

Bulletin

West End – Tower Form, Siting and Setbacks

Effective January 11, 2017

Last amended August 17, 2023

Authority: Director of Planning



1 RELEVANT BY-LAWS AND POLICIES

- West End Community Plan
- Rezoning Policy for the West End
- C-5A, C-6 and RM-5D District Schedules, the West End RM-5, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D Guidelines.

2 EXPLANATION

This bulletin provides guidance on new residential towers (siting and massing) in the West End. It should be used in conjunction with the C-5A and C-6 (West End Commercial Districts), and RM-5D (West End Residential) District Schedules, the *West End RM-5, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D Guidelines*, and the *West End Community Plan*. It also should be used for guidance in preparing rezoning applications and considered in conjunction with the *West End Rezoning Policy*.

3 GENERAL INFORMATION

Key considerations for the form, siting and setbacks of towers shall be:

- The size and the width of the frontage of sites;
- Minimizing shadowing on parks, public open spaces and the West End Davie, Denman and Robson “Villages”;
- Addressing visual privacy by achieving a minimum distance between towers;
- Allowing for the future development of a tower on an adjacent site by providing a sufficient setback from an interior property line to address separation between towers; and
- Shaping towers so they read as point towers rather than “slab” towers.

For the purposes of considering setbacks, towers are defined as those floors of a building exceeding a height of 18.3 m (60 ft.).

4 GENERAL DESIGN

4.1 Shadowing of Parks, Public Open Spaces and the West End “Villages”

4.1.1 Shadowing impacts may result in the maximum height identified in the zoning or the *West End Community Plan* not being achievable.

4.1.2 Shadows generated by proposed developments must be minimized on the following prioritized hierarchy of spaces:

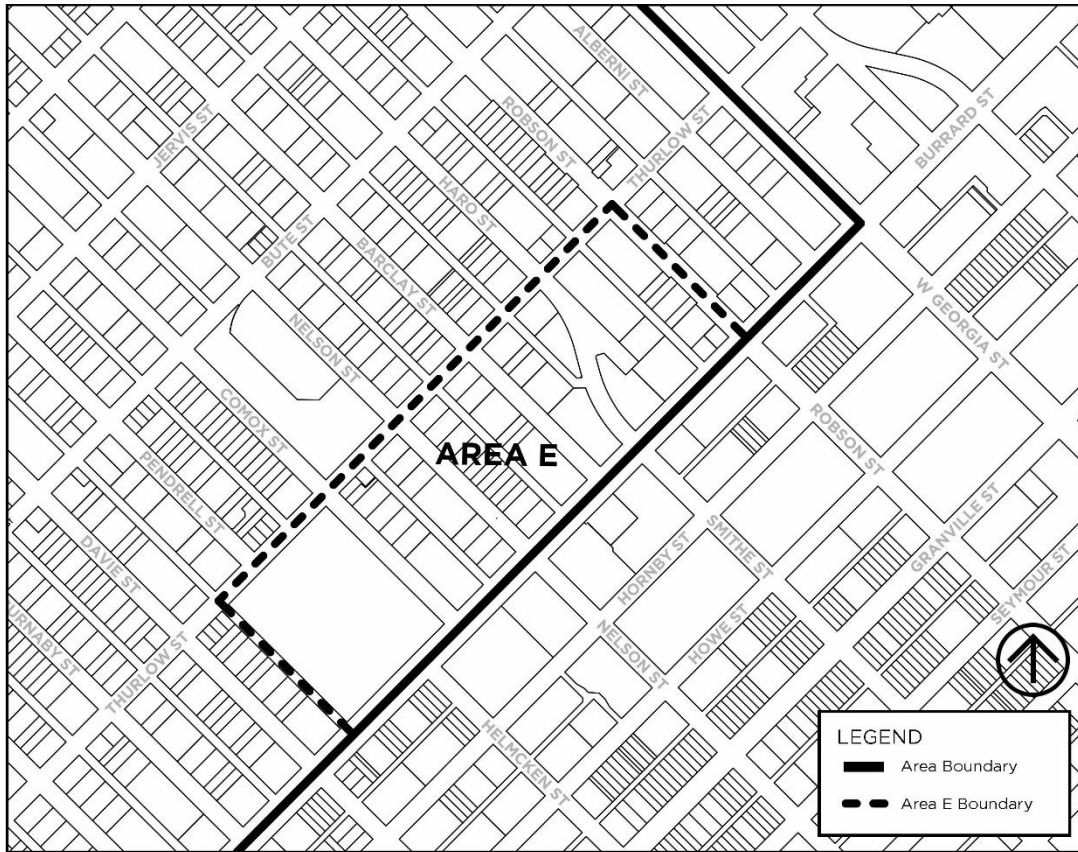
- (a) Parks, public open spaces and the West End “Villages”;
- (b) Semi-private open spaces; and
- (c) Private open spaces

