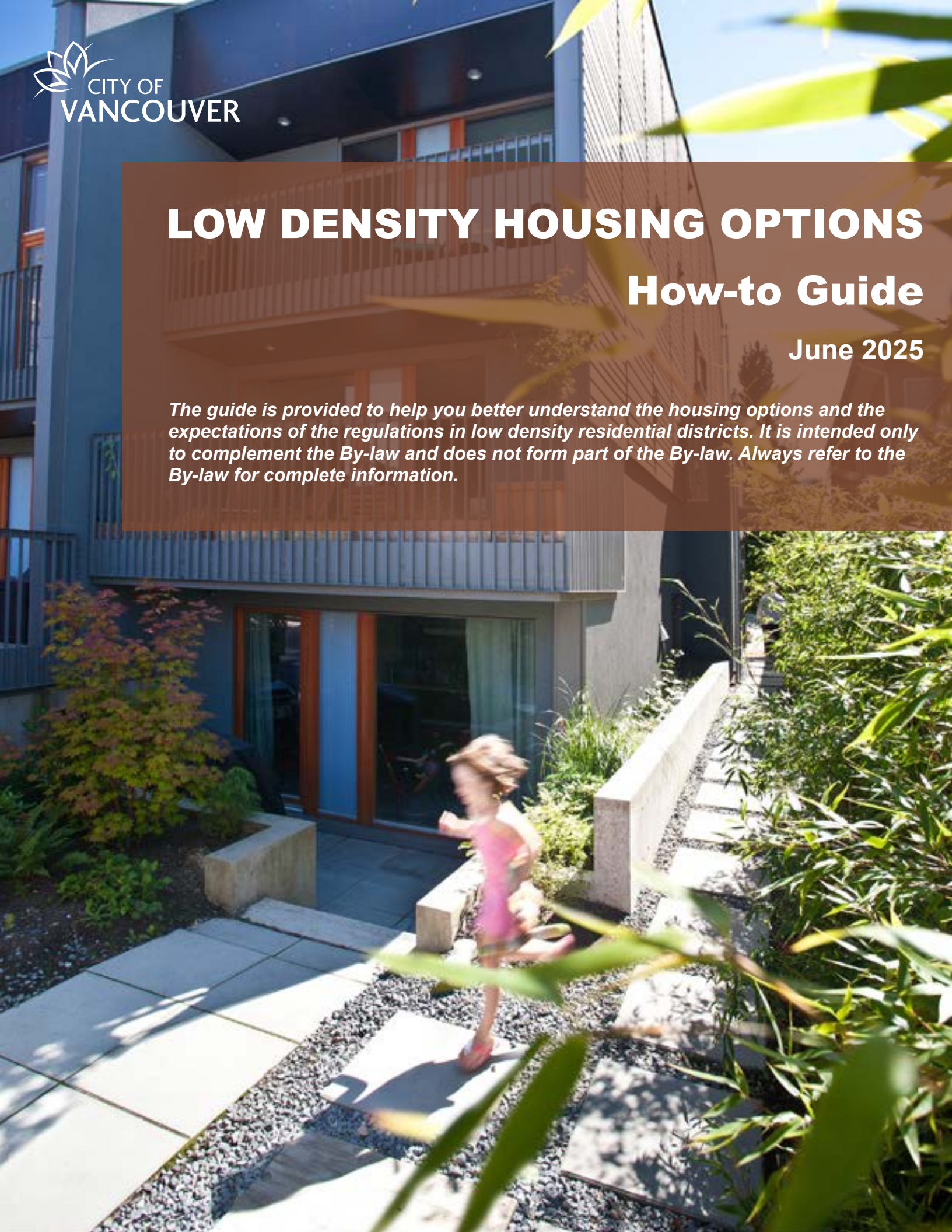


# LOW DENSITY HOUSING OPTIONS

## How-to Guide

June 2025

*The guide is provided to help you better understand the housing options and the expectations of the regulations in low density residential districts. It is intended only to complement the By-law and does not form part of the By-law. Always refer to the By-law for complete information.*



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Photo Credit: City of Vancouver

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is applicable to the following **new** construction housing options:

Multiple Dwelling (“Multiplex”)	R1-1, RT-7, RT-9
Single Detached House (with or without Secondary Suite)	R1-1, RT-7, RT-9
Duplex (with or without Secondary Suites)	R1-1, RT-7, RT-9
Laneway House	R1-1, RT-5, RT-6, RT-11, RM-7, RM-7A, RM-8, RM-8A, RM-9, RM-9A, RM-9B, RM-10, RM-12

Chapters 1 and 2 and Chapter 6 of this Guide are applicable to all options.

This guide provides dimensions in both metric and imperial for reference only. Refer to the appropriate by-law documents for the applicable measure.

The following acronyms are used throughout the document:

- **BP** - Building Permit
- **CRP** - Coordinating Registered Professional
- **DB** - Combined Development and Building Permit
- **DOP** - Director of Planning
- **DP** - Development Permit
- **FSR** - Floor Space Ratio
- **LOA** - Letter of Assurance
- **LPT** - Low Profile Transformer
- **LWH** - Laneway House
- **PMT** - Pad Mounted Transformer
- **VBBL** - Vancouver Building By-law
- **ZDBL** - Zoning and Development By-law

# 1 PERMITTING PROCESS

Before starting the process, you should determine whether your site is eligible for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”), single detached house, duplex, or laneway house. Your next steps are to investigate the site requirements and prepare the necessary drawings and documents to apply for the permits.

**Site analysis includes, but is not limited to:**

- utilities (e.g. sewer and water design, electrical servicing, gas line location);
- existing trees on site, on City property (i.e. street trees and trees at the lane), and on adjacent sites that may impact the utility connections and the location of the building(s); and
- site restrictions (e.g. easements, transformers, zoning regulations).

**Other requirements include:**

- building and energy requirements in the Vancouver Building By Law;
- new tree planting;
- new electrical transformers, and setbacks to existing pole-mounted transformers;
- housing agreements;
- non-stratification covenant;
- British Columbia Residential Tenancy Act; and
- New Home registration (BC Housing).

## Did you know?

City Building Grades are not required for R1-1, RT-7 and RT-9 applications. Height is measured from Base Surface using surveyed grades.

Hiring a design professional (house designer or architect) to coordinate the preparation of plans and application materials can be beneficial.

A registered Architect or a Coordinating Registered Professional (CRP) may be required for certain projects:

**Resource:** [Requirements for services of a CRP | BC Province](#) (pg. 18)

**Resource:** [Requirements for services of an architect | AIBC](#)



Other professional services are also required at the Building Permit stage depending on the scope of the project such as engineers (structural, geotechnical, mechanical, electrical and fire protection) and building envelope professionals.

Once a permit application is prepared, you can submit the application through the Development and Building Services Centre.

**Resource:** [Development and Building Services Centre | City of Vancouver](#)

## 1.1 Separate Development Permit (DP) + Building Permit (BP)

Multiplex applications require a separate development permit (DP) and building permit (BP) process.

You should wait until DP (Prior-to) conditions have been met before applying for a BP(s) to ensure no significant changes are required. Multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) buildings are generally evaluated under Part 9 as a Group C – Residential Occupancy. However, in some cases a multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) may be evaluated under Part 3. Your design professional should confirm which Part of the Vancouver Building By-law (VBBL) is applicable to the proposal.

**Did you know?**  
Neighbourhood notification is not required for applications in R1-1, RT-7 and RT-9.

The development fee for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) is the fee for multiple dwelling 2(a) in the Schedule of Fees. A separate building fee will be required based on the project value.

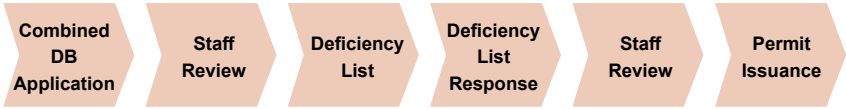
**Process for separate development permit and building permit for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”):**



## 1.2 Combined Development and Building Permit (DB)

A house, duplex, or laneway house can be processed as a combined development and building permit (DB).

Process for combined development and building permit for house, duplex or laneway house:



**Resource:** [Development Permit Fees | City of Vancouver](#)

**Resource:** [Building Permit Fees | City of Vancouver](#) (Article 1.6.2.3)

**Resource:** [Submission Checklists | City of Vancouver](#)

## 2 SITE ANALYSIS AND REQUIREMENTS

### 2.1 Tree Protection

Buildings should be located and designed to protect and preserve existing healthy trees where possible, including trees on neighbouring properties and City property.

#### 2.1.1 Multiple Dwelling ("Multiplex")

Multiple dwelling ("multiplex") will generally result in a larger building or multiple buildings on a site to accommodate additional units.

On sites of standard depth, less than or equal to 41 m (135 ft.), preservation of existing trees will be required in the front yard but not on the remainder of the site. 1 for 1 replacement trees are not required for those trees removed past the front yard. Additional opportunities for preservation of trees should be considered at the rear of the site on sites with a depth greater than 41 m (135 ft.). See [Figure 1](#).

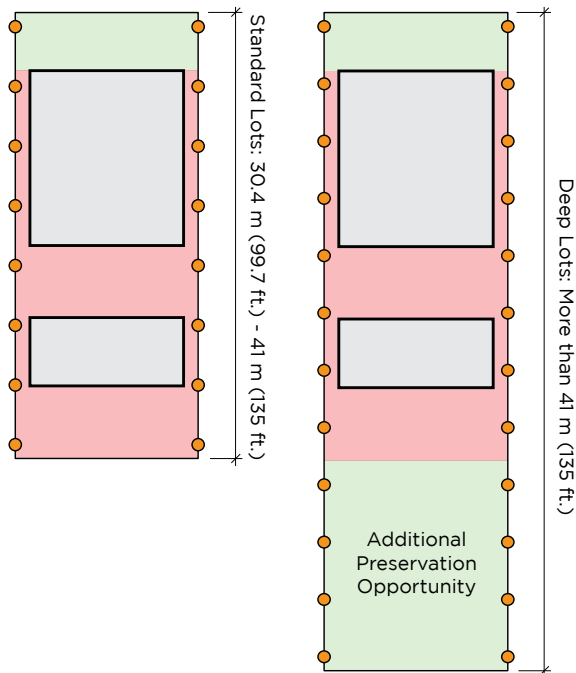


Figure 1: Multiple Dwelling ("Multiplex") preservation and new tree planting zones.

### Did you know?

The Tree By-law protects trees with a minimum diameter of 20 cm measured 1.4 m (4.6 ft.) above the existing grade (refer to [Figure 3](#)).

#### 2.1.2 Houses and Duplexes

For houses and duplexes (with a secondary suite) in the R1-1 district and for duplex with secondary suite in the RT-7 and RT-9 districts, in addition to the front yard, preservation of existing trees within the rear yard is also required. Trees within the buildable footprint may be removed subject to Landscape staff review. Replacement trees are required for removed trees in accordance with the Protection of Trees By-law. Variances to the regulations may be considered to facilitate tree preservation.

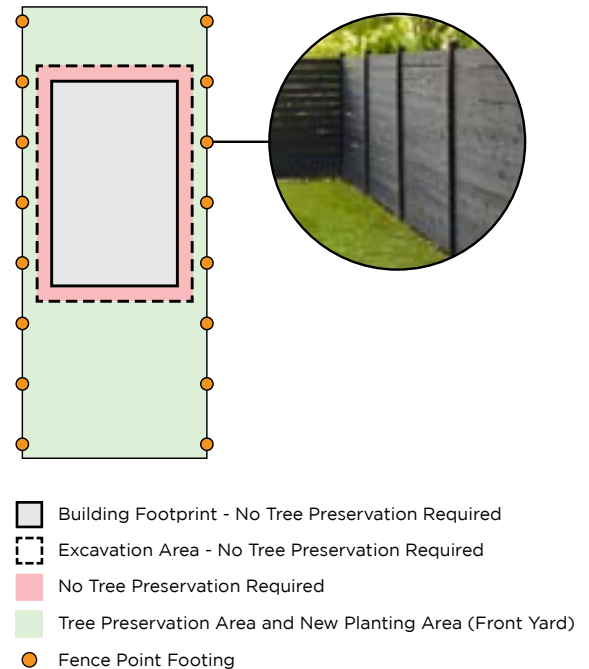


Figure 2: House and duplex preservation and new tree planting zones.



### 2.1.3 Laneway Houses

For laneway houses, if a tree is located within the buildable footprint, you may be able to remove the tree. Replacement trees are required for removed trees in accordance with the Protection of Trees By-law. It is recommended that you prepare an arborist report and consult with a Landscape Specialist at the Development and Building Services Centre. Variances to the laneway house regulations may be considered to facilitate tree preservation.

### 2.1.4 New Planting

For multiple dwelling (“multiplex”), duplex with secondary suite, house with secondary suite, and laneway house, tree planting is required in the front yard to compensate for the loss of existing trees from redevelopment. One new tree in the front yard is required for sites with a frontage smaller than 15.24 m (50 ft.) and two new trees for sites with a frontage greater than or equal to 15.24 m (50 ft.).

For multiple dwelling (“multiplex”), tree planting in the courtyard between the front and rear building is also encouraged but not required. In cases where new trees cannot be accommodated in the front yard, new trees in the courtyard or rear yard may be acceptable subject to Landscape staff review. In rare cases due to site hardship, the number of required new trees may be reduced.

Tree selection for new planting should comply with Schedule D of the Protection of Trees By-Law. When a tree is preserved on the front yard, it counts towards the requirement for new trees regardless of the tree species (i.e. the species does not need to be in Schedule D), if the tree has a minimum diameter of 20 cm measured 1.4 m (4.6 ft.) above the existing grade (refer to [Figure 3](#)).

For a complete list of tree planting options, including, size and species requirements, refer to Protection of Trees by-law, Replacement tree list, *Schedule D*.

To determine the appropriate location to plant a new tree, the following criteria must be considered:

- Distance from a side property line, an accessory building or structure should be min. 1.0 m (3.3 ft.);
- Distance from a building (new or existing) should be min. 1.5 m (5 ft.);
- Distance from existing trees in a street boulevard or new trees should be min. 2.5 m (8 ft.);



Figure 3: Criteria for preservation of trees

**Resource:** [Protection of Trees By-law | City of Vancouver](#)



Credit: D'Arcy Jones Architects. Photo by Sama Jim Canzian

**2.1.5 Neighbour Trees**

All new developments must also ensure that trees on neighbouring properties are preserved or that consent is obtained for their removal. The following must be included as part of an application.

If trees are being removed:

- A letter from the neighbour consenting to the removal of the tree; and,
- An arborist report confirming that tree preservation is not viable.

If trees are not being removed:

- An arborist report confirming that trees on neighbouring properties have no impact from the development or can be retained in a safe responsible manner through site planning and construction measures combined with arboricultural best practices. In all cases, certainty about tree impacts and residual risks must be addressed in the submission.

**2.1.6 Garages and Accessory Buildings Size Limit**

All detached garages, detached carports and accessory buildings are limited in size to 48 m<sup>2</sup> (517 ft.) to reduce tree removal in the rear of sites. The location of a garage or accessory building should carefully consider tree retention.

To promote root and canopy growth of trees on neighbouring properties, any accessory building must be setback a distance to ensure safe retention. The setback recommendations are provided by the project arborist, including best management practices, and reviewed by city staff.

**2.1.7 Fences**

Fences along the edges of the property should provide low impact point footings instead of continuous footings.

### 2.1.8 Utility Connections

All utility connections should be located outside of tree protection areas. An arborist's report should be prepared as part of the site analysis to evaluate the utility connections.

It is recommended that applicants obtain all applicable utility connection permits (i.e. sewer and water permits, etc) ahead of submitting an application.

### 2.1.9 Landscape Submission Requirements

Landscape Plans are not required for multiple dwelling ("multiplex"), duplex, single detached house, or laneway house applications. The site plan should indicate:

- All new trees (size, species and location);
- Trees to be retained (size, tree identification #, canopy dripline);
- Dimensioned tree protection barriers on the Site Plan;
- Re-landscaping and work near trees such as, utilities, walkways, fences, patios, gates, walls, grade alterations).



Credit: D'Arcy Jones Architects. Photo by Martin Tessler

### 2.1.10 Arborist Report

For all applications, an Arborist Report is required when there are trees on the site and/or adjacent to the site. Adjacent trees include trees on neighbouring properties and street trees. A report prepared by an ISA Certified Arborist to assess existing trees either for retention or removal will therefore be required with most R1-1, RT-7 and RT-9 applications, noting that most projects will occur on sites with trees or adjacent trees.

The Arborist Report is to include details of existing site trees and adjacent trees (as noted on the survey). If removal of a tree on neighbouring site or shared property line is proposed, a Letter of Consent from the neighbour is required. If consent is not provided, the designer must work with the arborist to propose a design that safely retains that neighbour tree as per the previous section on Neighbour Trees.

In rare cases where there are no site trees, neighbour trees, or street trees, the arborist report requirement may be waived subject to Landscape staff review.

An Arboricultural Letter of Assurance (LOA) is required when there is proposed work within a critical root zone to verify that the arborist hired will supervise and direct work within the area. The letter must include signatures by the owner, contractor and arborist to confirm that all parties are aware of the roles and responsibilities.

**Resource:** [Protection of Trees By-law | City of Vancouver](#)

### 2.1.11 Tree Permit

A tree permit is required for tree removal(s) on any site.



## 2.2 Electrical Transformer Capacity

Transformational capacity upgrades may be required to provide electrical services to new households in various areas of the City. BC Hydro may require a transformer, to support increased service demand from the addition of more units on a site.

BC Hydro must evaluate the service level currently available in the block before determining if the additional load demand from a new project may be serviced by existing infrastructure, or if a transformer is needed on site to support the project.

To create more clarity around this process, a development condition to reserve space on site for a transformer will be placed at the time of application for projects with more than three units. This includes all multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) projects.

It is the applicant’s responsibility to contact BC Hydro at the link below **before submitting a development application** to request an evaluation of the proposed service load and size to confirm if a transformer is required.

### **Resource:** [BC Hydro Design Connections](#)

It is recommended that applicants contact BC Hydro ahead of submitting an application to the City. If an application is submitted ahead of BC Hydro’s completed review, the application drawings must clearly indicate a 3.6 m by 3.6 m (12 ft. by 12 ft.) space reserved for the transformer on site.



Credit: City of Vancouver



Pad mounted transformer. Credit: City of Vancouver

If BC Hydro confirms that a transformer is not needed, the applicant needs to include BC Hydro's exemption letter in their development permit application.

