



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

## Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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# CHINATOWN HA-1A DESIGN POLICIES

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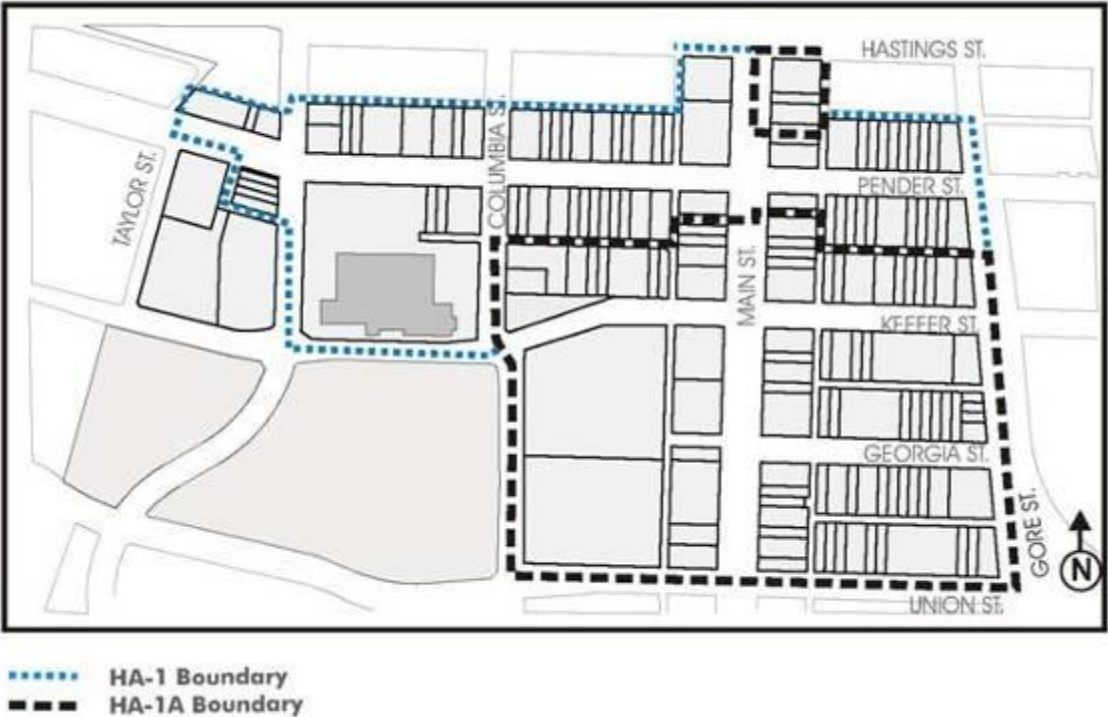
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# 1 Application and Intent

These policies apply to the HA-1A district identified in Figure 1, and are to be used in conjunction with the HA-1A District Schedule of the Zoning and Development By-law. Other applicable policies include, but are not limited to, the Chinatown Vision. Some of the sites in HA-1A have buildings listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register. These should be considered for heritage rehabilitation. The adaptive re-use of non-heritage buildings is encouraged as it supports the City’s environmental goals.

Figure 1. Map of HA-1A



The policies should be consulted in seeking approval for changes to the exterior of existing buildings, interiors of heritage buildings, additions to existing buildings and proposals for new buildings. In addition to assisting applicants, the policies will be used by City staff, the Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee and the Vancouver Heritage Commission in the evaluation of development applications.

The intent of these policies is to encourage contemporary new development that is responsive to the community’s established cultural and historic identity. These policies are a tool to help applicants understand and compose a response to the contextual circumstances of any particular site. Understanding that Chinatown’s context is unique, the policies will be applied with sensitivity to sites with special circumstances, including small frontage lots and development with affordable housing. (See also Sections 2.2 and 3.1.1 of these guidelines) The policies do not support literal replicas of historical design. Rather, they aim to facilitate creative architectural expression and encourage a variety of high-quality developments while ensuring the principles of excellent urban design are respected. This approach aims to uphold the sense of place of Chinatown, while ensuring that opportunities for quality development are not precluded.

Applicants are encouraged to retain professional design advice. Once design professionals are engaged, they are encouraged to meet with staff early in their design development. A proponent will need to demonstrate their understanding of the character and significance of the historic urban pattern and fabric by conducting contextual analysis for both existing and new buildings. Analytical tools include, but are not limited to, plans and elevations, axonometric drawings, shadow analyses, massing models, streetscape and lane-scape photo analyses. It is required that proponents review the Chinatown Statement of Significance (SOS), and the SOS for any affected heritage buildings, if applicable. These documents identify heritage values and character defining elements and are critical for understanding the context. The SOSs are available from City staff or on-line ([www.historicplaces.ca](http://www.historicplaces.ca)).

Applicants who are interested in pursuing heritage conservation in HA-1A should also refer to the policies for HA-1 and the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada for additional information. ([www.pc.gc.ca](http://www.pc.gc.ca))

## **1.1 Design Philosophy**

The policies in this document focus on setting up a framework of renewal for Chinatown that reflects its distinct identity, and the civic, cultural, social and historical significance of the neighbourhood. Chinatown HA-1A is a mixed-use, historic urban neighbourhood that is developing incrementally through both heritage building rehabilitation and new development. The intensification of uses, including residential uses is an important part of the renewal strategy for HA-1A.

Development can enrich and protect Chinatown's sense of place by observing and respecting prevailing scale and parcel pattern, expressing a neighbourhood identity that is authentic and meaningful, and achieving liveability and neighbourliness.

**Architecture and Urbanism:** Intervening in a historic urban environment requires an understanding of the history, culture and architecture of the place (i.e. urbanism), as opposed to object buildings only. Therefore, any contemporary architectural addition to the neighbourhood should be informed by urbanism.

**Scale and Pattern:** This is a neighbourhood where mid-rise urbanism should continue to be demonstrated. This scale of development complements heritage building rehabilitation and the existing building scale in HA-1A and the adjacent historic areas. Mid-rise development can be constructed on a variety of building sites. They can positively respond to the public realm, the area's parcelization pattern and the fragmented property ownership.

**Identity and Authenticity:** Proponents are encouraged to use a contemporary architectural vocabulary that is based on an understanding of the history, culture and architecture of Chinatown. This approach favors a respectful co-existence with the sensitive cultural-historic context instead of approaches based on imitation or literal adaptation. The design of new buildings in HA-1A should generally be informed by surrounding building façade proportions and compositions, patterns of fenestration and spatial organization. Signs, awnings and canopies, except in cases where heritage restoration is pursued, should also be of compatible contemporary design.

**Liveability and Neighbourliness:** HA-1A accommodates a variety of activities, people of diverse cultures and mixed incomes. Successful balancing of density, activities, character, pedestrian interest and neighbourliness is important in achieving sustainability and liveability goals. New buildings should be designed to contribute to establishing visually interesting places in the public realm, and creating a vibrant and liveable environment.

