

density framework

4



INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Core Area contains a broad range of building forms within its relatively compact area. These building forms generally range from low-scale historic buildings along the waterfront and in the Historic Commercial District, to a greater concentration of newer high-rise buildings in the Central Business District. The City has helped to guide this variation and transition in building forms through design criteria and development standards, regarding building height, building setbacks, parcel coverage, and building density.

DENSITY DEFINED

Building density, commonly referred to as Floor Space Ratio (FSR), is defined as the ratio between the total amount of gross floor area of a building and the area of the parcel upon which the building is located.

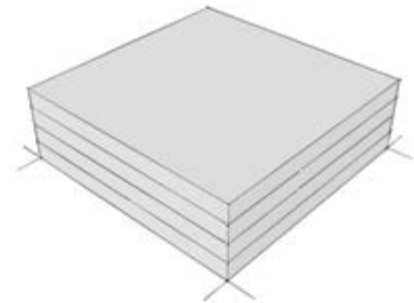
For example, if a new building is proposed on a 5,000 m² parcel of land zoned with a maximum density of 4:1 FSR, the maximum total combined floor area for the proposed building would be 20,000 m², because this amount of combined floor area is equivalent to four times the size of the parcel. The proposed building could also be theoretically configured in a variety of ways, so long as the combined floor area does not exceed the 4:1 FSR maximum density.

(SEE ILLUSTRATION 3)

ILLUSTRATION 3: DENSITY (4:1 FSR) EXPRESSED THROUGH BUILT FORM

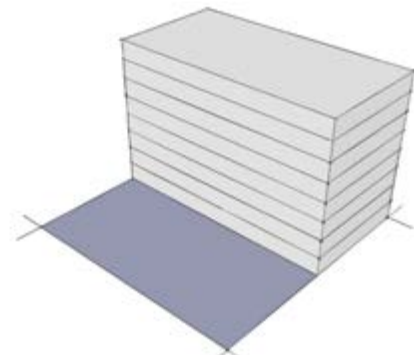
Example 1

- 5,000 m² parcel
- 4:1 FSR maximum density
- 4 storey building
- 5,000 m² on each storey
- 20,000 m² Total Floor Area



Example 2

- 5,000 m² parcel
- 4:1 FSR maximum density
- 8 storey building
- 2,500 m² on each storey
- 20,000 m² Total Floor Area



DENSITY FRAMEWORK

The Downtown Core Area Plan provides a framework for guiding the strategic distribution of density throughout the Downtown Core Area. This framework is applied in two distinct areas: Areas Exempt from Density Bonus System and Areas for Density Bonus System.

Areas Exempt from Density Bonus System refer to portions of the Downtown Core Area that are unlikely to see significant growth and development due to their location and sensitive context which is generally defined by lower scale buildings as well as the concentration of historic buildings in certain areas (SEE MAP 14: AREAS EXEMPT FROM DENSITY BONUS SYSTEM). Due to these factors, the density bonus system described in this Plan does not apply in these areas. Rather, the density framework provides policy direction for the application of maximum density levels within these areas that may only be considered through a rezoning process.

Areas for Density Bonus System refer to those portions of the Downtown Core Area where increased growth and development is anticipated (SEE MAP 15: AREAS FOR DENSITY BONUS SYSTEM). In consideration of the forecast growth and development over the next 30 years, this Plan recognizes the importance of providing an adequate supply of well-designed public amenities to serve both new and existing residents, businesses and visitors. The provision of additional public amenities is crucial to mitigate potential impacts on existing public amenities that may result from an increased number of users.

This Plan identifies that over the next 30 years additional public amenities will need to be provided to provide a balance with the forecast growth and development:

- Three new public parks
- Two new urban plazas
- Completion of the Harbour Pathway
- Various enhanced rapid transit stations along Douglas Street
- Public realm streetscape improvements along specific character streets and other public realm enhancements including minor open spaces and waterfront outlooks.

In addition to these public amenities, the retrofit, re-use and conservation of existing heritage buildings within the Downtown neighbourhood are also identified as integral components in retaining the attractive and unique historic streetscapes that are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike and that serve to enhance the public realm.

In order to encourage and accommodate new growth and development and to ensure a more balanced approach for the provision of key public amenities, the density framework introduces a structured density bonus system that provides new development with the ability to gain additional density in exchange for a monetary contribution that is specifically directed toward the acquisition and

development of specific public amenities and in support for the conservation of heritage buildings. The system also supports the City of Victoria Inclusionary Housing and Community Amenity Policy (2019).