If a transformer is required on site, BC Hydro will confirm whether this should be a Pad Mounted Transformer (PMT) or a Low Profile Transformer (LPT). Generally, the transformer must be:

- Located close to existing service lines. In most cases, this would be at the rear of the site adjacent to the lane;
- Easily accessible to power line technicians for maintenance;
- Clear from any building structure including above (open to sky).

**Resource:** [Landscaping and planting around an transformer | BC Hydro](#)

**Resource:** [Clearance and access requirements for transformer | BC Hydro](#)

The applicant is responsible for covering the cost associated with the transformer infrastructure and installation. A refund may be available from BC Hydro when eligible under the Extension Fee Refund Policy.

**Resource:** [Extension fee refund | BC Hydro](#)

If a transformer is not required on site, the development condition will be removed once the confirmation from BC Hydro has been submitted to the City. In such cases, the applicant may reprogram the space

previously reserved for the transformer to accommodate other uses (e.g. additional vehicular parking, bicycle parking, garbage and recycling, others).

Response on approval is conditional and may change due to other applications coming on the block.

Zoning setbacks, such as rear yard and side yard, are not applicable to a transformer (PMT/LPT).

In some neighbourhoods, undergrounding of utility services may be required by the City. However, there are no additional City requirements for undergrounding in R1-1 beyond what is required by BC Hydro. If BC Hydro approves an overhead service, that is acceptable. Written confirmation from BC Hydro that the overhead service is acceptable should be included with the permit application.

### 2.2.1 Existing Overhead (Pole-Mounted) Transformers

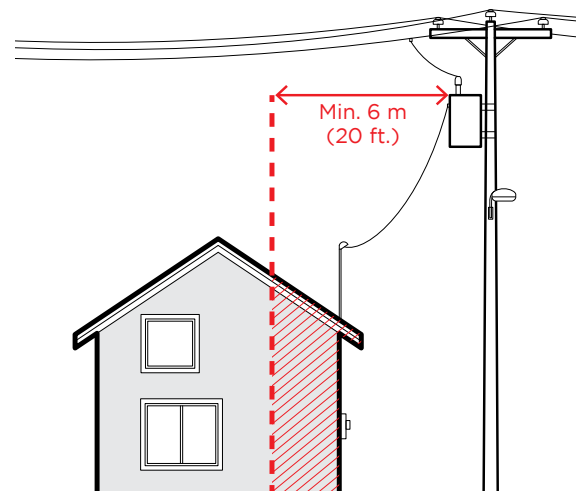
Where pole-mounted transformers exist in lanes a safety clearance of 6.0 m (20 ft.) is required under the Canadian Electrical Code. Where the clearance to pole-mounted transformers does not comply with Canadian Electrical code, additional protection measures may be required such as a barrier with non-combustible surface or materials must be constructed between the transformer and windows, decks, ventilation openings or combustible surfaces of the building that are located within 6.0 m (20 ft.) of the transformer. The 6.0 m (20 ft.) dimension is measured as a radius around the transformer and extending vertically to the ground as illustrated in [Figure 4](#).

The following checklist is required to be completed by your consultant if any part of your building is planned in proximity to the existing BC Hydro electrical works (e.g. it is intended to be within ~3 m (10 ft.) of a property line that abuts a street or lane). You may contact BC Hydro and request information regarding BC Hydro works adjacent to the property. It is important to ensure any potential impact or risks for your proposed building will be assessed and addressed.

**Resource:** [BC Hydro Clearance Checklist | City of Vancouver](#)

### Did you know?

Your surveyor should include power poles, pole-mounted transformers and high voltage overhead conductors in proximity to the rear of the site on the survey drawing as they may impact the proposed rear building.



 Additional protection measures required

Figure 4: Pole-mounted transformer safety clearance



## 2.3 Rainwater Management

Effective July 1, 2025, most new projects up to 1.0 FSR and on sites up to 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> are subject to the rainwater management requirements, including new houses, duplexes, and multiplexes.

Rainwater management requires the installation of a rainwater detention tank based on site area as follows:

Site Area	Minimum Active Storage Capacity	Orifice Plate Diameter
Up to 400 m <sup>2</sup>	3,400 L	30 mm
400.1 to 500 m <sup>2</sup>	3,900 L	35 mm
500.1 to 750 m <sup>2</sup>	4,600 L	45 mm
751.1 to 1000 m <sup>2</sup>	7,200 L	50 mm

Review of the detention tank requirement will occur as part of the Plumbing Inspection. However, applicants should consider the location and size of the detention tank as part of their design and building siting at the Development Permit stage. It is recommended the sewer connection permit be obtained in advance of the final detention tank design to determine the appropriate detention tank location.

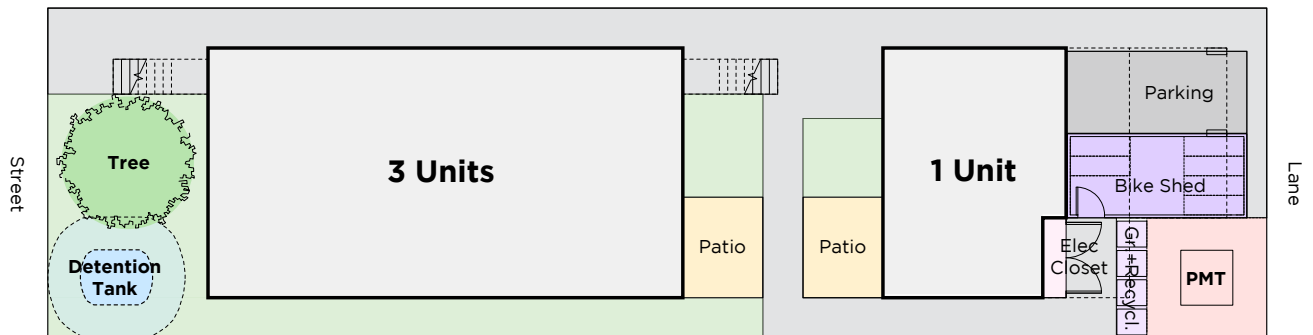


Figure 5: Multiple dwelling ("multiplex") illustrative site plan with location of requirements from section 2 of this Guide.



Detention tank installation. Credit: Lanefab Design/Build

Ideally the detention tank should be located close to the sewer connection and should drain by gravity. In most cases, the connection will be near the main street at the front of the site. A sewer connection permit will determine the invert location and elevation to guide the appropriate location for the detention tank.

Please visit the [Rainwater Management page](#) for more information.

For sloping sites, the detention tank should be located at the lowest point of the site to allow rainwater to redirect by gravity.

In exceptional cases, providing a detention tank on site may not be feasible. An exemption to this requirement will be considered when an applicant demonstrates that site conditions preclude excavation to the City Chief Building Official's satisfaction, with applicable supporting information. Some conditions that may preclude excavation may include but are not limited to:

- Archaeological resources;
- Artesian groundwater conditions;
- Soil contamination;
- Geotechnical limitations



Streetscape of notional block in R1-1. Credit: City of Vancouver, produced by QuickViz.



## 3 MULTIPLE-DWELLING (“MULTIPLEX”)

### 3.1 Overview

Multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) use is allowed in the R1-1, RT-7 and RT-9 districts to enable ground oriented multi-family buildings on **single sites**. Multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) is a fully new construction option only. This opportunity is not available for renovations/conversions of existing buildings; or for adding a new building to a site with an existing building.

In the R1-1 district, the number of units permitted on a site are conditional to the site’s frontage and area as follows:

Min. Site Frontage	Min. Site Area	Min. No. of Units	Max. No. of Units
10.0 m (32.8 ft.)	306 m <sup>2</sup> (3293.8 sq. ft.)	3	4
13.4 m (44 ft.)	464 m <sup>2</sup> (4994.5 sq. ft.)	4	5
15.1 m (49.5 ft.)	557 m <sup>2</sup> (5995.5 sq. ft.)	4	6 or 8*

In the RT-7 and RT-9 districts, the number of units permitted on a site are conditional to the site area as follows:

Min. Site Area	Min. No. of Units	Max. No. of Units
Less than 280 m <sup>2</sup> (3013.9 sq. ft.)	-	3
280 m <sup>2</sup> (3013.9 sq. ft.)	-	6
464 m <sup>2</sup> (4994.5 sq. ft.)	3	6
557 m <sup>2</sup> (5995.5 sq. ft.)	3	8*

\* 8 units permitted for secured market rental developments only.

The minimum site frontage and site area criteria for number of units cannot be relaxed. Both need to be met to qualify for the number of units. The site frontage determines the number of units and density bonus charge applicable in all cases, even if the site area meets a greater eligibility. For



Credit: Formwerks Architecture, produced by QuickViz

larger sites beyond 463 m<sup>2</sup> of site area OR 13.3 m frontage, the site must provide a minimum of 4 units to support affordability.

The multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) use in the Zoning and Development By-law (ZDBL) refers to the total number of units on the site as opposed to the number of units in each building. The units may be located in one or more buildings on the site as outlined in the ZDBL and this Guide. A Development Permit will be issued for the whole site. A single Building Permit application is required but separate Building Permits will be issued per building.

### 3.1.1 Density and Tenure

Multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) uses may develop up to a maximum density of 1.0 FSR. There are three paths to achieve this density:

- Develop all units as ownership (strata) and provide a cash density bonus contribution\*; or
- Develop units as ownership (strata) and provide one below-market home ownership unit\*\*; or
- Develop all units as **secured** market rental.\*\*\*

\* The density bonus contribution is a cash amount per square metre applicable to the density above 0.70 FSR (i.e. up to 0.30 FSR). Units that are approved as strata may be rented. These are also subject to the density bonus contribution. For more information, refer to Schedule F of the ZDBL and the Density Bonus Contributions Bulletin. The applicable bonus density charge is subject to the site frontage and site area. In cases where the site frontage used is an average, the bonus density charge is applied to the average (i.e. irregular shaped site). See section 3.3.2 (Site Frontage and Depth)

**Resource:** [Bonus Density Policy | City of Vancouver](#)

\*\* Note that this option is currently not available. Future opportunities are subject to a partnering agreement between BC Housing and the City of Vancouver. Contact [housingpolicy@vancouver.ca](mailto:housingpolicy@vancouver.ca) for more information.

\*\*\* All units must meet the ZDBL definition of residential rental tenure and be **secured** through a housing agreement (i.e. all units are non-stratified market or non-market rental housing, or non-profit co-op housing). One unit may be occupied by a registered owner of the site.

### 3.1.2 Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy

The City’s Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy does not apply to single site developments impacting existing secondary rental units in low density areas, however all parties should familiarize themselves with their rights and responsibilities under the provincial Residential Tenancy Act which is applicable in cases where there are renters living in any existing buildings.

## 3.2 Site Eligibility

Multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) is an option for single sites in R1-1, RT-7 and RT-9 districts so that the new buildings will fit within the established pattern of development on a block.

Consolidation or assembly of sites is not permitted for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) projects.

However, in the case where an existing house is straddled on tied lots, the Director of Planning may consider consolidation provided that the new building maintains the established pattern of development on the block.

If a site is eligible for subdivision under the Subdivision By-law, the site may be subdivided and each site would be eligible for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) provided the new sites meet the eligibility requirements.

## 3.3 Site Eligibility in R1-1

In the R1-1 district, multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) sites must meet the following conditions:

### 3.3.1 Vehicular Access at the Rear

- have access to an open lane; or
- are located on a corner served by an open or dedicated lane; or
- are double-fronting.

For double-fronting sites, parking access should be located on the quieter street. This is intended to avoid potential conflicts with vehicular traffic on the busier street. There is typically an established pattern of development on double-fronting sites, with houses facing one street and garages facing the other. That pattern should generally be followed.

The following diagrams ([Figures 7 to 11](#)) demonstrate various eligible site conditions that meet the vehicular access requirement:

### 3.3.2 Site Frontage and Depth

- have a minimum frontage of 10 m (32.8 ft.), and
- have a minimum depth of 30.4 m (99.7 ft.)

Irregular shaped sites may use a frontage average to determine eligibility for the number of units allowed. In these cases, the average frontage will be used to calculate the bonus density charge. See section 3.1.1 (Density and Tenure)

### 3.3.3 Heritage

- do not contain a heritage designated building, interior or landscape.





Credit: SHAPE Architecture. Photo by Eric Scott Photography

The Heritage By-law protects heritage designated buildings, interiors or landscapes from demolition or unsympathetic alteration. Designation is noted on the property title.

**Resource:** [Heritage designation | City of Vancouver](#)

Sites with character houses are eligible for demolition and redevelopment with multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) options. Alternately, a homeowner may choose to pursue a character house retention project. There are optional incentives for character house retention in the R1-1, RT-7 and RT-9 districts including additional (strata) units up to 6. These projects are not considered to be multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) use, but rather multiple conversion dwelling and infill uses. Character retention projects are not required to pay a bonus density contribution. In RT-7 and RT-9 districts, multiple conversion dwellings and infills are also available for houses that do not have character merit. However, these projects are required to pay a density bonus contribution.



Figure 6: Tied lot example

**Resource:** [Character House Guidelines | City of Vancouver](#)

Sites with buildings listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register (but not designated), are encouraged to contact planning staff to discuss retention options before proceeding with a multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) enquiry. Additional incentives may be applicable via a heritage process, such as designation or a Heritage Revitalisation Agreement.

To discuss a character or heritage house retention proposal, you may request an appointment with planning staff at the following link:

**Resource:** [Building and Development Services Centre | City of Vancouver](#)

### 3.3.4 Floodplain

- are not located in a designated floodplain.

**Resource:** [Designated floodplain map | City of Vancouver](#)

### 3.4 Parking

Figure 7: Double-fronting lot

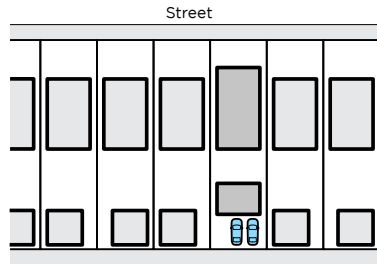


Figure 8: Lot with access to flanking lane

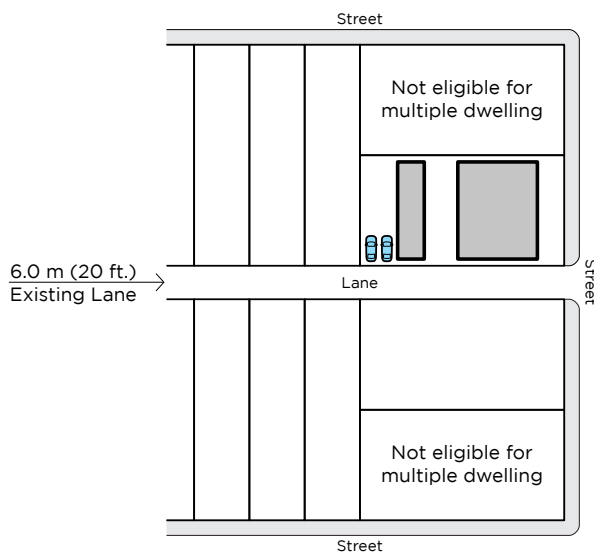


Figure 9: Lot with access to flanking lane with future lane dedication

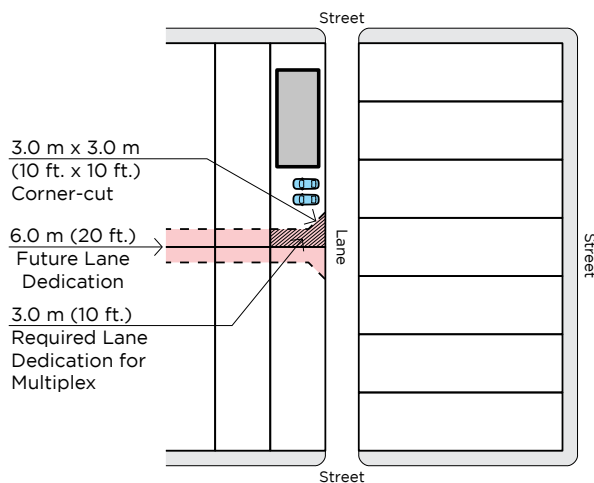


Figure 10: Lot with access to existing lane with partial lane dedication

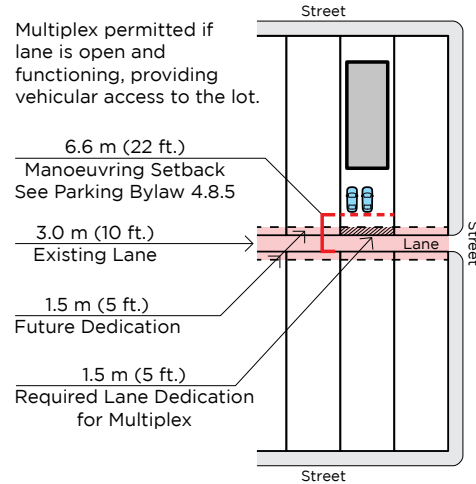
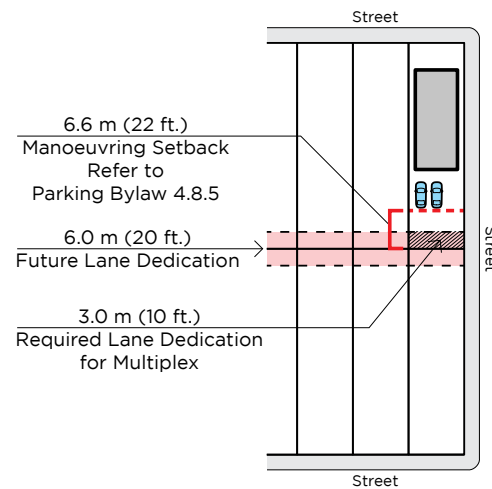


Figure 11: Corner lot, with future lane dedication



- Multiple dwelling (multiplex)
- Dedication required with multiplex application\*

\*All setbacks, including the maneuvering setback and rear yard setbacks, are measured from the ultimate rear property line which is the property line after a dedication

**Resource: [Parking By-law - Internal Circulation | City of Vancouver](#)**

Multiple dwelling ("multiplex") uses are not required to provide a minimum number of spaces for vehicular or bicycle parking.

### 3.4.1 Vehicular Parking

The spatial constraints and additional number of units on a site in a multiple dwelling ("multiplex") project limit the ability to provide one parking space per unit. Generally, 2 parking spaces can be accommodated on a 10 m (32.8 ft.) wide site, and 4 spaces on a 15.1 m (49.5 ft.) wide site. If a transformer is not required by BC Hydro, applicants may reallocate this space to one additional parking space.

Parking spaces may be provided under the second storey or deck overhang of a rear building, within a separate accessory building (open or enclosed), or as surface parking.