## 2 General Design Considerations

### 2.1 Neighbourhood and Street Character

Chinatown, together with Gastown, are the formative communities of Vancouver. Chinatown's distinctive urban pattern and vernacular architecture contribute to the legibility and image of the city, and forms part of Vancouver's civic identity. Chinatown's evolution through community involvement also epitomizes one of the core values of our national identity – cultural diversity.

The historic urban pattern of HA-1A consists of:

- (a) Dense urban development with narrow building frontages reflecting a parcelization pattern of 25' to 50' wide by 122' deep lots;
- (b) Resulting typologies consist of buildings constructed to the front property lines with commercial shopfronts at grade, forming a strong streetwall with open spaces in the centre and passageways intersecting the sites;
- (c) The general building scale is mid-rise. Buildings generally fall into one of two height categories: older buildings that are two to five storeys tall, and newer buildings that are nine storeys tall;
- (d) The parcelization pattern and small building frontages also create the characteristic "sawtooth" streetscape profile with varied roof lines.
- (e) Lanes for pedestrian access, commercial activities, and utilities.

The vision for Chinatown is that it is active 24 hours a day, with a diverse range of uses mixing and coexisting in close proximity. The architecture, people, sounds and smells from the various activities together create a unique and engaging Chinatown experience.

Many commercial uses, including fresh produce shops and professional services, are located in HA-1A, making the area the hub of the daily "hustle and bustle" of Chinatown. This area has fewer heritage buildings than HA-1 (Pender Street) and has a strong potential for growth.

**Main Street (South of Pender Street):** Main Street is a major north-south connector in Vancouver, linking several neighbourhoods and framing views to the north. Main Street also performs a transitional function, knitting together HA-1A and HA-1. New buildings on Main Street should bring activities that revive its role as a neighbourhood high street. Special attention should be given to future development in proximity to Pender Street intersection, where HA-1 Design Policies apply.

**Public Open Spaces:** Chinatown Memorial Square is the primary public open space in HA-1A. The Square accommodates activities from passive recreation, community events, festivals to memorial services. Buildings flanking Chinatown Memorial Square should include uses that offer general pedestrian interest.

**Lanes:** Chinatown's historic alleyways once served as pedestrian and shopping routes in addition to their utility functions. There are a number of historic alleys in HA-1, and Hogan's Alley was located nearby HA-1A. Lanes were often connected to the street with pedestrian passageways intersecting buildings. Lanes can significantly contribute to liveability and their treatment should be considered in redevelopment plans. (See Sections 3.6 and 4.3.4 of these guidelines)

### 2.2 Guiding Design Principles

**Heritage Buildings:** Heritage buildings on the Vancouver Heritage Register (VHR) should be conserved. Conservation strategies to be used are: preservation, restoration, rehabilitation or applicable combination of these three. These strategies aim at retaining the heritage values of the building and the area as described in their Statements of Significance. Any intervention to a heritage building requires the knowledge of fundamental principles of conservation and a sensitive design approach. For more detailed information on conservation principles, refer to the Chinatown HA-1 Design Policies and the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada ([www.pc.gc.ca](http://www.pc.gc.ca)).

**“Character” Buildings** (buildings that may have heritage values but are not listed on the VHR): Retention and rehabilitation of “character” buildings are strongly recommended, particularly if they are structurally sound. Any alteration or addition to an existing building should consider the heritage context of HA-1A.

**New Buildings:** New buildings should be designed in a contemporary architectural manner and should be respectful of the scale and the character of the urban pattern of HA-1A. It is critical that the planning and design of new developments contribute to achieving the Chinatown Vision Directions and enhancing Chinatown’s distinct sense of place.

**Small Frontage Lots:** In order to facilitate the development of small frontage lots (75 feet or less), flexibility will be considered in the application of these policies, while ensuring that new development is consistent with the intent of these policies, including appropriate scale, character and liveability.

## **2.3 Views**

2.3.1 Council-adopted public view cones that pass through HA-1A are to be respected.

2.3.2 New developments should maximize opportunities for views, with priority given to public views. Public and private views include public street view (e.g. vista), permeable views into entries, passages and semi-privates paces, and views from within the building (e.g. townscape view).

## **2.4 Shadowing**

Access to sunlight for parks and public open spaces is a priority in Chinatown. Development should also minimize overshadowing on other public spaces including streets and, if possible, on semi-private open spaces.

2.4.1 General Shadow Criteria

- (a) Shadows generated by proposed developments must be minimized on the following prioritized hierarchy of spaces:
  - (i) parks
  - (ii) public open spaces, including streets
  - (iii) semi-private and private open spaces
- (b) New developments should be mindful of adjacent semi-private spaces and lanes. New development should also be designed to optimize solar exposure to these spaces where possible.
- (c) As a minimum, developments over 10.7 m in building height require a shadow impact analysis taken at the equinox, at 10:00 a.m., noon, 2:00 p.m., and 4:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time. Where special circumstances (e.g. cultural programming in the a.m.) are present, additional analysis and information will be required.

# **3 Policies Pertaining to Scale and Form of Development**

## **3.1 Building Scale and Building Height**

3.1.1 Objective

In some areas of HA-1A the historic urban pattern remains intact (see Section 2.1 of these guidelines). The objective is to permit building heights that will strengthen the urban pattern of HA-1A. The prominent streetwall height is 21.3 m. The area also has a number of taller buildings, up to nine storeys, constructed on consolidated lots with uniform roof lines and larger frontage expressions that deviate from the historic pattern. This type of development is not encouraged.

In order to facilitate the development of small frontage lots (75 feet or less), flexibility will be considered in the application of these policies, while ensuring that new development is consistent with the intent of these policies, including appropriate scale, character and liveability.

3.1.2 The permitted building height for new buildings is up to 27.4 m. A parapet, with or without a cornice, to a maximum height of 2.2 m in addition to the maximum building height maybe excluded from the calculation of building height subject to urban design performance.

3.1.3 A minimum number of storeys is not required, recognizing that there are a number of one and two storey buildings in Chinatown. To allow for attractive retail and commercial opportunities, ground floor height should be 4.9 m. Mezzanines are also encouraged.

3.1.4 Additional building height to existing buildings

Heritage buildings: Generally, a one storey, set-back addition (total building height not to exceed maximum building height of 27.4 m) may be considered, as part of a heritage building's rehabilitation. Any addition to a heritage building should be architecturally compatible but clearly distinguishable from the heritage building as well as visually subordinate to the main heritage structure.

Existing "Character" buildings: They are encouraged to be rehabilitated. A one storey addition may be considered. On a case by case basis, an addition of more than one storey may be considered subject to excellence of architecture and urban design. In any case the total building height should not exceed 27.4 m.

