



# **City of Vancouver** *Land Use and Development Policies and Guidelines*

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## **C-1 RESIDENTIAL GUIDELINES**

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# Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1 Application and Intent</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2 General Design Considerations</b> .....	<b>1</b>
2.1 Neighbourhood Character and Streetscape .....	1
2.3 Orientation .....	2
2.4 Views .....	3
2.6 Light and Ventilation .....	3
2.7 Weather .....	3
2.8 Noise .....	4
2.9 Privacy .....	4
2.10 Safety and Security .....	5
2.11 Access and Circulation .....	6
2.12 Heritage .....	7
<b>3 Uses</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>4 Guidelines Pertaining to the Regulations of the Zoning and Development By-law and the Parking By-law</b> .....	<b>7</b>
4.3 Height .....	7
4.4 Front Yard and Setback .....	7
4.9 Off-Street Parking and Loading .....	8
4.10 Horizontal Angle of Daylight .....	8
<b>5 Architectural Components</b> .....	<b>9</b>
5.1 Roofs .....	9
5.4 Balconies .....	9
5.5 Exterior Walls .....	9
<b>7 Open Space</b> .....	<b>9</b>
7.2 Semi-Private Open Space .....	9
7.3 Private Open Space .....	9
<b>8 Landscaping</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>9 Utilities, Sanitation, and Public Services</b> .....	<b>10</b>
9.3 Garbage and Recycling .....	10

**NOTE:** The guidelines in this report are organized under standardized headings. As a consequence, there are gaps in the numbering sequence where no guidelines apply.

## 1 Application and Intent

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the C-1 District Schedule of the Zoning and Development By-law. The guidelines should be consulted in seeking conditional approval for dwelling uses. As well as assisting the applicant, the guidelines will be used by City staff in the evaluation of projects.

Sites zoned C-1 represent an opportunity to increase housing choice in the City without significant impact on existing residential neighbourhoods. The intent of the guidelines is to encourage more housing to be built in C-1 zones that is compatible with commercial uses and with adjacent developments, maintains livability, and achieves an appropriate form and character in terms of the street, the neighbourhood and the overall city.

The guidelines are not neighbourhood specific and deal with general principles of livability and urban design as they apply to mixed commercial/residential projects.

Wherever reference is made in these guidelines to residential uses, the provision also applies to Artist Studio - Class A, Artist Studio - Class B and the associated residential unit.

## 2 General Design Considerations

### 2.1 Neighbourhood Character and Streetscape

Sites zoned C-1 generally occur at major street intersections within residential neighbourhoods, and are intended to provide opportunities for small scale convenience commercial uses serving the local neighbourhoods and opportunities to increase housing choice within neighbourhoods. The relatively low density permitted in C-1 zones is intended to allow a compatible transition in scale and character to the surrounding neighbourhoods.

- (a) New developments should generally seek to blend in with the character of surrounding neighbourhoods through the use of architectural components with a residential scale and character such as sloping roofs, and balconies;
- (b) New developments should provide transitions in scale and mass to be compatible with the existing neighbourhood and existing adjacent development. In some cases, setbacks to upper floors may be appropriate to match the scale of existing newer adjacent buildings; and
- (c) Ground floor commercial uses should be located close to the street edge in a continuous fashion and provide pedestrian interest and amenity. Minor articulation of the building facade, including ground level setbacks, may be permitted if street continuity is preserved and pedestrian amenity provided. Outdoor extensions of cafes and restaurants are encouraged where the context is appropriate.



Figure 1. Example of residentially compatible architectural components

- (d) Where pedestrian-oriented storefronts exist or should be established, the character of the street as a shopping area should be expressed by features such as display windows, individuality of shop frontages, awnings, canopies, and signage.



Figure 2. Examples of pedestrian-oriented store fronts



### 2.3 Orientation

- (a) Building faces should be oriented to respect the established street grid; and
- (b) On corner sites, both street facing facades should be as fully developed as front elevations. Some architectural expression of the corner is appropriate.

## 2.4 Views

There are many neighbourhoods in the City with good distant views to features such as the North Shore mountains, Mount Baker or the Fraser River. There may be other important public views such as where a jog in the street alignment occurs, providing unique view opportunities. New developments should:

- (a) Ensure that Council-approved viewcones and significant public views are not compromised;
- (b) Ensure that existing views enjoyed by adjacent developments are not unduly compromised by incompatible siting, massing or orientation; and
- (c) Take advantage of potential views for residents.

## 2.6 Light and Ventilation

Provision of sufficient daylight access is one of the most challenging aspects in the design of housing in C-1 zones.

