



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

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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HIGHER BUILDINGS POLICY

Adopted by City Council on [May 6, 1997](#)

Amended [February 1, 2011](#), [November 20, 2013](#), [June 25, 2014](#), [February 13, 2018](#) and July 11, 2018

(Applies to applications received on or after November 1, 2018)

1 Application and Intent

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with all applicable plans and policies for buildings seeking approval through rezoning or development permit, for significant additional height above current zoning and policy, or for those entering into the Queen Elizabeth Park or other Council approved view corridors. The intent of these guidelines is to mark the prominence of the Central Business District in our downtown skyline, while also providing opportunities for strategically placed height at the prominent “gateways” to mark the entry into downtown: the Burrard Bridge, the Granville Bridge, and the Georgia Gateways in Northeast False Creek and at West Georgia and Pender streets.

2 Requirements

The following should be considered when reviewing proposals for Higher Buildings (i.e. those which significantly exceed current height limits and/or enter into the Queen Elizabeth Park View Corridor):

2.1 Design

- (a) Higher Buildings must establish a significant and recognizable new benchmark for architectural creativity and excellence, while making a significant contribution to the beauty and visual power of the city’s skyline;
- (b) Higher Buildings are only permitted within the areas identified below in Figure 1;
- (c) The highest buildings (i.e. ~550-700’) are located within the Central Business District. Of these buildings, the tallest buildings (i.e. ~700’) should be located on one of Vancouver’s three primary streets: West Georgia, Burrard and Granville;
- (d) Secondary heights may be considered for buildings at the Granville and Burrard Bridgeheads with a single prominent tower (~500’) in axial alignment with the Burrard Bridge, two towers framing the Granville Bridge Gateway (~ 425’), three towers framing the Georgia Gateway (~400’-425’), and one tower at the Georgia Gateway West (~515’);
- (e) All other applications for additional height at the two bridgehead locations should be analyzed to ensure that the experiential intent of these gateways is maintained;
- (f) The development should not involve the demolition of a Class ‘A’ heritage building;
- (g) The buildings should achieve community benefits (i.e. as a recipient site for density transfers; retention of important heritage components; provision of significant cultural or social facilities; or provision of low cost housing);

- (h) In addition, Higher Buildings should be considered with careful effort to provide a lasting and meaningful public legacy to Vancouver and should include careful consideration of the following:
 - (i) The building should include activities and uses of community significance and/or public amenity;
 - (ii) The development should provide on-site open space that represents a significant contribution to the downtown network of green and plaza space;
 - (iii) The building should not contribute to adverse microclimate effects;
 - (iv) Careful consideration should be given to minimize adverse shadowing and view impacts on public realm including key streets, parks and plazas, as well as neighbouring buildings;
 - (v) Signage on the buildings should not be located at a height which exceeds the building's current height limit.

2.2 Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency

Higher buildings should demonstrate leadership and advances in sustainable design and energy efficiency which must be accomplished in one of the following ways:

- (a) Achieve Passive House Certification; or
- (b) Achieve the following energy performance targets based on building type AND connect to a Low Carbon Energy System (LCES) in accordance with the requirements of the LCES Policy:

	Total Energy Use Intensity (TEUI) (kWh/m ²)	Thermal Energy Demand Intensity (TEDI) (kWh/m ²)	Greenhouse Gas Intensity (GHGI) (kgCO ₂ /m ²)
Residential	100	15	3
Hotel	120	15	4
Retail	100	15	1.5
Office	100	15	1.5

In achieving the performance targets, projects will be encouraged to reduce their use of domestic hot water, leveraging approaches like suite sub-metering, and their impacts on local energy infrastructure, including innovative approaches to managing peak loads.

Note: To ensure higher buildings achieve innovation in greenhouse gas reductions and energy efficiency, higher buildings will not be permitted to aggregate greenhouse gas reductions achieved by another LCES in order to meet the requirements of this policy.

The requirements of the Green Buildings Policy for Rezonings apply to all developments subject to the Higher Building Policy.

3 Process

- (a) All higher buildings will undergo an enhanced review by the Urban Design Panel, which will be supplemented with the addition of two local architects as appointed by the Director of Planning.
- (b) As determined by the Director of Planning, a further enhanced review for buildings with a proposed height of 550' or more as well as for the Granville Bridge gateway buildings (~ 425'), Georgia Gateway (two tall towers on the waterside of Pacific only) and the landmark building in axial alignment with the Burrard Bridge (~ 500') will include two additional international design experts joining the Urban Design Panel in addition to the two local architects noted above. A special public engagement, such as a public forum, or guest lecture featuring the panel members and experts may also be held to expand public discussion and education around architectural excellence and green design in Vancouver.

Figure 1. Areas and sites where Higher Buildings are permitted

