



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

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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SOUTHLANDS RA-1 GUIDELINES

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1 Application and Intent

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the RA-1 District Schedule of the Zoning and Development By-law for developments in the Southlands area. The guidelines indicate design opportunities to help applicants in the design of projects, as well as assist City staff in their evaluation. The guidelines should be consulted in seeking approval for conditional approval uses or the variance of regulations as may be permitted by the District Schedule. They will be most applicable to the Blenheim Flats area of the RA-1 District where the majority of the residential and equestrian development occurs.

The Health Department's guidelines for on-site sanitary sewage disposal and stabling in the RA-1 District.

2 General Design Consideration

2.1 Neighbourhood Character

The major intent of the guidelines is to ensure that new development will maintain and enhance the prevailing semi-rural character. As redevelopment occurs, it is essential that this character is not compromised. Semi-rural character is created by an assemblage of design elements such as expansive vistas, equestrian functions, open pastures and informal landscaping along the side edges.

Objective:

New development should maintain and enhance the existing semi-rural character, and ensure that the prevailing development pattern is not compromised.

Figure 1. Representative Semi-Rural Character



2.2 Street Character

The character of the streets in the area contributes significantly to the overall image. The street edge is the most visible part of any development and assists in establishing a cohesive character. It is important that as redevelopment occurs, the treatment of private property adjacent to the street does not compromise or clash with the existing street character. Streets in the area are characterized by their informal edges. The lack of curbs, the presence of ditches and the gradual visual transition from the public to private domain contributes to the semi-rural image. Solid walls or hedges along the property line abruptly terminate the street edge, severely limit visual transition from public to private property, restrict views through the site and result in a more urban street image which is inconsistent with the established character.

Objective:

New development should provide a gradual visual transition from the public domain along the road to the private development site in order to maintain the semi-rural character and not disrupt the cohesiveness of the existing street pattern.

This can be achieved by:

- (a) Using informal planting materials along the perimeter of the site;
- (b) Limiting hedges to those which are low, not solid, and informal in character; and
- (c) Using only low fencing which is open and allows for views through from the street.

Figure 2. New Development Providing A Characteristic Street Treatment

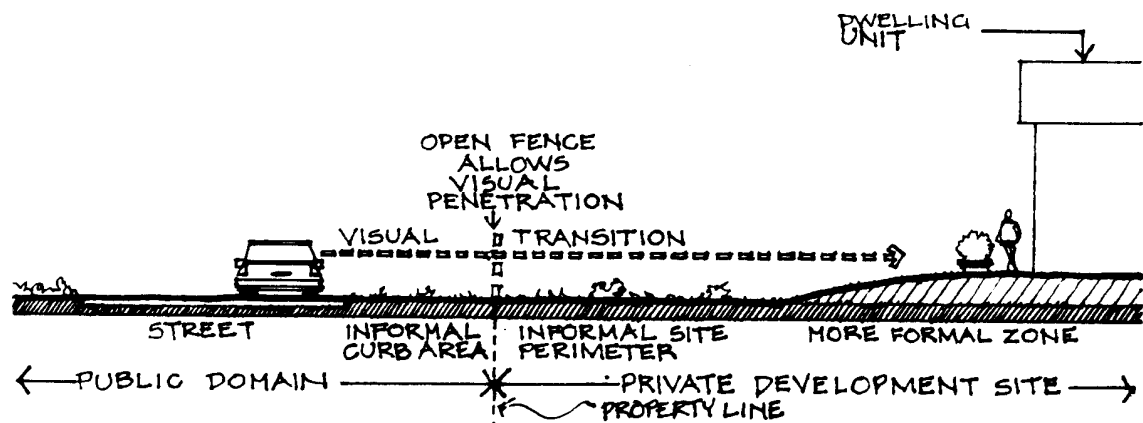


Figure 3. Characteristic Fencing



2.2.1 Site Character

The area is characterized by related, individual building components being grouped together on the site. These components can include the main house, infill unit, caretaker's unit, garage, stable, and accessory buildings. The smaller incremental scale of these components allows them to blend into the site in a less conspicuous manner and open up views through to adjacent properties. Large, isolated single building forms that appear out of scale and visually dominate the site are not appropriate. Clustering buildings together can free up areas that may be developed as pasture. The site planning of adjacent properties should be recognized and opportunities for grouping similar functions together explored. Particular importance should be paid to the inconspicuous siting and scale of caretaker's and infill units.

