



# Staff Report to Agricultural Advisory Committee

Planning and Development

FILE: 13-6635-20/24

**REPORT DATE:** February 04, 2025      **MEETING DATE:** February 13, 2025  
**TO:** Agricultural Advisory Committee  
**FROM:** Allison Dominelli, Planner  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendments Related to Uses of Agricultural Land

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## **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

THAT the Agricultural Advisory Committee:

- A. Receive the recommended amendments to the Zoning Bylaw, as outlined in the February 4, 2025 Staff Report titled “Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendments Related to Uses of Agricultural Land”, and presented at the February 13, 2025 Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting; OR
  - B. Other.
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## **PURPOSE**

To seek the Agricultural Advisory Committee’s feedback on potential amendments to the Zoning Bylaw related to residential uses of agricultural land, to implement objectives of the Agricultural Viability Strategy and Official Community Plan.

Information Report       Decision Report       Direction Report

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Background:**

In 2022, the City’s Official Community Plan (OCP) was adopted and in 2023, the City’s Agricultural Viability Strategy was endorsed. Together, these plans reinforce the City’s support for the preservation of farmland for food production, the local agricultural sector, and its commitment to strengthening the long-term sustainability of agriculture. Agriculture is recognized as the priority use of land in the City’s farming areas.

To help realize the goals identified in both plans, a number of amendments to the City’s Zoning Bylaw are proposed. These amendments are intended to simplify and improve clarity, increase alignment with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) regulations, and incorporate best practices.

**Relevant Policy, Bylaw or Legislation:**

The use of Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) land is governed by the provincial *Agricultural Land Commission Act (ALC Act)* and supporting *Agricultural Land Reserve Regulations*. The *ALC Act* has primacy over local government bylaws and regulations for ALR-designated land, meaning local government bylaws, plans and policies must be consistent with the *ALC Act*. These regulations do allow local government bylaws and regulations to be more restrictive than the ALC for non-agricultural land uses (including residential uses), but not less restrictive. The reverse is true for agricultural uses, where local governments cannot restrict agricultural uses in the ALR any further than the ALC. Any local government regulations that conflict with ALC regulations are of no force and effect on lands within the ALR.

The “Agricultural Land Commission Bylaw Review Guide<sup>1</sup>” (ALC Bylaw Review Guide) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food’s publication “Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas<sup>2</sup>” (Minister’s Bylaw Standards) provide recommended zoning bylaw standards and guidance for farming areas, and were referenced as part of this project.

The OCP identifies Pitt Meadows as a community where agriculture is the dominant land use and farmland is protected for food production. The OCP supports the preservation of ALR land for productive uses by discouraging subdivision, encouraging lot consolidation, and limiting housing through farm home plate provisions.

The Agricultural Viability Strategy (AVS) also supports the protection of farmland for farming. It recommends updating the Zoning Bylaw to strengthen agriculture by: discouraging non-farm uses, including non-agricultural vehicle parking; combining multiple agricultural zones for ease of use; and consideration of farm home plate regulations.

The Zoning Bylaw regulates the use of agricultural land, including provisions for residential uses.

**Analysis:**

Taking guidance from the OCP and AVS, the City has reviewed the Zoning Bylaw regulations related to agricultural land, with a goal to identify:

- Opportunities to streamline and simplify;

**A.**

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/assets/alc/assets/library/land-use-planning/alc\\_bylaw\\_review\\_guide.pdf](https://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/assets/alc/assets/library/land-use-planning/alc_bylaw_review_guide.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/strengthening-farming/local-government-bylaw-standards/840000-1\\_guide\\_for\\_bylaw\\_development\\_in\\_farming\\_areas.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/strengthening-farming/local-government-bylaw-standards/840000-1_guide_for_bylaw_development_in_farming_areas.pdf)

- Gaps or areas where regulations should be further considered to support the protection of farmland and enhance agricultural viability; and
- Non-alignment with ALC regulations.

Generally, this review focused on the regulations for managing residential uses on agricultural land.