## **3.2 Form of Development and Massing**

3.2.1 Objective

The objective is to encourage a variety of appropriate building forms in HA-1A, including double-loaded corridor and courtyard typologies. Although the existing building heights can vary from two to nine storeys, the buildings share commonalities that are characteristic of HA-1A and should be maintained in new development. These include a rectangular built form, street oriented massing, a well articulated principle façade and prominent saw-tooth profile. They can be constructed on both small (single lot) and medium (double or triple lots) building sites.

3.2.2 Tower forms with lower-level podiums are not considered appropriate for HA-1A. There are various ways that building height and massing can be arranged on a variety of lot sizes. The following diagrams illustrate form of development examples that are encouraged for use in HA-1A.

Figure 2. Double-loaded corridor scheme with setback

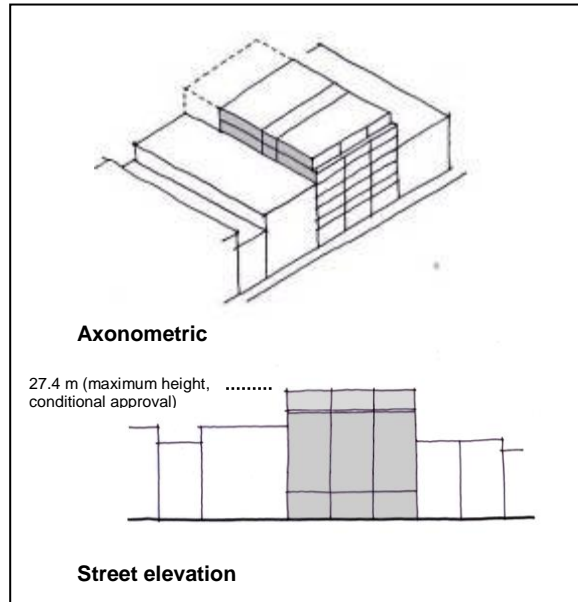
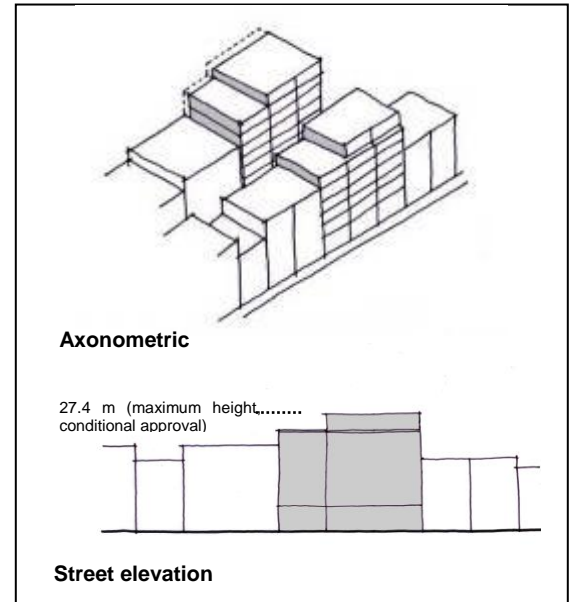


Figure 3. Courtyard scheme with street and lane setback and varied streetwall height



### 3.3 Yards and Setbacks

#### 3.3.1 Objective

The objective is to continue the established urban pattern characterized by zero front and side property lines setbacks in HA-1A. Rear property line setbacks should contribute to liveability of the adjacent units, provide sunlight and surveillance on the lanes while not precluding opportunities for quality courtyard developments that might result in more building massing towards the rear of the site.

3.3.2 New buildings should be built to the front and side property lines of their sites, for the full extent of their respective principal façades. Open spaces, including courtyards, are typically organized in the centre of the site. Some of the permitted exceptions are described below:

- (a) Side setback at the mid-depth of the site and open to the lane might be considered for new development adjacent to existing lightwells to maintain adequate lighting into rooms in existing buildings. This can be combined with a courtyard accessed from the inside of the building, or from the street through a passage or from the lane. Privacy interface needs to be considered in these developments. New dwelling units should orient principal living spaces towards the lane instead of the lightwell;
- (b) All or portions of the top storey(s) are encouraged to be set back for approximately 3.0 m above 21.3 m in order to reduce the apparent building height, to contribute to a coherent streetscape, to provide greater sunlight penetration across a street or lane, or to provide open space for occupants. (See Sections 3.5.2 & 3.5.3 and Figure 2 & 3 of these guidelines)
- (c) A frontyard setback of 450mm is required for all new buildings for sidewalk-widening purposes in this historic district. This setback will also enable projecting decorative building elements to be provided without necessarily needing to project onto city-owned sidewalk property.
- (d) A 1.0 m setback from the rear lane at grade and at any commercial level above is required to ensure that an alcove is not created; this is especially for exits from the building.



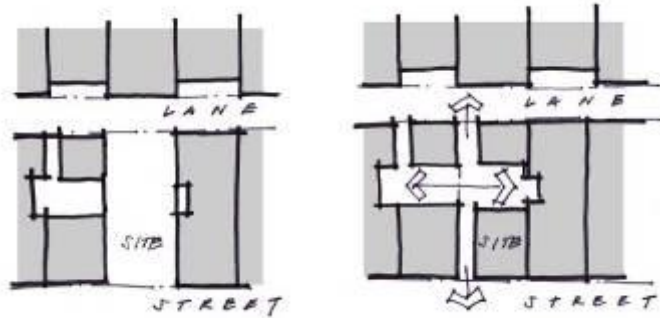
- (e) For residential uses that usually are located in the upper portion of a building, a 7.0 m rear setback will be required. Open balconies may project into the 7.0 m setback. Where it improves viability of courtyard development, architectural expression and “eyes on the lane”, relaxation to the 7.0 m setback, to a minimum 2.0 m, may be considered subject to shadow analysis on lane, privacy, sightline across lane, and provision of outdoor amenity. Similar provision for setback relaxation may be considered for sites with unique context, such as with two flanking lanes or streets.
- (f) Where the full 7.0 m setback is not provided, windows and balconies on developments across the laneways should be staggered to mitigate privacy and overlook issues.

### 3.4 Courtyards and Passageways

#### 3.4.1 Objective

Long, narrow lots are prevalent in Chinatown. Historically, many buildings had internal courtyards and passageways for access to light and air, forming intricate intra-block pedestrian routes that connected streets and alleys. The objective is to encourage rehabilitation of these existing courtyards and passageways and to provide new opportunities for their development. These opportunities should also be balanced with the objectives of optimizing solar exposure onto the lanes. (See Section 3.6.2 of these guidelines)

Figure 4. New developments should build on opportunities to link open space with adjacent courtyards and lightwells



- 3.4.2 Internal courtyards and passageways should be designed to improve liveability by providing sufficient light and ventilation into buildings with residential units. The design of internal courtyards should consider maintenance factors and usefulness of the space for intended activities.