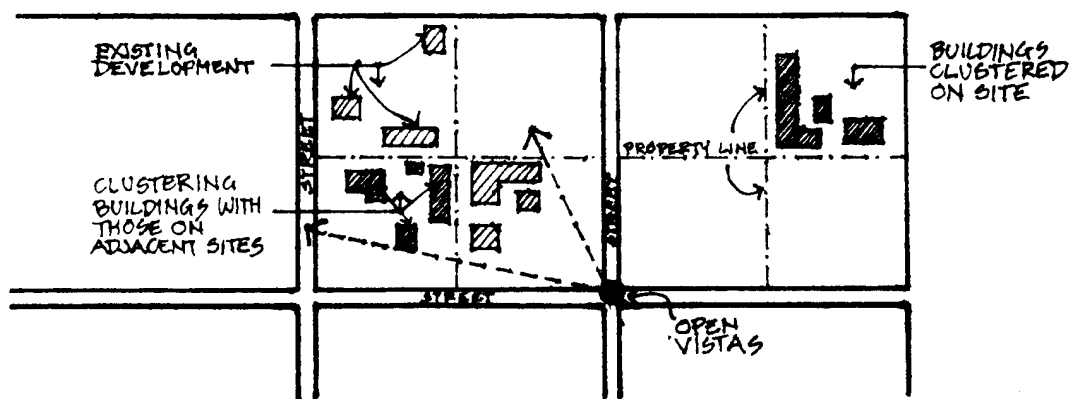
Objective:

New development should reinforce the prevailing site planning pattern.

This can be achieved by:

- (a) Clustering buildings on site; and
- (b) Clustering buildings with those on adjacent sites where there is no conflict of use.

Figure 4. Preferred Site Planning



2.2.2 Building Character

In the RA-1 area landscaping and open space are visually dominant in creating the overall character and image rather than the actual built form. Buildings are clearly set into the landscape. This is reinforced by the predominance of elements such as pitched roof forms, wood finishes and earth tone colours. Extensive use of stucco, concrete and bright colours is inappropriate. A variety of building styles can be compatible with the area character as long as they maintain this secondary image. An important relationship will be between the principal house and any infill or caretaker's units. These units should be subordinate to and compatible in character with the principal house.

Objective:

Residential buildings should be secondary to and fit unobtrusively into the existing semi-rural context primarily created by the overall landscaping, site planning and edge treatment.

This can be achieved by:

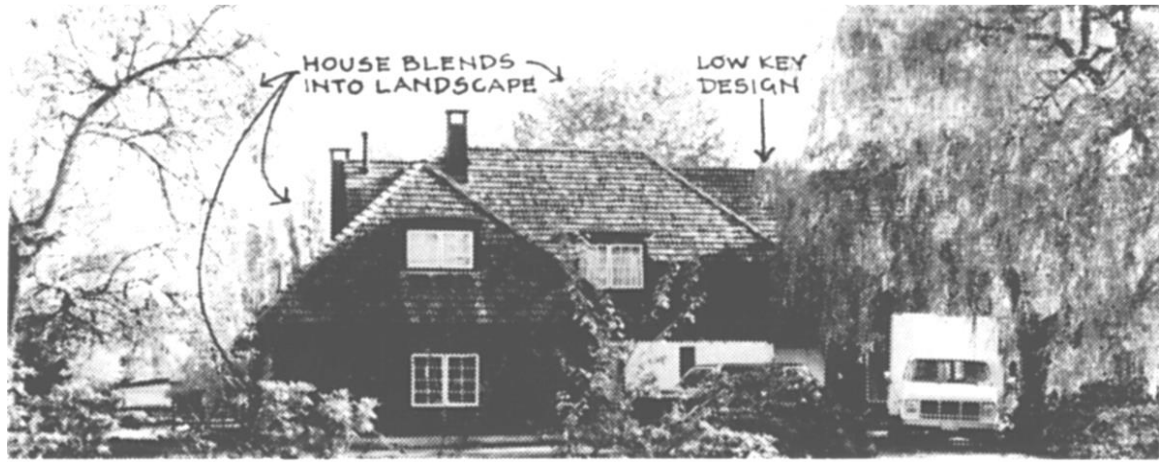
- (a) Giving more prominence to landscaping than to buildings; and
- (b) Using low-scale, semi-rural building forms which blend into the landscape.

Objective:

Infill and caretaker's units should be compatible and subordinate to the principal house.

This can be achieved by ensuring that infill units do not create so strong an identity to imply a separate and subdivided lot.

Figure 5. Representative Building Character



3 Uses

3.1 Caretaker's Quarters

Caretaker's quarters are found on a number of sites in the Blenheim Flats area. In most cases, the sites are large and include equestrian facilities. The keeping of horses often results in the need for ongoing care and supervision, thus justifying the caretaker's quarters.

Objective:

Caretaker's units should be occupied by bona fide caretakers of the subject site. Caretaker's units may be permitted only if the following conditions are met.