The recommended changes to the Zoning Bylaw can be summarized as follows:

- Combine the A-1, A-2 and A-3 zones;
- Add clarity to A-1 zone regarding compliance with ALC regulations, total lot coverage, parking;
- Implement residential footprint (farm home plate ) regulations;
- Reduce the maximum single-family dwelling size on smaller parcels (option for consideration):
- Remove allowances for mobile homes;
- Combine specific use regulations into the new combined A-1 zone;
- Move and update regulations for accessory farm residential buildings and structures into the new combined A-1 zone;
- Remove allowance for garden suite uses from parcels > 8094 m<sup>2</sup>; and
- Simplify temporary farm worker housing regulations.

It is noted that these are preliminary recommendations based on staff's initial review. As noted above, the purpose of this report is to seek the Agricultural Advisory Committee's feedback on these potential zoning amendments.

#### Combine A-1, A-2 and A-3 Zones

The AVS, ALC Bylaw Review Guide and the Minister's Bylaw Standards recommend applying a single agriculture zone to the ALR.

The A-1 General Agricultural zone is the most common zone for ALR land in the City, although there are 44 A-1 parcels that are located outside of the ALR (e.g. rural areas, some City parks, parts of the Metro Vancouver greenway, etc.). The A-2 Large Lot Agricultural zone is used for the largest ALR land parcels (67) in the northern part of Pitt Meadows.

