



# Design Guidelines for Attached Residential Development: Fairfield Neighbourhood

## **Publishing Information**

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*Duplexes consist of two units, which may be organized side-by-side, front to back, or up-down. Depending on zoning, each unit may have a suite.*



*Houseplexes consist of multiple residences within a single structure, designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood and appearing similar in form to a large house.*



*Townhouses can be expressed in many forms. The ownership format may be stratified, rental, or fee simple. The photos above are examples of townhouses oriented to the street.*



*Stacked townhouses (above, left) allow for up-down units within a townhouse-style building. Each unit typically has its own access at grade, and ground-level units may provide accessible living. Some townhouse developments, where supported by zoning and city policy, may be organized in more than one row around a common courtyard (example above, right).*

# Design Guidelines for Attached Residential Development

## Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to encourage high quality design that enhances neighbourliness and social vitality and creates a good fit with the existing neighbourhood.

## Application

Attached Residential Developments can be designed in different forms (e.g. duplexes, townhouses or rowhouses which occur side-by-side; smaller multiplexes/houseplexes.) They can also be designed in different configurations, and may involve stacked units or more than one building on a site, which may be organized in more than one row where supported in plan policies and permitted by zoning. Units located at grade generally have direct access to outdoor space, while upper units may have direct access or shared entries.



## Context

Victoria's Traditional Residential areas contain a variety of housing types, including single-detached houses as well as a mix of duplexes, multiplexes and townhouse style developments. Some areas have distinctive styles, having been built during a specific period often before World War 2 (particularly during a building boom in the early part of the 1900s), while others reflect a post-World War 2 character. Many areas display a variety of styles as lots infilled over the years, and houses range from simple bungalows and ranchers to larger mansions.

Most of Victoria's Traditional Residential areas are characterized by the presence of front and back yards, with tree-lined streets. An important proportion of Victoria's urban forest and tree canopy is found in Traditional Residential areas, both as street trees and on private property. These areas also display a diversity of topography which may include varied soil types and rock outcrops. Some fall within important ecosystems, such as Gary Oak meadow.

Another common element of Victoria's Traditional Residential neighbourhoods is that most (though not all) lots lack laneways, unlike other cities of a similar age in North America.

Victoria has embraced diversity within this context, with policies endorsing secondary suites, garden suites, the conversion of existing houses to multiple residences, and infill housing in the form of duplexes, townhouses and multiplexes. Many larger character houses have been successfully converted into multiple rental or strata residences.

## Objectives

**Site Planning:** To site buildings in a manner that considers and maintains the pattern of landscaped front and back yards, that makes a positive contribution to the streetscape and that achieves a more compact residential building through increased "eyes on the street."

**Orientation and Interface:** A friendly face: To ensure new development is oriented and designed to enhance public streets and open spaces and encourage street vitality and safety

**Building Form and Design:** To achieve buildings of high architectural quality and interest with human-scale building proportions that are oriented towards and are compatible with the established streetscape character and pattern. Human scale refers to the use of architectural features, details and site design elements that are human proportioned and clearly oriented towards pedestrian activity.

**Neighbourliness/Compatibility:** To respond to the established form and architectural characteristics of surrounding buildings in order to achieve new buildings which are compatible with their context and minimize impacts on neighbours.

**Mechanical Equipment and Service Areas:** To site and screen mechanical equipment and service areas to minimize impacts on neighbours and the public realm.

**Materials:** To use materials which are high quality, weather gracefully, and contribute to the overall neighbourhood image.