- (a) The registered owner (or registered owner under agreement) of the subject site must submit together with the development permit application a written explanation to include;
 - (i) The reasons why the site or dwelling requires a full-time caretaker; and
 - (ii) An undertaking to be recorded on the development permit as issued, that conditions of section 2.2.5 the RA-1 District Schedule will be complied with;

- (b) Prior to the issuance of a development permit for caretaker's quarters, arrangements are to be made to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal Services for:
 - (i) A covenant under Section 215 of the Land Title Act to be registered to ensure that the dwelling unit will be occupied and maintained only as caretaker's quarters for a person whose occupation is full-time caretaker on the subject site;
 - (ii) Statutory right-of-way allowing the City of Vancouver to demolish the caretaker's quarters unless such quarters are vacant or occupied by a person whose occupation is full-time caretaker on the subject site. The right-of-way shall include a covenant to indemnify the City of Vancouver against demolition costs.
 - (iii) An equitable charge to secure the City of Vancouver's cost of demolition.

The above-noted charges must have priority over existing charges on the subject site.

3.2 Retail Uses

The RA-1 schedule allows for limited retail functions in combination with nurseries and stables.

Objective:

Limited retail functions, if provided, should present a low-key image.

This can be achieved by integrating any retail functions into the principle stable or greenhouse building.

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

4.1 Building Height

Houses in the area are generally two storeys or less in building height, and fit unobtrusively into the low-lying topography of the area. The maximum building height set by the RA-1 district schedule reinforces this general height. Building height is measured from the base surface and includes all fill required for floodproofing. Base surface is measured from the existing grades certified by a B.C. Land Surveyor at the four corners of the site. Existing grades of adjoining sites measured 3.1 m from the common property lines should be included in the survey plan. The district schedule allows the building height to be increased where it does not adversely affect adjacent properties. For example, if the front and side yards are generously increased beyond the minimum prescribed by the schedule, the greater distance of the house from the road and adjacent sites would render the increase in building height less noticeable.

Objective:

New development should be compatible with the prevailing building height of existing built form and should fit unobtrusively into the existing low-lying landscape. Increases in building height should only be considered in cases where it would not adversely impact an adjacent site, and where the increases would facilitate other design objectives to be achieved.

This can be achieved by:

- (a) Ensuring that an increase in building height will not result in significant view blockage or increased shadowing of adjacent properties;
- (b) Significantly increasing the setback from the street and the side property lines to diminish the visual impact of the increase in building height; and
- (c) Employing pitched roof forms which reduce the apparent building height of development.

Figure 6. Building Height Variance: Side Yard Situation

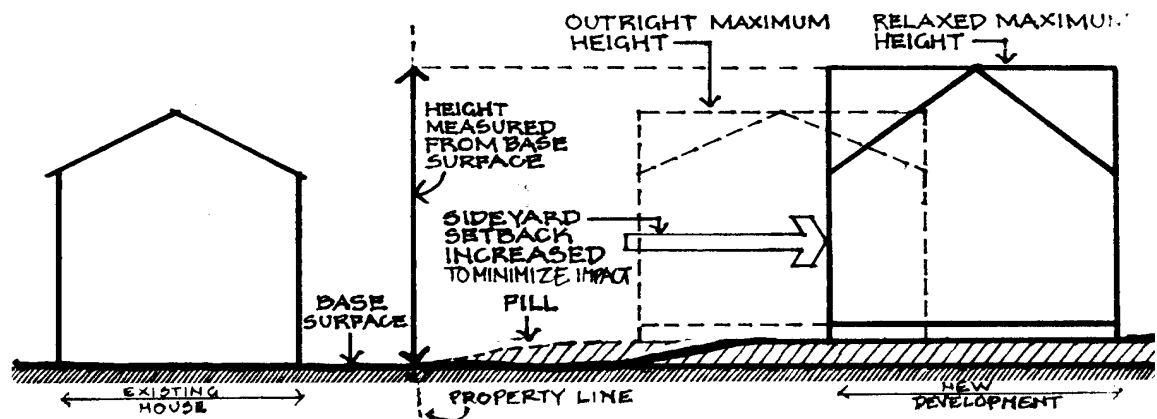
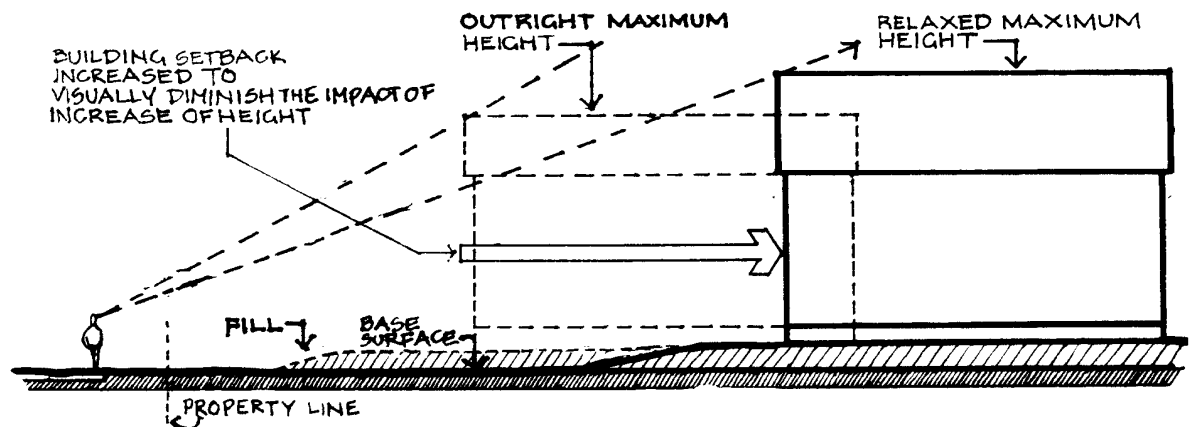