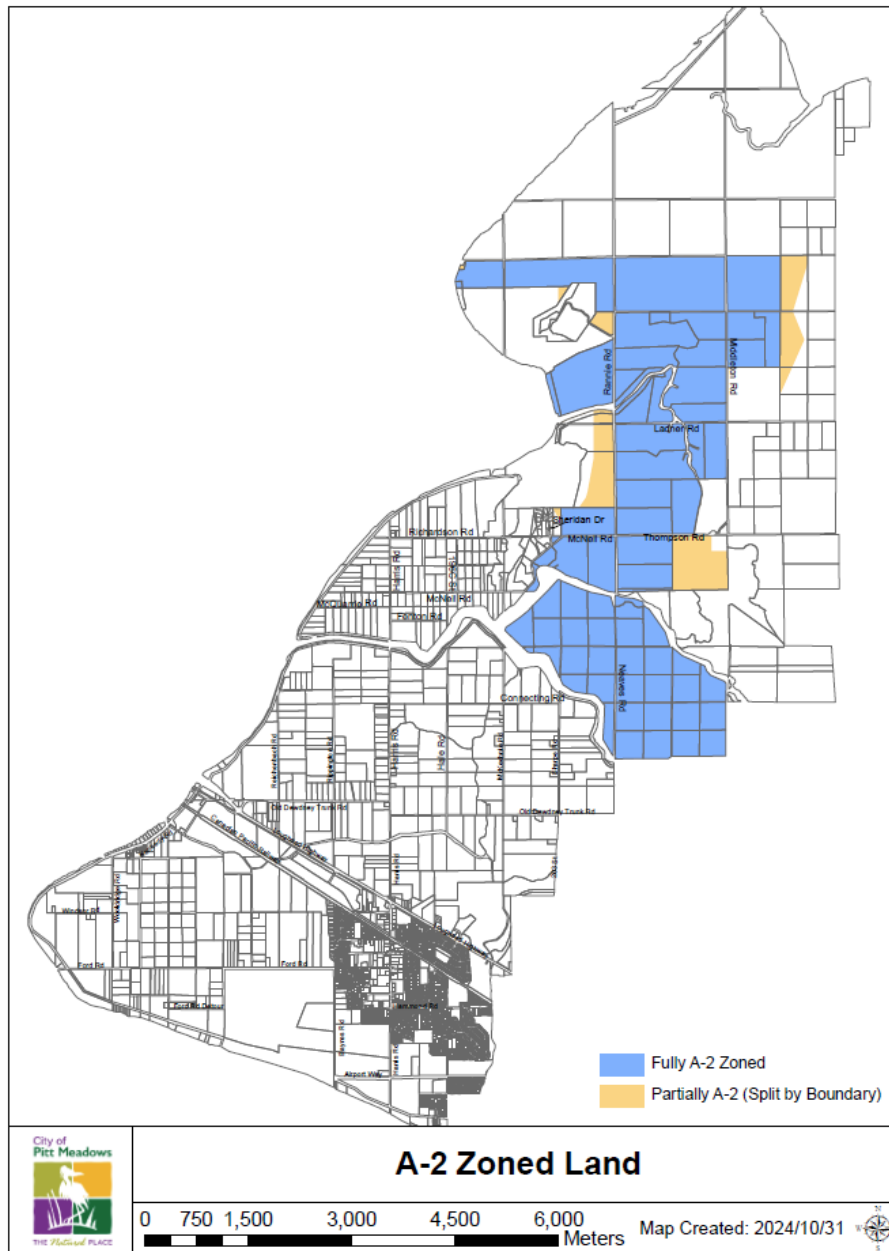


Figure 1: Properties zoned A-2

The permitted uses in both the A-1 and A-2 zones are the same. The main difference between the two zones relates to minimum parcel size for the purposes of subdivision. In the A-1 zone, the minimum parcel size for subdivision is 8 ha (20 acres) and in the A-2 zone, it is 16 ha (40 acres). Subdivision of land in the ALR, however, is not supported by City plans or policies and requires approval from the ALC. The ALC recommends a large minimum parcel size to discourage subdivision and the use of ALR land for rural residential purposes. Only a small number of subdivisions have been approved in the ALR in the last 20 years, and these include two homesite severances, a lot line adjustment, and some subdivision/re-alignment due to the Golden Ears Bridge project.

There are only 34 parcels in the A-1 zone that theoretically have subdivision potential (i.e. they are larger than 16 ha (40 acres) and could be subdivided to create two >8 ha parcels). Of those 34 parcels, 32 are privately owned and the City owns the other two. The word “theoretically” is used because actual subdivision is not supported by City policy. Even if an application were submitted, it would likely be challenging to support from a policy perspective, and many of the parcels also present technical challenges for subdivision, such as inadequate access and servicing. It is recommended that the new A-1 zone include a minimum parcel size of 16 ha, to further reinforce the City’s long-standing policy of not supporting subdivision in the ALR and to reduce redevelopment speculation. If implemented, this change to the minimum lot size would make the current A-2 zone redundant.