4.1.3 Building height and mass should minimize shadowing on parks, public open space and the West End Shopping “Villages” between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. P.D.T. at the fall and spring equinoxes. In the “Villages” during these hours, shadows should not extend beyond the curb of the sidewalks on the north side of the street. In the case of parks, depending on the activities in the parks (e.g. school yards), shadow analysis over a longer time frame may be required.

4.2 The 1000 Block of Robson

4.2.1 The intent of the *West End Community Plan* for Area ‘E’ in the Burrard Corridor is to accommodate substantial growth through rezoning (Map A). However, the increased densities and heights envisaged for Area ‘E’ challenge realization of another Plan objective, namely the limitation of shadowing on key shopping streets, in this case, Robson Village. In order to balance achievement of both Plan objectives, a more detailed analysis of the shadow impacts of development in Area ‘E’ on the 1000 block of Robson Street and the public realm was undertaken. As a result, it was concluded that for rezoning proposals which fall within Area ‘E’, shadow impacts on the 1000 block of Robson Street will be evaluated between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. P.D.T. at the spring and fall equinoxes, rather than between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. New shadows should not extend beyond the curb of the sidewalk on the north side of Robson Street during these hours.

Map A: Area 'E' of the Burrard Corridor



5 BUILT FORM

5.1 Minimum Distance Between Towers

5.1.1 The minimum distance between towers shall be 24.4 m (80 ft.).

5.2 Minimum Site Frontage for Towers

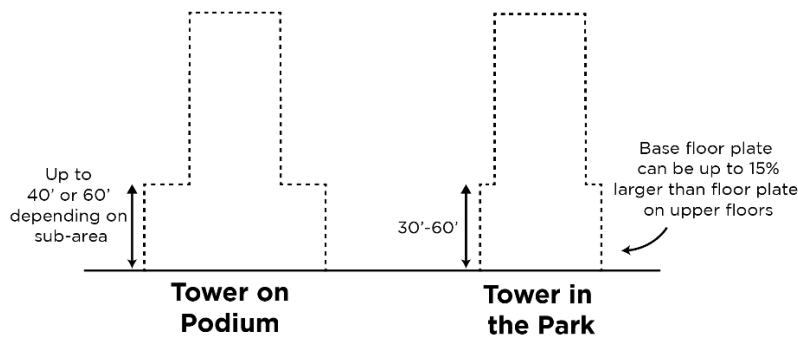
5.2.1 The minimum frontage for a site that can be considered for a tower shall generally be 39.6 m (130 ft.) Corner sites with lesser frontage may be considered for the development of a tower. However, provision of the minimum distance of 24.4 m (80 ft.) from possible future and existing towers on adjacent sites is a key consideration in these cases (see also section on Setbacks on page 3).

5.2.2 For the purposes of identifying the frontage of a site, it shall be considered as the width of the site on the fronting street. Most sites in the West End have a depth of 40 m (131 ft.). The depth of a corner site shall not be considered as the frontage of a site.

5.3 “Towers in the Park” and “Tower on Podiums”

- 5.3.1 Towers proposed for sites on Lower Robson and Davie Streets (Jervis Street to Denman Street) shall be “towers on podiums” (see Diagrams 2 to 4).
- 5.3.2 **Podiums on Davie and Robson Streets:** In locations where podiums are supported (e.g. Lower Robson and Lower Davie), the heights of podiums shall be a minimum of 9.1 m (30 ft.) high and a maximum of 12.2 m (40 ft.) high. The maximum height of podiums on sites zoned C-5A is two storeys. For sites zoned C-6 and RM-5D, the maximum podium height is three storeys.
- 5.3.3 **“Tower in the Park”:** The distinguishing feature of a “tower in the park” form is that the tower meets the ground without the presence of a podium element. Towers proposed on sites east of Thurlow (except those on Davie Street or Burrard Street, or north of Haro Street) that can be considered for rezonings under the rezoning policy should be “towers in the park”. On these sites, a front yard and side yard on a side street setback shall be a minimum of 3.7 m (12 ft.). In these cases, the base of a “tower in the park” can be up to 15% larger than the floor plates above a height of 18.3 m (60 ft.).
- 5.3.4 Rezoning proposals for towers located on Alberni Street can be either “tower in the park” or “tower on podium” depending on the context. See Diagram 1 below.