- (a) Living rooms should not face into courtyards;
- (b) In double fronting units (i.e. street/courtyard or lane/courtyard) a minimum courtyard dimension of 6.0 m and a maximum courtyard height/width ratio of 1.5 to 1 may be acceptable provided no secondary living spaces (bedrooms, dining rooms or dens) face into the courtyard. Secondary living spaces, however, may face the courtyard on the highest floor only;
- (c) Secondary living spaces (bedrooms, dining rooms, dens) may face into the courtyard on lower floors provided that the minimum courtyard width is 9.2 m;
- (d) Courtyard width will be measured to any obstruction including exterior corridors;
- (e) Courtyard configuration and building massing should maximize sun access to courtyard level including terracing of the upper level on south side of courtyards;

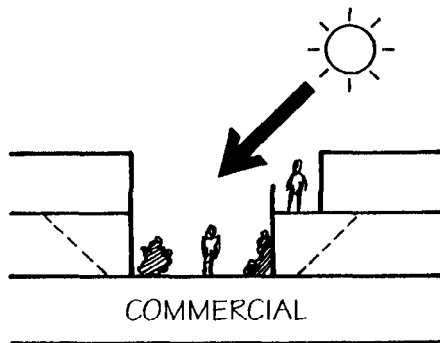


Figure 3.  
Terraced massing on south side improves light penetration into courtyard and units

- (f) Where new development abuts or is adjacent to existing development with windows on the sidewalls, adequate light and ventilation should be maintained; and
- (g) Mechanical ventilation of commercial space should be exhausted at a location having the least impact on residential livability.

## 2.7 Weather

When commercial or other similar active uses are provided at street level, pedestrian weather protection should be provided.

- (a) Provide weather protection for individual residential entrances;
- (b) At upper levels, if access to dwelling units is by means of external circulation, weather protection of entry door should be provided; and
- (c) Consideration should be given to continuous architecturally integrated weather protection and signage system.



Figure 4. Example of desired weather protection

## 2.8 Noise

Many C-1 sites are located on busy arterials, with traffic noise. In addition, commercial components of mixed use developments such as parking and loading, exhaust fans, and restaurant entertainment, can create noise which disturbs residents. An acoustical report is required for all new developments with residential units.

- (a) Buildings that include dwelling uses should meet acoustic standards as set out in the zoning schedule. Some of the methods which can be considered are:
  - (i) orienting bedrooms away from noise sources;
  - (ii) providing mechanical ventilation (to allow the choice of keeping windows closed);
  - (iii) enclosing balconies; and
  - (iv) using sound-deadening construction materials and techniques;
- (b) Local noise generated by the development itself, such as parking and loading activities, exhaust fans, and restaurant music, should be mitigated by location and design.

## 2.9 Privacy

Privacy in relation to other units, passersby, and adjacent development is a crucial aspect of project livability and neighbourliness.

- (a) Unit orientation, window placement and screening should be used to enhance privacy;
- (b) Balconies and decks should be oriented, screened, or landscaped to reduce direct overlook of adjacent residential uses or other units in the project;

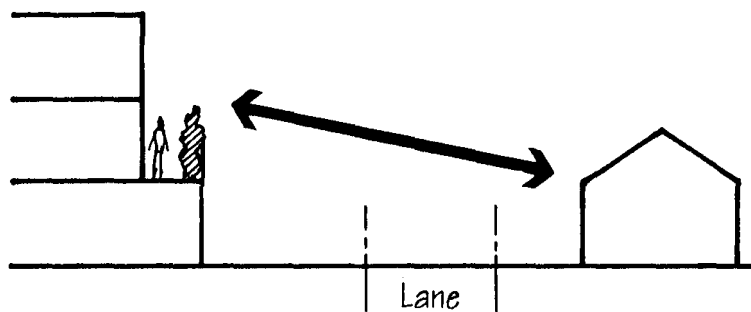


Figure 5. Example of massing and screening to ensure privacy

- (c) Habitable rooms within the developments should be oriented away from pedestrian circulation routes; and
- (d) In developments with courtyards, stacked units are encouraged to reduce privacy conflicts due to access corridors.

## **2.10 Safety and Security**

Safety and a sense of security are key components of livability. New development, both residential and commercial, should provide a secure environment through attention to principles of crime prevention through environmental design.