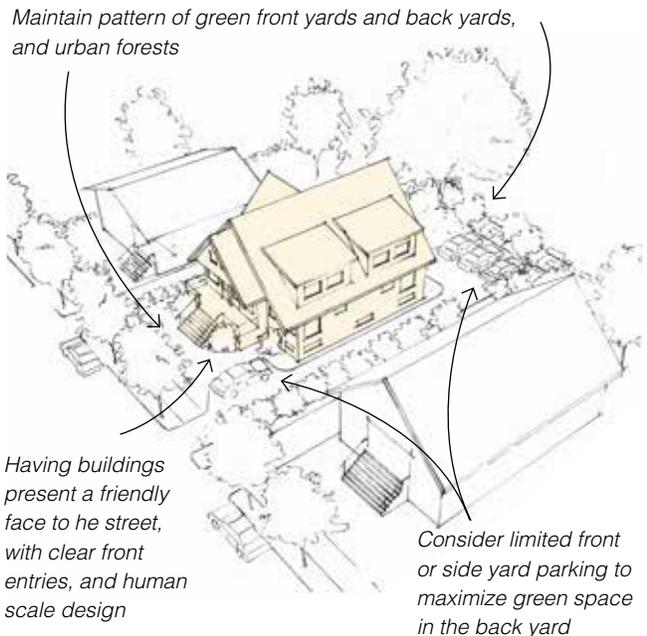
**Open Space Design:** To enhance the quality of open space, support the urban forest, provide privacy where needed, emphasize unit entrances and pedestrian accesses, provide amenity space for residents, reduce storm water runoff, and to ensure that front and rear yards are not dominated by parking.

## 1) Site Planning

**Objectives:** To site buildings in a manner that considers and maintains the pattern of landscaped front and back yards, that makes a positive contribution to the streetscape and that achieves a more compact residential building form, while maintaining livability.

### a. Building Placement

- i. Attached residential buildings should be designed parallel to the street with unit entrances oriented to, and directly accessed from the street. Both front and rear yards should be provided.
- ii. For properties that include buildings of heritage value (Heritage Designated or listed on the City's Heritage Register) alternative siting of new buildings or additions may be considered to facilitate heritage conservation.
- iii. For properties that include significant natural features (e.g. significant trees, topography, rocky outcrops), buildings and landscape should be sited and designed to respond to natural topography and protect significant natural features wherever possible. Strategies to achieve this include but are not limited to alternative siting or clustering of buildings to avoid disturbance of natural features, and clustering of parking to reduce pavement on the site. (See also Section 4)
- iv. Where townhouses are located on a corner lot, townhouses may be organized to face the flanking street. In this case, buildings should be sited and parking oriented to minimize the amount of the site dedicated to automobile circulation and parking, to support on-site soft landscape, and to support sensitive transitions to adjacent development. These developments may be designed with modest setbacks along the flanking street in order to maximize open space to the rear of units.



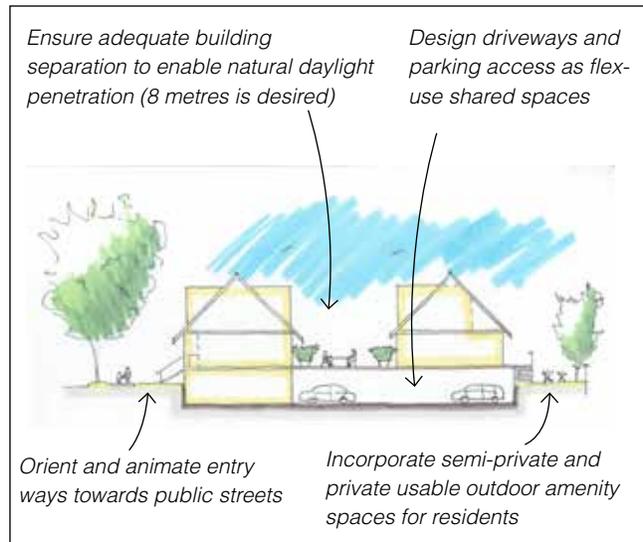
Example of how townhouses might be organized on a corner lot to minimize curb cuts and provide for on-site open space.



