



# City of Vancouver *Planning - By-law Administration Bulletins*

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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## RA-1 HEIGHT RELAXATION

*Authority - Director of Planning*

*Effective December 1, 2002*

*Amended November 14, 2022*

Maximum building height is 2½ storeys and 9.2 m, relaxable up to 10.7 m. The height is measured from the natural base grade, determined by an interpolative average of the existing grades of the four corners of the site, and includes the height of the fill for floodproofing. Therefore, houses requiring higher levels of fill to reach the floodproofing elevation may not be able to realize the maximum number of storeys permitted in the RA-1 District Schedule, but be limited to a lower building mass of 1½ to 2 storeys. This encourages a building profile that sits lower in the landscape and is consistent with the objectives of the Southlands RA-1 Guidelines.

Height relaxations as permitted in the RA-1 District Schedule will be evaluated on the following three sets of criteria, listed in order of importance:

### **1. Building Setbacks**

- RA-1 District Schedule establishes a side yard building envelope requirement that increases the width of the side yard as the height of the house increases (RA-1 District Schedule section 3.1.2).
- The Southlands RA-1 Guidelines recommend increases in front yard and side yard setbacks to compensate for relaxations in building height. Siting the house farther back on the site minimizes potential negative impact on adjacent properties and visually diminishes the apparent height as seen from the street (Southlands RA-1 Guidelines 4.1). On smaller sites this may not be possible and may preclude a height relaxation for these sites.
- Applicants requesting a height relaxation will be required to submit site sections to demonstrate how the increased setbacks lessen the impact of the increased building height, as seen from the street and from the neighbouring property.

### **2. Impact On Adjacent Properties**

- Shadowing on neighbours (shadow studies may be required);
- View obstructions;
- Privacy/overlook issues; and
- Evaluation of other impact issues such as incompatibility of adjacent uses resulting from increased setbacks, grade differences that cannot achieve a gradual transition, front yard setbacks inconsistent with the context and perimeter landscaping that could be negatively affected.

### **3. Building Form and Site Context**

Compatibility of the proposed design with the general character of the neighbourhood, the surrounding landscape and consistency with the RA-1 Guidelines. Generally, pitched roofs lessens the apparent height of the building where the top floor is combined with dormers into the roof space. Landscaping may be used to mediate scale between the house and the street or the adjacent properties. Finally, the broader context should be considered in evaluating height

increases. Factors such as the size of the site, relationship of site to the street and size of the adjacent property and buildings should also be considered.

## **Reference Documents**

### **Southlands Plan**

6.0 RA-1 District

### **Zoning and Development By-Law, RA-1 District Schedule**

3.1.2 Height

### **Southlands RA-1 Guidelines**

4.1 Height

5.0 Open Space