

# Height-Based Development Framework

## Summary of Zoning Regulations



*Aligning with new Provincial requirements, the City of Burnaby completed a major amendment to the Burnaby Zoning Bylaw that establishes a new height-based development framework.*

### Background

The Province of BC introduced legislation requiring municipalities to take a new approach to inclusionary housing requirements, density bonus incentives, and development in transit-oriented areas. In response, the City of Burnaby has adopted a new development framework that implements required provincial changes while meeting additional City objectives.

Key changes to the Burnaby Zoning Bylaw include the introduction of a new height-based development framework, including new height-based multi-family residential and commercial zoning districts. This is being implemented as part of the City's ongoing Zoning Bylaw Rewrite project.

### Why a new approach?

Burnaby's previous floor area ratio (FAR)-based framework determined the development potential, or permitted density, of a given property. However, FAR presented challenges, including that it:

- was complex for staff to administer
- was difficult for the public and applicants to navigate
- resulted in unpredictable building heights and forms

The new height-based framework replaces FAR-based regulations and simplifies the development process by focusing on the physical form and design of buildings rather than complex density calculations. This increases transparency and predictability for developers and the community.










**New Development Permit Area (DPA) guidelines** for form and character are being introduced at the end of 2025 that will further support the new framework by providing clear expectations on the appearance and function of building facades, landscaping, and materials, ensuring development contributes positively to its surroundings.

### Objectives

- Simplify regulations and approvals process
- Increase transparency on building height & form
- Allow greater flexibility and mixing of land uses
- Enhance urban design standards
- Maintain opportunities for affordable housing
- Align with Burnaby 2050 Official Community Plan

### New height-based districts

The following new height-based multi-family residential and commercial zoning districts were adopted and added to the Burnaby Zoning Bylaw on June 10, 2025:

-  **CM1** Neighbourhood Commercial
-  **CM2** General Commercial
-  **R2** Townhouse
-  **R3** Low-rise Apartment 1
-  **R4** Low-rise Apartment 2
-  **R5** Mid-rise Apartment 1
-  **R6** Mid-rise Apartment 2
-  **R7** High-rise Apartment 1
-  **R8** High-rise Apartment 2

## How will height be measured?

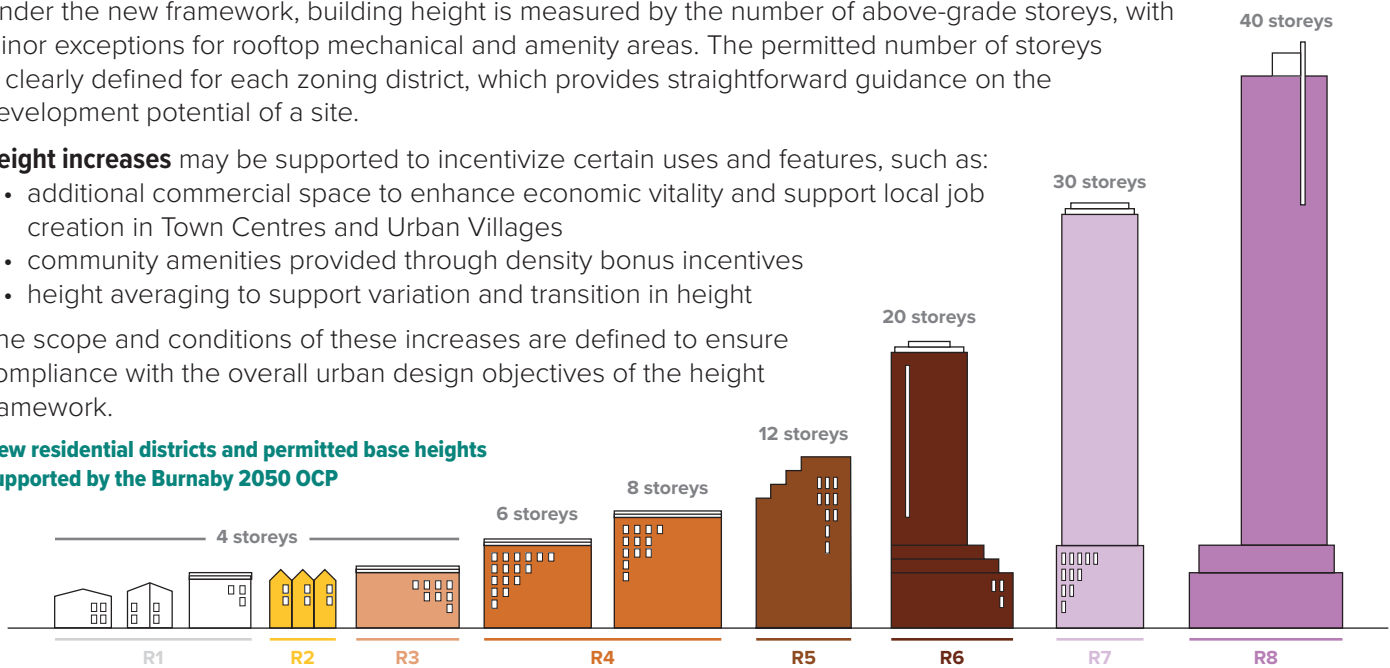
Under the new framework, building height is measured by the number of above-grade storeys, with minor exceptions for rooftop mechanical and amenity areas. The permitted number of storeys is clearly defined for each zoning district, which provides straightforward guidance on the development potential of a site.