Parking spaces must be located at the rear of the site and accessed through a lane or rear street in the case of double-fronting sites. Parking is not permitted as tandem parking, parallel to the lane or in the courtyard. In the RT-7 and RT-9 districts, on sites with no lane, surface parking is permissible in the front yard.

While accessible parking spaces are not required, it is encouraged to provide at least one accessible stall if possible.

All enclosed parking spaces will be counted as part of the permitted floor area, whether in an accessory building or as an attached garage. All parking spaces must be open on at least two sides, whether this is a rear or accessory building, in order to be excluded from FSR.

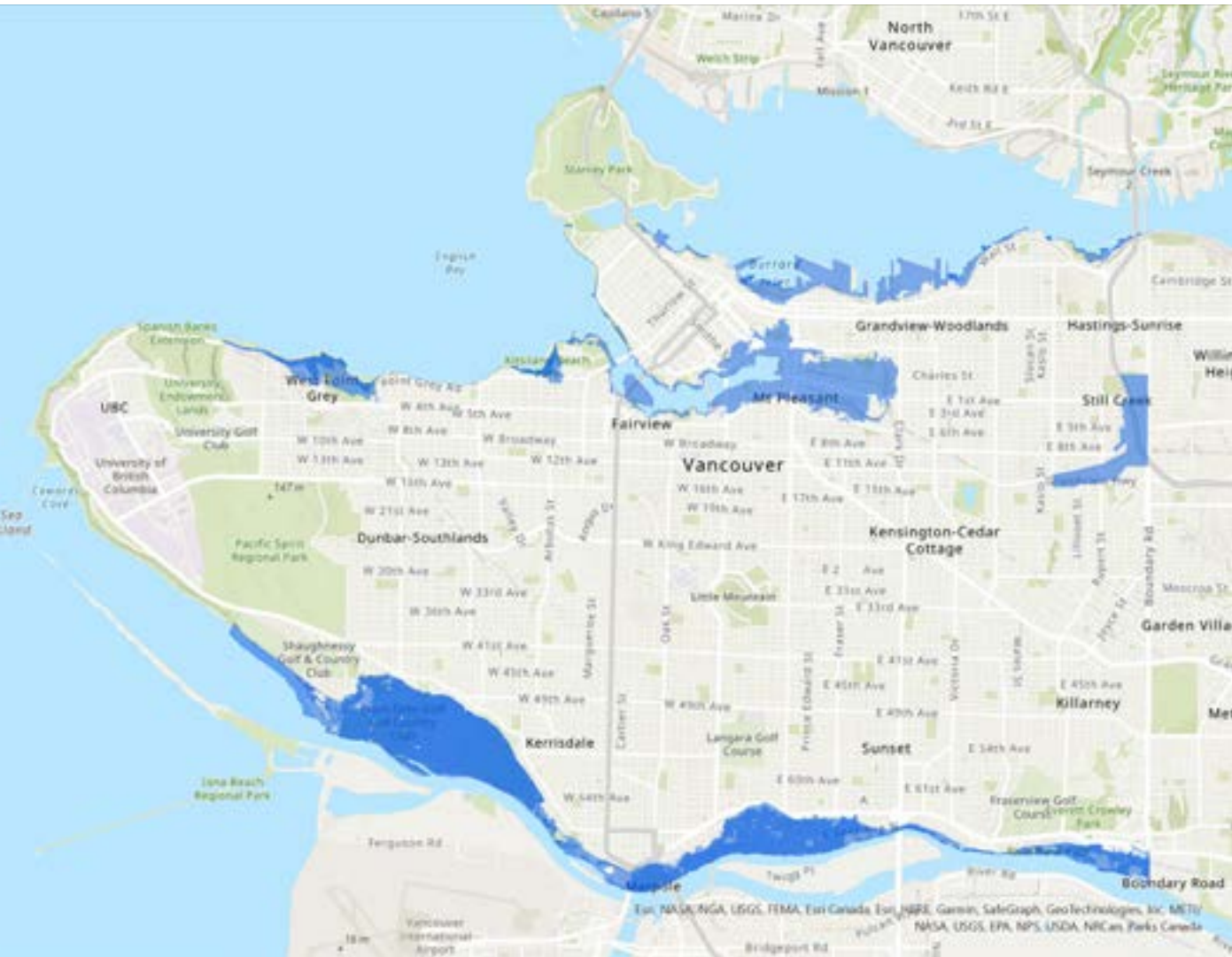
The maximum size of an accessory building (i.e. detached garage or detached carport) is 48 m<sup>2</sup> (516 sq. ft.).

It's important to note that an open carport is considered building area and occupied space with respect to the Building By-law and must be carefully designed for spatial separation and fire spread to adjacent properties.

Surface parking material should be permeable. Examples of permeable materials include permeable pavers, gravel, grass-crete or solid surface wheel strips within landscape (i.e. ground cover planting) or gravel. The requirement for a fully permeable space may be waived to facilitate accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Where (optional) vehicular parking spaces are provided they should meet the requirements of the Parking By-law for size of standard or small car spaces (as applicable).

Figure 12: Designated floodplains





Setbacks are dependent on the type of parking provided as per the following table:

Parking Type	Side Yard	Rear Yard
Attached to rear building (open or enclosed)	1.2 m (4 ft.)	0.9 m (3 ft.)
Stand-alone detached building (open or enclosed)	N/A*	0.6 m (2 ft.)**
Surface parking	N/A	

\* Side walls on a stand-alone detached building must comply with the Vancouver Building By-law requirements around combustibility.

\*\* Additional setbacks may be required to provide sufficient manoeuvring of 6.6 m (22 ft.) for backing out of spaces that are perpendicular to lanes. Refer to [Figures 10 and 11](#).

**Resource:** [Design Standards – Parking By-law | City of Vancouver](#)

Other requirements of the Parking By-law are not applicable, including the 1 m (3.3 ft.) landscape setback to surface parking. A fence and vine planting is recommended to be located adjacent surface stalls at the side property line.

### 3.4.2 Electrical Vehicle (EV) Charging

If provided, vehicular parking spaces are required to provide a 240 v outlet (Level 2) per stall capable of supplying at least 15 amps (as low as 8 amps in a load sharing scenario). Load sharing devices (miser switches, feeder monitors) are accepted to avoid a larger service being needed.

**Resource:** [EV Charging - Parking By-law | City of Vancouver](#) (section 4.14 pg 32)

### 3.4.3 Bicycle Parking

Bicycle parking may be provided under external stairs and porches, or within an accessory (shed) or rear building if the total area does not exceed 24 m<sup>2</sup> (258 sq. ft.). These spaces will not be counted as part of the permitted floor area.

Bicycle parking must not be located within a courtyard unless it is contained under external stairs or porches.

Where bicycle parking spaces are provided they should meet the dimensions of the Parking By-law. Other criteria, such as aisle width, percentage of vertical spaces, etc. are not applicable to multiple dwelling ("multiplex").

### 3.4.4 Electrical Bicycle Charging

An electrical bicycle (E-bike) charging station is not required but may be provided.

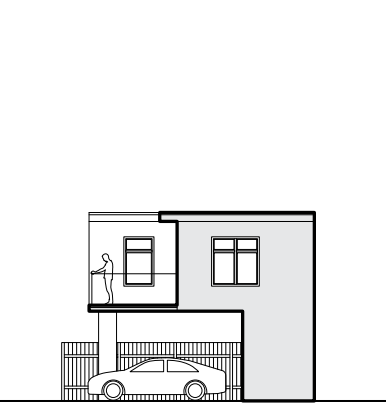


Figure 13: Parking under second storey of rear building

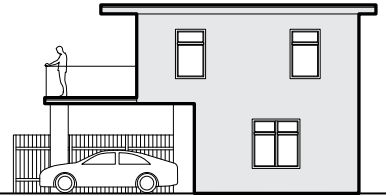
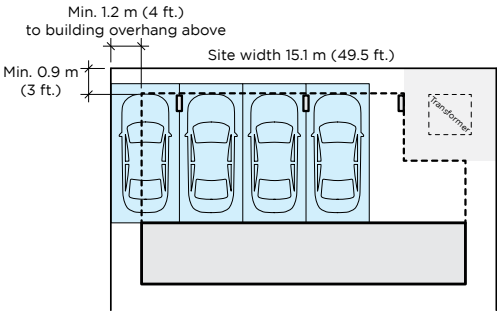
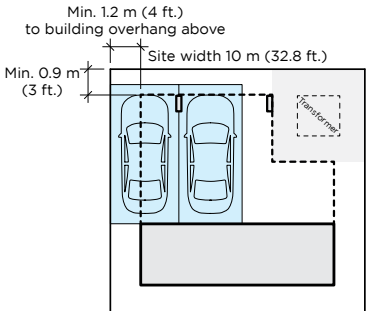
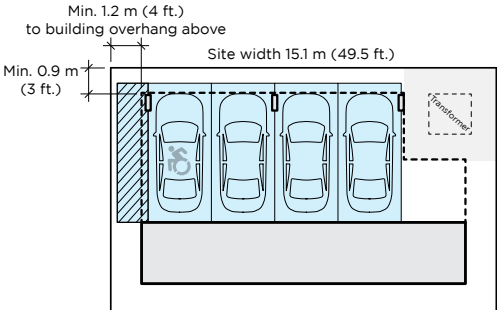
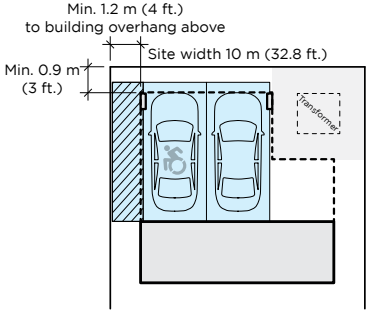
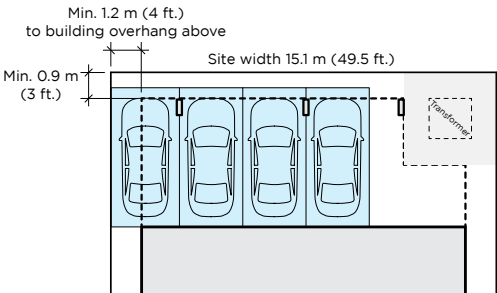
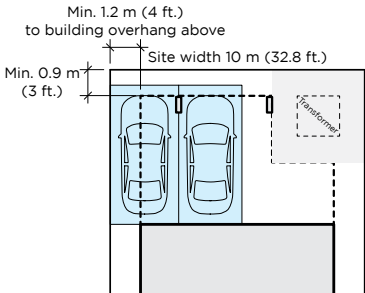
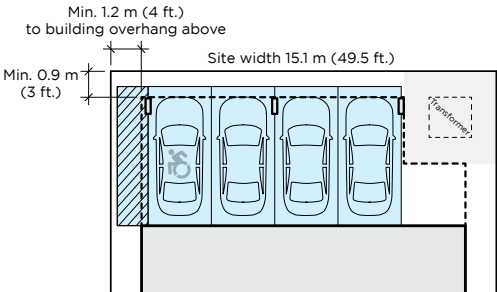
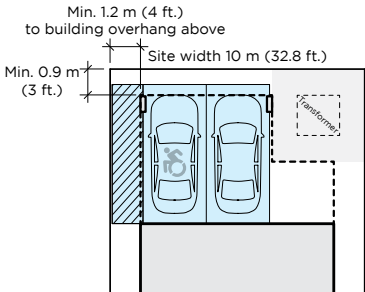


Figure 14: Parking under deck overhang of rear building



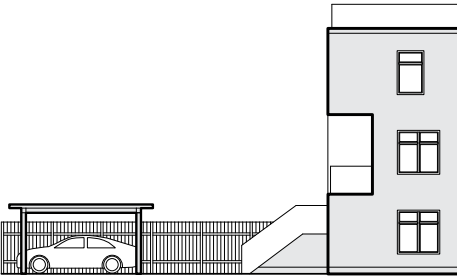
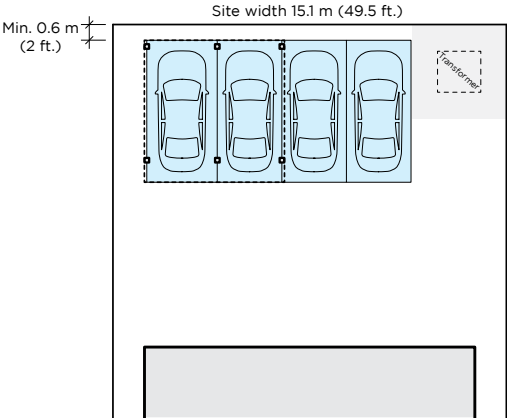
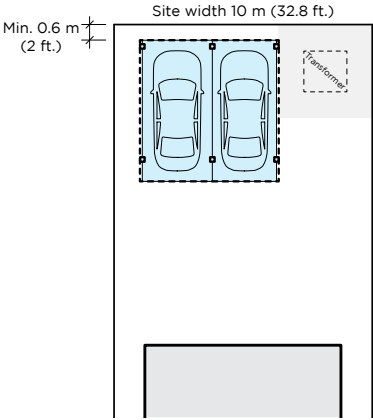
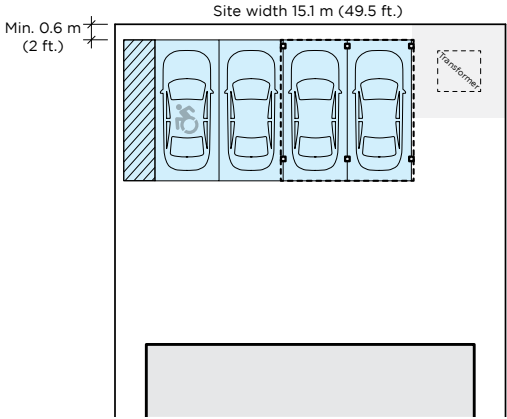
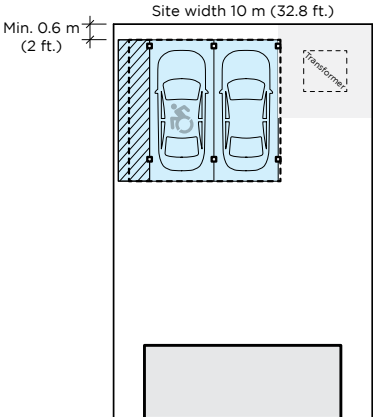


Figure 15: Parking in a detached open accessory building



## 3.5 Site and Unit Configuration

### 3.5.1 Site Configuration

A multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) may consist of a single building or more than one building in a courtyard configuration.

A minimum depth of 33.5 m (110 ft.) is required for courtyard configuration. In a courtyard configuration, the site will accommodate a larger building at the front and smaller at the back. The typical courtyard configuration will consist of a building at the front of the site and a building at the rear of the site separated by a 6.1 m (20 ft.) courtyard. Height restrictions, parking, and PMT, generally result in a smaller building at the rear.

### 3.5.2 Deep Sites

For deeper sites only 2 multiplex buildings are permitted along the depth of the site. See [Figure 19](#).

For rear buildings on deep sites, particular attention should be paid to the Vancouver Building By-Law (VBBL) requirements for firefighter travel distance to unit entrances. Entrances that exceed a travel distance, 45 m (148 ft.) from the street curb to unit entrance, are subject to additional requirements. Refer also to section 3.6.1: Unit Entrance Location of this Guide.

**Resource:** [Vancouver Building By-Law | City of Vancouver](#) (Article 9.10.20.3, subsection 3.2.5)

### 3.5.3 Wide Sites

For wider sites, buildings may be located side-by-side along the front and rear of the site provided that the maximum width of buildings is 17.4 m (57 ft.) and the minimum separation between side-by-side buildings



Credit: City of Vancouver based on Lanefab Design/Build



is 2.4 m (8 ft.). The maximum building width and separation regulations are intended to ensure buildings fit within the scale and pattern of development on the block. See [Figure 19](#).

Side-by-side buildings are required to meet VBBL requirements for side wall elevations. Regulations limiting exit exposure for paths accessing rear units must also be met. These regulations will impact the type of cladding and amount of windows on side elevations adjacent to paths, or require additional sprinklers.



Credit: Lanefab Design/Build

### 3.5.4 Unit Configuration

Multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) buildings will typically consist of simple arrangements of side-by-side and/or back-to-back units depending on the site width and depth.

A minimum site width of 13.4 m (44 ft.) is needed to provide side-by-side units.

Units can be stacked vertically, typically with single level lower units located below two-storey upper units. Stacking of units is not required.

### 3.5.5 Corner Sites

Corner sites provide the opportunity for units to be arranged in a row facing the side street. The maximum 19.8 m (65 ft.) building depth can be relaxed for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) on corner sites to facilitate this arrangement, provided that the following conditions are met:

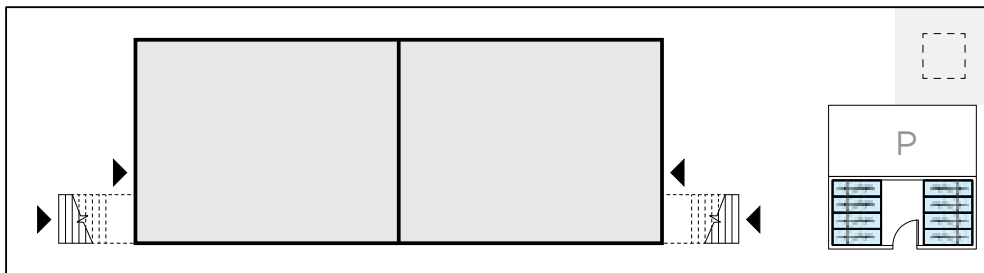


Figure 16: Bicycle parking in an accessory building (shed)

0.6 m (2 ft.)

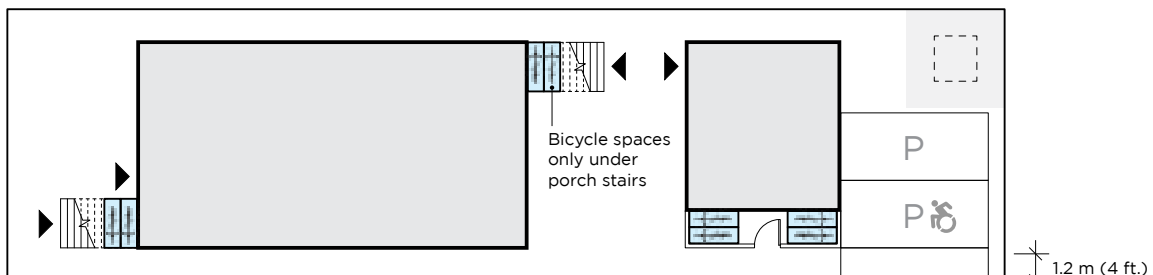


Figure 17: Bicycle parking under stairs and in rear building

1.2 m (4 ft.)

