



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

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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GENERAL POLICY FOR HIGHER BUILDINGS

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

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

(Applies to applications from February 13, 2018 to October 31, 2018)

Application and Intent

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with all applicable Official Development Plans for buildings seeking approval for significant additional height above current zoning and policy, or for those entering into the Queen Elizabeth View Corridor. 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 two prominent bridge “gateways” to mark the entry into downtown from the Burrard and Granville Bridges.

General Policy for Higher Buildings

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 View Corridor):

- Higher Buildings will only be permitted within the areas identified below in Figure 1;
- The tallest buildings (i.e. ~ 550-700’) should be located within the Central Business District with the tallest buildings (i.e. ~ 700’) located on one of Vancouver’s three primary streets: Georgia, Burrard and Granville;
- 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’) and three towers framing the Georgia Gateway (~400’- 425’);
- All other application for additional height at these two bridgehead locations should be analyzed to ensure that the experiential intent of these gateways is maintained;
- All 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;
- Higher buildings should demonstrate leadership and advances in sustainable design and energy consumption and as a result must be subjected, not only to current review requirements, but also to review by a Council appointed panel including respected community leaders, notable local design experts, and leaders in sustainable design;
- All Higher Buildings must significantly demonstrate and advance the city’s objective for carbon neutrality for new buildings with a stated objective to achieve a 45% reduction in energy consumption as compared to the 2014 Vancouver Building By-law. However, if the development is connecting to a neighbourhood energy system approved by the City that has a defined path to a low carbon outcome, in order to ensure consistency between minimum performance requirements for building envelopes in DE versus non-DE areas, building designs must comply with the methodology described in the “**City of Vancouver Neighbourhood Energy Interpretation Guide for Rezonings**”;

- An 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 tallest towers on the waterside of Pacific only) and the land mark building in axial alignment with the Burrard Bridge (~ 500') will include two international design experts joining the panel in addition to the two local experts. There will be special public engagement, such as a public forum or guest lecture, should be held featuring the guest panel members and experts to expand public discussion and education around architectural excellence and green design in Vancouver.

In addition, all 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:

- 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);
- The development should not involve the demolition of a Class 'A' heritage building;
- The building should include activities and uses of community significance such as public observation decks or other public amenity;
- The development should provide on-site open space that represents a significant contribution to the downtown network of green and plaza space;
- The building should not contribute to adverse microclimate effects;
- 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;
- Signage on the buildings should not be located at a height which exceeds the building's current height limit.

Figure 1: Areas and sites where Higher Buildings are permitted.