Figure 7. Building Height Variance: Front Yard Situation



4.2 Front, Rear and Side Yard

Most lots in the RA-1 District are substantially larger than the standard city lot, allowing a greater flexibility in site planning and resulting in much larger front, rear and side yards. Generally, the yards exceed the requirements of the RA-1 District Schedule. These setbacks should be considered as the minimum in most circumstances as the creation of open space is a major objective. Variances permitted in the RA-1 District Schedule should only be considered when such variances do not adversely affect adjacent properties or compromise other design objectives. In some cases, such as narrow lots, variances may be desirable.

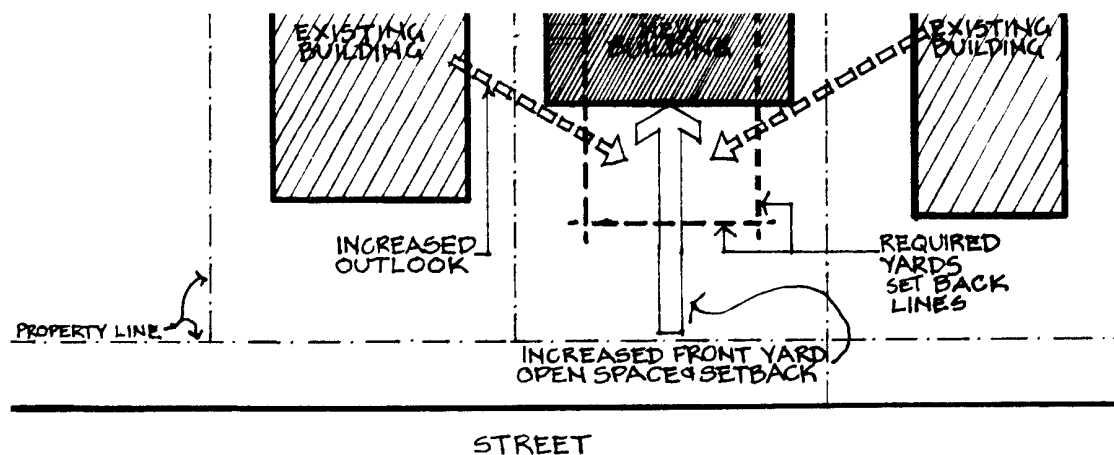
Objective:

New development should maximize front and side yards to emphasize semi-rural character and contiguous open space. Variances should only be considered in circumstances where it can be demonstrated that such Variances will not compromise the semi-rural character nor adversely impact adjacent properties.

This can be achieved by:

- (a) Ensuring that a variance of a side yard will be accompanied by an increase in the front yard setback; and
- (b) Ensuring that the variance of any side or rear yard does not affect the privacy of an adjacent property and the visual outlook from the neighbouring house is enhanced.

Figure 8. Relaxation of Side Yards



4.3 Off-Street Parking and Loading

In addition to residential uses, many sites will be developed to include equestrian or nursery facilities. These facilities will require an additional number of parking stalls beyond those required for residential use. If the parking areas are prominently visible from the road, the objective of creating a pastoral semi-rural character could be compromised.