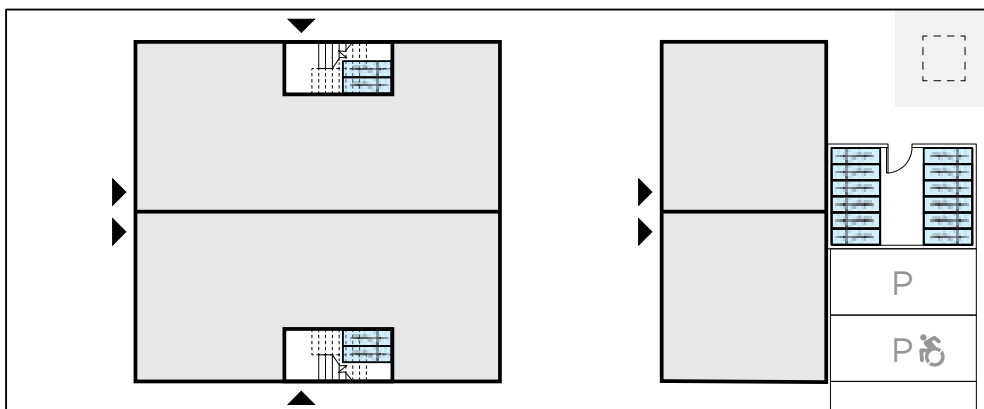


Figure 18: Bicycle parking under stairs and in accessory building (shed)

0.6 m (2 ft.)

- Site width is a minimum 15.1 m (49.5 ft.);
- Interior site yard increased to 2.4 m (8 ft.) for units oriented towards the side street;
- The exterior site yard is increased to 2.4 m (8 ft.) for units oriented towards the side street as illustrated in **Figures 25** and **26**; and
- A minimum of 7.3 m (24 ft.) rear yard is provided from the lane. This may be used for parking, pathways, landscaping and other servicing facilities.

The above conditions are designed to lessen the impact of the additional building depth on adjacent properties and to provide sufficient outdoor space for the units.

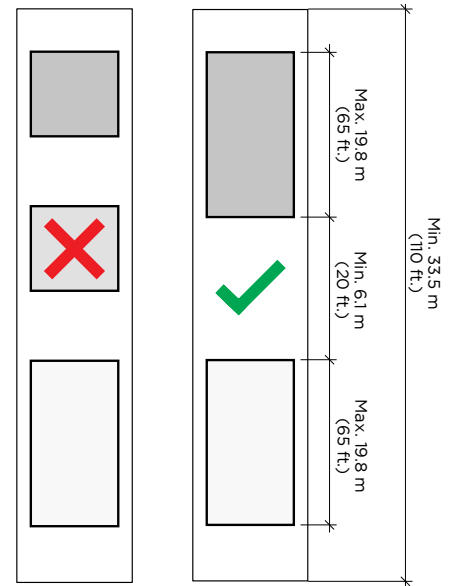


Figure 19: Configuration of buildings on deep sites

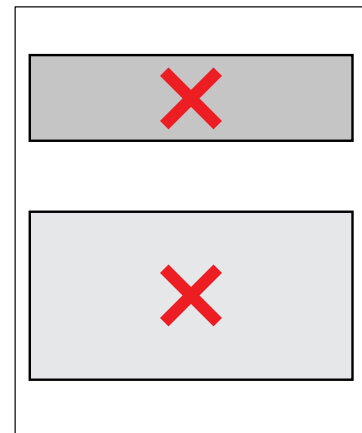
### 3.5.6 Unit Orientation

Units should be oriented with main living spaces facing a street, courtyard or rear yard. Units should not be oriented with a single exposure facing an interior side yard as this would result in limited outlook and access to daylight for units.

### 3.5.7 Illustrative Examples

The following images illustrate typical multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) buildings, noting that other arrangements are possible. Note that some of these examples may be defined as four storeys with respect to the VBBL, and subject to the requirements of Part 3.

- 10.0 m (32.8 ft.) site frontage (3-4 units)



### 3.5.8 Regulations Summary

The following tables summarize the site and building regulations for single building and courtyard configurations.

- 15.1 m (49.5 ft.) site frontage (4-8 units)

## 3.6 Building Design

### 3.6.1 Unit Entrance Location

Multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) are small townhouse buildings. Generally, units will be ground-oriented, meaning each unit

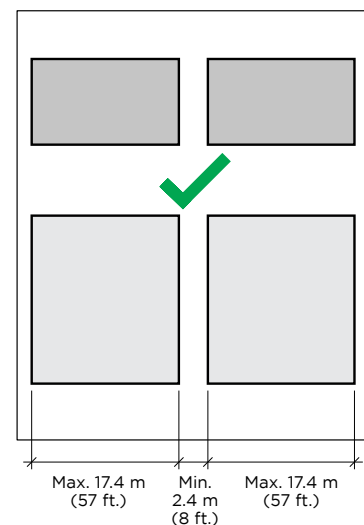


Figure 20: Configuration of buildings on wide sites

has its own entry door from the outdoors and there are no shared corridors. This is distinguished from apartment buildings which have shared entrance lobbies, elevators, and corridors that access single-level apartment units within the building (i.e. flats).

Exterior entrance porches and landings can be individual or shared between units.

Unit entrances can be located facing the front yard, side yard, rear yard, lane, or courtyard.

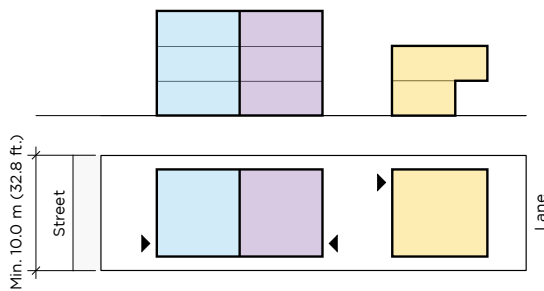


Figure 21: Back-to-back units with rear building

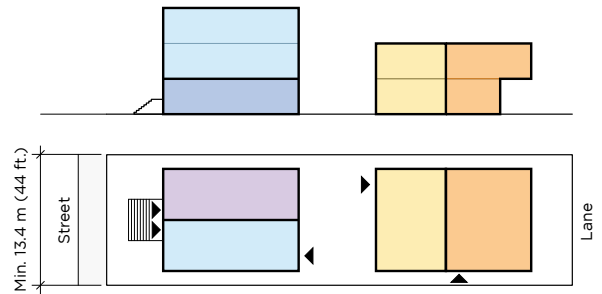


Figure 22: Side-by-side units and rear building with front-to-back units

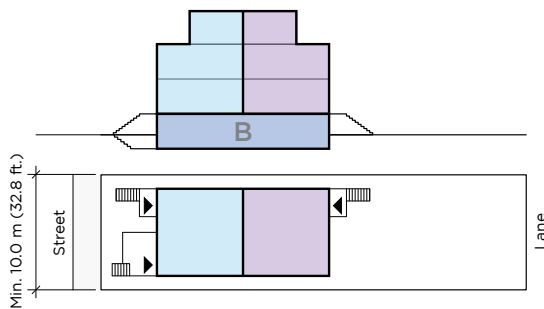


Figure 23: Stacked back-to-back units

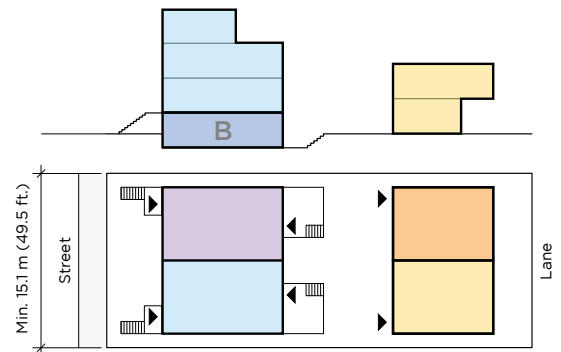


Figure 24: Stacked side-by-side units and rear building with side-by-side units

Some regrading of side yards will be permitted to allow ramps and stairs in the side yard that access side and rear unit entrances.

The location of the unit entrances at the courtyard, rear yard and side yard should be clearly identified with a well-designed entrance path that may include an entry trellis or gate at the front property line with addressing.

Unit entrances should be reviewed by your design professional for compliance with the Vancouver Building By-law (VBBL). Some relevant considerations include, but are not limited to the following:

- All unit entrances are addressed and accessed from the street (not the lane).
- Unit entrances must comply with regulations for firefighter access paths, including travel distance from the street curb to the unit entrance, and path slope, surface, and clear width.
- Surface treatment of paths must be continuous to avoid tripping hazards.



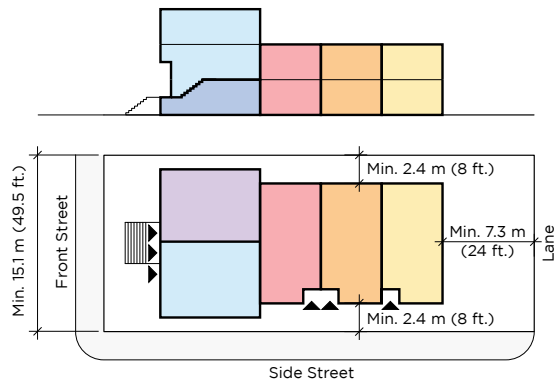


Figure 25: Corner site with stacked units fronting main street and row units fronting side street

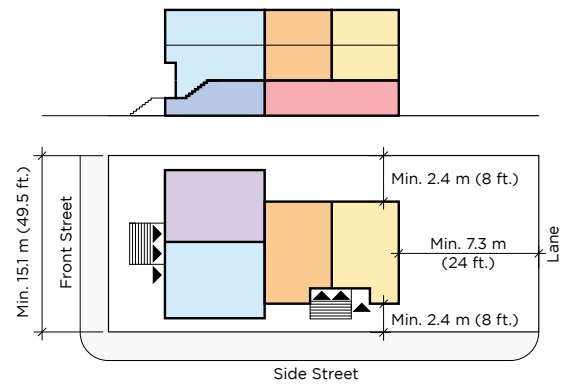


Figure 26: Corner site with stacked units fronting main street and stacked units fronting side street

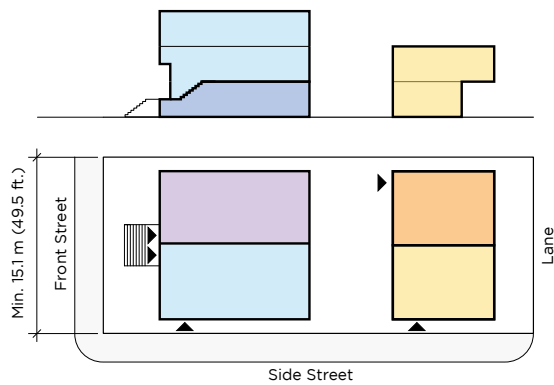


Figure 27: Corner site with stacked side-by-side units and rear building side-by-side units

- A well-lit address marker is required at the front showing the location of rear units.
- Unit entrances at the rear that are not visible from the street may require strobe lights or other provisions to ensure visibility for emergency services.

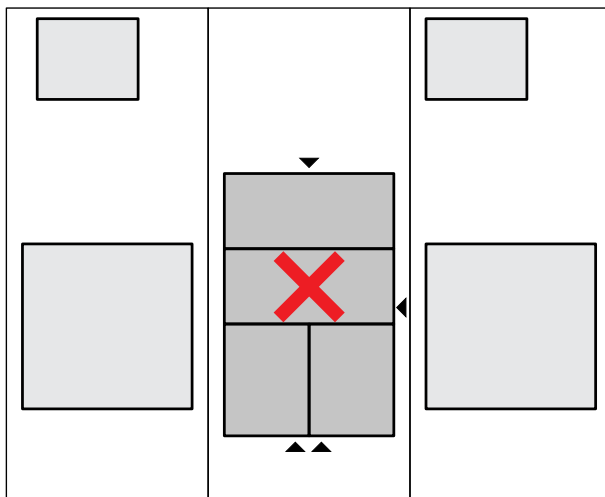


Figure 28: Incorrect unit layout with single exposure facing interior side yard

- Sites with rear units that are not visible from the street will require an additional strobe light at the front of the path in the side yard. This is intended to alert emergency response personnel that units are located at the rear of the site and accessed via the path in the side yard.
- A side yard setback of 1.2 m (4 ft.) is required for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) to ensure the access paths to rear units meet the required width of the VBBL.

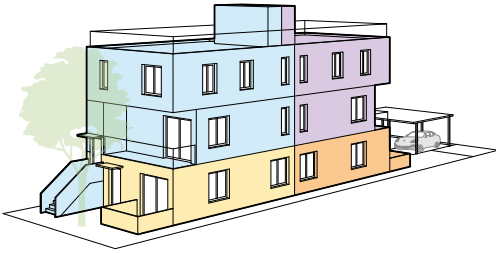


Figure 29: Single building above ground configuration

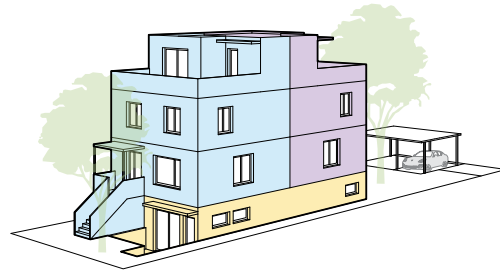


Figure 30: Single building with basement configuration

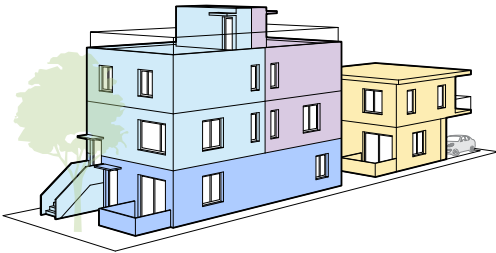


Figure 31: Courtyard above ground configuration

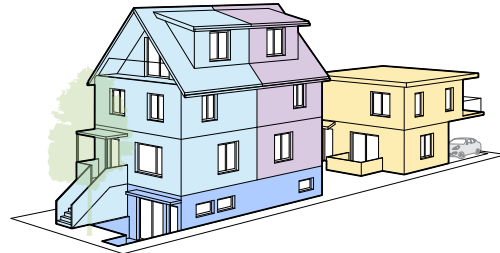


Figure 32: Courtyard with basement configuration

- Regulations limiting exit exposure for paths accessing rear units must also be met. These regulations



Figure 33: Single building above ground configuration

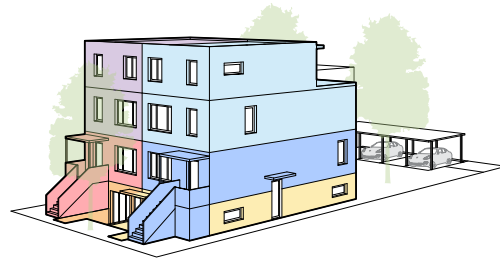


Figure 34: Single building with basement configuration

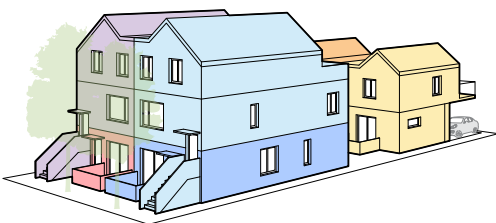


Figure 35: Courtyard above ground configuration

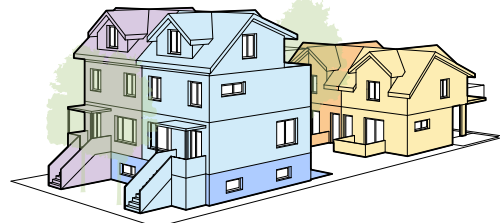
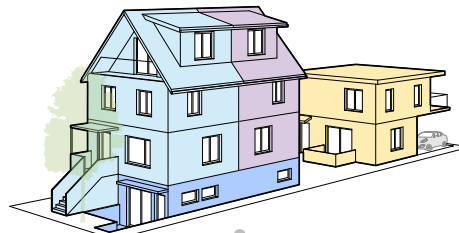
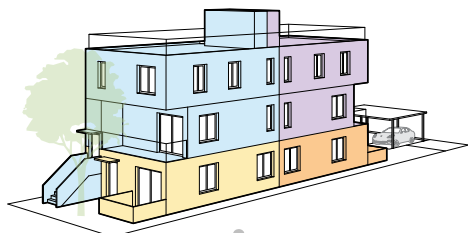


Figure 36: Courtyard with basement configuration

- The entry door swing for a unit cannot conflict with the access path to another unit; side entrance doors may be inset to avoid that conflict.



Single Building			
		All Zones	RT-7 & RT-9
Density	Base	0.7 FSR	
	Bonus	0.3 FSR	
	Total	1.0 FSR	
Site Area (min.)		306 m <sup>2</sup> (3,293 sq. ft.)	280 m <sup>2</sup> (3013.9 sq. ft.)
Site Width (min.) – Frontage		10 m (32.8 ft.)	N/A
Site Depth (min.)		30.4 m (99.7 ft.)	N/A
Height (max.)	Front Building	11.5 m (37.7 ft.) and 3 storeys	
	Rear Building	N/A	
Yards (min.)	Front	4.9 m (16 ft.)	
	Side	1.2 m (4 ft.)	
	Rear	10.7 m (35 ft.)	
	Courtyard	N/A	
Building Depth (max.)		19.8 m (65 ft.)	
Building Width (max.)		17.4 m (57 ft.)	
Basement Depth (max.)		1.2 m (4 ft.)	

Courtyard			
		All Zones	RT-7 & RT-9
Density	Base	0.7 FSR	
	Bonus	0.3 FSR	
	Total	1.0 FSR	
Site Area (min.)		306 m <sup>2</sup> (3,293 sq. ft.)	280 m <sup>2</sup> (3013.9 sq. ft.)
Site Width (min.) – Frontage		10 m (32.8 ft.)	N/A
Site Depth (min.)		33.5 m (109.9 ft.)	
Height (max.)	Front Building	11.5 m (37.7 ft.) and 3 storeys	
	Rear Building	8.5m (27.9 ft.) and 2 storeys*	
Yards (min.)	Front	4.9 m (16 ft.)	
	Side	1.2 m (4 ft.)	
	Rear	0.9 m (3 ft.)	
	Courtyard	6.1 m (20 ft.)	
Building Depth (max.)		19.8m (65 ft.)	
Building Width (max.)		17.4 m (57 ft.)	
Basement Depth (max.)		1.2 m (4 ft.)	