Diagram 1: Tower Typology



- 5.3.5 Any portion of a building above 18.3 m (60 ft.) should be sculpted to provide variety, identity, and scale as part of the skyline.

5.4 Setbacks

- 5.4.1 The minimum distance between a tower and an interior property line shall be 12 m (40 ft.). A reduced setback can be considered where a minimum of 24.4 m (80 ft.) can be achieved from an existing tower or the likely location of a future tower on an adjacent site, subject to urban design analysis.

- 5.4.2 Sites in the Burrard Corridor (except sites on Davie Street or Burrard Street) shall provide a minimum front and side yard setbacks of 3.7 m (12 ft.). Sites fronting on Burrard Street will provide a minimum setback of 5.5 m (18 ft.) measured from the curb to the building face.
- 5.4.3 Sites in the Georgia Corridor will have a minimum front yard setback on Alberni Street of 7.6 m (25 ft.) measured from the curb to the face of the building. This can be varied due to a unique context such as the setback of an existing building on-site that will be retained. The minimum side yard setbacks shall be 5.5 m (18 ft.) measured from the curb to the building face. In some cases, a greater setback may be required to provide for a wider sidewalk or a bike lane.
- 5.4.4 Sites fronting on Davie and Robson Streets shall provide a front yard setback of a minimum 2.1 m (7 ft.).
- 5.4.5 Engineering may have additional setback requirements for the face of buildings facing a City street or lane.
- 5.4.6 The *West Georgia Street Tree and Sidewalk Guidelines* (1998) should be consulted for guidance on the West Georgia Street frontages of development. <https://guidelines.vancouver.ca/guidelines-downtown-west-georgia-street.pdf>

5.5 Maximum Tower Floor Plates

- 5.5.1 The *West End Community Plan* and the *West End Rezoning Policy* should be consulted for guidance on the maximum size of tower floor plates. “Floor Plate” is the total gross floor area of a single level of a building, excluding podium levels. It includes elevator cores, storage, stairs, enclosed balconies, etc., but excludes open cantilevered balconies.
- 5.5.2 The maximum size of tower floor plates identified will not be achievable on some sites due to the requirement to set the tower back from an interior property line, the size of the site or the presence of an existing tower, and the requirement to ensure there is a minimum of 24.4 m (80 ft.) between the proposed tower and existing and future towers on adjacent sites.
- 5.5.3 The following are recommended dimensions for achieving a floor plate up to 511 m² (5 500 sq. ft.). This maximum floor plate size applies in the C-5A, C-6 and RM-5D Districts and for rezonings in the Georgia Corridor, west of Cardero Street, and in the Burrard Corridor, south of Davie Street. The maximum width of a tower can be increased in cases where a minimum distance of 24.4 m (80 ft.) from possible future or existing towers on adjacent sites can be achieved. Upper levels of a tower should be “tapered” with setbacks.
- The sculpting of the tower floor plate must be within these maximum tower floor plate widths and depths:

- Corner sites with a frontage of less than 39.6 m (130 ft.) noting that the maximum floor plate and density may not be achievable:
 - Depth: maximum 26 m (85 ft.)
 - Width: maximum 14.3 m (47 ft.) – 24.4 m (90 ft.), depending on frontage
 - Floor plate: 511 m² (5 500 sq. ft.) may not be achieved, depending on frontage
- Corner sites with frontages of 39.6 m (130 ft.) or more:
 - Depth: maximum 26 m (85 ft.)
 - Width: maximum 21.3 m (70 ft.) – 24.4 m (80 ft.)
 - Floor plate: up to 511 m² (5 500 sq. ft.)
- Interior sites with a frontage of less than 39.6 m (130 ft.), noting that the maximum floor plate and density may not be achievable:
 - Towers may not be achievable due to the setback requirements from interior property lines.
 - Depth: maximum 26 m (85 ft.)
 - Width: maximum determined by setbacks from interior property lines.
 - Floor plate: 511 m² (5 500 sq. ft.), may not be achievable depending on frontage
- Interior sites with a frontage of 39.6 m (130 ft.) or more:
 - Depth: maximum 26 m (85 ft.)
 - Width: maximum 15.8 m (52 ft.) – 21.3 m (80 ft.), depending on frontage
 - Floor plate: up to 511 m² (5 500 sq. ft.), depending on frontage
- Where the maximum permitted floor plate is up to 604 m² (6 500 sq. ft.) or 697 m² (7 500 sq. ft.) the following shall apply (see the *West End Rezoning Policy*):
 - Depth: maximum 26 m (85 ft.)
 - Width: maximum 27.4 m (90 ft.), depending on frontage and setbacks

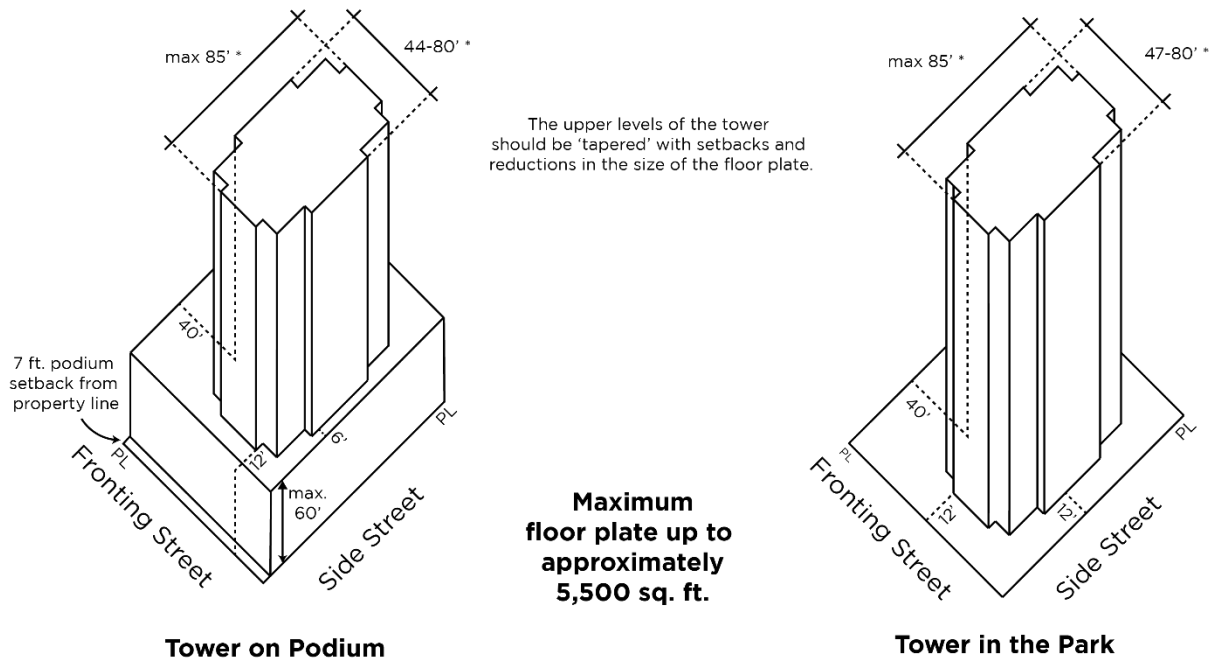
5.5.4 Setback requirements from existing buildings and existing and future towers will determine the setbacks from interior property lines.

5.5.5 Balconies and architectural appurtenances can extend up to 1.8 m (6 ft.) into the setback areas. However, architectural appurtenances will not be supported cases where they significantly contribute to building bulk, shadowing and view blockage. In such cases, the architectural appurtenances should be located within the setback areas and the areas defined by the maximum permitted floor plates identified in the *West End Rezoning Policy* and the *West End Community Plan*.