Figure 5. Example of good courtyard with landscaping and careful walkway placement to ensure privacy



- 3.4.3 In addition, the following criteria will be considered. Figure 6 illustrates how the criteria can be achieved in a development.

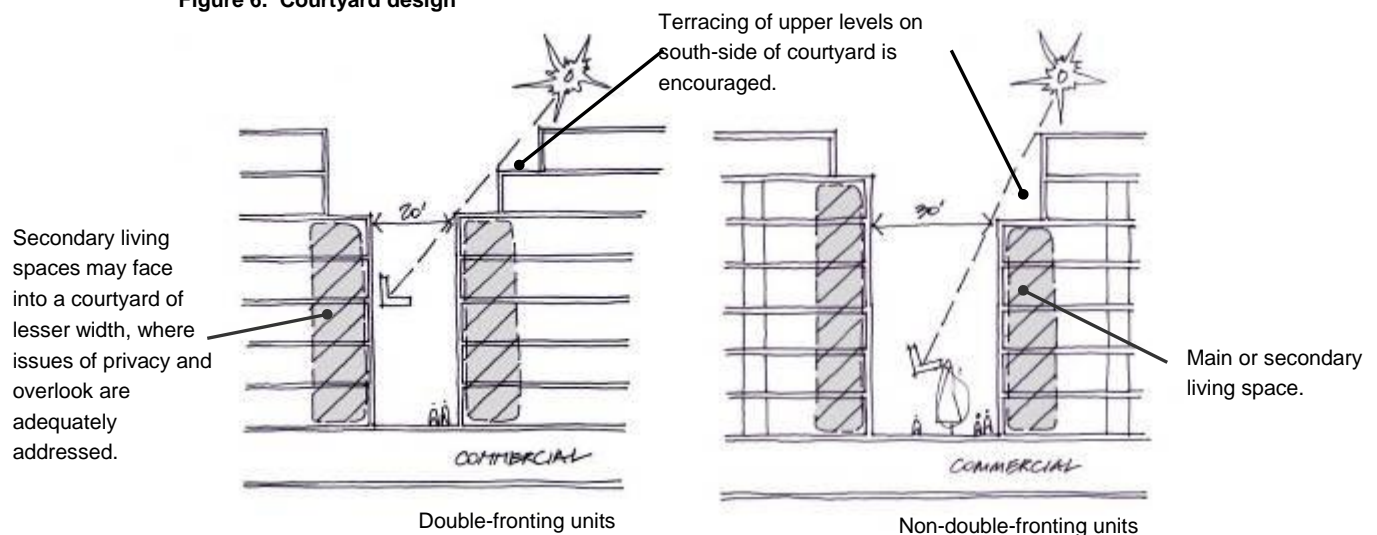
- (a) Living rooms should not face into courtyards that are less than 9.2 m.
- (b) In double fronting units (i.e. street/courtyard or lane/courtyard), a minimum clear courtyard dimension of 6.0 m and a courtyard height/width ratio of 1.5 to 1 is allowed. A

higher height/width ratio up to maximum of 3 to 1 for very limited areas may be acceptable subject to urban design performance and solar analysis onto adjacent lanes.

- (c) Secondary living spaces may face into the courtyard on lower floors where the courtyard width is 9.2 m. Secondary living spaces may face into a courtyard of lesser width, where the building design adequately addresses privacy and overlook, including use of landscaping and careful placement of access corridors.
- (d) Courtyard width will be measured to any obstruction including exterior corridors.
- (e) Courtyard configuration and building massing should maximize sun access to courtyard level including terracing of upper levels on the south side of courtyards;
- (f) Where courtyards or lightwells exist in adjacent developments, new developments are encouraged to link open space with adjacent courtyards or lightwells yet maintain privacy and security. Adequate light and ventilation should be maintained. (See Section 3.3.2 of these guidelines)

3.4.4 The provision new public gathering spaces and pathways in Chinatown is encouraged. New developments may provide on-site indoor, outdoor or covered spaces that are openly accessible to the public. Interesting places with various levels of intimacy may be considered, such as passageways, courtyards, breezeways and similar spaces. The District Schedule encourages the provision of these spaces through an exemption from the calculation of these spaces towards the maximum allowable floor space, on the condition that a legal Public Statutory Right-of-Way is secured.

**Figure 6. Courtyard design**



### 3.5 Street

#### 3.5.1 Objective

The appropriate built form for HA-1A consists of robust continuous streetwalls with small building frontages and varied roof lines creating the characteristic “sawtooth” street profile. The objective is for new buildings to maintain streetwall continuity and reflect the fine grain streetwall pattern by responding to the context of the block.

3.5.2 Streetwall height should relate to existing building height, be proportionate to street width, and contribute to building a pedestrian-friendly streetscape. Upper floor setbacks or other architectural techniques that reduce the overall massing and building height should be considered where a building is more than 21.3 m tall, or stray dramatically from the prevailing building height of significant adjacent buildings. (See Sections 3.3.2 & 4.3.3 of these guidelines)

3.5.3 In the case of large sites (e.g. site frontage equal to or greater than 23.0 m), it will be necessary to vary the proposed streetwall heights and frontages in order to reinforce the visual pattern and

contextual scale created by existing traditional development on 25' to 50' wide building sites, when use of other architectural treatments is not considered sufficient to achieve this (refer to Figure 3).

### **3.6 Lanes**

#### **3.6.1 Objective**

The objective is to ensure that each building plays its part in making the lanes of Chinatown suitable places for pedestrians and attractive when viewed from adjacent buildings. The lanes of Chinatown were historically vibrant places for pedestrians and commercial activities. As more development occurs, alleys become more important, as more people will be viewing and using them, particularly residents in adjacent buildings.

#### **3.6.2 Lane Activation**

Buildings should contribute positively to the lane environment at grade, and include active lane-side uses, where appropriate. Pedestrian-oriented uses, such as retail and similar commercial uses, are strongly encouraged. (Also see Section 4.3.4 of these guidelines)

#### **3.6.3 Daylighting lanes**

While it is understood that lanes will not receive as much sunlight as streets, the intent is to find opportunities to daylight portions of lanes through setbacks, massing articulations and creating passageways that link streets to lanes. Achieving daylight in lanes should be balanced with opportunities for developing courtyard buildings. (See Section 3.4 of these guidelines)

#### **4.6.4 Access to off-street parking and service areas**

The District Schedule and Parking By-Law discourages the provision of on-site parking for development sites that are 50 ft. wide or less. There is no parking requirement for residential uses and all parking spaces provided at grade will be counted as part of the maximum Floor Space Ratio (with the exception of an optional car share space). The intention is to enable viable laneway retail uses, which can be physically disrupted by the provision of parking spaces, ramps and elevators serving the development.