Example of corner lot townhouse frontage incorporating landscape and amenity space (i.e. porch), achieving a friendly face to the street with limited setback.

v. Some locations and lot sizes, as noted in local area or neighbourhood plans or other city policies, may permit developments sited in more than one building on a site (i.e. more than one row). This may include “courtyard townhouses” (townhouses which incorporate a central courtyard providing shared or private outdoor amenity space) or a main building at the front of the lot and a smaller building such as a coach house to the rear. For these developments, the following should be achieved:

1. Site planning should ensure that public streets are faced with dwelling units that have direct access to the ground and the public sidewalk;
2. Units located in the interior of lots should be designed with adequate separation from other buildings and have access to open space;
3. Vehicle access, parking and circulation should be integrated sensitively so it is not the dominant aspect of the development. See Section 1, vii for further guidance.
4. Dwelling units located in the interior of a site should have rear yard and side yard setbacks sufficient to support landscape and sensitive transitions to adjacent existing development and open spaces.
5. Sufficient building separation should be provided between buildings to maximize daylight and minimize shadowing and overlook.



Illustrative examples of possible approaches to courtyard townhouse layout (illustration above and photo below)



Ensure clear pedestrian access to rear units

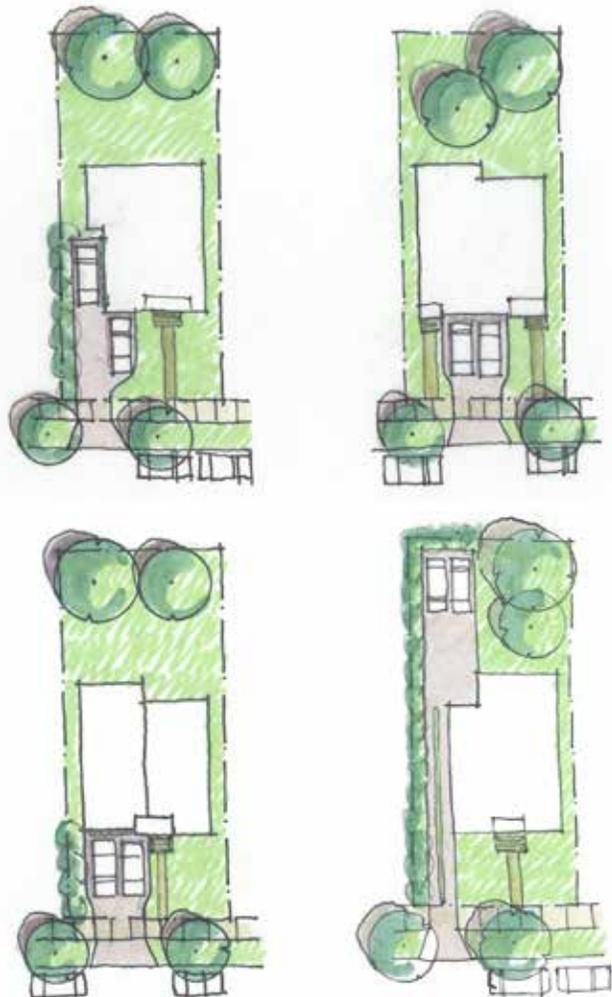


Development fronting the street may in some cases be complemented by limited development to the rear of the lot, retaining backyard open space.

6. Buildings which do not front onto the public street should be sited to provide sufficient separation from shared property lines and adjacent development in order to reduce overlook and shading, protect privacy for residents and neighbours, and provide space for landscaping.
  7. Consider lower height and massing of buildings located to the rear of a site, compared to the front, where this would mitigate impacts on neighbouring properties.
  8. Where parking access courts are included in a development, these areas should be integrated into the overall development to create a welcoming space. Integrate landscape into these areas and provide features such as legible entries, windows or balconies to provide casual surveillance. Wherever possible, integrate one or more trees within or directly adjacent to a parking court or rear yard parking area.
  9. Consider varying garage and parking orientations (e.g. a mix of garages oriented to the street, to a parking court, or units with parking separated from the unit) to avoid drive aisles dominated entirely by garage doors. A mix of entries, patios, windows and landscape create a more livable and inviting space.
- vi. “Galley-style” developments, where building complexes are sited perpendicular to streets with residential unit entries oriented internally, are strongly discouraged. This layout is discouraged because it does not orient as many residential units towards the street, typically provides less landscaped open space, and can create poor transitions to adjacent backyards or future development on neighbouring lots.