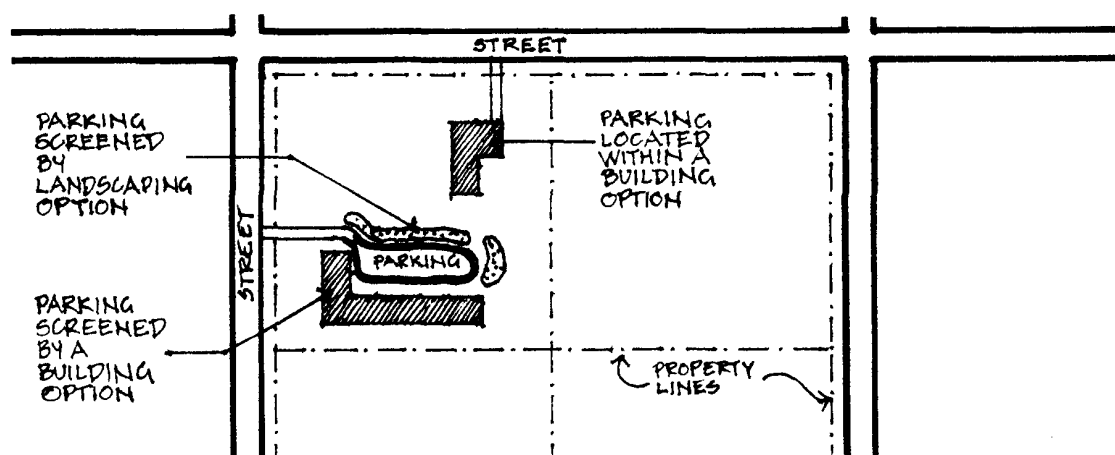
Objective:

New development should minimize the impact of parking areas to maintain a semi-rural character.

This can be achieved by:

- (a) Providing some intervening screening between any parking areas and the street and adjacent sites;
- (b) Locating parking areas behind buildings to make them less visible from the street; and
- (c) Locating residential parking within a building, or ensuring it is appropriately screened.

Figure 9. Preferred Parking Location and Treatment



4.4 Building Width and Depth

Most existing buildings in the area have a depth and width that is an appropriate scale for the size of the site, and contributes to semi-rural character. Buildings which are overly deep and wide create an obtrusive image and limit views through the site. The RA-1 District Schedule prescribes the maximum width and depth of buildings used for dwelling uses and accessory to dwelling uses. Buildings used for equestrian and other purposes should also not appear out of scale and be overly dominant.

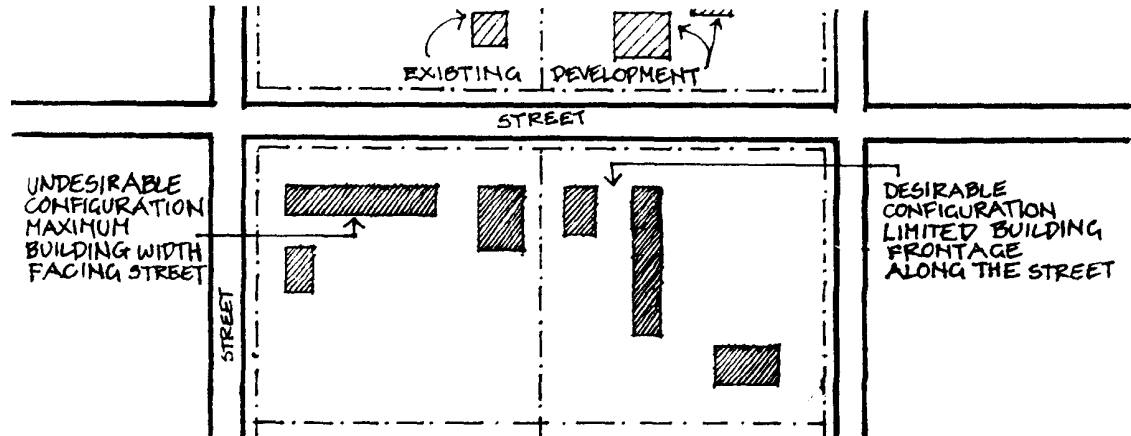
Objective:

New development should be compatible with the prevailing built form in width and depth.

This can be achieved by:

- (a) Ensuring that buildings are not sited or configured so as to create a wall along the street edge; and
- (b) Locating indoor riding rings well back from the street edge and by using other intervening buildings of a more compatible scale to screen and reduce visual impact. Riding rings should also be sited so as not to adversely impact any adjacent sites.

Figure 10. Preferred Width and Depth Configuration

**5****Open Space**

Open space is a key component in maintaining and creating semi-rural character in the RA-1 area. Generally, existing development consists of buildings sited in a manner which maximizes contiguous open green space in conjunction with equestrian functions. These large expanses of open space allow for vistas through the site, decrease the visual scale of buildings and establish an unique image for the area. Smaller lots are limited in potential for providing characteristically large open space. However, the available open space can be consolidated to provide a compatible image.