5.6 Tower Setbacks on Podiums

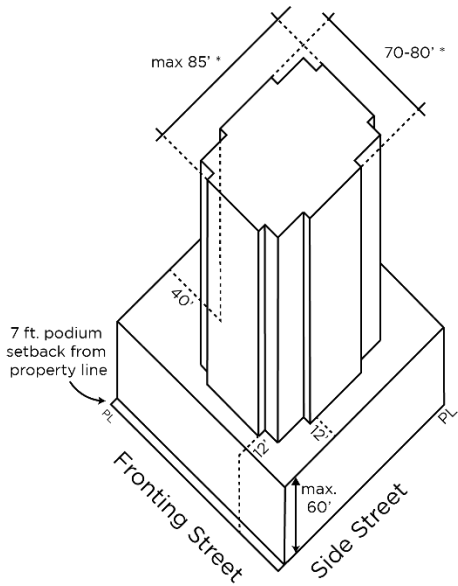
5.6.1 On corner sites, the tower should be setback a minimum of 1.8 m (6 ft.) from the face of podium facing a side and fronting street.

Diagram 2: 99-131 ft. wide corner sites



*Depth and width does not include appurtenances and balconies.
Any appurtenances and projecting balconies can extend into the setback up to 6 ft. on each face of the building.

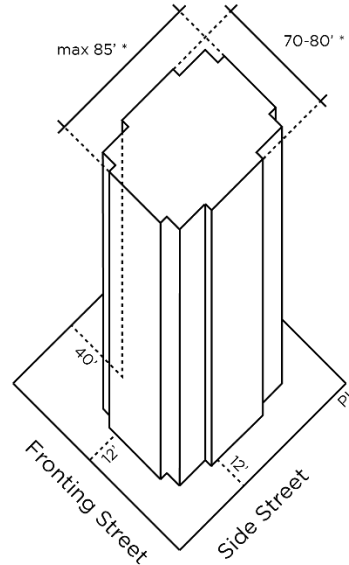
Diagram 3: 132 ft.+ wide corner sites



Tower on Podium

The upper levels of the tower should be 'tapered' with setbacks and reductions in the size of the floor plate.

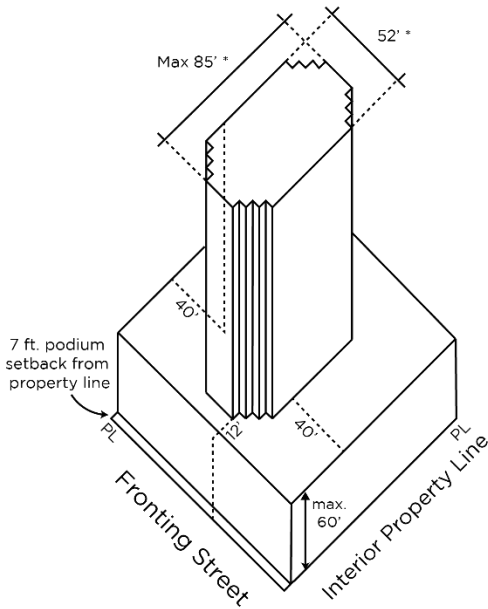
Maximum floor plate up to approximately 5,500 sq. ft.



Tower in the Park

*Depth and width does not include appurtenances and balconies.
Any appurtenances and projecting balconies can extend into the setback up to 6 ft. on each face of the building.

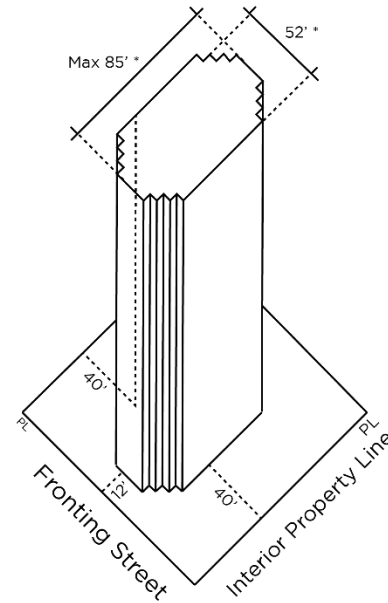
Diagram 4: 132 ft.+ wide interior sites



Tower on Podium

The upper levels of the tower should be 'tapered' with setbacks and reductions in the size of the floor plate.

Maximum floor plate up to approximately 5,500 sq. ft.



Tower in the Park

*Depth and width does not include appurtenances and balconies.
Any appurtenances and projecting balconies can extend into the setback up to 6 ft. on each face of the building.