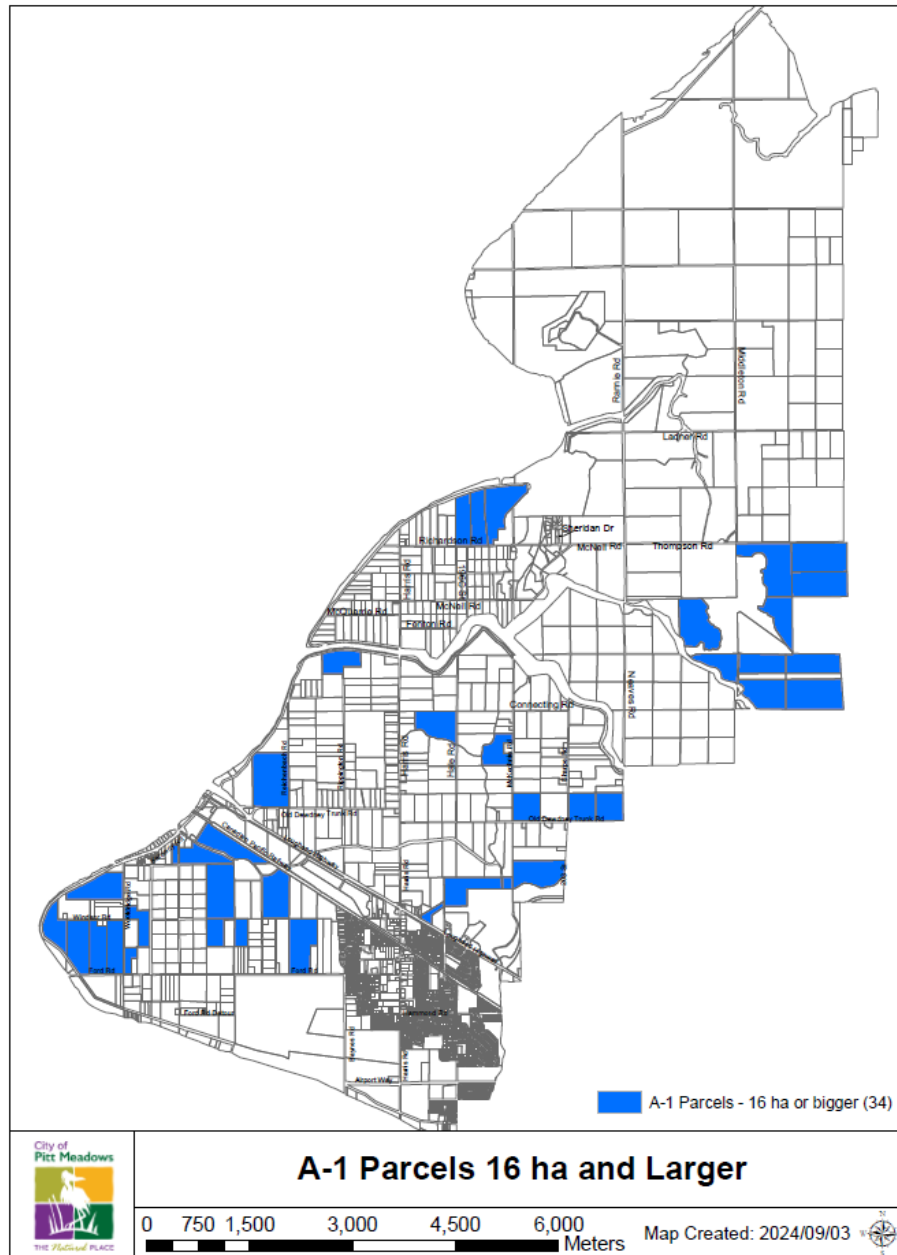


Figure 2: A-1 parcels >16 ha

The A-3 Agricultural and Farm Industrial zone only applies to two parcels, 18315 Ford Rd (Meadow Valley Meats) and 13753 Hale Rd (processing plant). This zone dates back to 1999, when the processing plant at 13753 Hale Rd received approval from the ALC to process farm products other than those originating solely from that farm. At that time, ALC regulations only permitted the processing of farm products grown on the farm. A new zone (now A-3) was created to accommodate this use. Subsequently, in 2002, the ALC amended its regulations to permit processing if at least 50% of what is being processed originates on the farm. Therefore, the A-3 zone is essentially redundant, as processing can and does occur on properties zoned A-1 and A-2.

However, Meadow Valley Meats does not process any products that originate from their site. Therefore site-specific permission will be added to the new A-1 zone, to permit their continued operation.

There are two additional Agricultural zones, A-4 Agricultural and Golf Course and A-5 Agricultural and Wildlife Management. A-4 is the zone used for the City’s golf courses, and A-5 is the Pitt-Addington Marsh Wildlife Area zoning. These zones already regulate those specific uses, so no changes are proposed to those zones.

Add Clarity to A-1 Zone

To improve clarity in the A-1 zone, the following minor revisions are suggested.

First, a statement clarifying the primacy and jurisdiction of the ALC is proposed for inclusion into the Zoning Bylaw: *“Despite any other provisions of this bylaw, all lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve are subject to the provisions of the Agricultural Land Commission Act, Agricultural Land Commission Regulations thereto and Orders of the Commission”*. The additional language provides bylaw readers with notice that ALC requirements also apply and should be reviewed. This addition aligns with the ALC Bylaw Review Guide and the Minister’s Bylaw Standards, and does not implement any new or additional regulatory requirements.