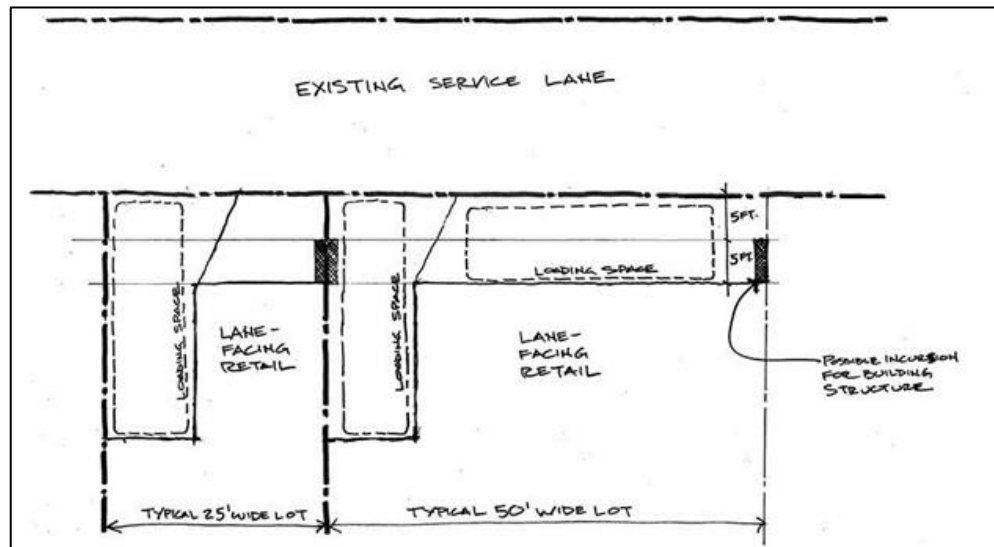
Vehicular access to underground parking, loading, and service areas should be provided from the lane. However, they have the potential to create large expanse of blank walls, dark holes and an overall uninviting environment. In order to mitigate these impacts, the following should be considered:

- (a) Negative impacts of vehicular entrance parking ramps and service areas should be minimized through the use of enclosures, screening, quality finishes, sensitive lighting and landscaping.
- (b) Where possible, service and utilities areas and parking ramps should be located side by side to reduce their impact on the lanes.
- (c) Further, where possible, parking areas and access ramps should be shared between separate developments.
- (d) Loading spaces are important components for any new building in Chinatown. In this historic district, service lanes are shared with older buildings that are not equipped with on-site loading facilities. Keeping the service lanes clear of parked trucks and cars is an important goal in this district as residential and commercial uses intensify.

To balance and facilitate both the desires for loading spaces and laneway-facing retail frontages, small 25 ft. wide lots will be required a minimum and maximum of 1 Class "B" loading space, perpendicular to the rear property line.

For 50 ft. wide sites and larger, more than 1 Class "B" loading space is typically required by the Parking By-Law. The design of these spaces, however, should consider their flexible nature as public patio spaces when loading is not occurring. Providing the second required loading space as a parallel space can be considered, since it would provide a space that is more conducive to public gathering against the service lane, than a second perpendicular space.

Figure 7 Loading spaces example



### 3.6.5 Utilities and Services

- (a) Utilities should be under-grounded where possible.
- (b) Garbage and recycling containers in the lanes are to be contained within the building (See Section 4.3.4 of these guidelines).

## 4 Architectural Components

### 4.1 Vernacular Architecture

The historic urban landscape of Chinatown is strongly defined by the distinctive “balcony-style” architecture of Chinatown Society buildings constructed between 1901 and 1926. This balcony-style is considered a hybrid architectural style that blends aspects of Chinese regional architecture (Guangdong and Fujian Provinces) with western styles and building methods. It is unique to Vancouver’s Chinatown and considered vernacular.

Society buildings and other heritage buildings are concentrated mostly along Pender Street (HA-1). There are many newer buildings in Chinatown that refer in their architecture to character-defining elements of Society buildings as well as to traditional Chinese architectural motifs (e.g. glazed pantiles and dragon finials), continuing the tradition of blending eastern and western influences. Also, there are a number of buildings in Chinatown that, even though they were built by Chinese owners, were built in Victorian or Edwardian architectural styles.

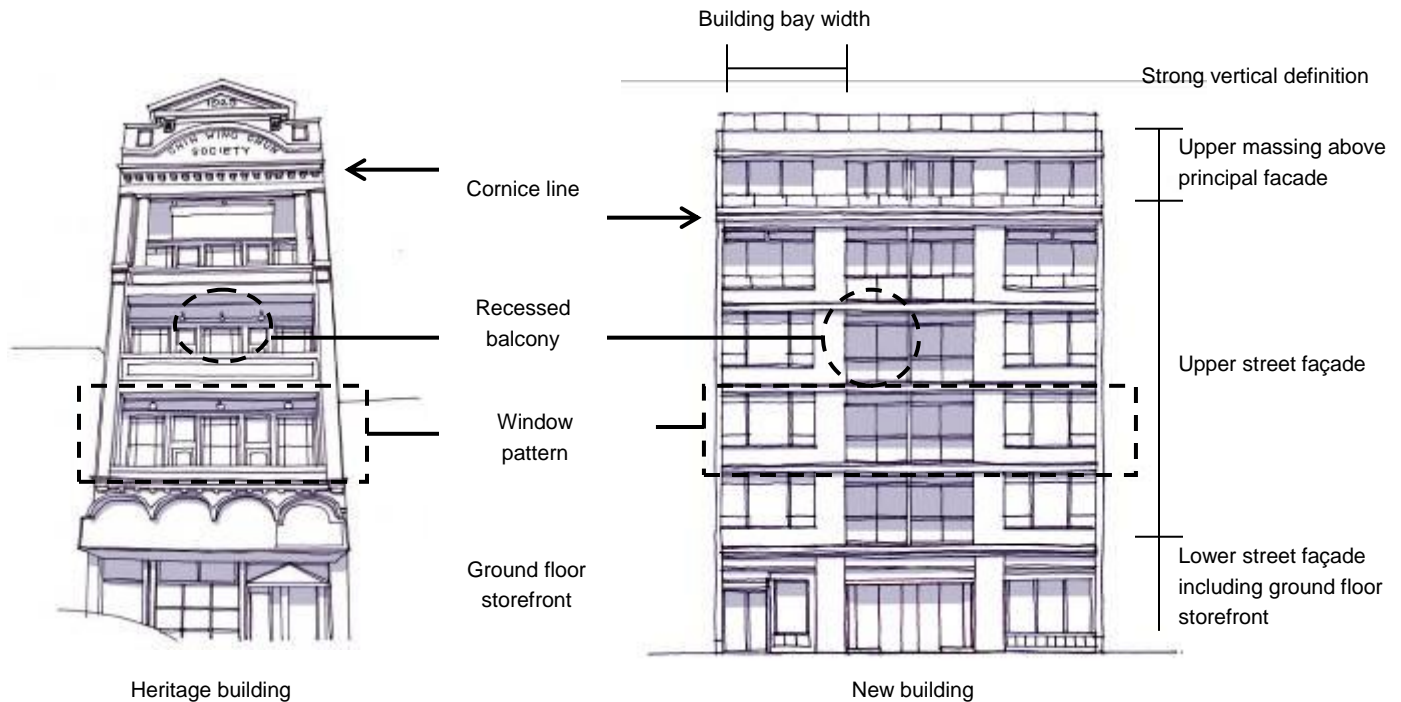
The contemporary use of colorful canopies and retractable awnings with signage, often combined with convertible storefront windows allowing merchandise to spill onto the sidewalk, are widely-spread characteristics of HA-1A.