- (a) Public, private and semi-private spaces should be clearly defined. Public and semi-private spaces should be configured to maximize surveillance;
- (b) Separate lobbies and circulation (including elevators) should be provided for commercial and residential uses. Lobbies should be visible from the street;



**Figure 6. Distinct residential lobby entrance**

- (c) The design of parking facilities should provide for personal safety and security. Underground residential parking, including pedestrian access routes from parking into the building, should be secure and separate from commercial parking;
- (d) Buildings should maximize opportunities for surveillance of sidewalks, entries, circulation routes, semi-private areas, children's play areas and parking entrances. Blind corners and recessed entries should be avoided. Visibility into stairwells and halls is desirable. Laundry facilities, amenity rooms, and storage rooms should be grouped together and visible for surveillance;



**Figure 7. Intimidating entrances to parking are *not* desirable**

- (e) Residential lighting should ensure good visibility of access routes and landscaped areas without excessive lighting levels, glare or overspill to neighbours;
- (f) Landscaping and screening should be designed to reduce opportunities for intruders to hide; and
- (g) Access routes from buildings to residential garbage should be separate and secure from commercial garbage.

## **2.11 Access and Circulation**

### **2.11.1 Pedestrian Access**

- (a) On corner sites, side street residential entries should be provided. At mid-block, residential entries should be separate and distinct from retail or office entries or lobbies;
- (b) Corridors should be adequately sized for moving furniture and should not be overly long or circuitous;
- (c) Open exterior corridors are discouraged due to concern over building bulk and privacy, unless it can be demonstrated that benefits to the site and neighbouring sites will result in terms of massing and building organization; and
- (d) Pedestrian access to commercial uses should be at street sidewalk elevation. This may require stepping the commercial to match the street elevation on sites with sloping topography.

### **2.11.2 Vehicular Access**

#### **Lane Access**

An active pedestrian environment is envisaged along C-1 zoned sites. Therefore, it is important that vehicular and service functions are accessed from the lane, so as not to conflict with retail street frontage and pedestrian activity.

- (a) Vehicular access to parking, loading, and service areas should be provided from the lane; and
- (b) Negative impacts of vehicular entrances, parking and service areas should be minimized through proper treatment such as enclosure, screening, high quality finishes, sensitive lighting, and landscaping.



## Street Access

There are a few situations where, because of site peculiarities or special user needs, a street access may be considered. For example:

- (a) Street access will be considered for sites without lanes, and may be considered for sites having street grade so much lower than the lane grade that providing a ramp from the lane is extremely difficult. In these cases, impacts on street continuity will be taken in to account; and
- (b) Any vehicular entrance from the street should minimize interruption to pedestrian movement, and should be designed integrally with the building.

### 2.12 Heritage

Council policy is to give special attention the resources on the Vancouver Heritage Register. Upon approving any conditional use or in an area zoned comprehensive development, whenever possible, resources on the Register are to be conserved. When a site contains a heritage building or tree, early enquiry with a development and heritage planner is recommended to discuss the various development opportunities which are available.

- (a) Explore all options for retention of heritage listed buildings and trees;
- (b) Developments adjacent to buildings on the Vancouver Heritage Register, should not detract from their importance and character; and
- (c) Other buildings and artifacts of heritage character, although not listed on the Register, should also be considered for retention and/or integration into new developments.

## 3 Uses

C-1 zones are intended to provide for small scale convenience commercial uses to meet the needs of local neighbourhoods, as well as for compatibly designed housing.

- (a) Retail and/or service uses are encouraged at grade across the full width of the front of C-1 sites, for a minimum depth of 10.7 m to provide convenience commercial services and an active pedestrian environment;
- (b) Residential uses, in conjunction with commercial uses, are encouraged above the ground floor to increase housing choice in neighbourhoods; and
- (c) Parking should be located at the rear or underground.

## 4 Guidelines Pertaining to the Regulations of the Zoning and Development By-law and the Parking By-law

### 4.3 Height

The maximum building height in C-1 zones is intended to be compatible with adjacent single-family and two-family zones.

- (a) An increase in the permitted height of 9.2 m may be considered only in the case of three storey buildings, where the increase to a maximum of 10.7 m is used to provide steeply pitched roofs, and other similar residential architectural elements to increase compatibility with adjacent development. Analysis of the impact on views, roof lines, adjacent properties and the character of the area should be provided.

### 4.4 Front Yard and Setback

- (a) Except as required in the By-law for sites adjoining residential zones, and as outlined in clause (i) below, a front yard or setback should not be provided, so that a continuous pedestrian-oriented, commercial street frontage can be achieved;
  - (i) A front yard or setback is only encouraged where a pedestrian courtyard or other features benefitting pedestrian character are provided; and
- (b) The front yard required adjacent a residential zone should be landscaped to provide a compatible transition to the adjacent residential front yard and a visual amenity for pedestrians and residential units.