Second, a combined maximum lot coverage for all buildings and structures on a parcel is proposed to be added to the section on Permitted Lot Coverage. Currently, there is a separate lot coverage limit for buildings containing various uses as follows:

<b>Use</b>	<b>% of lot coverage permitted</b>
<i>Greenhouses</i>	75%
<i>Apiculture</i>	20%
<i>Other agricultural buildings</i>	35%
<i>Residential</i>	1% for parcels >4 ha 5% for parcels <4 ha

When a property contains multiple uses, this can cause confusion about the actual maximum permitted lot coverage. While not intended, a reader may interpret this to mean a property could contain greenhouses (75%), barns (35%), and residential buildings (1%), which total over 100% lot coverage. While that scenario is unlikely, a maximum combined lot coverage is recommended

for inclusion (e.g. 80%), ensuring that at least a portion of a property remains open space and available for stormwater drainage and site access.

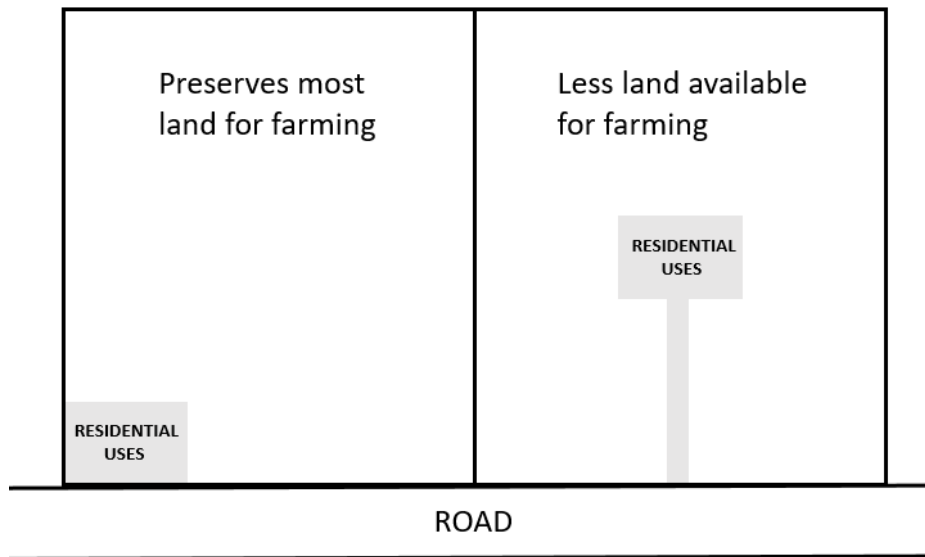
Third, for the Onsite Parking and Loading section, the following changes are recommended to provide improved clarity on permitted parking and storage of unlicensed, commercial, and recreational vehicles:

- Include a definition for farm vehicle
  - Consistent with the *Motor Vehicle Act*, farm vehicles will be defined as farm tractors and implements of husbandry (e.g., harvesting machinery, bailers)
  - No restrictions on the number of legitimate farm vehicles
- Include a defined limit on the number of recreational vehicles (including motorhomes, camping trailers, boats) that can be parked on a property
  - Suggest a limit of four to six per parcel according to parcel size
  - Must be uninhabited
  - Must be registered to the property owner or resident
- Clarify unlicensed vehicles section
  - Only permit unlicensed vehicles to be parked or stored inside a single-family dwelling (ie., an attached garage) or a residential accessory building (i.e., a detached garage or workshop)
  - Unlicensed farm vehicles and associated equipment are exempt
- Commercial vehicles
  - Suggest a limit of two per parcel at any one time
  - Must be owned and operated by the farm operation of which the property is a part of, a property owner, or a resident
  - Prohibit storage of construction/contractor's equipment and vehicles unless used for active residential or agricultural development on the property, an authorized use on the property, or in association with a valid building permit

The use of ALR land for truck parking or commercial recreational vehicle (RV) storage is not permitted; the recommended revisions are intended to provide greater clarity for property owners and residents.