### 4.2 Overall Façade Composition

#### 4.2.1 Objective

The intent is not to replicate or mimic heritage façades but to ensure that new buildings have a level of complexity and an engaging architectural expression compatible with the character of the area’s heritage buildings (See Section 4.1 of these guidelines for description).

**Figure 8. Façade composition**



#### 4.2.2 Overall Façade Composition

New buildings should respond to the prevailing façade composition as established by heritage buildings, including:

- (a) storefront width and configuration;
- (b) transoms above storefront windows;
- (c) architectural patterns (including fenestration patterns);
- (d) cornice lines.

For all new development, particularly those on large sites (e.g. site frontage equal or greater than 23 m), façades can be broken up with:

- (a) a regular rhythm of projections (pilasters);
- (b) changes in massing;
- (c) variegated street-wall and roof lines.

New buildings should also be designed to express the three-dimensional façade articulation including rich textures and architectural detailing that complement the visual qualities of heritage buildings in Chinatown.

#### 4.2.3 Vertical Façade Definition

New buildings should have a clearly defined streetwall massing with distinctive lower and upper street façades. The upper street façade should be clearly distinguished from the lower street façade and articulated with windows, projections, and/or balconies. The roof, cornice, or parapet area should be well integrated with the building's overall composition, visually distinctive, and include elements that create skyline interest. Floors above 21.3 m should be secondary to the principal streetwall massing. (See Section 4.3.3 of these guidelines)

#### 4.2.4 Fenestration

The presence of various architectural styles in HA-1A (see Section 4.1 of these guidelines for description) results in different fenestration patterns on existing buildings. Fenestration patterns for new buildings should be drawn from the best examples in the immediate and adjacent blocks, and be compatible with adjacent buildings.

#### 4.2.5 Building Bay and Storefront Width

There is a well-established pattern of individual buildings on 25' to 50' wide lots in Chinatown. The objective is to reflect the typical streetscape rhythm of Chinatown created by characteristic single storefront per single parcel frontage. New buildings should continue the existing pattern of small storefront widths. Changes to existing buildings should avoid consolidating two or more existing storefronts into larger bay.

Any principal façade with a width greater than 15.2 m should be segmented, over its entire building height, into vertical bays having widths no greater than 7.6 m, by means of columns, engaged pilasters or similar architectural treatment (see Figure 8).

### 4.3 Façade Design

#### 4.3.1 Lower Street Façade

The objective is to reflect the scale, configuration, and rhythm of the lower façade of Chinatown heritage buildings. The lower façade is that portion of the building made up of the ground floor and, very often, the traditional glazed mezzanine. It is typically defined at its upper edge by a minor cornice or decorative band. The lower façade typically has large areas of glazing, transom windows above storefront, recessed entries and decorative panels and tiles.

All new multi storied principal façades should have an architecturally distinct ground floor, which may have a mezzanine. A high level of appropriate architectural detailing is encouraged, especially in the base plates. The lower façade should have the following features:

- (a) The minimum apparent building height should be 4.9 m, except that with a mezzanine, the minimum apparent building height should be 6.7 m; and
- (b) The top edge should be defined by a continuous projecting cornice or similar decorative element.
- (c) The interior of the commercial frontages should be visible at pedestrian eye level to help activate the street. The use of dark or mirrored glazing is discouraged.
- (d) The ground floor should have storefronts, building entrances and other architectural features encouraging pedestrian interest. Blank walls or non-transparent (absent windows, entries or ornamentation) should be avoided.
- (e) Lobbies, entries and passageways provide transition space between the public sidewalk and the interior of private properties. These spaces should be visible from the street to provide pedestrian and visual interest. Major entries should be recessed.

#### 4.3.2 Upper Street Façade

The objective is to reflect the proportions of the upper façades of early Chinatown buildings, including strong vertical elements segmenting the façade, vertical windows and recessed balconies. A clear distinction between the lower and upper façade is required (see Figure 8). Projecting balconies (not over property lines) that are different from traditional recessed balconies, might also be appropriate for larger developments to help mitigate scale, achieve more varied façade layering, and improve liveability. There should be a level of wall surface texture and architectural detailing that is inspired by the richness of details commonly found on Chinatown heritage buildings.

All principal façades, above the ground floor, should have fenestration pattern and other significant architectural elements characterized by:

- (a) A symmetry of the elements within each building bay;
- (b) A repetitive pattern of the symmetrically arranged elements, both horizontally and vertically (from bay to bay, and also from floor to floor).
- (c) Definition at the upper most building height by a continuous cornice or similar architectural treatment or element.

#### 4.3.3 Upper Massing Above Principal Façade

Upper massing above 21.3 m should be visually subordinate to the principal façade. Architecturally techniques including upper floors setback and using lighter materials and colours, can be used to visually reduce the appearance of massing and building height.

#### 4.3.4 Lane Façade

The objective for new developments is to significantly upgrade the appearance of the lane environment. (See section 3.6 of these guidelines) Architectural treatment and landscaping of the lane façades should give special attention to making the lane environment pedestrian friendly. Corner sites in particular will have an opportunity to upgrade the portion of the lane which their users experience most often and to create visual interest from the street into the lane.

- (a) Garbage and recycling containers are to be contained within the walls of the building or enclosed. Loading areas and garage entrances should be securable and screened.
- (b) The design should consider including a lane side entrance into the commercial uses on the ground floor of the building.
- (c) Where possible, parking should be underground, enclosed and/or fully screened. Beyond this, the architecture and landscape design of the development should deal with the lane as an integral component of the project, with lane façades and landscape carefully considered to upgrade and enhance the lane environment
- (d) Building walls abutting the lane should be attractive to neighbouring developments and passersby through articulation and use of quality materials and finishes. Blank walls facing the lane are discouraged.
- (e) Landscape materials should be incorporated in the projects adjacent to the lane through provision of climbing plants, hanging plants, and/or shrubs and trees of suitable growing habit.