Objective:

New development should maintain or create significant, visible and contiguous green areas or equestrian related open space.

This can be achieved by:

- (a) Locating buildings on the site to create single, large open space areas, rather than a series of isolated, smaller and less visible ones;
- (b) Locating open space areas along the street edges and especially at intersections; and
- (c) Having smaller lots consolidate their open space areas at the street edge rather than at the rear of the site where it is less visible.

Figure 11. Preferred Open Space Configuration

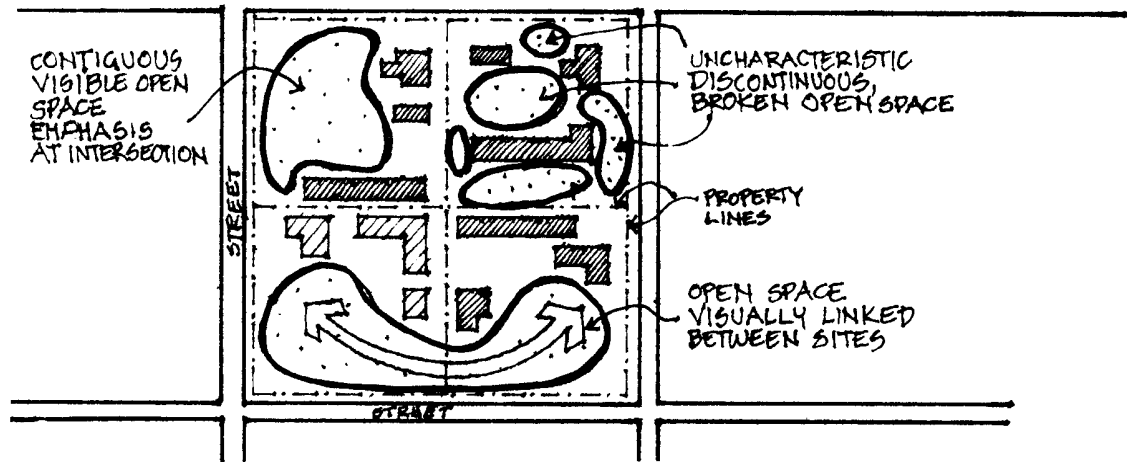


Figure 12. Representative Open Space



5.1 Private Open Space

In some cases, new development will include private open space and areas for uses that are visually incompatible with semi-rural character such as swimming pools and tennis courts. Solid walls or hedges along the property line are not appropriate. While this treatment ensures privacy, it also results in an uncharacteristic and inhospitable image. Through sensitive design, perforated screening for private open space can be provided that allows some visual penetration through the site. Uses that require privacy or are not compatible with semi-rural character should not be visually dominant, and should for instance, be located adjacent to the main house, well away from the street edge.

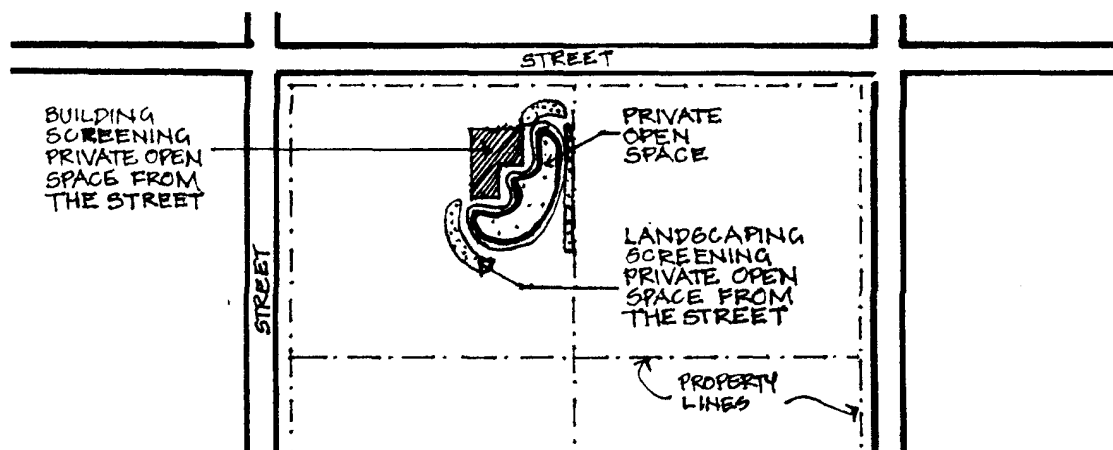
Objective:

New development should minimize the visual impact of private open space, swimming pools, tennis courts and any other uses incompatible with semi-rural character.