#### Implement Residential Footprint (Farm Home Plate) Regulations

To minimize the negative impacts of residential uses on farming, regulating the siting of those farm residential uses is recommended by the ALC Bylaw Review Guide, Minister's Bylaw Standards, and the City's OCP and AVS. In most cases, requiring residential development to be located close to a road provides the greatest protection for agricultural areas by reducing potential conflicts between farm and residential uses and preserving more of the property available for farming. Traditionally, farmers have understood this rationale, and many have located their homes near the road. However, in recent years, some farmland has been used instead for rural estates. Residential estate-style development has tended to be located on a parcel without consideration for farming viability, often in the middle of a parcel, which reduces the long-term potential farming ability of a property.



*Figure 3: Examples of Residential Uses on Farmland*

Currently, no City bylaws restrict the location of residential uses on farmland other than typical property line setbacks. Since 2019, the ALC has provided some oversight for the location of a dwelling, in that any amount of fill placement greater than 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> in area requires approval from the ALC. However, if a project does not require fill or requires less than 1,000 m<sup>2</sup>, then there is no ALC approval required and a dwelling could be located anywhere on a property.

It is recommended that regulations for the siting of residential uses be introduced, and be based on the Minister’s Bylaw Standards (see Figure 4). Any existing residential uses not complying with the new regulations would be considered as a “non-conforming” use under the *Local Government Act*, meaning they could lawfully continue in their current form.

Typically, a residential footprint or farm home plate includes buildings, structures and improvements associated with a single-family dwelling. For example:

- attached or detached garages or carports;
- driveways to residences;
- decorative landscaping;
- attached or detached household greenhouse or sunroom;
- residential-related workshop, tool and storage sheds;
- artificial ponds not serving farm drainage, irrigation needs or aquaculture use; and
- residential-related recreation areas such as, but not limited to, swimming pools and tennis courts.



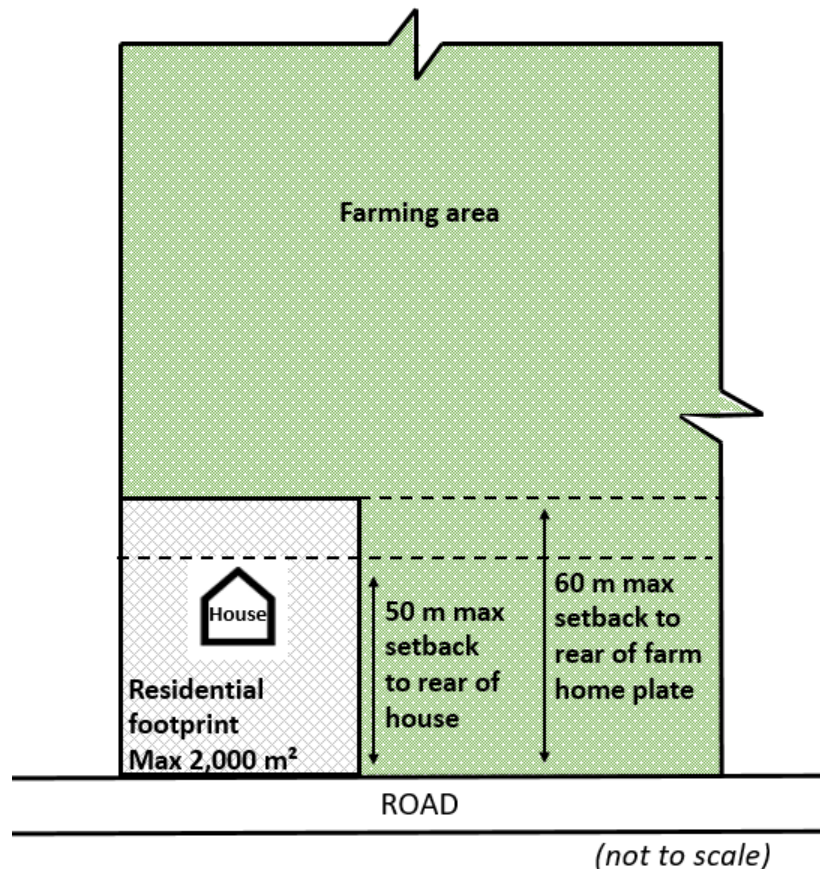


Figure 4: Example of residential footprint (farm home plate) regulations

#### Reduce Maximum Allowable Single-Family Dwelling Size on Smaller Parcels

Under the *ALC Act*, one single-family dwelling to a maximum size of 500 m<sup>2</sup> is permitted, along with one additional residence with a maximum size of 90 m<sup>2</sup>. Any other residential use of an ALR parcel requires approval from the ALC (e.g. temporary farm worker housing, residence larger than 500 m<sup>2</sup>). City Bylaws permit an additional 90 m<sup>2</sup> residence only on parcels at least 8 ha (20 acres).

