



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

## Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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# LIVE-WORK USE GUIDELINES

*Adopted by City Council on March 21, 2006  
Amended December 10, 2019 and July 20, 2022*

## **1 Application and Intent**

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with a District Schedule of the Zoning and Development By-law or the Official Development Plans which permit Live-Work Use. These guidelines should be consulted in seeking approval for this conditional approval use. As well as assisting the applicant, the guidelines will be used by City staff in the evaluation of development applications.

The intent of the guidelines is to encourage functional, liveable, and safe Live-Work units and developments.

Discretion may be used, and exemption may be considered, in the application of these guidelines in cases where a heritage building will be preserved.

There are guideline documents for some District Schedules and Official Development Plans, such as design guidelines for the Downtown (DD), Gastown (HA-2), Chinatown (HA-1 and HA-1A), and Downtown Eastside/Oppenheimer (DEOD) districts. The Guidelines for Live-Work should be used in conjunction with the approved guidelines for the relevant District Schedule or Official Development Plan.

### **1.1 Vancouver Building By-law Requirements**

For the range of uses allowed under Live-Work Use, development will need to comply with Vancouver Building By-law requirements for both residential and non-residential occupancies. In cases where there is difficulty meeting a requirement, an applicant has the option of proposing an equivalent solution which meets the intended performance level and objectives of the Building By-law.

Projects receiving development permit approval for Live-Work Use will need to follow through with meeting Building By-law requirements for both residential and non-residential occupancies, including accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities, so that units may be used for both live and work purposes. Applicants are encouraged to consider consulting a building code professional early in the development process, notably in cases where an existing building is proposed to be rehabilitated, to ensure that Building By-law issues are identified and considered at the design stage.

## **2 General Design Considerations**

### **2.1 Light and Ventilation**

Provision of sufficient daylight access for living and work areas in live-work units may be difficult especially in existing buildings originally constructed for non-residential purposes. The use of “borrowed light” may be necessary.

- (a) Where direct access to daylight cannot be provided to a living or work area, when located at the rear of a unit, daylight may be borrowed from exterior wall windows through a living or work area adjacent to these windows. Where it is proposed to enclose a living or work area that does not have direct access to daylight, at least one wall of the enclosed area with primary exposure to the building’s exterior wall windows should be located no more than 7.6 m (25 ft.) back of the building’s exterior wall windows and of no less than 60% transparent or translucent glazing.
- (b) Mechanical ventilation of live-work space should be exhausted at a location having the least impact on residential liveability. This should ideally be at the roof in a location that does not affect air quality for open space or air intake units.

### **2.2 Safety and Security**

Safety and security provisions in live-work development can present some challenges, particularly because occupants, employees, and clients are likely to share underground parking, lobbies, elevators, hallways, etc.

- (a) Live-Work development should take into consideration the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). In addition, the safety sections of guidelines related to a District Schedule or Official Development Plan should be supplemented with the following considerations:
  - (i) Public access to floors above the ground level should be limited to established business hours and restricted by intercom and pass-code systems or equivalent security solutions;
  - (ii) Each unit, including ground level units, should have secure internal access through a corridor to parking, garbage, and mailbox areas. For ground level units, additional security features such as electronic security systems should also be considered. Standard window security grill bars would not be supported on building elevations that flank the street; and
  - (iii) Live-work parking should be separate and secure, similar to security provisions for separating residential parking from commercial parking.
- (b) A security report by a licensed security professional addressing the treatment of security issues, including parking area security, should be provided for developments that include more than one other use (e.g. dwelling use and commercial use) in addition to live-work use.

### **3 Uses**

#### **3.1 Artist Studio - Class A Live-Work**

There are two use options in the Zoning and Development By-law that permit Artist Studio - Class A use in live-work premises – Live-Work Use and “Residential Unit associated and integrated with an Artist Studio”. An applicant’s choice of option should be made with an awareness of the differences as discussed below.

- (a) Under Live-Work Use, occupants including artists are permitted to have employees and walk-in trade in their units. As noted in Application and Intent above, Live-Work units need to comply with Vancouver Building By-law requirements for both residential and non-residential occupancies.
- (b) Under “Residential Unit associated and integrated with an Artist Studio”, occupants are limited to the production of art only, and employees and walk-in trade are not permitted. The Vancouver Building By-law allows these units to be designed as a residential occupancy, provided they comply with certain sprinklering and structural floor load requirements (i.e., generally the building code requirements are less onerous under this option).

There are separate zoning regulations and guidelines for each of these live-work uses. For “Residential Units associated and integrated with an Artist Studio” refer to the Artist Studio Guidelines.

### **4 Guidelines Pertaining to the Regulations of the Zoning and Development By-law and Parking By-law**

#### **4.1 Off-Street Parking and Loading**

Loading bays should be adjacent to a direct route to an elevator, and access and corridors between a loading bay and an elevator should be designed to accommodate larger, work-related products.

### **5 Internal Design and Facilities**

#### **5.1 Facilities**

An amenity room for the use of occupants in live-work development is encouraged, similar to residential developments. The amenity room can be used for, among other functions, meeting space or an exercise facility.

### **6 Open Space**

Private and/or semi-private open space is desirable to provide an amenity. Open space should be provided consistent with the open space guidelines for residential development related to the relevant District Schedule or Official Development Plan.