This can be achieved by:

- (a) Ensuring that private open space and uses incompatible with semi-rural character are not located in the required front yard, or are conspicuously visible from the street;
- (b) Using buildings and appropriate landscaping to screen private open space and uses incompatible with semi-rural character from the street; and
- (c) Clustering private open space areas and uses incompatible with semi-rural character adjacent to dwelling units.

Figure 13. Preferred Private Open Space Location and Treatment



6

Landscaping

Landscaping plays a major part in establishing semi-rural character. The word semi-rural evokes images of soft, informal greenery, as is found in the area, as opposed to hard, impervious surfaces and formal landscape treatment. Some incompatible landscaping in the form of the excessive use of hard surfaces, berms, dense trimmed hedges, solid fences and screens of trees that block views through the site and create inhospitable edges has been used in the area. Landscaping in conjunction with infill and caretaker's units should visually integrate them into the overall pattern of the site rather than creating an image that severs the units from the site.

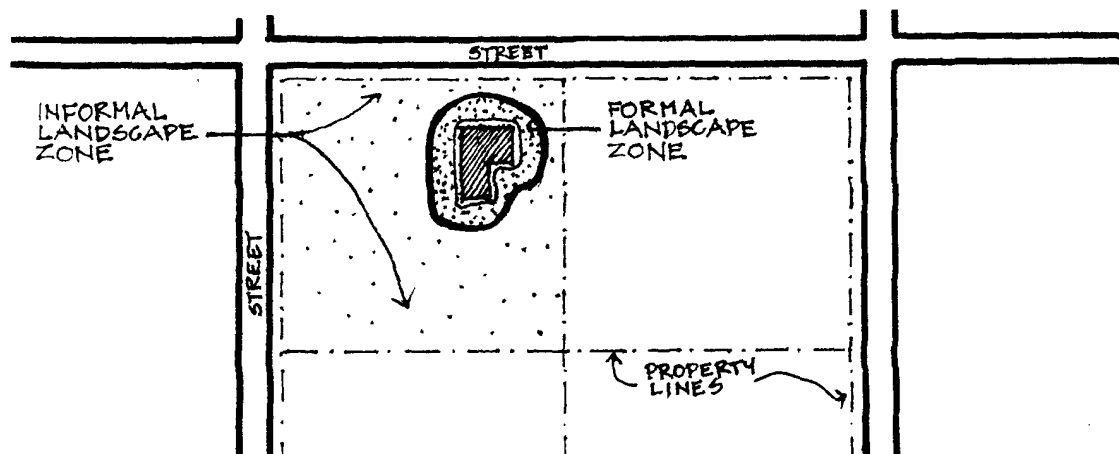
Objective:

New development should maintain and enhance the cohesive, characteristic landscaping treatment that emphasizes a soft, informal, green image.

This can be achieved by:

- (a) Ensuring that all developments provide a landscape plan that clearly notes the mature size and type of plant species;
- (b) Restricting formal plantings and gardens to the private open space zones around the dwelling units;
- (c) Employing informal landscaping in any area not used as private open space; and
- (d) Ensuring that fencing used in any area except the private open space zone is low, open and allows views through the site.

Figure 14. Landscape Zones



Filling and Drainage

Filling and drainage are critical aspects of new development in the area. Some filling will be employed below and immediately around the house. This floodproofing fill should be strictly limited and not detract from the prevailing low-lying landscape. Hard impervious surfaces, while visually incompatible with the prevailing landscaping are also detrimental to drainage, and should be minimized. Local water run-off will need to be handled on-site with appropriate perimeter drainage treatment to protect adjacent properties from flooding.

Objective:

All floodproofing fill and impervious surfaces should be inconspicuously integrated into the prevailing topography and landscaping, and not have a detrimental impact on adjacent properties.

This can be achieved by ensuring that:

- (a) Fill other than that required for floodproofing purposes is limited to a maximum height of .6 m above the base surface (measured from the existing grades certified by a B.C. Land Surveyor at the four corners of the site);
- (b) Impervious surfaces are strictly limited;
- (c) The floodproofing apron is directly beneath and adjacent to the dwelling unit and does not extend beyond 4.6 m from the dwelling unit;
- (d) Floodproofing fill does not exceed elevation 30.5 m city datum;
- (e) The apron letdown merges inconspicuously into the prevailing landscape;
- (f) The letdown has a constant slope rather than a series of steps;
- (g) The slope of the letdown does not exceed 20%;
- (h) In the case of narrow side yard conditions, the apron size is reduced or floodproofing is achieved by structural means;
- (i) There are no abrupt changes in grade at property lines;
- (j) Driveways, parking areas and other non-habitable uses are located below the flood construction level;
- (k) Raised septic fields are integrated inconspicuously into the floodproofing apron and designed to minimize filled area;