*A mix of landscape, fenestration and parking create a more interesting space.*



*Examples of site layouts for duplexes which support the pattern of landscaped front and back yards, urban forest, buildings which presents a friendly face to the street and considers livability.*

vii. Vehicular access, circulation, garage doors and parking should not be the dominant aspect of developments and should be integrated to minimize impacts on fronting streets and adjacent public and private open spaces. Design strategies should be employed to minimize the impact of accommodating vehicles on site, including but not limited to the following:

1. Integrate parking in a manner that provides substantial landscaped areas in rear yards;
2. Locate and consolidate off-street parking areas to reduce the overall site area dedicated to parking and circulation, and/or create a better relationship of individual units to open spaces or adjacent development. This strategy may be particularly effective when combined with Transportation Demand Management measures;
3. Consider grouping driveway access points to minimize the number of driveway cuts and maximize space for landscaping and on-street parking;
4. Location of driveway access should strive to preserve existing canopy trees or provide opportunities for new canopy trees within the boulevard by providing enough planting space. See Section 4 Open Space Design for further guidance;
5. Front-accessed parking may be appropriate in some areas in order to avoid excessive pavement in rear yard areas. In these cases, attention to design is required to emphasize front yard landscape, provide tree planting space, and ensure a pedestrian-friendly building façade.
6. Minimize the impact of garage doors and vehicular entries by recessing them from the facade to emphasize residential unit entries.
7. Use high quality and, where appropriate, permeable paving materials for driveways;
8. Use attractive, high quality materials and consider incorporating glazing in garage doors;
9. See Section 4, Open Space Design for additional design guidelines related to landscaping and screening.

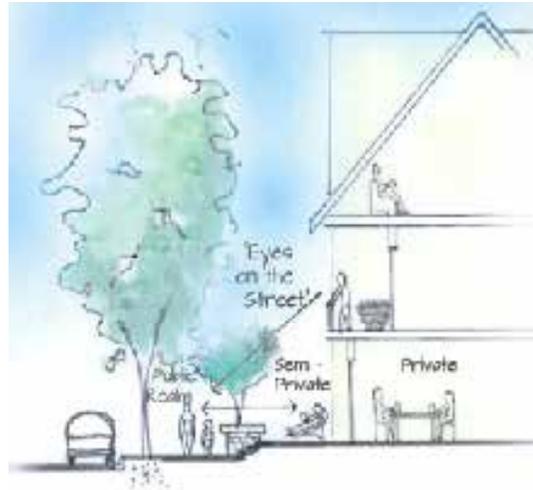


*Example of a site layout which clusters parking in order to minimize the area of the site dedicated to vehicle circulation, and enhances the relationship of individual units to open spaces.*

## 2) Orientation and Interface - A Friendly Face

**Objectives:** *To ensure new development is oriented and designed to enhance public streets and open spaces and encourage street vitality and safety through increased “eyes on the street.”*

- a. Residential buildings should be sited and oriented to overlook public streets, parks, walkways and open spaces balanced with privacy considerations.
- b. Developments should maintain a street-fronting orientation, parallel to the street.
- c. All residential units facing streets should have entries oriented towards, and be clearly accessible and visible, from the street.
- d. Where some units do not front onto a public street, a clear, legible and welcoming pedestrian pathway from the public street should be established.
- e. For developments that have interior-facing units, ensure unit entries are legible. This is important for welcoming visitors, for emergency responders and as a principle for CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design). Strategies to achieve this include:
  - i. Visible addressing to help visitors navigate to the entry. Where an entry is shared, include addressing at the shared entry.
  - ii. Defining features such as a roof overhang or other features to help identify the entry.
  - iii. Provide low-glare outdoor lighting beside or above entry doors as well as walkways, to enhance security and to help identify the entrance.
  - iv. Entries to at-grade or basement units should be accessible wherever possible.
  - v. If the entrance is immediately adjacent to a parking area, delineate the entrance with planters or other landscape features to provide visual relief and a clear separation from the parking area
- f. Consider design strategies to delineate private front yard spaces, porches or patios from the public realm, while maintaining visibility of unit entrances. Design strategies may include but are not limited to:
  - i. elevating the front entryway or patio slightly above the fronting sidewalk level; or