#### 4.3.5 Sidewall on Private Properties

As HA-1A redevelops, some buildings will be taller than adjacent buildings, and have exposed party walls or sidewalls. To mitigate the impact of blank sidewalls they should be designed with a material finish that complements the architectural character of the main building façades. Side setback above 21.3 m could also be considered. The amount of setback should allow for sufficient glazing.

**Figure 9. Examples of preferred sidewall treatment**



## **4.4 Exterior Materials, Colours, and Detailing**

### **4.4.1 Rooftop Features**

Rooftop equipment on top of additions and new buildings should be set back far enough from the front or exterior side façades so that, where possible, it cannot be seen by a pedestrian on the opposite side of the street. If this is not possible, rooftop equipment should be screened.

### **4.4.2 Windows**

The objective is to recognize the importance of fenestration patterns and windows in establishing the character of Chinatown buildings and the streetscape.

For existing buildings, heritage or not, the preservation or rehabilitation of original windows, is encouraged, wherever viable. Window replacement with compatible contemporary windows can also be considered, if appropriate. Replacement windows for heritage buildings should be designed based on historic evidence. Replacement and new windows may be constructed of wood, steel, aluminium or other contemporary materials.

For new buildings, windows should be design to reflect the traditional scale, proportion and configuration of the area's historic windows and should be characterized by the following:

- (a) wood frames and sashes or alternatives of a compatible frame profile (width and thickness), resulting in a similar visual appearance;
- (b) clear or slightly tinted glass (reflective glass is not considered appropriate); and
- (c) sashes recessed within the window opening.

### **4.4.3 Cornices and Parapets**

The objective is to recognize the historic role of building cornices and parapets and to ensure that this level of design resolution is continued.

The repair of original cornices, wherever viable, is encouraged. Replicas will be considered appropriate when rehabilitating a heritage or existing building, and should be designed based on historic evidence. Materials used should be traditional or compatible contemporary. For new buildings, contemporary expression of projecting cornices and parapets, which elicit visual interest through play of light and shadow are encouraged.

### **4.4.4 Materials and Colour**

Building materials traditionally found in Chinatown should be used for both rehabilitation and new construction. These include the following:

- (a) standard clay brick in a range of solid colours;
- (b) dimension building stone masonry;
- (c) terracotta and tile decorative elements;
- (d) cast iron and pressed metal decorative elements;
- (e) wood elements for features such as recessed balconies, bay windows and storefronts;
- (f) specially treated concrete finishes;
- (g) smooth finish stucco; and
- (h) compatible materials other than those listed may also be acceptable.

Buildings should use a colour palette that is integral to the building materials used. A generous use of colour is encouraged, especially at the ground floor level. Brighter colours should be used for detailing and trim. The exposed sides and rear elevations should provide a consistent appearance and be of similar quality to the principle façade.

### **4.4.5 Storefront and Display**

Solid retractable security shutters are discouraged. If security shutters are used, they should be a high-quality system offering visual interests and contributing to the character of the street.



Installation of security gates behind a window display is strongly encouraged, as this maintains maximum pedestrian interest of the storefronts.

#### 4.4.6 Awnings and Canopies

Continuous weather protection over the public sidewalk should be provided in the form of retractable cloth awnings. Retractable fabric awnings were frequently found in Chinatown and these are encouraged for the area (refer to Figure 10). These devices help to express the small-lot incremental nature of storefronts and development sites. Retractable cloth awnings emulate the historical experience of sidewalk life in Historical Chinatown, where the boundary between private and public space were blurred by the placement of merchandise and café seating on the public sidewalk. Furthermore, a more intimate scale of the pedestrian sidewalk experience can be created when the awnings extend well over the sidewalk, and are appropriately situated with a minimum extension depth of 8 ft.

**Figure 10. Appropriate awning design**



### 4.5 Lighting

#### 4.5.1 Objective

The objective is for lighting on buildings to contribute to the safety and vibrancy of HA-1A in the night time. When installed at appropriate location with appropriate intensity and colours, lighting can be effective without being overly bright.

Installation of ground floor level lighting at a pedestrian scale is encouraged. The fixture design should be chosen from simple forms which are compatible with the Chinatown area.

#### 4.5.2 Lane lighting

The objective is to allow lighting at lane to help create a safe and inviting lane environment for pedestrians and residents. Installation of lane lighting should pay attention to principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). Lane lighting should not produce glare and should emphasize on alcoves to discourage crime and nuisance activities.

### 4.6 Signs (including neon)

#### 4.6.1 The objective is to allow a variety of signs that are complimentary to existing signs. A large number and diversity of signs, including painted fascia signs, neon signs and other illuminated signs are traditionally found in Chinatown. Regulations for signs are found in the Sign By-law.

#### 4.6.2 Neon

The design of new neon lighting features and signs should be compatible with adjacent buildings and the streetscape. New neon signs should mitigate potential impacts to residents.

## **5 Interiors of Heritage Buildings**

### **5.1 Objective**

The objective is to conserve interior elements with heritage and cultural values as building rehabilitation occurs. The interiors of many of Chinatown's heritage buildings, particularly the Chinatown Society buildings, may have heritage value.

### **5.2 Criteria for Heritage Buildings**

Interior features, finishes and fixtures which are identified as having heritage value and listed as character defining elements in the building's Statement of Significance should be preserved, whenever possible. Some of the more common interior elements worth preserving are interior fabric (e.g. wall, ceiling, floor finishes), stairs and their components, interior architectural features (e.g. fireplace), built in furniture, light fixtures, various hardware and other similar features.

Every effort should be made to identify and retain these elements where they contribute to the heritage and cultural value of the building.

## **6 Liveability and Neighbourliness**

### **6.1 Residential Liveability**

#### 6.1.1 Objective

The vision for Chinatown is that it is an area where opportunities to live, work and play can all be found in one complete, compact community. The objective is to maintain the mixed-use character of Chinatown and promote compatibility of these uses. Residential liveability should be achieved in balance with other area objectives stated in these Policies. As a mixed use area, some impacts to residents in the area are anticipated, particularly regarding privacy, noise and smell. The following sections outline ways in which impacts can be mitigated.

#### 6.1.2 Noise

Because HA-1A allows a variety of uses, residents can expect to be affected by noise. Commercial activities such as parking and loading, exhaust fans, and restaurant entertainment, can create noise which disturbs residents. New buildings should consider the following:

- (a) Use appropriate design and construction techniques to buffer residential units from noise, including:
  - (i) orienting bedrooms away from noise sources, e.g. facing the quieter internal courtyards ("deep units" might be considered under unique circumstances, see Section 6.1.5 of these guidelines);
  - (ii) using concrete construction;
  - (iii) using acoustically rated glazing;
  - (iv) using sound absorptive materials and sound barriers on balconies.
- (b) Noise generated by the development itself should be mitigated by location and design.