- (l) In the case of:
- (i) New infill dwelling units or caretaker's units adjacent to existing principal dwelling units; and
 - (ii) Minor first-storey additions to existing dwelling units;
- The first-storey elevation may correspond to the first-storey elevation of the existing principal dwelling unit;
- (m) A filling and drainage plan, prepared by a professional Engineer in the Province of British Columbia, to the satisfaction of the City Engineer, is provided that clearly indicates:
- (i) existing grades of the subject site;
 - (ii) existing grades of the adjoining sites measured 3.1 m from the common property line;
 - (iii) proposed grades; and
 - (iv) drainage treatment;
- (n) The drainage and filling plan indicates run-off from the site, including impervious and filled areas, is directed to the City ditch system and not to adjacent lands.

Figure 15. Floodproofing Treatment: Section View

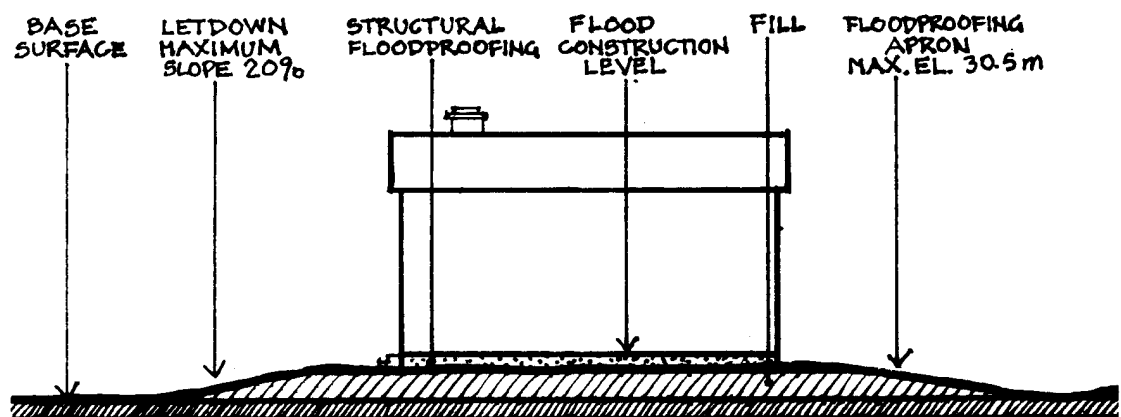
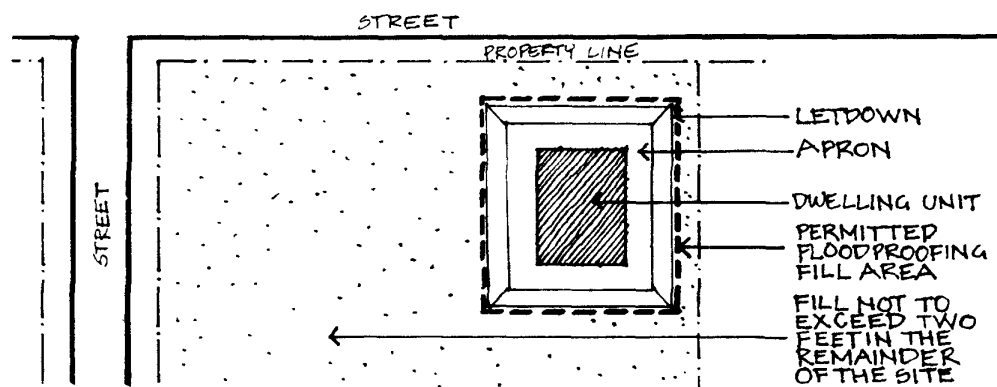


Figure 16. Floodproofing Treatment: Plan View



8 Fraser River and Celtic Island Area

Most of the land flanking the Fraser River foreshore in Southlands is zoned RA-1 and is presently in park and golf course use. In addition to retaining the semi-rural character of these lands, it is essential that new development respond to the sensitive environment and to the opportunities for improved recreational access. In the redevelopment of the RA-1 foreshore lands, the City will be seeking opportunities to secure access for a continuous waterfront trail. In addition, easements or dedications for the building of a standard dyke may be required.

City objectives for this area include:

- (a) Create significant public waterfront access along the waterfront and through the Celtic Island area;
- (b) Protect and enhance the semi-rural and equestrian character;
- (c) Exploit rare opportunities to secure unique park environments;
- (d) Retain opportunities for employment in the fishing and related industries; and
- (e) Protect and enhance the fish and wildlife habitat of the area.