

Direct Control Zoning Options to Preserve Heritage/Character Properties

There are two basic types of Direct Development Control Provisions (DC1 Zoning) that address the preservation/conservation of historic/character properties and areas. All Direct Development Control Provisions are adopted as Bylaws.

One type of Direct Development Control Provision, commonly a property-specific Provision, is applied to historic properties in conjunction with the provision of a grant to the affected owner as part of the process to designate the property as a Municipal Historic Resource. The grant both incents the owner to designate the property as a historic resource, and assists the owner with the costs to restore and maintain the property. This type of Direct Development Control Provision is applied with the consent of the owner, regulates and protects the specific character defining elements of the resource from unsympathetic alteration, and in some cases includes use opportunities as may be necessary to facilitate the repurposing and long term sustainability of the resource/property. This type of Direct Development Control Provision is applied to numerous designated Municipal Historic Resources throughout Edmonton that range in scale from carriage houses, to residences, to commercial and institutional buildings, to mid-rise mid-century modern apartment buildings.

A second, less common type of Direct Development Control Provision, is applied to clusters of properties – some with, and some without, historic significance, but the majority sharing a context or era-specific defined character. This type of Direct Development Control Provision is also applied with the consent of the affected owners, but is not focused on the designation of specific properties as historic resources. The intent of this Provision type is to maintain/manage the historic character of the area, based on the character defining elements of structures and streetscapes, instead of only the structures. Rather than applying specific regulations to preserve an identified heritage structure, this type of Direct Development Control Provision is often based on the regulations of the underlying standard Land Use Zone (e.g., RF1, RF4, RF5) and augmented by a variable mix of additional regulation and guidelines to manage potential changes to existing structures/properties and the type and design of potential infill development. The area-based Direct Development Control Provision is often associated with the concurrent adoption of an Area Redevelopment Plan.

The area-based Direct Development Control Provision is most effective and justified when applied to a consolidated cluster of properties – perhaps an entire block face, or several blocks – for the best opportunity to maintain/manage the desired heritage character. Because this Direct Development Control type involves multiple properties and owners, it can also take considerable time to navigate and negotiate to conclusion – hence, these Direct Development Control Provisions are less common. While the motivation to accept this type of Direct

Development Control Provision is often driven by a mix of owner altruism and regulatory flexibility, the long-term integrity of the Provision is vulnerable/subject to changes in perspective with evolving economic conditions and ownership. Accordingly, both sympathetic and unsympathetic alterations and infill has occurred in area-based Direct Development Control Provisions. Notwithstanding its limitations, the area-based DC1s have been relatively successful as they can effectively guide redevelopment expectations to maintain the character, scale and massing of existing built forms and streetscapes and to manage the incorporation of sympathetic infill. Strengthening the effectiveness of area-based Direct Development Control Provisions would require more emphasis on their regulatory aspects – this in turn reduces owner flexibility and poses issues relative to obtaining owner acceptance of the Direct Development Control Provision.