DENSITY FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

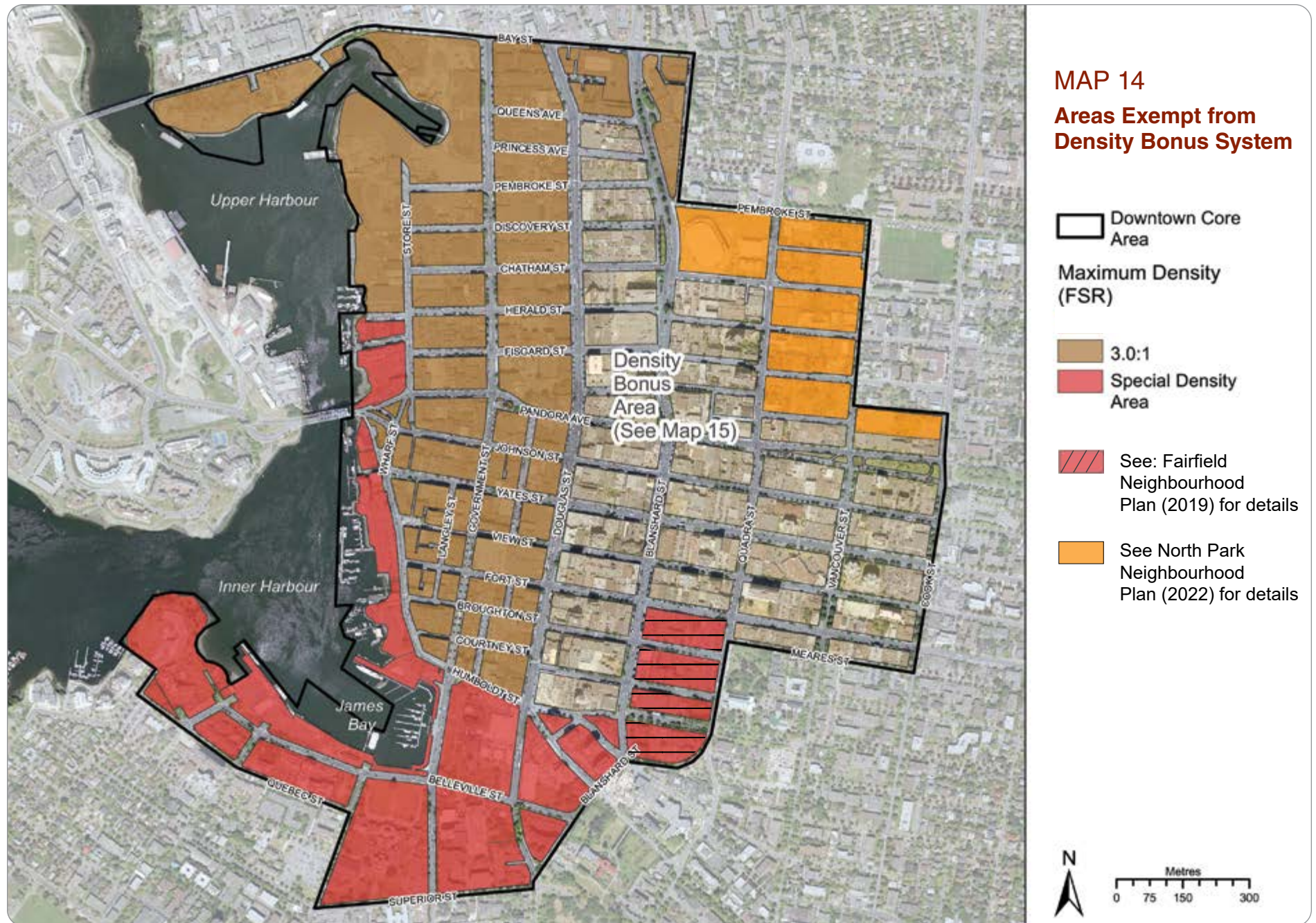
The policies and actions for the density framework contained in this Plan collectively address the following objectives:

1. That density levels respond to both existing and anticipated land uses, functions, building forms and the general physical context of each District.
2. That increased density is offset by the addition of key public amenities that benefit local residents, businesses, visitors and employees.
3. That heritage properties – so important to the character and economic strength of Victoria – are retained and rehabilitated, in balance with new development.
4. That higher density development is accommodated and focused along primary transit corridors and within areas that already have a concentration of higher density buildings.
5. That the maximum building height policies specified in this Plan are supported.