While 500 m<sup>2</sup> of floor area is the current maximum permitted by the ALC and the City for a single-family dwelling, this applies regardless of the parcel size. For example, a 2 ha (5 acre) parcel can have a 500 m<sup>2</sup> (5,381 ft<sup>2</sup>) dwelling on it, the same as an 8 ha (20 acres) parcel. However, the scale of a 500 m<sup>2</sup> dwelling on a 2 ha parcel is relatively more impactful than a 500 m<sup>2</sup> dwelling on an 8 ha parcel.

The City can choose to implement a smaller house size limit on smaller parcels. For example, Richmond has a blanket size limit of 400 m<sup>2</sup>, while Delta permits 300 m<sup>2</sup> on lots less than 8 ha and 465 m<sup>2</sup> on lots greater than 8 ha.

To minimize the development of estate homes, the recommended approach is to reduce the allowable size of single-family dwellings on smaller parcels, and use 8 ha as the dividing line.

Parcels greater than 8 ha are more likely to require more farm labour, so a larger house size may be required to support multi-generational farming families. For lots of at least 8 ha in area, no changes are suggested, so the maximum floor area of 500 m<sup>2</sup> will continue, along with an additional 90 m<sup>2</sup> residence also permitted. A 350 m<sup>2</sup> (3,767 ft<sup>2</sup>) maximum residential floor area is suggested for lots less than 8 ha.

#### Remove Mobile Home Section

As of January 1, 2022, specific ALC regulations permitting a mobile home as an additional dwelling in the ALR were removed as a result of earlier regulatory changes permitting an additional residence up to 90 m<sup>2</sup> (which could include a mobile home).

Since a mobile home is no longer an outright permitted use by the ALC and requires an application for an additional dwelling, it is recommended that the mobile home section in the Zoning Bylaw be deleted. Existing mobile homes will continue to be allowed as “non-conforming” under the *Local Government Act*. New mobile homes <90 m<sup>2</sup> would continue to be permitted outright on lots at least 8 ha in size (as an additional residence). New mobile homes >90 m<sup>2</sup> in floor area would be allowed as an additional farm house, if approved by the ALC.

#### Combine Specific Use Regulations into New A-1 Zone

The Zoning Bylaw currently contains several sections detailing specific uses that are permitted in the ALR, including:

- Farm Worker Housing
- Farm Retail Sales and Winery / Brewery / Distillery / Meadery or Cider Lounges
- Cannabis production in the ALR
- Additional (90 m<sup>2</sup>) residence in the ALR
- Additional farm house

Since these specific uses only pertain to properties in the ALR, it is recommended that these sections be moved into the agricultural zone, where a property owner could easily find the relevant Zoning Bylaw information in one section rather than having to refer to multiple sections in the bylaw.

Farm worker housing is discussed in more detail later in the report. While maintaining the existing regulations in the other sections, minor changes are intended to aid in interpretation and administration of the bylaw.

#### Move and Update Accessory Farm Residential Buildings and Structures

Similarly, it is recommended that information from Zoning Bylaw section 4.13 on accessory farm residential buildings and structures be moved from the general regulations section to the A-1 zone, again so that property owners are mainly referring to one location in the Zoning Bylaw for regulations relating to their property.

The ALC's recently released guidelines<sup>3</sup> for accessory residential use structures in the ALR clarify that residential accessory structures are only permitted if they are necessary for a residential use. These structures cannot contain residential uses that would normally be contained in a dwelling (e.g. sleeping area, gym, spa, etc.) and cannot be used to circumvent the size limits on residential dwellings in the ALR. The guidelines suggest a maximum floor area of 90 m<sup>2</sup> and single-storey height be included.

