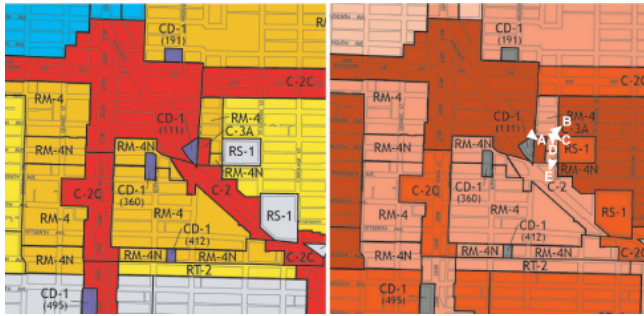


# Tangent—ial Vancouver—ism

**Tangential Vancouverism: *Projects for Vancouver's Urbanism*** explores the potential for new "urban extensions" to be tenably designed as vibrant constituents of city life in Vancouver. **Read on »**



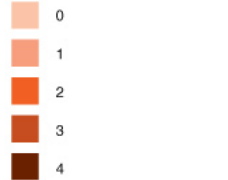
Left: City of Vancouver zoning map illustrating use: varieties of residential + commercial Right: Zoning map altered to reflect intensity of 'character' regulations

**Zoning District Schedule Categories:**

- Intent
- Outright Approval Uses\*
- Conditional Approval Uses
- Regulations
- Relaxation of Regulations

note\* 'character' never appears in outright approval uses

**Number of Categories in Which 'Character' Appears: proxy for relative importance of 'character' in each zone**



A) RT-5 ...emphasis is placed on the external design of all new buildings and additions being compatible with the historical CHARACTER of the area

## Character Study – 11th and Prince Edward

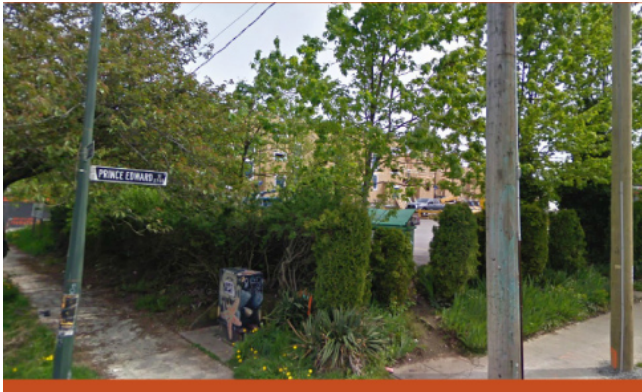
Hannah Teicher  
02 Systematize

Practicing architecture, character seemed to come up frequently, both in analyzing the relevant zoning bylaw for any particular project, and in conversations with development planners. Increasingly, this term seemed influential in the planning approval process, and I had a hunch that it was officially undefined. The hunch was soon gratifyingly realized through a quick search of the definitions section of the zoning bylaw (gratifying because this meant there were depths to plumb).

Attempting to be systematic in the exploration, I set up a chart with every district schedule down the left hand side and the five sections of those schedules across the top. I searched each schedule to determine which sections included a reference to character. As a body, the schedules were riddled with character, but other than that, at first glance, the results were not surprising. The only zoning district with character mentioned in 4 out of 5 sections, Strathcona (RT-3) scored highest, just what one would expect in Vancouver's 'heritage' bastion. And almost without exception, the industrial districts, where function is presumably primary, were unhampered by character regulations.

But determining where these distinctions fall on a map could help elucidate how they're used. To move toward spatializing the results, I attached a colour code for the range from 0-4 sections to indicate the intensity of character requirements in each district. I transposed this information to the existing City of Vancouver zoning map, and some patterns started to emerge. All of a sudden what had been vast swathes of un-toned single-family residential districts gained intensity, an intensity reinforced by their overwhelming area. While Vancouver is increasingly known for its downtown density, it remains, in reality, largely a city of single-family homes. And throughout these vast dwelling districts, which dwarf the intersecting commercial zones, character is a prominent requirement for building anything new.

This magnitude points to one of the many issues with using character as a criterion for development. A sense of character often springs from a feeling about a place, a feeling that emanates from how things have been,



*B) C-3A ...to maintain commercial activities, specialized services and some light manufacturing enterprises while preserving the CHARACTER and general amenity of the area*



*C) RS-1 ...maintain the single-family residential CHARACTER of the RS-1 District*



*D) RS-1 ...emphasis is placed on the external design of all new buildings and additions being compatible with the historical CHARACTER of the area*

embodying a visceral impulse toward preservation. Rather than enshrining that impulse, a responsible, forward-looking planning department would urge those engaged in development to resist. Planning policy and practice would cultivate difference not for the sake of novelty, but to acknowledge that the way things have been done has not always performed, functionally, materially, typologically, environmentally. In other words, that staying in character might be more of a hindrance than a help as a city moves forward.

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**CHARACTER (working definition): 'all things being equal, we should probably keep going just like we have been'**

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