#### 6.1.3 Smell

Mechanical ventilation of commercial space should be exhausted at a location having the least impact on residential liveability, ideally at the roof. For new buildings, a separate vertical shaft should be provided for the purpose of air exhaust for commercial uses, especially if the uses produce a strong smell such as a restaurant kitchen.

#### 6.1.4 Privacy

Residential privacy in relation to other units, pedestrians, and adjacent development is an important aspect of liveability and neighbourliness.

- (a) Unit orientation, window placement and screening should be used to enhance privacy.
- (b) Balconies and decks, which do not front onto the street, should be oriented, screened or landscaped to reduce direct overlook of adjacent residential uses or other units in the project.
- (c) In developments with courtyards, stacked units are encouraged to reduce privacy conflicts due to access corridors (see Section 3.4.3 of these guidelines).

#### 6.1.5 Residential Units

Access to adequate daylight, external views and ventilation are important liveability issues in all residential development. HA-1A has a dense urban pattern of narrow and deep lots, which make residential liveability challenging to achieve. The following will be considered in order to ensure liveability of new residential units:

- (a) In conversion of heritage buildings and non-heritage applications where the adaptive re-use of an existing building imposes physical limitations, internal bedrooms and dens may be considered.
- (b) For new buildings, main and secondary living spaces should have access to adequate daylight, external views and ventilation.
- (c) Internal bedrooms or dens may be considered in new buildings in limited circumstances. The intent is to address sites with atypical situation (i.e. a typical floor should not be designed having multiple units with internalized bedrooms). Internal bedrooms or dens will likely be limited to atypical studio or 1 bedroom units only, within otherwise highly liveable development. Irregular sites or sites where there are unusual privacy or liveability constraints may also be considered for a limited number of these units. Such applications might require the review and approval of the Development Permit Board. Applicants should discuss in detail with Planning staff at the preliminary enquiry stage.

### 6.2 Semi-Private and Private Open Space

#### 6.2.1 Objective

The objective is for new development to provide residents with “active” or “social” semi private and private open space, to improve liveability in Chinatown’s high density setting. A range of activities should be considered when designing these spaces, from passive or visual amenities to active use areas.

6.2.2 Semi private open space should preferably occur in the rear or in the centre of a building (i.e. courtyards) above the commercial level. Common roof decks above the second floor are encouraged as semi private open space subject to considerations of overlook, scale relationships, view blockage, and noise impacts on units and properties below

6.2.3 Provision of private open space for each unit in the form of balconies, decks or patios is an important component of liveability in a high density residential environment.

- (a) Where possible, residential units should have access to a private outdoor space. A horizontal dimension of 1.8 m should be provided to allow for adequate useable space.
- (b) Where possible, private open spaces should be oriented to capture sunlight and take advantage of views.
- (c) Private open spaces should be designed to ensure visual privacy (see Section 6.1.4 of these guidelines).

## 6.3 Public Realm

### 6.3.1 Objective

Specific streetscape treatments for the public realm in Chinatown have been approved by City Council to reinforce the area's identity. These streetscape treatments, such as granite cobblestones tree surrounds, sidewalk paver design, Chinese Dragon light fixtures, and heritage-style litter containers should be maintained when doing any work on the public realm when required as part of the City's development permit review process. Further detailed specifications for street design elements are available from the Streets Division of Engineering Services. Note that public realm improvements and usages are subject to all applicable City of Vancouver policies, regulations and guidelines.

### 6.3.2 Public Sidewalk

- (a) The existing sidewalk paving pattern (see Figure 11) is part of the Council-approved treatment for the Chinatown public realm. The pattern is created from a template that is in the care of Engineering Services.
- (b) Continued use and retention of granite in the streetscape is encouraged (see Figure 11).
- (c) Street bulges should be constructed at corners or mid-blocks, where directed and approved by the City Engineer. This will provide opportunities for improved pedestrian crossings, landscaping and for street furniture.
- (d) A variety of street trees are planted in the area. New and replacement trees should be provided, taking into consideration the variety and shape of the tree that is most appropriate, as approved by the City Arborist.

**Figure 11. Sidewalk paving pattern and granite cobblestones detail**



### 6.3.3 Areaways

Applicants are encouraged to explore rehabilitation options for areaways in situations where existing areaways are attached to heritage buildings. Options can range from full rehabilitation for active use of an areaway to preservation of existing prism glass only as a pavement surface treatment.

### 6.3.4 Street Furniture

- (a) Street furniture, (i.e. benches and bus shelters) are provided by the City and have a specific design and colour scheme.
- (b) Benches should be provided within street bulges, utility strips at corners or mid-block, and especially on the north-side of the street to provide sitting opportunities where there are more sun exposure.

- (c) Bike racks are not part of the City’s street furniture program. If bike racks are required or desired, they should be provided at building fronts, or street bulges, in particular to the south-side, and be compatible to the Chinatown street furniture scheme subject to the approval of Engineering Services.

#### 6.3.5 Outdoor Retailing and Restaurants

Outdoor retailing and restaurant patios add liveliness and variety to the streetscape, and are encouraged. The City’s Streets Administration Branch in Engineering Services administers the Small Patio and the Produce & Flower Display Programs. Outdoor retailing and restaurants are subject to all applicable policies, regulations, guidelines and approvals affecting the private use of public sidewalks.

### 6.4 Safety and Security

#### 6.4.1 Objective

The objective is to provide safety and security for the neighbourhood through appropriate building design.

#### 6.4.2 New development, both residential and commercial, should provide a secure environment through attention to principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

- (a) Separate lobbies and circulation (including elevators) should be provided for retail, office and residential uses. Lobbies should be visible from the street.
- (b) The design of parking facilities should provide for personal safety and security. Underground residential parking, including pedestrian access routes from parking into the building, should be secure and separate from commercial parking.
- (c) Buildings should maximize opportunities for surveillance of sidewalks, entries, circulation routes, semi private areas, children’s play areas and parking entrances. Blind corners and deeply recessed entries should be avoided. Visibility into stairwells and halls is desirable. Laundry facilities, amenity rooms, and storage rooms should be grouped together and visible for surveillance.
- (d) Residential lighting should ensure good visibility of access routes and landscaped areas without excessive lighting levels, glare or overspill to neighbours.
- (e) Access routes from building to residential garbage should be separate and secure from commercial garbage.

## 7 Green Buildings

Buildings in Chinatown should be designed to meet the City’s environmental sustainability goals. There are a number of strategies that are appropriate, including active reuse of existing buildings, incorporation of passive design to increase comfort and building energy performance as well as implementation of a low carbon energy system.

### 7.1 Passive Design

“Passive design” is an approach to building design that uses the building architecture to minimize energy consumption and improve thermal comfort. The City has developed and approved passive design toolkits detailing ways to reduce energy use in new buildings, which are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions in Vancouver. Applicants are encouraged to review the City’s Passive Design Toolkit.