\*Increased to 11.5 m (37.7 ft.) and 3 storeys for sites less than 306m<sup>2</sup> or sites without lane

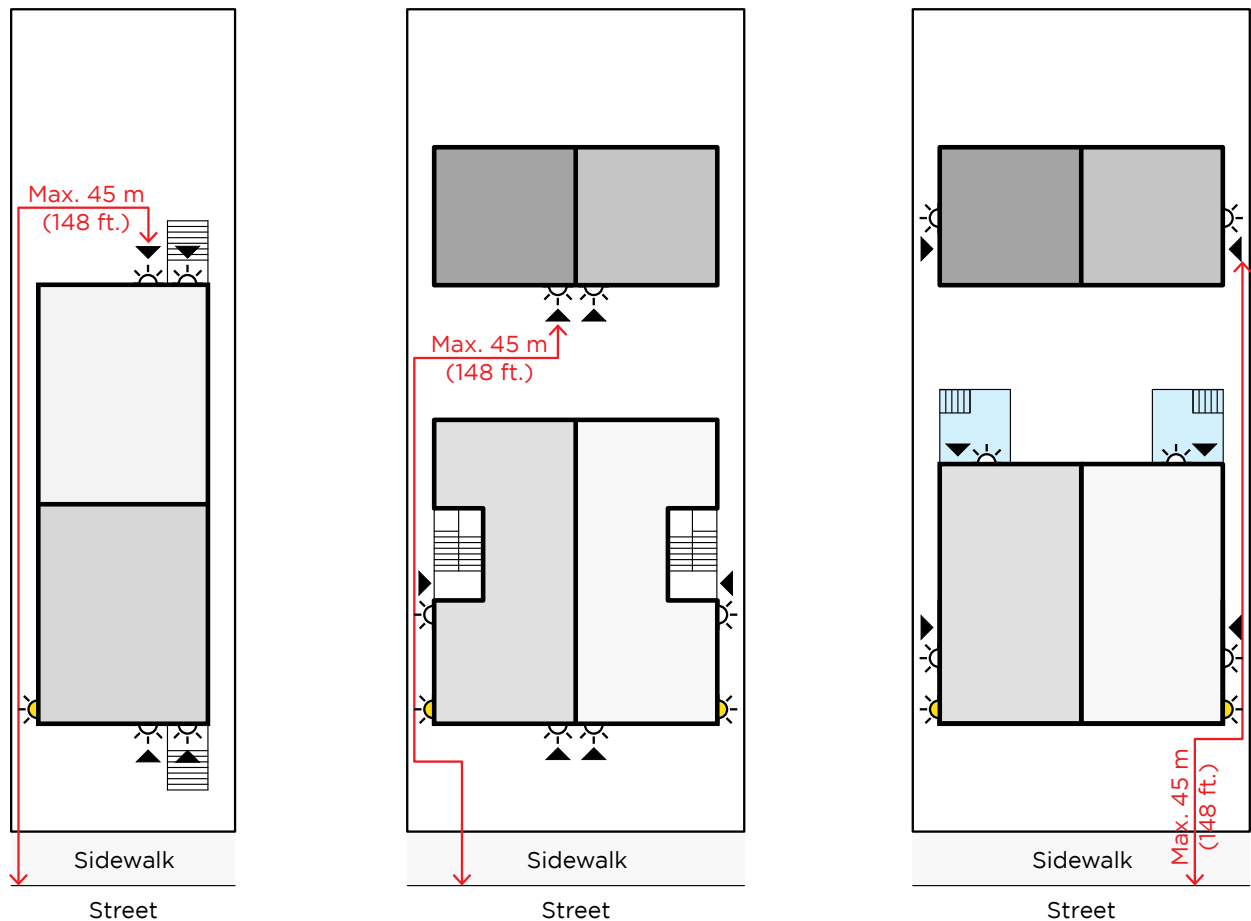


Bird's eye view of notional block in R1-1. Credit: City of Vancouver, produced by QuickViz



will impact the type of cladding and amount of windows on side elevations adjacent to paths, or require additional sprinklers.

- For rear buildings on deep sites, particular attention should be paid to the requirements for firefighter travel distance to unit entrances. Entrances that exceed a maximum travel distance, 45 m (148 ft.) from the street curb to unit entrance, are subject to additional requirements.



- ☼ Emergency Strobe Light above Unit Entrance
- ☼ Additional Emergency Strobe Light Indicating Access to Rear Units
- ↔ Fire Fighter Access Travel Distance

Figure 37: Entries and emergency measures (travel distance and lighting)

### 3.6.2 Entrance Stairs

For stacked units, the upper unit may be located a full storey above grade necessitating a full storey of entrance stairs to access that unit.

External entrance stairs to the upper unit are limited to 2.4 m (8 ft.) horizontal projection into front yards or courtyards so as not to compromise the amount of open space in yards. This measurement is applicable to the stairs only and not the associated landing or porch adjacent the front entry door.

In order to limit the extent of external stair projection into the yards for stacked units, the entrance stairs to upper units may be fully or partially inset or internalized. The partially internalized stair functions as a “split level” entrance.

A floor area exclusion of up to 7.4 m<sup>2</sup> (80 sq. ft.) per unit can be utilized for portions of entrance stairs that access stacked units which are internalized. The exclusion is applied to each unit that is affected by the internalised stairs. This includes the internal entrance stairs to the upper unit, as well as the space directly below the stairs for the lower unit as shown in [Figures 38 to 40](#). The space below the stairs is limited in ceiling height, but may be utilized by the lower unit. It may be used for storage, bikes, washer/dryer, mechanical equipment, powder room, expansion of the adjacent rooms, or other similar uses.

**This exclusion does not apply to internal stairs connecting storeys of a multi-level unit.**

### 3.6.3 Building Height and Rooftop Decks

Rooftop decks are permitted for single building multiple dwellings (“multiplexes”) and for the front building(s) of courtyard multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) options. Similar to Laneway Houses, rooftop decks are not permitted for the rear building(s) of courtyard multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) options.

Rooftop access structures including stairs, elevators and guardrails may be permitted above the height limit of 11.5 m (37.7 ft.) and excluded from FSR under Section 10 of the ZDBL. This is intended to encourage use of rooftops for private outdoor space for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) units. These exclusions are applicable to buildings citywide, including multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) in R1-1, RT-7 and RT-9.

#### Resource:

[Zoning and Development By-law | City of Vancouver](#) (Sections 10.1.1 and 10.36)

The rooftop stair enclosure is limited to 3.6 m (12 ft.) above the permitted height of 11.5 m (37.7 ft.).

The FSR exclusion is applicable to the enclosed or unenclosed stair and landing at the rooftop for each unit, and not to any rooms at the top of the stairs on the rooftop.

Under VBBL as well, anything other than a stair or mechanical enclosure on a rooftop constitutes a storey, which would affect whether the building is



Credit: Formwerks Architecture, produced by QuickViz

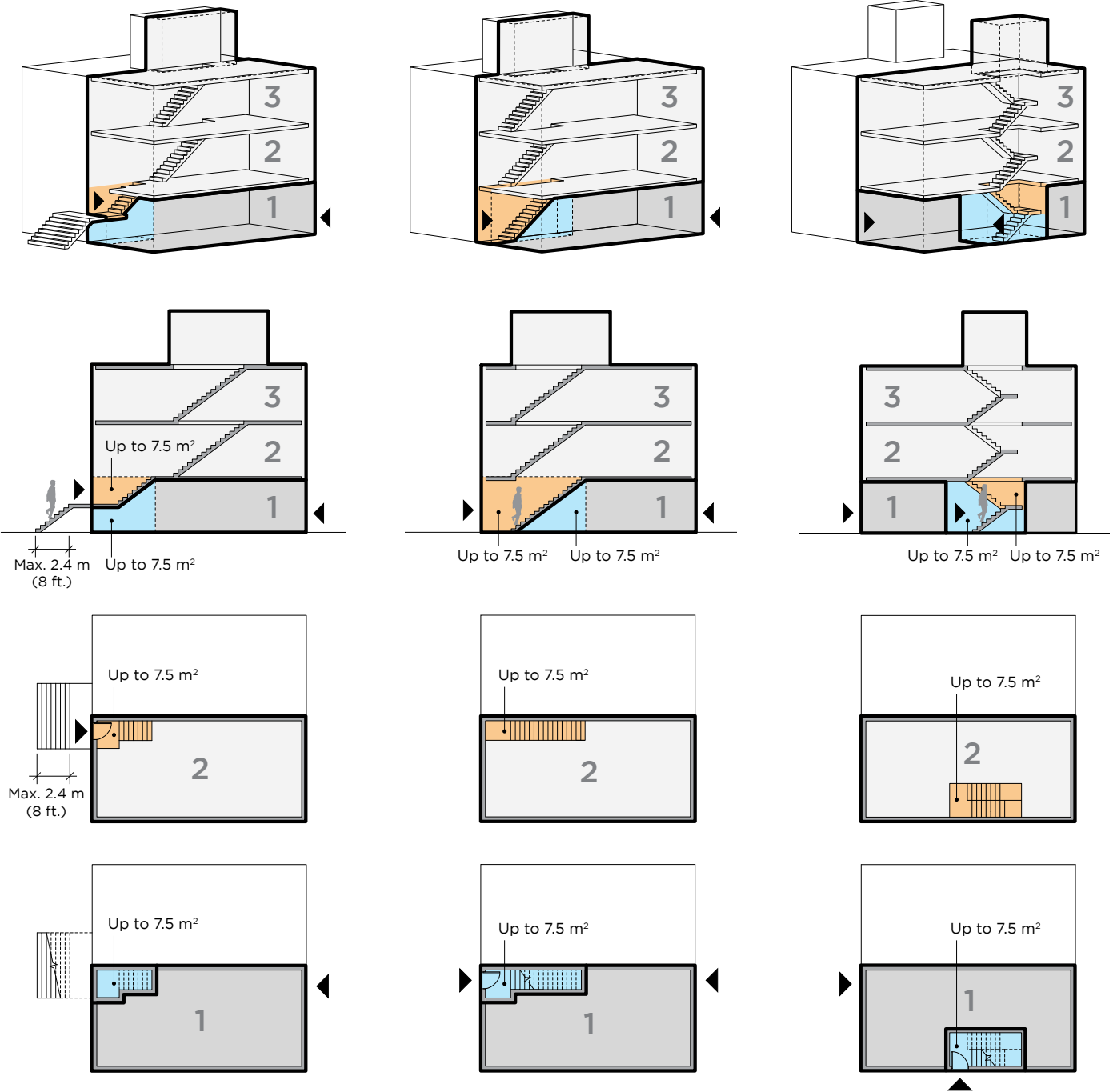


Figure 38: Partially internalized access stairs

Figure 39: Fully internalized access stairs from the front

Figure 40: Fully internalized access stairs from the side

considered Part 3 or Part 9 and the complexity of the code review.

Exclusions under Section 10.1.1 and 10.36 for common rooftop amenity rooms are not applicable to multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) as there is no common access to the rooftop for common amenity rooms for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”).

Guardrails are not required to be setback from the roof edges and may be solid extensions of the parapet or separate glass, metal, or wood rails. Rooftop guardrails are limited to 1 m (3.5 ft.) in height which is the minimum required by the Vancouver Building By-law. See [Figure 41](#).

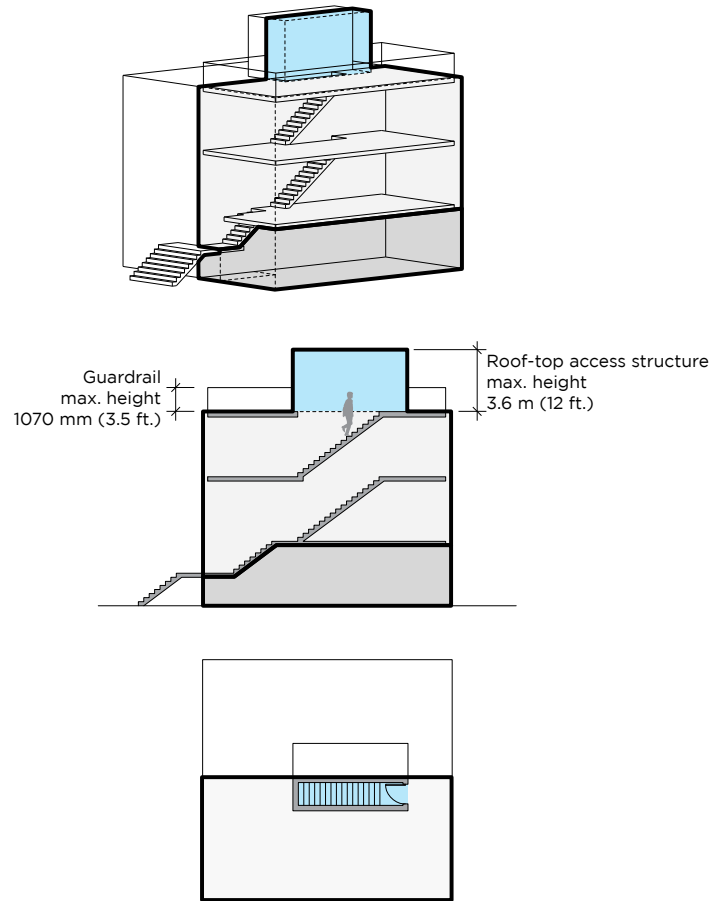


Figure 41: Rooftop access, permitted to exceed height limit

### 3.6.4 Roof Form

Roofs may be flat or sloped.

For sites that are at least 13.4 m (44 ft.) wide, side-by-side units can be provided. In such cases, sloped roofs should read as individual roofs per unit to break down the building massing, ensure the two units are clearly identifiable, and facilitate compliance with the permitted height. See [Figure 42](#).

Floor space under sloped ceilings with low ceiling height between 1.2 m (4 ft.) and 2.3 m (7.5 ft.) is excluded from FSR up to 10% in order to enable a cohesive roof form without having to provide “cut outs” in the roof. See [Figure 43](#).

### 3.6.5 Ground Floor Units and Visit-ability

Multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) are permitted to have all 3 storeys of the building fully above ground with no basement. Basements, while permitted, are not required. Fully above ground units are encouraged for various benefits including:



- reducing barriers to accessibility and visitability (i.e. steps);
- reducing carbon pollution from concrete;
- allowing for gravity-flow sewer connections; and
- minimizing impact to existing trees due to excavation.

### 3.6.6 Basements and Code Considerations

As noted above, basements are not required. If provided, basement units cannot be located more than 1.2 m (4 ft.) below grade.

Entrances to basement units may be located within a sunken patio of 7.5 m<sup>2</sup> (80 sq. ft.), approx. 2.4 m by 3.1 m (8 ft. by 10 ft.), to provide outdoor space and improved daylighting for basement units.

Such sunken patios are excluded from the calculation of height (number of storeys) in the ZDBL provided they meet the limitations of:

- the portion of the building abutting the lowered surface faces either the front street or the rear property line;
- the lowered surface does not extend more than 3.1 m (10 ft.) into the required front or rear yard, measured from the street-facing wall and including stair runs or vertical change in grade between the basement and the existing grade; and
- the sum of the widths of all lowered surfaces abutting the building is not greater than half the building width or 4.6 m (15 ft.), whichever is the lesser.

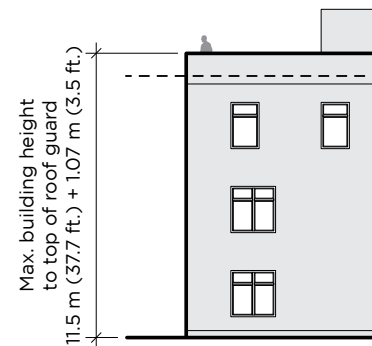
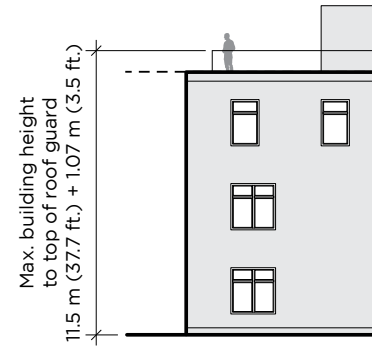


Figure 42: Guardrails, permitted to exceed height limit

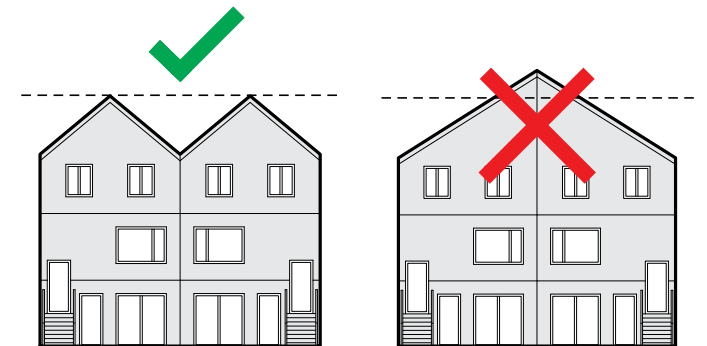


Figure 43: Roof form break down

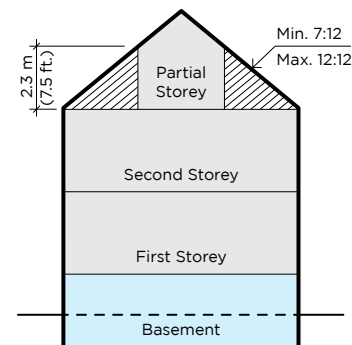


Figure 44: Floor are excluded under sloped ceiling (hatched)

Sunken patios are not exempt from the calculation of height (number of storeys) in the Vancouver Building By-law (VBBL). Therefore while proposals with 3 storeys above “basements” may be fine for compliance with the height limit in the ZDBL, they may be considered 4 storey buildings in the VBBL and therefore will be regulated under Part 3.

For Part 3 buildings, there are limitations on the location of the entry door above ground and the travel distance within the unit to that entrance. This entry door functions as the required exit door. The travel distance does not include the roof deck provided there are no rooms other than a stair or mechanical enclosure on the rooftop.

There are two options to comply with the travel distance requirement:

- the exit door is no more than 1.5 m (5 ft.) above ground and travel distance is not more than 2 storeys and 25 m (82 ft.), or
- travel distance is not more than 2 storeys and 18 m (59 ft.) (with no restriction on height of the exit door).

Your design professional should review these requirements in the VBBL as it may impact the location (height) of the main floor unit(s) above ground.

