income while simultaneously providing substantial benefits to greater community.