*Example of interface with street.*



*Example of townhouse units with friendly interface.*



*A houseplex with visible entries establishing friendly relationships to the street, landscaped front yards, porch or semi-private transition spaces, legible doors and windows.*

- ii. where a change in grade is not desired to provide accessibility, delineate the space through other means such as landscaping features, low fencing or planters.
- g. The design and placement of buildings and landscape should establish a sensitive transition to adjacent parks, trails, open spaces, and natural areas, considering a landscaped edge; respect the root zones of adjacent trees; and minimize impacts on ecologically sensitive areas and natural features.
- h. For new development adjacent to parks and larger public outdoor open spaces, design should clearly delineating private from public spaces, to avoid “privatizing” of public space.
- i. The location of blank walls or extensive parking areas adjacent to parks, trails and natural areas is strongly discouraged.



*Where unit entries do not directly face the street, design features including pathways, gates, signage, lighting, and visibility make it clear where unit entries are located.*



*Where zoning permits, townhouses may be built close to the street (left). This example shows how a front porch or patio and landscape can create a friendly face, transition from the public to the private realm with landscape, and result in a comfortable and usable space. In other areas (right), setbacks and green front yards establish a pattern.*

### 3) Building Form, Features and Context

#### 1. Building Form and Design

**Objectives:** To achieve buildings of high architectural quality and interest with human-scale building proportions that are oriented towards and are compatible with the established streetscape character and pattern. Human scale refers to the use of architectural features, details and site design elements that are human proportioned and clearly oriented towards pedestrian activity. Building articulation refers to the many street frontage design elements, both horizontal and vertical, that help create an interesting and welcoming streetscape.

- a. Building design elements, details, and materials should create a well-proportioned and cohesive building design and exhibit an overall architectural concept.
- b. Incorporate a range of architectural features and design details into building facades that are rich and varied in detail to create visual interest when approached by pedestrians. Examples of architectural features include:
  - i. building height, massing, articulation and modulation
  - ii. bay windows and balconies
  - iii. fenestration pattern (proportions and placement of windows and entry ways)
- c. For townhouse type development: modulation in facades and roof forms are encouraged to break up building mass, differentiate individual units within attached residential developments, and to provide architectural interest and variation along the street.
  - i. Individual units should include distinct design elements while being compatible with neighbouring units as part of an overall architectural concept.
  - ii. Longer rows of townhouses (exceeding approximately 4 units) should generally be broken up.
- d. Houseplexes and multiplexes may be designed to appear as a single building with a shared roof form. In these cases, design features should make clear that the building comprises different units through legible front entries (see Part 2 Orientation and Interface). Duplex buildings may choose either of these strategies.



Development which exhibits a cohesive architectural expression, with variation in units, clear front entries, and architectural interest for pedestrians.



Historic traditional townhouses (left) demonstrate human scale architecture, relationship to the public street, and cohesiveness of architectural expression. These same principles should guide the design of more modern developments which may be expressed in varied architectural styles (example at right).