DENSITY FRAMEWORK POLICIES AND ACTIONS

FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1. Maintain a density framework that divides the overall Downtown Core Area into two general areas including Areas Exempt from Density Bonus System as illustrated in Map 14 and Areas for Density Bonus System as illustrated in Map 15.
- 4.2. Review and amend the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* to reflect the density policies and the density bonus system described in this Plan.
- 4.3. Review and amend all related neighbourhood plans to ensure that the density policies are consistent with those described in this Plan.
- 4.4. Consider the expansion of the density bonus system to include portions of the Rock Bay District through the development of a local area plan for the Rock Bay District.
- 4.5. Any increase to density through a rezoning application or through the provisions of the density bonus system described in this Plan are not supported for parcels where a building has been demolished without the prior approval of a Development Permit that demonstrates how the parcel or site is to be redeveloped.
- 4.6. Real property that is, or was subject to a heritage designation bylaw or that is listed on the City of Victoria Heritage Register is ineligible for the density bonus provisions in this Plan.



AREAS EXEMPT FROM DENSITY BONUS SYSTEM

- 4.7. Changes to maximum density levels within the areas identified in Map 14 must be considered through a rezoning application and evaluated against the density policies described in this Plan and any other relevant plans, policies and design guidelines.
- 4.8. Changes to the maximum density on any individual parcel located within the area labeled as Special Density Area on Map 14 must be approved through a rezoning process that considers the policies of this Plan along with the local historic context, public realm context and other relevant plans, policies and design guidelines.
- 4.9. Increases to density either through a rezoning application or through the provisions of the density bonus system described in this Plan will not be supported for any parcel where a protected heritage property has been demolished or where the parcel contains a property that is subject to a legal covenant for the purpose of heritage conservation.

DENSITY BONUS SYSTEM

A density bonus system (allowed under s. 904 of the *Local Government Act*) is a voluntary system under which a municipality provides a developer the opportunity to acquire additional building floor area in exchange for conserving, providing or contributing towards specific public amenities. The developer benefits by being able to potentially increase the size of a development, while the municipality benefits through the developer's contribution toward, or provision of, needed public amenities that improve local vitality and provide direct and tangible benefits to the community, and that would otherwise be difficult for the municipality to provide.

DENSITY BONUS OBJECTIVES

The policies and actions for the density bonus system that are contained in this Plan collectively address the following objectives:

1. That the density bonus system is fair and transparent and increases certainty for all parties.
2. That the density bonus system helps to augment the provision of public amenities that cannot be fully achieved by other regulatory or financial mechanisms, such as development cost charges or development permits.
3. That the density bonus system should apply in areas where growth pressures are strong and land availability is limited.
4. That higher density development is balanced with public benefits and amenities.
5. That the amount of additional floor space gained as the result of density bonus is fairly commensurate with the monetary contribution toward, or actual cost of providing, the public amenity.
6. That residential and commercial development is encouraged and accommodated in strategic locations within those portions of the Downtown Core Area where increased growth and development is anticipated.
7. That the density bonus system encourages the rehabilitation and permanent protection of more heritage properties through seismic upgrading.

DENSITY BONUS POLICIES AND ACTIONS

DENSITY LEVELS

- 4.10. Amend the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* to reflect the base and maximum density levels and eligible uses described in Map 15.
- 4.11. Amend the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* to identify the base density as "as-of-right" density levels that eligible uses may achieve without providing a monetary contribution or public amenity through the density bonus system.
- 4.12. Ensure that any amendments to the density bonus system continue to provide base and maximum density levels that reflect: the existing or desired character of each area; the availability of land with development potential within each area; each area's ability to accommodate increased density and growth in different built forms; and the need for specific public amenities and benefits.
 - 4.12.1. The Base and Maximum densities for eligible uses identified on Map 15 are non-cumulative regardless if more than one eligible use is provided on the same parcel or development site



MAP 15
Areas for Density Bonus System

Location	Eligible Uses	Base Density (Non-Cumulative)	Maximum Density (Non-Cumulative)
A-1	commercial	4:1	6:1
	residential*	3:1	3:1
	mixed use ^{1,2,*}	4:1	6:1