## Did you know?

Providing a basement may impact the calculation of the building height (number of storeys) in the Vancouver Building By-law (VBBL). If your multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) is considered a 4 storey building according to the VBBL it will be regulated under Part 3 which is more complex than Part 9 and requires the involvement of an architect and other professionals. Sunken patios typically mean that a basement is actually considered the first storey with respect to the VBBL.



Credit: Lanefab Design/Build.

### 3.6.7 Siting of Building on Sloped Sites

Working with the natural site grading on sloped sites provides opportunities for minimizing site disturbance and excavation, and improving liveability of units. Taking advantage of the natural slope of the site for unit entrances and the location of the lowest floor can also increase accessibility and daylighting of units.

**As illustrated in Figures 46, 47 and 48:** Buildings with back-to-back units may “step” with the site slope.

**As illustrated in Figures 49 and 50:** For buildings with a single unit on the lowest level stepping the unit may not be practical. A portion of the unit may be located below ground due to the site slope. In those cases the unit entrance, main living space and outdoor patio space should be located on the side of the building that is closer to grade and less sunken to improve accessibility and daylighting.

**As illustrated in Figure 51:** For buildings with basements, the location of upper unit entrances should be carefully considered in order to take advantage of the site slope while meeting Vancouver Building By-law (VBBL) requirements. The entrance to the upper units may be required to be located within 1.5 m (5 ft.) of the adjacent ground level.

In the case of steeply sloping sites where it is clearly demonstrated that the building cannot reasonably fit in the height envelope, staff may consider a height relaxation due to “unnecessary hardship”.

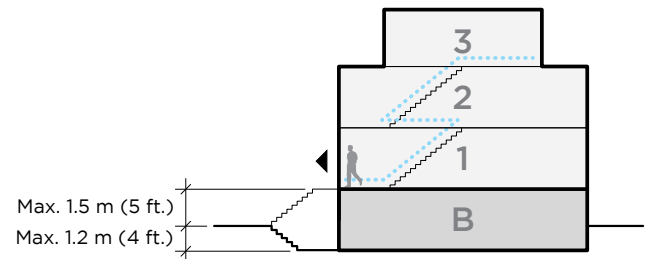
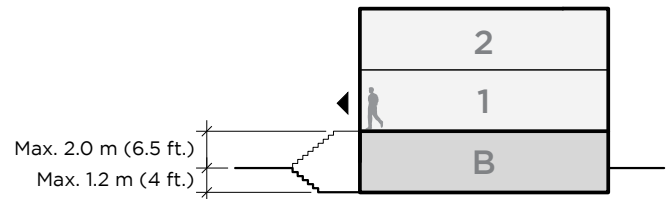
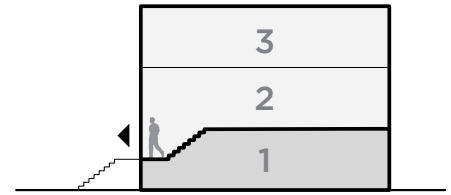


Figure 45: Access to upper and basement units.\*

\* Basement levels (B) with large sunken patios are counted as a storey under VBBL.

### Did you know?

Buildings that provide 4 levels (3 storeys over a “basement” in ZDBL) may be considered 4 storeys under the VBBL definition of Building Height. In such cases, the building is required to be reviewed under Part 3 of the VBBL. Your design professional should review these requirements to ensure compliance.

Height relaxations will generally be limited to sites where the change in grade along the depth of the site is significant, approx. 2.4 m (8 ft.), or when a sloped roof is proposed on a sloped site. Ceiling height should not exceed 3.1 m (10 ft.) floor to floor in such cases.

### 3.6.8 Storage

The Bulk Storage and In-suite Storage – Multiple Dwelling Residential Developments bulletin is not applicable to multiple dwellings (“multiplexes”). As such, a storage room for each unit is not required and there is no FSR exclusion for storage rooms.

### 3.6.9 Mechanical Rooms

A mechanical room FSR exclusion of 3.7 m<sup>2</sup> (40 sq. ft.) per unit is available. It may be utilised per unit or in a collective location. The mechanical room exclusion is applicable to the electric room that may be required with a Pad-mounted Transformer (PMT).

### 3.6.10 Unit Sizes

Multiple dwellings (“multiplexes”) are intended to primarily provide family-sized units with 2 or more bedrooms. The number of units permitted is related to the site size and intended to achieve an average unit size of approximately 93 m<sup>2</sup> (1000 sq. ft.). The intent is to have all units be of a good size to be treated as primary dwellings. Secondary suites or lock-off units are not permitted in multiple dwellings (“multiplexes”).

In the R1-1 district, multiple dwellings (“multiplexes”) are required to provide a minimum number of dwelling units with 2 or more bedrooms as per the following table:

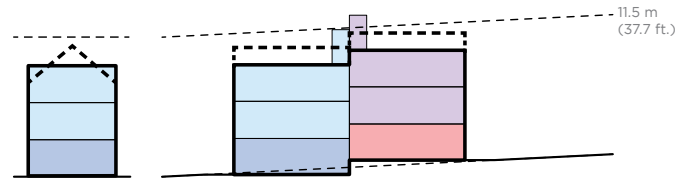


Figure 46: Back-to-front sloped site with stepped back-to-back units

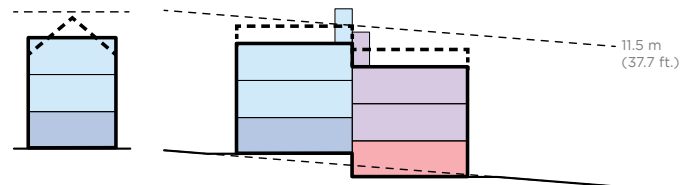


Figure 47: Front-to-back sloped site with stepped back-to-back units

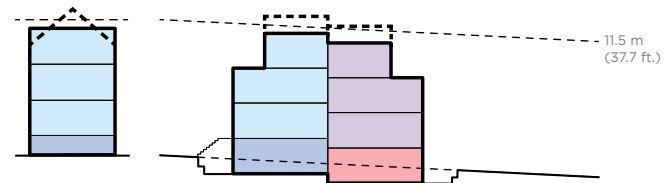


Figure 48: Front-to-back sloped site with stepped back-to-back units with basement

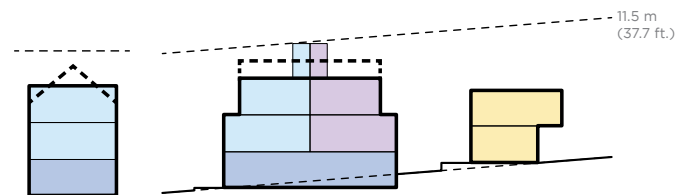


Figure 49: Back-to-front sloped site with partially sunken single lower unit

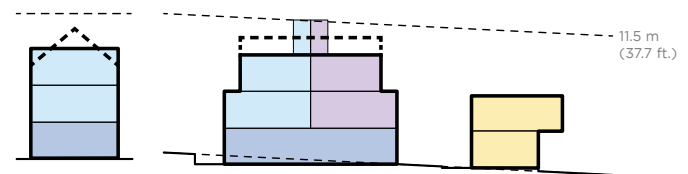


Figure 50: Front-to-back sloped site with partially sunken single lower unit

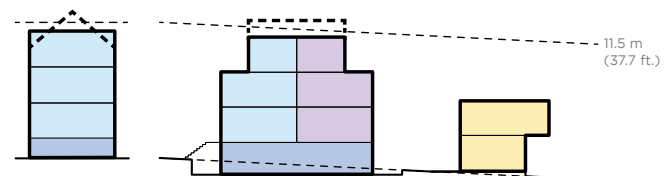


Figure 51: Front-to-back sloped site with single basement unit

Number of dwelling units	Multiple dwellings where all of the dwelling units except a dwelling unit occupied by a registered owner are secured as residential rental tenure	All other multiple dwellings
Multiple dwelling containing 3 dwelling units	1 dwelling unit	2 dwelling units
Multiple dwelling containing 4 dwelling units	1 dwelling unit	2 dwelling units
Multiple dwelling containing 5 dwelling units	2 dwelling units	3 dwelling units
Multiple dwelling containing 6 dwelling units	2 dwelling units	3 dwelling units
Multiple dwelling containing 7 dwelling units	2 dwelling units	N/A
Multiple dwelling containing 8 dwelling units	3 dwelling units	N/A

### 3.7 Outdoor Space

Each unit should have access to outdoor space of 7.4 m<sup>2</sup> (80 sq. ft.) per unit. The space can consist of individual private patios, decks, balconies or roof decks. The space can also be provided as communal outdoor space adding up to 7.4 m<sup>2</sup> (80 sq. ft.) per unit, typically in a shared courtyard. A combination of shared and private spaces can also be provided.

#### Did you know?

The *High Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines* are not applicable to multiple dwellings (“multiplexes”). As such, a common indoor amenity room, common outdoor amenity space, or dedicated children’s play space is not required. While pockets of common gathering or play space may be provided and are encouraged, they are not required noting the limited space on site.

#### 3.7.1 Rooftop decks

Roof decks are not counted in floor area regardless of the floor level on which they occur. Roof decks may be located on the roof or atop a “stepped” portion of the building massing. Roof decks are distinguished from other decks which consist of projections from the building massing. The latter, projecting decks (in conjunction with porches) are capped at 16% of the permitted floor area.

Refer also to section 3.6.3 of this guide for height and FSR exclusions for stairs to access rooftops



and guardrails, which are intended to encourage use of rooftops for private outdoor space for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) units.

### 3.7.2 Balconies

Balconies are not permitted to project into the front yard or courtyard so as not to overly compromise the sense of openness and sunlight access to these spaces.

Balconies for Passive House/Net Zero buildings are not subject to this limitation and may have balcony projections in the front and courtyards up to 1.8 m (6 ft.), noting the simplified building form does not lend itself to stepping or insets for decks.

### 3.7.3 Entry porches

Entry porches are permitted to project into front yards and courtyards up to 1.8 m (6 ft.).

**Resource:** [Zoning and Development By-law | City of Vancouver](#) (Section 10.8)

### 3.7.4 Stairs

Exterior stairs are permitted to project into front yards and courtyards up to 2.4 m (8 ft.). This measurement is for the stairs only, and is in addition to the associated landing or porch at the entry door. See [Figures 52](#) and [53](#).

### 3.7.5 Sunken Patios

Sunken patios can project up to 3.1 m (10 ft.) into yards. This dimension includes stair runs or terraced planters between the basement and the existing grade.

The sum of the widths of all sunken patios should not be greater than the lesser of half the building width or 4.6 m (15 ft.).

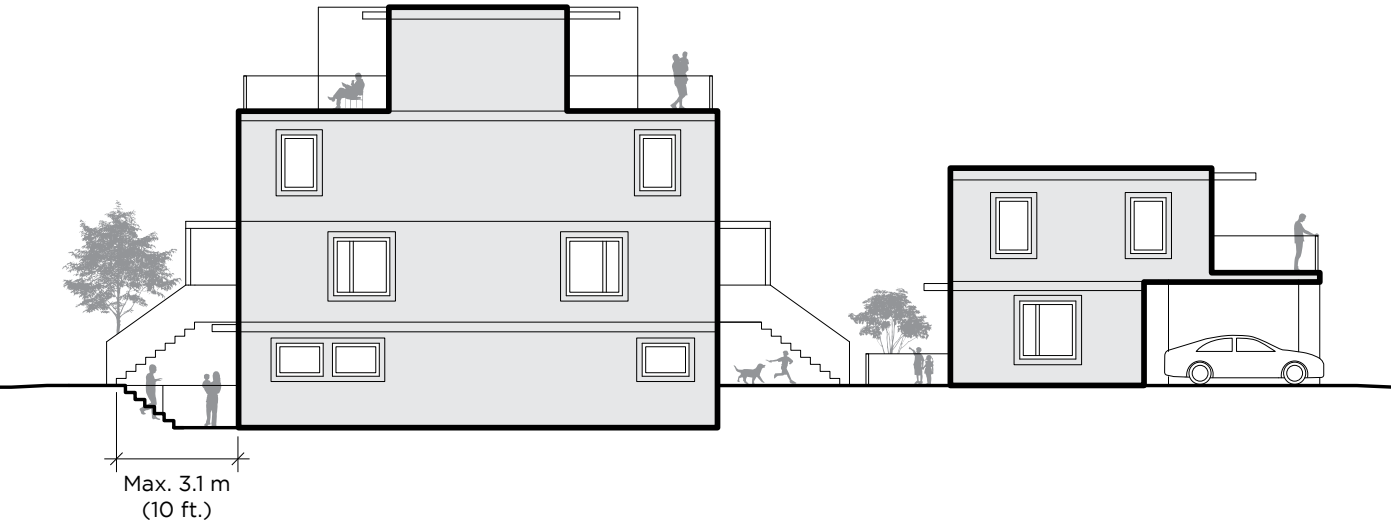


Figure 52: Outdoor space opportunities on a courtyard project with basement unit.



Figure 53: Outdoor space opportunities on a courtyard project above ground.



Section model of a multiple dwelling building with six units - four units in the front and two units in the rear in a courtyard configuration. Credit: Formwerks Architecture

## **3.8 Addressing**

### **3.8.1 Overview**

This section provides guidelines for assigning building and suite numbers to multiplex buildings with three to eight residential dwelling units. The intent is to maintain consistency and logical order while considering the specific layout of each building. This policy will guide the decision making of Address Coordinators to help achieve a clear and standardized suite numbering system for these buildings.

### **3.8.2 Building Numbering**

- Each building located on a parcel will be assigned a single building address.
- The building address will serve as a reference point for the entire structure.
- Building addresses will be assigned in accordance with subsection 1.10.1, Division C of the Vancouver Building By-law.

### **3.8.3 Sequential Numbering**

- Each unit within the building will be assigned a unique sequential suite number.
- The numbering will start from 1 for each building, and increase by 1 for each subsequent unit in that building.

### **3.8.4 Buildings with Front-Facing Units**

- If all the primary access doors to the units are at the front of the building, assign the sequential numbers in order from left to right as you face the front of the building.
  - For example, if a building has four units that are all accessed from the front, they would be numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4 from left to right.
- Address Coordinators may use discretion to deviate from this approach if the access to one of the units is more prominent than the others.

### 3.8.5 Buildings with Mixed Access Locations

- Buildings with mixed access locations may have dwelling units that are accessed from the front, side, and/or rear.
- If there is no prominent access point at the front of the building, assign unit 1 to the leftmost access point and continue assigning sequential numbers to units following the left-to-right order in a clockwise fashion.

### 3.8.6 Corner Sites

- In cases where the building is located on a corner site and primary access points for units are facing different streets, a separate building number will be assigned to units based on the primary street-facing entrance.
- Suite numbers will be assigned to dwelling units if there is more than one unit accessed from either street.

### 3.8.7 Exceptions

- If there are unique architectural or layout challenges that prevent straightforward sequential numbering, they will find the most logical and practical solution.
- Projects with complex layouts may necessitate the inclusion of supplementary wayfinding or site directory signage to aid in identifying specific units.

**Resource:** [Suite Number Address Bulletin | City of Vancouver](#)

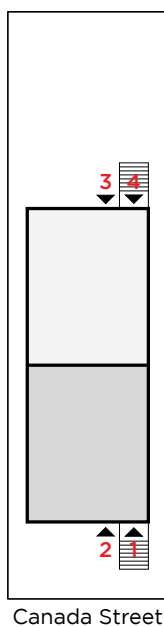


Figure 54: Civic address:  
123 Canada St. Units 1-4

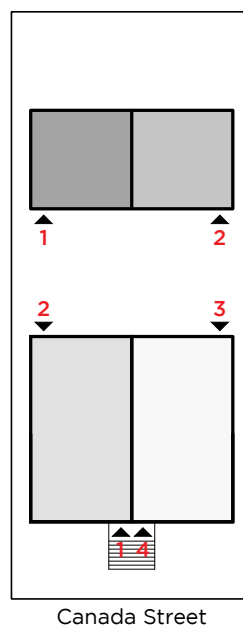


Figure 55: Civic address  
Front building: 123 Canada St. Units 1-4  
Rear building: 125 Canada St. Units 1-2

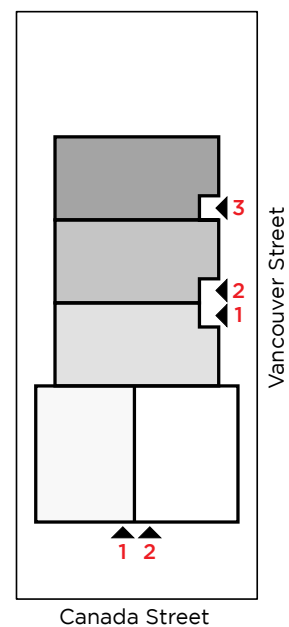


Figure 56: Corner site civic address:  
123 Canada St. Units 1-2  
123 Vancouver St. Units 1-3





Credit: Lanefab Design/Build. Photo by Colin Perry

### 3.9 Landscape

While Landscape Plans are not required for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) applications, the following bullet points and drawings illustrate how front yards and courtyards may be designed and landscaped to encourage a positive interface with the public realm and high quality outdoor space for the use of residents.

- Consolidate circulation and entrance doors. Optimize to simplify circulation to allow more room for patios and planting. On wide sites opt for shared circulation routes.
- Design for liveable basement patios through skillful grading. Where a sunken patio condition is unavoidable, instead of tall retaining walls with guardrails, use a stepped wall or low wall with sloped planting to manage grade change. This will create desirable outdoor space and visual interest for the basement unit.

#### Did you know?

There are no impermeability or site coverage regulations for multiple dwelling (“multiplex”) because the site size is small relative to the development requirements. Creative design of small outdoor spaces is encouraged to enhance the front yard and courtyard.



- Screen for privacy and comfort. Provide a reasonable amount of screening with a planted trellis, wooden or metal screen or fence, and hedging. Shared spaces should provide suitable screening to interior spaces.
- Plants can be used to soften edges and create spatial hierarchy. Basic planting design considerations outlined below provide a framework for plant selection:
  - **Layering:** Use plants of different heights and textures in layers to add depth and diversity (e.g. a low ground cover or small shrub/perennial at the edge with gradually taller plants behind and a privacy hedge at the back)
  - **Privacy:** Coniferous hedges can provide privacy screening year round. Consider the foliage density and plant size when choosing the appropriate species (e.g. will the shrub get tall enough to provide desired privacy? Is the foliage thick enough to block views?)
  - **Year-round interest:** Use a palette of plants that will provide interest through the seasons (e.g. early spring leaves or flowering, early-late summer flowering, fall leaf colour or late blooming plants, shrubs that retain colourful berries through winter or have interesting bark or branching structure)
  - **Native and naturalized species:** Use plant species that are native and naturalized, and appropriate for the micro-climate of your site. Call your local nurseries to see what plant stock is available and to get suggestions for an appropriate planting palette.