It is recommended that these guidelines be incorporated into the accessory farm residential buildings and structures regulations and that these uses be contained within the proposed farm home plate.

#### Remove Garden Suite Uses from Parcels < 8094 m<sup>2</sup>

Currently, the Zoning Bylaw permits garden suites, in addition to a principal residence, on parcels in the ALR that are less than 8,094 m<sup>2</sup> (2 acres), as ALC use regulations do not generally apply to parcels of this size. The City's OCP supports the consolidation of small agricultural parcels and more intense residential use (i.e., allowing multiple dwelling units) deters consolidation. These parcels are also located outside of the urban containment boundary. Growth and residential development in the City are directed inside the urban containment boundary; therefore, it is recommended that provisions for garden suites be removed from these small agricultural properties.

#### Simplify Temporary Farm Worker Housing Regulations

It is recommended that the name be changed from migrant farm workers to temporary farm workers to align with wording used by the ALC, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and other agencies. Similar to other specific use regulations noted above, it is suggested that temporary farm worker housing (TFWH) regulations be moved to the A-1 zone.

ALC approval for any TFWH is required. If approved by the ALC, the City's Zoning Bylaw permits TFWH with the following regulations:

- Farm status from BC Assessment;
- Minimum farm operation is contiguous 8 ha (20 acres);
- Minimum lot size of 3.75 ha;
- Supporting agrologist report;
- Building on temporary foundation or footings;
- Maximum one building for TFWH;
- Maximum number of workers is 60 per farm operation <40.5 ha (100 acres), 150 per farm operation 40.5 - 405 ha, 250 per farm operation > 405 ha; and

**A.**

<sup>3</sup><https://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/763/2024/02/Accessory-Residential-Use-Structures-in-the-ALR-Guidelines.pdf>

- Minimum and maximum interior space restrictions per occupant, specified by floor area type and rooms.

Many of these regulations were written when the federal TFWH program was first introduced. At the time, the City was responsible for inspecting these housing units for compliance with the applicable government regulations. Since then, the BC Agriculture Council has taken over the recurring inspections for TFWH, though the City still inspects during construction as part of the building permit process. In addition, there are now Minister’s Bylaw Standards and ALC regulations related to TFWH. It is recommended that the Zoning Bylaw be updated based on these guidelines and to increase flexibility for farm operations to bring in TFWH. The proposed changes generally include:

- Removal of minimum lot size of 3.75 ha, but maintain minimum farm operation size of 8 contiguous ha (20 contiguous acres);
- Maximum number of workers per farm operation limited to no more than:
  - 130 workers for greenhouse, mushroom, tree fruit, and berry/vegetable production
  - 40 workers for all other commodities;
- Simplify floor area requirements by just using a maximum floor area per worker;
- Remove the restriction for a maximum of one building; and
- Introduce siting restrictions, similar to the farm home plate or residential footprint, e.g.:
  - Contiguous to principal residence home plate;
  - 35 m<sup>2</sup> per worker for additional home plate space;
  - Maximum setback 60 m from road.

Although not included in these Zoning Bylaw updates, staff intend to prepare a draft Council Policy for evaluating TFWH applications which may include a recommendation that if an application meets the criteria, staff could be authorized to automatically forward it to the ALC for a decision. If the policy is approved, this could ultimately streamline the process for TFWH applications by eliminating the need for AAC and Council consideration for applications that comply with the designated criteria. A separate report outlining this approach would be presented to this AAC at a future meeting.

### Conclusion

At this stage, staff request feedback from the AAC about the proposed changes to the Zoning Bylaw. This feedback is intended to be used to help inform a future report to Council and the drafting of future bylaw amendments. With that, the recommendation is that the AAC receive this report, noting that AAC feedback will be captured in the meeting minutes.

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### **KATZIE FIRST NATION CONSIDERATIONS**

Referral     Yes     No

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**SIGN-OFFS**

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