1. The base density for mixed use development is 4:1 FSR, of which the residential portion shall not exceed 3:1 FSR
2. The maximum density for mixed use development is 6:1 FSR, of which the residential portion shall not exceed 3:1 FSR

A-2	commercial	3:1	5:1
	residential*	3:1	3:1
	mixed use ^{3,4,*}	3:1	5:1

3. The base density for mixed use development is 3:1 FSR
4. The maximum density for mixed use development is 5:1 FSR, of which the residential portion shall not exceed 3:1 FSR

B-1	commercial	3:1	5:1
	residential*	3:1	5:1
	mixed use ^{5,6,*}	3:1	5:1

5. The base density for mixed use development is 3:1 FSR
6. The maximum density for mixed use development is 5:1 FSR

B-2	commercial	3:1	4.5:1
	residential*	3:1	4.5:1
	mixed use ^{7,8,*}	3:1	4.5:1

7. The base density for mixed use development is 3:1 FSR
8. The maximum density for mixed use development is 4.5:1 FSR

Location	Eligible Uses	Base Density (Non-Cumulative)	Maximum Density (Non-Cumulative)
C-1	commercial	3:1	5.5:1
	residential*	3:1	5.5:1
	mixed use ^{9,10,*}	3:1	5.5:1

9. The base density for mixed use development is 3:1 FSR
10. The maximum density for mixed use development is 5.5:1 FSR

C-2	commercial	1:1	3:1
	residential*	3:1	5.5:1
	mixed use ^{11,12,*}	3:1	5.5:1

11. The base density for mixed use development is 3:1 FSR, of which the commercial portion shall not exceed 1:1 FSR
12. The maximum density for mixed use development is 5.5:1 FSR, of which the commercial portion shall not exceed 3:1 FSR

C-3	commercial	1:1	1:1
	residential*	3:1	5.5:1
	mixed use ^{13,14,*}	3:1	5.5:1

13. The base density for mixed use development is 3:1 FSR, of which the commercial portion shall not exceed 1:1 FSR
14. The maximum density for mixed use development is 5.5:1 FSR, of which the commercial portion shall not exceed 1:1 FSR

MONETARY CONTRIBUTIONS

- 4.13. Require all developments that seek additional density over and above the specified base density through the density bonus system described in this Plan, to provide a contribution as described in this Plan. Monetary contributions should be directed to the Downtown Core Area Public Realm Improvement Fund (75%) and the Downtown Heritage Buildings Seismic Upgrade Fund (25%). Monetary contributions or other amenity contributions may also be directed at the discretion of Council in accordance with other City policies including the *Inclusionary Housing and Community Amenity Policy*, where applicable.

CALCULATING MONETARY CONTRIBUTIONS

- 4.14. All developments that seek additional density through the density bonus system described in this Plan must submit to the City of Victoria, a site-specific land lift analysis prepared by an independent third party consultant, agreed upon by the developer and the City of Victoria. The land lift analysis must calculate and identify the amount of increased land value over and above the current land value that is directly attributable to the increased density. The lift in land value is generally determined by multiplying the additional floor space that is being acquired by the buildable rate. Buildable rate is the current land value divided by the floor area that is allowed by the base density. The concept of land lift is expressed as a formula below:

$$\text{Land Lift Value} = \text{Additional Floor Area} \times \text{Buildable Rate}$$

$$\text{Buildable Rate} = \text{Land Value} / \text{Base Floor Area}$$

- 4.15. The City of Victoria will recover 75% of the land lift value through amenity contributions.
- 4.16. The formula for calculating the monetary contribution is intended to result in a reasonable contribution toward the overall cost for providing the various key public amenities over the next 30 years, in combination with other potential financial sources including, but not limited to development cost charges, tax levies and grants.

HARRIS GREEN R-48 ZONE

- 4.17. The density bonus system and the proposed densities described in this Plan for area C-1, C-2 and C-3 do not apply to parcels that are zoned as R-48 Harris Green District or Mixed Use Residential – 1 Zone, unless the property owner seeks to rezone the property to a different zone.

DENSITY INCREASE THROUGH REZONING

- 4.18. Any rezoning application within the Downtown Core Area that is seeking an increase in density should result in the provision of public amenities or monetary contributions that support the policies and objectives of this Plan, and the *Inclusionary Housing and Community Amenity Policy*, where applicable.