Credit: Measured Architecture. Photo by Andrew Latreille



Credit: D'Arcy Jones Architects. Photo by Sama Jim Canzian



Credit: City of Vancouver



Credit: City of Vancouver





Figure 57: Planting trees in the courtyard will enhance spatial and experiential qualities and create year-round interest.



Figure 58: A layer of planting in front of fences and retaining walls can help soften hard edges.





Figure 59: Managing grade change using a stepped wall or low wall with sloped planting will create desirable outdoor space for basement units.



Figure 60: Outdoor space can be designed as communal space accommodating a range of activities such as gatherings and children's play.

## 4 SINGLE DETACHED HOUSE AND DUPLEX



Credit: City of Vancouver

### 4.1 Overview

Duplex is permitted for new construction only and the two primary units can be strata-titled. Duplex cannot be built in conjunction with a Laneway House.

Duplex may include secondary suites. In R1-1, duplex may include lock-off units instead of secondary suites. Alternatively, one dwelling unit of duplex may include a lock-off unit and the other may include a secondary suite.





Figure 61: Parking in an accessory building and additional surface parking space.

## 4.2 Accessory Building and Parking

Parking spaces may be contained within an accessory building (open or enclosed), which must not exceed 48 m<sup>2</sup> (516 sq. ft.) which can accommodate 2 parking spaces. Additional parking spaces must be surface parking.

Surface parking material should be permeable. Examples of permeable materials include permeable pavers, gravel, grass-crete or solid surface wheel strips within landscape (i.e. ground cover planting) or gravel. For the purpose of calculating the amount of impermeable site coverage, these materials are considered impermeable, except gravel.

On sites with no lanes, internal parking spaces may be located on the ground floor of the house or duplex and accessed via a front driveway. In such cases, the driveway and garage door as viewed from the street should be minimized; landscape setbacks and upgraded surface treatments should be considered in order to maintain a “residential” look at the front yard.

In the RT-7 and RT-9 districts, on sites with no lane, surface parking is permissible in the front yard.

A 1.0 m (3.0 ft.) landscaped setback is typically required adjacent to the side property line for surface parking spaces and driveways.

Depending on the site width, the landscape setback may be reduced as follows:

Site width	Landscaped setback
Up to 12.2 m (40.0 ft.)	N/A Vine planting is acceptable instead. Plans should provide a fence detail showing vine supports.
12.2 m (40.0 ft.) to 15.2 m (50.0 ft.)	0.6 m (2.0 ft.)
More than 15.2 m (50.0 ft.)	1.0 m (3.0 ft.)



Figure 62: Garage doors appear to be set into the building massing, rather than as a base alien to the house on top.



Figure 63: Garage door is narrow with robust details.

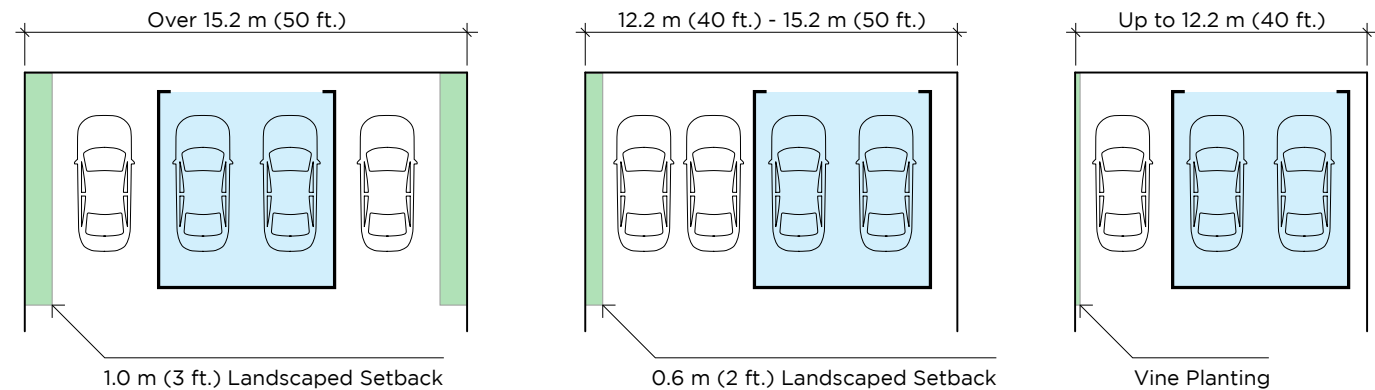


Figure 64: Accessory building and surface parking arrangements with landscaping buffers.

## 4.3 Secondary Suite, Lock-Off Unit

### 4.3.1 Secondary Suite

Secondary suite means a smaller dwelling unit within a larger single detached house or duplex. It must have a separate external entry door and may have shared internal door and stairs connecting the units. One parking space is typically required for each secondary suite; however, for duplexes with secondary suites, a minimum of 3 parking spaces can be considered even when two suites (i.e. 4 dwelling units in total) are provided.

Each secondary suite must have a minimum area of 37 m<sup>2</sup> (400 sq. ft.). There must be no more than one secondary suite in a single detached house or in each dwelling unit of a duplex.



Credit: Lanefab Design/Build. Photo by Colin Perry

### 4.3.2 Lock-Off Units (Duplex in R1-1 only)

Lock-off units are small, self-contained units with an external door and a shared internal door which can be locked, enabling both the principal dwelling unit and suite to be independent (e.g. used periodically for long-term rental), or unlocked and used as part of the principal dwelling. Unlike secondary suites, lock-off units do not trigger parking space requirements.

Lock-off units must have an area of at least 26 m<sup>2</sup> (280 sq. ft.) and a maximum of 29.7 m<sup>2</sup> (320 sq. ft.). The maximum unit size will help to distinguish lock-off units from secondary suites, which are intended to be larger and provide longer-term rental housing.

Lock-off units are not permitted in a single detached house. In a duplex, there must be no more than one lock-off unit for each dwelling unit.

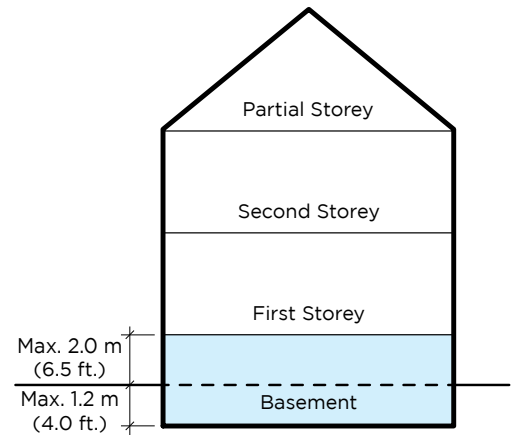


Figure 65: Suites in basement

### 4.3.3 Suites – Addressing

Secondary suites and lock-off units are to be assigned a suite number that is subordinate to the principal dwelling unit, with the exception of houses or duplexes that are located on a corner or double-fronting site where the access to these units may differ from the access to the principal dwelling.

**Resource:** [Suite Number Address Bulletin | City of Vancouver](#)

### 4.3.4 Suites in Basements

In the case where the secondary suite or lock-off unit is located in the basement, the floor level must be no more than 1.2 m (4.0 ft.) below finished grade.

**For new houses and duplexes, sunken patios are only permitted where the basement floor level is no more than 1.2 m (4.0 ft.) below grade.**

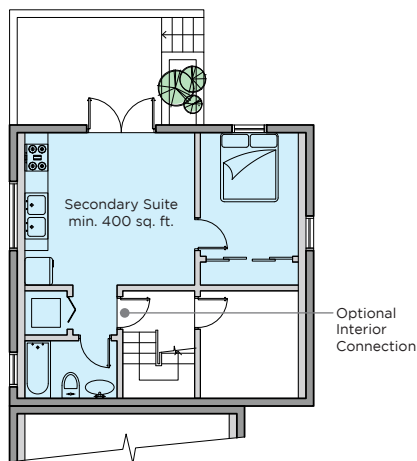


Figure 66: Secondary suite

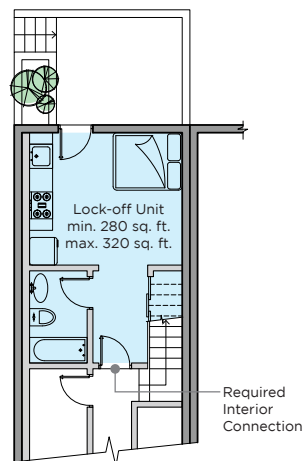


Figure 67: Lock-off unit

## 4.4 Summary of Related Regulations

### 4.4.1 Floor Space Ratio (FSR)

All allowable floor area can be located fully above ground with no basement. I.e. Basements, while permitted, are not required. This is encouraged for various benefits including:

- reducing barriers to accessibility and visit-ability (i.e. steps);
- reducing carbon pollution from concrete;
- allowing for gravity-flow sewer connection; and
- minimizing impact to existing trees due to excavation.

### 4.4.2 Renovations – FSR

Renovations to existing single detached houses that are over the permitted floor area are allowed provided they were legally permitted and there are no additions. Any work that creates new floor area will be considered new development, and will require compliance with the current FSR allowed.

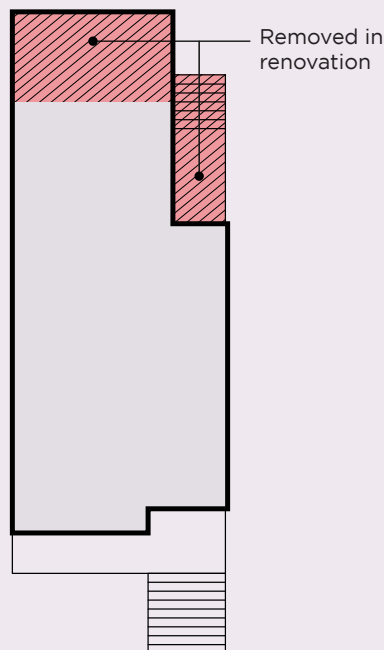


Figure 68: Floor area exceeds the limit

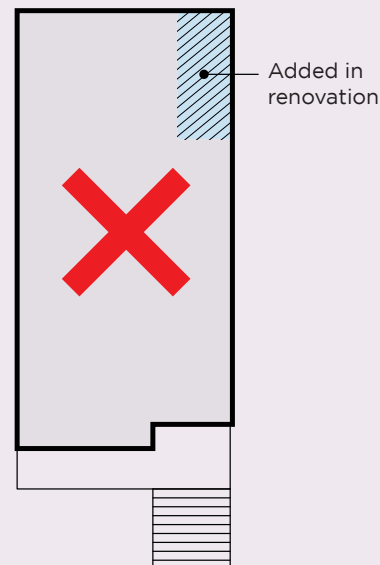


Figure 69: Transferring floor area not supported





Credit: City of Vancouver

#### 4.4.3 Site Area and Frontage (in R1-1 only)

The by-law sets a minimum site area and minimum frontage for houses and duplexes in order to ensure that the liveability of the units is not compromised. When a relaxation of site area and site frontage is sought, the layout of the units will be reviewed by staff to ensure adequate unit and room size, and direct sunlight and ventilation to all habitable rooms.

#### 4.4.4 Height

The height envelope in the by-law is a simple box which is intended to provide flexibility in the design of the upper storey and roof form.

In the case of steeply sloping sites where it is clearly demonstrated that the building cannot reasonably fit in the height envelope, staff may consider a height relaxation due to “unnecessary hardship” as per Section 5.1 of the Zoning and Development By-law.

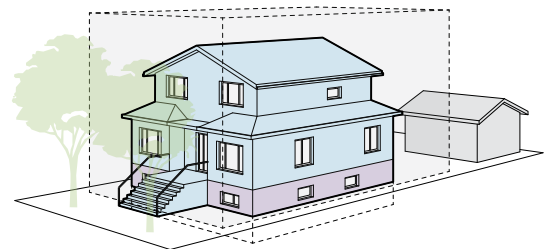


Figure 70: Building height (2 storeys and basement) within the allowable envelope

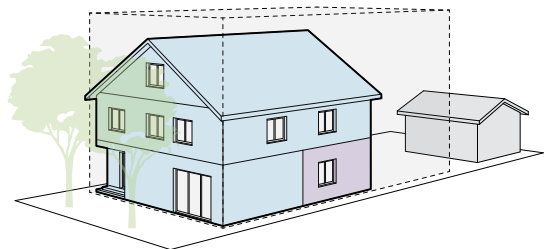


Figure 71: Building height (2.5 storeys) within the allowable envelope

#### 4.4.5 Required Yards

The required yard provisions in the by-law are the minimum. Increased yard separation can be provided at the owner's discretion. In locating the building, consideration of tree preservation is encouraged. Relaxation of required yards can be considered on very shallow or narrow sites.

For double-fronting sites, the front yard is determined by the pattern of the block (i.e. the orientation of the majority of the sites in the block). Consult with the Development and Building Services Centre for questions about the front yard in double-fronting site situations.

For corner sites in the R1-1 district, the minimum requirement for the exterior side yard is the same as the interior side yard. It is encouraged to provide a wider exterior side yard where possible to enhance the public realm interface with landscaping.



Credit: Measured Architecture. Photo by Ema Peter Photography

#### 4.4.6 Fences

Fencing of the front yard cannot exceed 1.2 m (4 ft.) whereas fencing of the rear yard can be 1.8 m (6 ft.).

It is encouraged to limit fencing to 1.2 m (4 ft.) at exterior side yards, or provide hedges and soft landscaping to enhance the public realm.

#### 4.4.7 Lane Dedications and Building Lines

Where the site has a Building Line or abuts non-standard lane, less than 6.0 m (20 ft.), the Director of Planning, in consultation with the General Manager of Engineering, may determine where the anticipated lane or street will be. This may affect the ultimate property lines or the ultimate center line of the lane. While lane or other dedications are not being sought in the case of outright applications, and there will be no effect on the allowable floor space ratio of the site, yards should be measured from the ultimate property lines. In some challenging sites with building lines or dedications, the Director of Planning may consider relaxations of the yard provisions due to "unnecessary hardship".

#### 4.4.8 Renovations - Existing Non-Conforming Yards

Legal non-conforming yards in existing buildings continue to be honored.

Renovations and additions should respect the current by-law for yard provisions if possible. Where the difference is not significant, for example, if the existing side yard is 1.0 m (3.3 ft.) and the current by-law requires 1.2 m (4.0 ft.), new additions may align with the existing non-conforming wall.

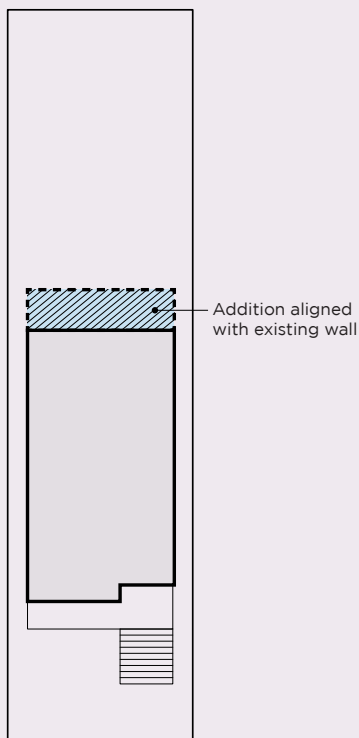


Figure 72: Addition may align to the non-conforming existing side wall

#### 4.4.9 Site Coverage and Impermeability

The intent of site coverage is to limit the building footprint and ensure sufficient open space on sites.

The intent of impermeable site coverage is to reduce the amount of paving and hard surfaces on sites.

For sites without a lane where a front driveway is necessary, the driveway area and the manoeuvring area can be excluded from the calculation of impermeable site coverage.

While there may be paving products available with permeable qualities, all paved materials are typically included in the impermeable site coverage calculation. A deck or patio with a gap between deck boards would also be considered impermeable.

#### 4.4.10 Renovations – Impermeability

For renovation projects with existing non-conforming impermeability or new development on very challenging sites, it is preferable that the impermeable area be reduced as much as possible. If the effort demonstrated still results in an overage, a relaxation of the impermeable site coverage may be permitted due to “unnecessary hardship”.

#### 4.4.11 Building Depth

In the R1-1 district, there is no building depth regulation for house and duplex.

## 4.5 Design Considerations

### 4.5.1 Building Form and Roof Form

There are no regulations that prescribe a particular architectural style or roof form. Flat and sloped roofs are allowed. This is intended to encourage design flexibility and variety.

On wider sites, careful attention to the massing is encouraged to reduce the perceived width and scale of the building, and ensure compliance with height regulations. A possible solution is to break up the roof form as shown in [Figure 73](#).

Roof decks are permitted on houses and duplexes. It is encouraged to set back decks from roof edges and provide landscape screening at the perimeter.

Roof decks are not permitted on garages or carports.

Floor space under sloped ceilings with low ceiling height between 1.2 m (4 ft.) and 2.3 m (7.5 ft.) is excluded from FSR up to 10% in order to enable a cohesive roof form without having to provide “cut outs” in the roof. See [Figure 74](#).

Note that all occupied levels, including storage attics, are considered storeys with respect to the VBBL regardless of whether or not they are excluded from FSR in the Zoning & Development By-law.

### 4.5.2 Outdoor Space and Inset Balconies

Private outdoor space should be provided for each unit in the house or duplex.

Inset balconies contained within the principal roof form are excluded from FSR if they are no more than 1.8 m (6.0 ft.) in depth.

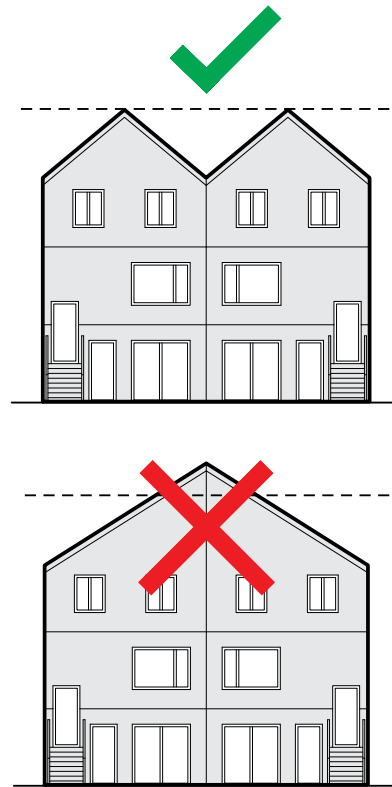


Figure 73: Roof form break down

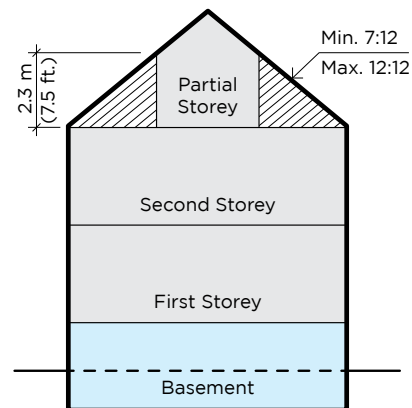


Figure 74: Floor area excluded under sloped ceiling (hatched)



Figure 75: Inset balcony in house or duplex

### 4.5.3 Entrance to House and Duplex

The main entrance doors should be visible from the street where possible. This is intended to ensure recognizable, easily identifiable entrances for residents, visitors, deliveries and emergency services.