#### 4.9 Off-Street Parking and Loading

Parking and loading are essential service functions. They can seriously detract from residential livability unless skilful design is used to screen them from residential uses in and near the development.

- (a) Parking should be located underground where possible;
- (b) Where it is not possible to place all parking underground, it should be located at the rear of the site and screened effectively from adjacent residential uses. Depending on the specific site, this should include roofs to avoid noise and visual impacts to dwelling units above, and screen walls, doors and landscaping along the lane to reduce impacts on adjacent dwelling units;



Figure 8. Example of screened parking

- (c) In flanking situations, where residential uses adjoin the rear, the most visible portion of the lane should be kept clear of parking and loading. Landscaped setbacks are encouraged to buffer the development from the adjacent residential front yard;
- (d) Over-height parking and loading spaces which could present an unpleasant appearance to residents across the lane should be mitigated through appropriate lighting, treated surfaces, and screening (including doors). The dimension from grade at lane to the underside of slab should be limited to 3.7 m. Where structural or mechanical elements project below the slab, requiring an increase in this dimension, it should be screened from view; and
- (e) Convenient loading of furniture to residential units should be facilitated by the design of loading areas and access routes.

#### 4.10 Horizontal Angle of Daylight

Adequate daylight access to habitable rooms is critical to livability of dwelling units in C-1 zones.

- (a) Where the horizontal angle of daylight is relaxed, the distance of unobstructed view should not normally be less than 12.0 m for living rooms and 6.0 m for bedrooms and dens; and
- (b) In situations where the horizontal angle of daylight needs to be relaxed to the minimum of 3.7 m, additional overshadowing of windows by overhead balconies or other projections should be avoided. Overhead projections should be limited either in depth to 1.8 m, or in width relative to the affected window.

### 5 Architectural Components

The architecture in C-1 zones should seek to blend with the adjacent residential neighbourhoods.

## **5.1 Roofs**

- (a) Roof forms should reflect the roof expressions of adjacent residential areas.

## **5.4 Balconies**

- (a) Balconies should be designed to maximize light into the unit.

## **5.5 Exterior Walls**

### **5.5.1 Interior Sidewalls**

The appearance of exposed sidewalls should be improved by appropriate treatment where they occur due to front yard and height variations between buildings.

- (a) Exposed sidewalls should be treated through use of materials, textures, patterns or coloured finishes.

### **5.5.2 Lane Edges**

- (a) Ensure that building walls abutting the lane are designed to be finished and made attractive to neighbouring developments.

## **7 Open Space**

### **7.2 Semi-Private Open Space**

Typically in C-1 developments the residential units are geared to singles and families without children who do not require on-site play space. However, “active” or “social” semi-private open space is desirable to provide an amenity, particularly where a known user group such as a co-op or other social housing is involved.

- (a) Semi-private open space should be provided wherever possible. It should preferably occur in the rear, above the commercial level, with access provided to residents. Privacy of adjacent units and properties should be addressed, with special attention given to steeply sloping sites. Common rooftop decks above the second floor are encouraged as semi-private open space subject to considerations of overlook, scale relationships, view blockage, and noise impact on units and properties below.

### **7.3 Private Open Space**

Usable private open space should be provided for each residential unit.

- (a) Private open space should be provided for each unit in the form of balconies, decks or patios with a minimum single horizontal dimension of 1.8 m and minimum area of 4.5 m<sup>2</sup>; and
- (b) Private open space should be designed to capture sun and views where possible, as well as to avoid noise and to take account of visual privacy and security. Balcony enclosure to reduce noise will be appropriate in many cases.

## **8 Landscaping**

- (a) Landscaping can improve the livability of dwelling units and minimize impacts on adjacent residential uses. Landscaping should be provided on amenity roof decks or gardens and screened at the edge of the second floor level to provide privacy for neighbouring sites. Landscaping should also be considered adjacent to rear lanes provided that the branches of trees are kept clear of the lane right-of-way, and provided that security is not compromised.



Figure 9. Example of second level landscaping

## 9 Utilities, Sanitation, and Public Services

### 9.3 Garbage and Recycling

Garbage and recycling are essential services. They can seriously detract from residential livability unless skilful design is used to screen them from residential uses in and near the development.

- (a) Garbage and recycling facilities should be located adjacent to the lane, and should be screened and landscaped from adjacent residential uses.