DOWNTOWN CORE AREA PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENT FUND

- 4.19. Establish and maintain the Downtown Core Area Public Realm Improvement Fund to assist in funding various improvements that tangibly and visibly improve the physical condition, appearance and function- of the public realm and provide a public benefit to the overall surrounding area, such as:
- 4.19.1. Redeveloping and enhancing streetscape designs within City rights-of-way along character streets identified in this Plan.
- 4.19.2. Enhancing landscaping and public amenities along City rights-of-way or within public parks and open spaces including the development of minor open spaces and waterfront outlooks.
- 4.19.3. Acquiring and developing three new public parks.
- 4.19.4. Developing and enhancing the Harbour Pathway.
- 4.19.5. Developing and enhancing rapid transit stations along Douglas Street.
- 4.19.6. Developing two new urban plazas.
- 4.20. The City will create a list of eligible public realm improvement projects as funding priorities that will also be identified as a component of the Downtown Core Area Plan Implementation Strategy/Action Plan.
- 4.21. The City will explore additional funding sources or delivery mechanisms to foster the provision of public amenities within the Downtown Core Area.

DOWNTOWN HERITAGE BUILDINGS SEISMIC UPGRADE FUND

- 4.22. Maintain the Downtown Heritage Buildings Seismic Upgrade Fund to assist in funding a portion of the cost of seismic upgrading as part of the re-use, retrofit and conservation of eligible heritage buildings within the Downtown Neighbourhood.
- 4.23. Eligible heritage buildings must adhere to the following conditions:
- 4.23.1. Be located within the Downtown Neighbourhood and identified on the City of Victoria Heritage Register.
 - 4.23.2. Complete the physical rehabilitation and seismic upgrading as stipulated within a Heritage Revitalization Agreement.
 - 4.23.3. Agree to be designated by a Municipal Heritage Designation Bylaw, if not already.
 - 4.23.4. Demonstrate the full and complete use of all other City of Victoria heritage financial incentives and programs.
- 4.24. The Downtown Heritage Buildings Seismic Upgrade Fund must not be used to replace other existing financial incentive programs for heritage property. Rather, this Fund should function as a supplement to other existing financial incentives, which together serve to improve the financial viability of undertaking the physical rehabilitation and seismic upgrading of remaining heritage buildings.

DENSITY BONUS AREAS

AREA A (A-1 AND A-2)

Area A is generally the Central Business District (CBD) in addition to four blocks located between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street, north of Caledonia Avenue and south of Queens Street. Area A contains the highest densities of the Downtown Core Area, due to the concentration of high-rise commercial and residential developments within the CBD and along the Douglas Street Transit Corridor. For the purpose of the density bonus system, Area A is illustrated as two sub areas including A-1 and A-2.

Area A Vision: To primarily accommodate higher density commercial developments within the Central Business District (A-1) while also accommodating a blend of high density commercial and residential development directly north of the CBD (A-2).

AREA B (B-1 AND B-2)

Area B consists of four blocks located in the North Park neighbourhood bordered by Pandora Avenue to the south, Caledonia Avenue to the north, Blanshard Street on the west and Quadra Street on the east. This small area has several underdeveloped and vacant sites with opportunities for moderate increases in density levels. For the purpose of the density bonus system, Area B is illustrated as two sub areas including B-1 and B-2.

Area B Vision: To accommodate higher density commercial and residential development along Blanshard Street, with medium density development in the rest of the area – consistent with the area’s current character. The specified density levels in Area B also provide a sensitive transition to the surrounding areas.

AREA C (C-1, C-2 AND C-3)

Area C consists of approximately 12 blocks located within the Residential Mixed-Use District, running from Mason Street on the north, to Meares Street on the south, Quadra Street on the west and Cook Street on the east. Area C is adjacent to the Central Business District and is situated around the Yates Street transportation corridor, which features a number of mid-rise and high-rise residential and commercial developments. The area includes most of the Harris Green neighbourhood and the two blocks located along Pandora Avenue between Cook Street and Quadra Street that are part of the North Park neighbourhood, and is home to a small number of isolated but significant heritage properties. For the purpose of the density bonus system, Area C is illustrated as three sub-areas including C-1, C-2 and C-3.

Area C Vision: To further intensify the area with multi-residential development in order to accommodate population growth, while focusing higher density commercial development along Yates and Fort Streets.