**Height increases** may be supported to incentivize certain uses and features, such as:

- additional commercial space to enhance economic vitality and support local job creation in Town Centres and Urban Villages
- community amenities provided through density bonus incentives
- height averaging to support variation and transition in height

The scope and conditions of these increases are defined to ensure compliance with the overall urban design objectives of the height framework.

### New residential districts and permitted base heights supported by the Burnaby 2050 OCP



## Key Changes

### Seven new multi-family residential "R" Districts and two new commercial "CM" Districts that include:

- reduced and simplified sub-districts
- no FAR requirements—permitted height and setbacks define buildable area
- no min. or max. lot areas, lot widths, or lot coverage
- reduced building setback minimums
- support for live-work and multi-family flex units
- more flexible, simplified commercial use categories
- "secondary uses" to support mixed-use development

### New height regulations for new districts that address:

- how height is measured, including exemptions
- determination of above- and below-grade portions of a building
- permitted conditional height increases in relation to voluntary commercial space and height averaging

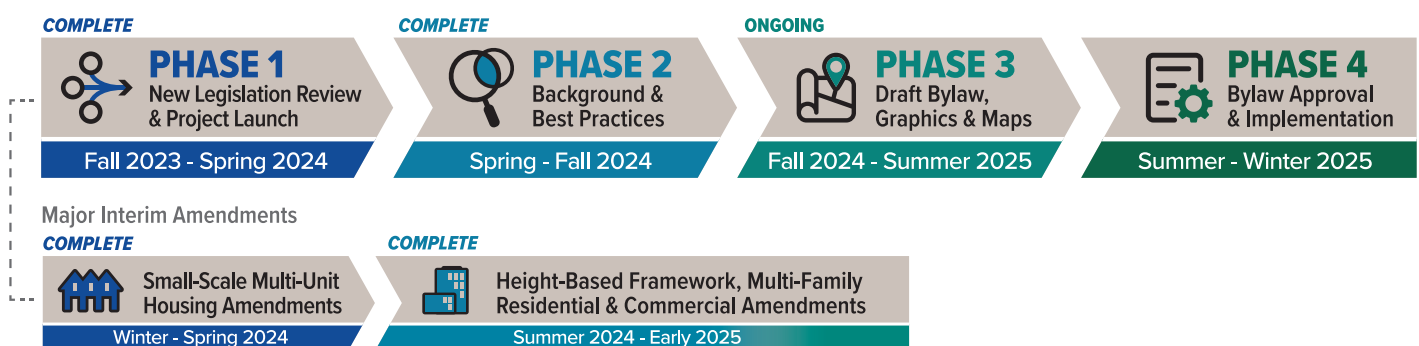
### These regulations support and will be shortly followed by the introduction of:

- new inclusionary rental housing requirements
- new density bonus incentive for community amenities

### Interim Amendment

Full implementation of the height framework is expected by late 2025, following the adoption of the new Burnaby 2050 OCP, Development Permit Area guidelines, and Zoning Bylaw. In the interim, the new height-based multi-family residential and commercial districts will coexist with the City's existing FAR-based zoning districts.

## Zoning Bylaw Rewrite Timeline



For more information, visit [Burnaby.ca/ZoningBylawRewrite](https://burnaby.ca/ZoningBylawRewrite)