For corner sites, one main entrance may face the front street and one may face the flanking street to provide activation of both street frontages.

For mid-block sites, for side-by-side duplex units, placing all the entrances on the front facade at the main level is acceptable.

For front-to-back duplex units, the rear unit entrance may be at the side yard and open to the street or within an inset entry “notch”. Where the side walls of the front and rear dwelling units align and an entry notch is proposed for the rear dwelling unit, an entry canopy or roof may be provided to improve legibility of the entrance. Canopies may project into a side yard to the same amount as an eave projection.

Where rear-facing entrances to the rear unit are provided, the location of the rear unit should be clearly identified with a well-designed entrance walkway that may incorporate a landscape border, upgraded surface treatments, and an entry trellis or gate.

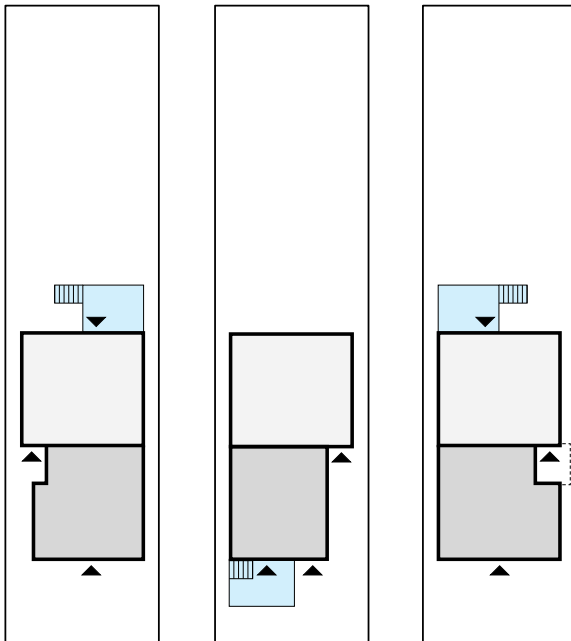


Figure 76: Entrances to duplex and 1 secondary suite

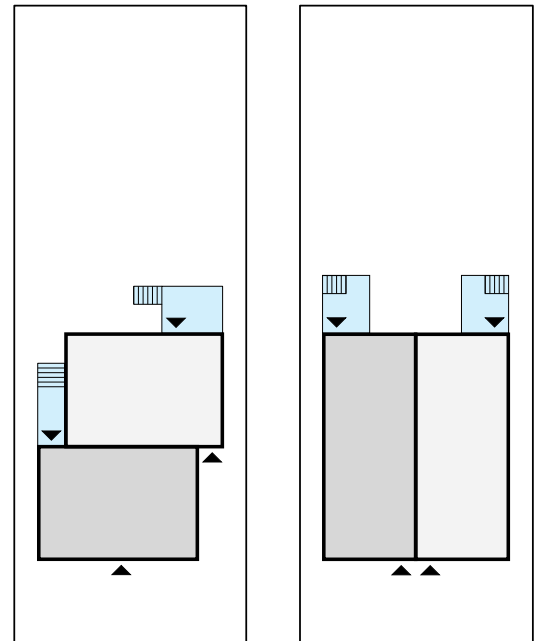


Figure 77: Entrances to duplexes and 2 secondary suites



#### 4.5.4 Entrance to Secondary Suite and Lock-Off Units

Entrance to suites and lock-off units are typically secondary in prominence to the primary unit entries.

Entrances to suites and lock-off units may be from the front, side, rear or through sunken patios.

Sunken patios more than 0.6 m (2.0 ft.) below grade should include terraced landscape planters at the border. Planter terraces should be no more than 0.60 m (2.0 ft.) in height to avoid a requirement for a guardrail. Careful attention to design of the doorway, windows, and steps down to the entry is necessary to ensure that it provides a functional entry and outdoor amenity space for the secondary suite.

Patio entrances to suites may be located in the front yard and should be minimized in size while still providing functional outdoor space for the unit, screened with landscaping and avoid the use of guardrails where possible.

#### 4.5.5 Covered Entry

Main entrances should be covered for weather protection. A covered entry is not required to have posts or a traditional porch appearance.

A covered entry should be provided for each primary unit with a minimum width and depth of 1.8 m (6.0 ft.). For duplex, a shared entry is acceptable, but it should have a usable seating area for both units. I.e. 0.6 m by 1.8 m by 1.8 m (2 ft. by 6.0 ft. by 6.0 ft.).

The entry porch should be one storey in height; two storey entry porches are not permitted.



Figure 78: Sunken patio entrance to Secondary Suite with outdoor space



Credit: Architrix Design Studio

## 5 LANEWAY HOUSE

### 5.1 Overview

A laneway house (LWH) is a small house at the rear of a site near the lane. It is intended for a single household, and may or may not include an attached garage or carport.

A laneway house:

- is only allowed in conjunction with a single detached house, not a duplex;
- can be permitted in addition to a secondary suite in the main house;
- can be a rental suite, or can be for family use; and
- cannot be strata-titled.

A laneway house is different from an infill, which can be strata-titled and is only permitted as an incentive for character house retention. Homeowners may add a laneway house while keeping their existing home, or build a laneway house along with a new main house.

#### 5.1.1 Site Eligibility

##### (a) Lane access

In order to build a LWH, your site must have vehicular access from the rear of the site. This means that the site must:

- have access to an open lane; or
- be located on a corner served by an open or dedicated lane; or

- be located on a double-fronting site served by a street at both the front and rear.

**Refer to Figures 7 to 11 in section 3.2 of this Guide for further information on site eligibility for Laneway House for different corner and lane conditions.**

##### (b) Site depth

The site must be deep enough to allow for both a courtyard and a LWH. A minimum separation of 4.9 m (16 ft.) between the LWH and the main house (including rear deck) is required.

##### (c) Site width

A minimum site width of 7.3 m (24 ft.) is required. The site width can be measured at the lane where the laneway house is located.

##### (d) Firefighter access

A firefighter access path must be provided from the street to the entrance of the LWH. This path must be at least 900 mm (3 ft.) in width and clear of any projections. The surface treatment must be solid and continuous to avoid tripping hazards.

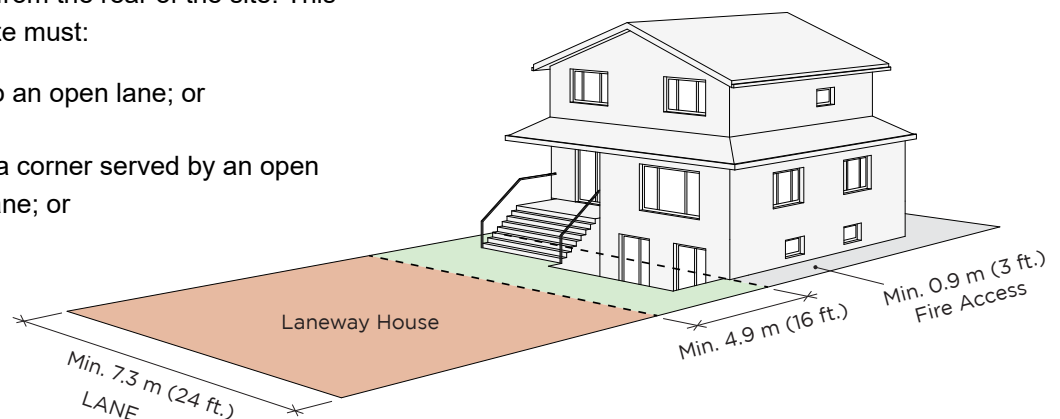
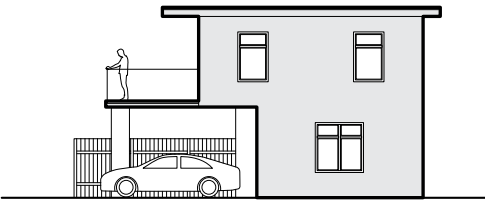


Figure 79: Sitting eligibility



## 5.2 Parking

Parking spaces may be provided but are not required. The parking space(s) may be excluded from the computation of floor area when open on at least two sides. These can be located under a canopy or the second level of the laneway house. It may be for the use of any of the dwelling units on site.

An enclosed garage may be provided within the laneway house but it will be counted as part of the permitted floor area.

For corner sites, parking may be located at the interior site yard so that the exterior site yard can be used for landscape planting or the entrance to the laneway house.

For larger sites where a detached garage may be possible in addition to the provision of a laneway house, this garage can be allowed to a maximum of 48 m<sup>2</sup> (516 sq. ft.). There should be adequate separation between the laneway house and the detached garage to clearly break up the massing along the lane.

1.0 m (3.0 ft.) landscaped setback is typically required adjacent to the side property line for surface parking spaces.

Depending on the site width, the landscape setback to surface parking may be reduced as follows:

Site width	Landscaped setback
Up to 12.2 m (40.0 ft.)	N/A
	Vine planting is acceptable instead. Plans should provide a fence detail showing vine supports.
12.2 m (40.0 ft.) – 15.2 m (50.0 ft)	0.6 m (2.0 ft.)
More than 15.2 m (50.0 ft.)	1.0 m (3.0 ft.)

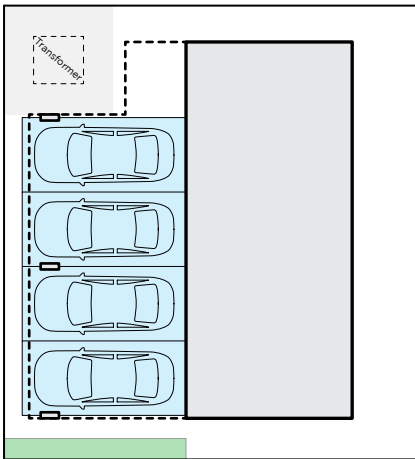
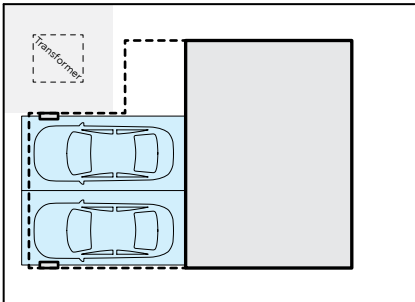


Figure 80: Parking spaces under second storey or deck overhang of laneway house.

## 5.3 Secondary Suite, Lock-off Unit

Secondary suites or lock off units are not allowed in conjunction with a laneway house.

## 5.4 Summary of Related Regulations

### 5.4.1 Floor Space Ratio (FSR)

All allowable floor area can be located fully above ground with no basement. Basements are allowed in laneway houses, although not encouraged. The floor area of a basement counts towards the total allowable floor area.

### 5.4.2 Site Area and Frontage

The minimum site width required for laneway house should be measured at the lane frontage.

### 5.4.3 Height

The height provision in the by-law allows for flexibility to respond to site's topography. It is unlikely that the full height allowance of 8.5 m (28 ft.) will be needed to accommodate a 2-storey Laneway House on most sites, particularly for flat roof designs. In the case of steeply sloping sites where the building cannot reasonably fit in the height envelope, staff may consider a height relaxation due to "unnecessary hardship".

### 5.4.4 Required Yards

A laneway house must be setback 0.9 m (3 ft.) from the lane. This setback should be permeable and landscaped with plantings that add visual interest to the lane. Refer to Schedule D of Protection of Trees By-law for a suggested plant list.

**Resource:** [Protection of Trees By-law | City of Vancouver](#)

If the lane is not wide enough for vehicular access (6.0 m / 20 ft.), a lane dedication should be respected, and the laneway house must be set back 0.9 m (3 ft.) from the ultimate rear property line.

Additional setbacks may be required to ensure a 6.7 m (22 ft.) manoeuvring space for cars backing out of the site onto the lane.

The required side yard setback on each side is 1.2 m (4 ft.). This requirement may be reduced on a narrow site, noting that any side yard less than 0.6 m (2 ft.) may result in no windows on the wall adjacent to the reduced side yard as per Vancouver Building By-law. There must be a minimum separation of 4.9 m (16 ft.) between the laneway house and main house, including any rear decks. This is to ensure that there is a reasonable amount of open space between the two structures to ensure liveability of units. Covered porches, sunken patios and landings may project into this separation. As this open space is very minimal, relaxation of the separation requirement is unlikely to be entertained.

### 5.4.5 Site Coverage and Impermeability

The intent of site coverage is to limit the building footprint and ensure sufficient open space on sites. The intent of impermeable site coverage is to reduce the amount of paving and hard surfaces on sites. For sites without a lane where a front driveway is necessary, the driveway area and the manoeuvring area can be excluded from the calculation of impermeable site coverage.

While there may be paving products available with permeable qualities, all paved materials are typically included in the impermeable site coverage calculation. A deck or patio with a gap between deck boards would also be considered impermeable.

### 5.4.6 Building Depth

Building depth is not regulated as long as the separation between the main house and the laneway house is provided.





Credit: City of Vancouver based on Lanefab Design/Build



Credit: Lanefab Design/Build. Photo by Colin Perry



Credit: City of Vancouver

## 5.5 Design Considerations

### 5.5.1 Building Form and Roof Form

Laneway House regulations allow for a range of architectural approaches and building forms, from traditional to contemporary. Simple building and roof forms are encouraged.

Rooftop decks are not permitted.

### 5.5.2 Outdoor Space and Inset Balconies

An at-grade patio or covered porch should be provided as means of private outdoor space. An area of at least 3.7 m<sup>2</sup> (40 sq. ft.) is recommended.

Balconies should face a lane, or flanking street (not the backyard or side neighbours) to enhance neighbourliness, and should be at least 1 m (3 ft.) in depth for outdoor seating.

### 5.5.3 Entrance to Laneway House

The entrance to a laneway house can face the street, the side, or the lane. An entry facing the lane should be set back 1.5 m (5 ft.) to allow safe access. The laneway house entrance should be connected directly to firefighter access toward the street via a 1.0 m (3 ft.) path with no obstruction.

Vancouver Building By-law requires a firefighter access path that is at minimum 1.0 m (3 ft.) wide from the street to the entrance of the laneway house. This path should be clear of any obstruction and parking.

For corner sites, the entrance may face the flanking street to provide activation of the street frontage.

### 5.5.4 Lane Design

Landscaping should be considered along the edge of the lane. All fences should be located behind the landscaped strip, and no more than 1.2 m (4 ft.) in height in order to enliven the lane.

Pedestrian-friendly lighting, such as porch lights or bollard lights, is encouraged to help make the lane a safe and welcoming public space.



### 5.5.5 Existing Overhead (Pole-Mounted) Transformers

Where pole-mounted transformers exist in lanes a safety clearance of 6.0 m (20 ft.) is required under the Canadian Electrical Code. Where the clearance to pole-mounted transformers does not comply with Canadian Electrical code, less than 6.0 m (20 ft.), a barrier with non-combustible surface or materials must be constructed between the transformer and windows, decks, ventilation openings or combustible surfaces of the building that are located within 6.0 m (20 ft.) of the transformer. The 6.0 m (20 ft.) dimension is measured as a radius around the transformer and extending vertically to the ground as illustrated in [Figure 4](#).

The following checklist is required to be completed by your consultant if any part of your building is planned in proximity to the existing BC Hydro electrical works (e.g. it is intended to be within ~3 m (10 ft.) of a property line that abuts a street or lane). You may contact BC Hydro and request information regarding BC Hydro works adjacent to the property. It is important to ensure any potential impact or risks for your proposed building will be assessed and addressed.

**Resource:** [BC Hydro Clearance Checklist](#)  
[| City of Vancouver](#)

### 5.5.6 Garbage and Recycling Bins

Garbage and recycling bins should be located away from outdoor space and the lane as much as possible, but within easy access to the lane.

### 5.5.7 Liveability and Windows

Laneway houses are intended to provide a range of units sizes from studios and one-bedroom units, to family sized units. The design and layout of the unit should provide sufficient living space relative to the number of bedrooms. Small laneway houses that are built with multiple bedrooms and no shared living space are not supported.

One shared living space that is at least 16.7 m<sup>2</sup> (180 sq. ft.) must be provided for a combined kitchen/living/dining area (not a bedroom). All units, other than studio units, must provide at least one bedroom that is minimum size of 8.5 m<sup>2</sup> (90 sq. ft.).

These rooms should have a minimum dimension of 2.1 m (7 ft.) measure between the finished wall surfaces.

Hallway, storage, and stairs are not included in these areas.

## Did you know?

Your surveyor should include power poles, pole-mounted transformers and high voltage overhead conductors in proximity to the rear of the site on the survey drawing as they may impact the proposed rear building.

Credit: Lanefab Design/Build. Photo by Colin Perry



## 6 SUBDIVISION BY-LAW INFORMATION

Subdivision of properties into two or more parcels may be considered where the proposal is compliant with the Subdivision By-law. Specifically, proposed parcels must meet the minimum widths and areas of the Subdivision Category which they are assigned, though certain relaxations may exist. Subdivision Categories and corresponding minimums can be found in Schedule A of the Subdivision By-law.

**Resource:** [Schedule A - Subdivision By-law | City of Vancouver](#)

All subdivision applications are conditional and are to be reviewed by staff before a preliminary approval is granted. Please refer to the Subdivision & Strata Group at [subdivision@vancouver.ca](mailto:subdivision@vancouver.ca) or refer to the Subdivision By-law for more information.

**Resource:** [Subdivision By-law | City of Vancouver](#)

### Strata-titling

In most cases, new construction which has not been previously occupied does not require City approval for registration of a strata plan.

If a previously-occupied non-strata building is being converted to strata, a strata-conversion application will be required – which may or may not require upgrades to the existing building. Please contact the Subdivision & Strata Group at [subdivision@vancouver.ca](mailto:subdivision@vancouver.ca) for more information.





## Low Density Housing Options How-to Guide

Zoning and Land Use Document Library | City of Vancouver