- e. Entrances should be located and designed to create building identity, to distinguish between individual units, and generally create visual interest for pedestrians. Well-considered use of architectural detail and, where appropriate, landscape treatment, should be used to emphasize primary entrances, and to provide “punctuation” in the overall street-scape treatment.
- f. Upper floor areas should be integrated into roof forms to help further mitigate the scale of new developments.
- g. Balconies should be designed as integral to the building. Overly enclosed balconies should be avoided, as these limit views and sunlight access.
- h. Building sidewalls should be designed to be attractive and interesting when viewed from adjacent buildings, street, and sidewalks through the use of materials, colours, textures, articulation, fenestration, and/or plant material.
- i. Creative use of landscaping or other screening should be used to reduce the perceived scale of adjacent development without compromising surveillance of public areas.
- j. Accessory structures should be compatible in architectural expression and quality of materials to main structures.



*Example of a well designed balcony.*

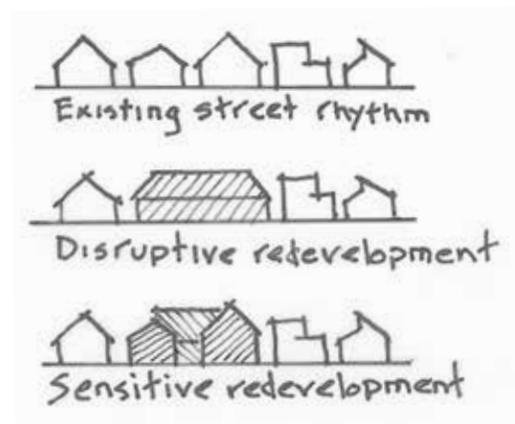
## 2. Neighbourliness/Compatibility

**Objectives:** *To respond to the established form and architectural characteristics of surrounding buildings in order to achieve new buildings which are compatible with their context and minimize impacts on neighbours..*

- a. New development should ensure a good fit with existing development by incorporating architectural features, details and building proportions that complement and respond to the existing architectural context, and by referring to distinctive and desirable architectural qualities of existing adjacent buildings in new development. Consideration should be given to the following aspects of development:
  - i. building articulation, scale and proportions
  - ii. similar or complementary roof forms
  - iii. building details and fenestration patterns
  - iv. materials and colour
- b. In some cases where a contextual architectural form and pattern does not exist, architectural character may be created rather than reflecting contextual precedent. In such cases, a well designed, new project can become a contribution to the context that may inform future development considerations.
- c. New townhouse development should transition in scale to existing residential buildings. Strategies to achieve this include but are not limited to the following:



*Examples of a duplex (above) and houseplex (below) responding to existing scale, proportions, and architectural context.*

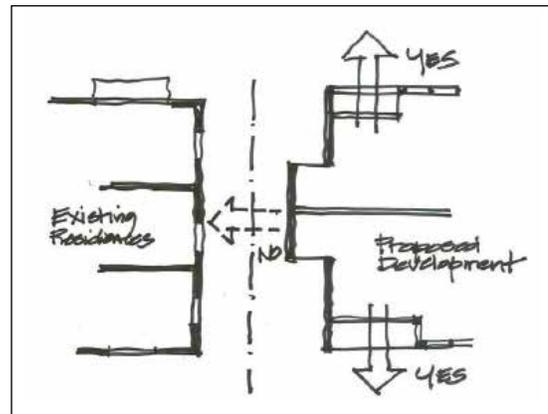
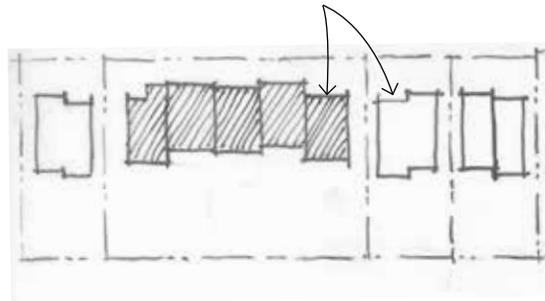


- i. A maximum one storey height difference between the end units of new street fronting developments and adjacent existing development should be achieved.
  - ii. The end units of new street fronting townhouse developments should be sited to match or transition to the front yard set back of adjacent existing residential buildings.
- d. The views from upper stories of new buildings should minimize overlook into adjacent private yards, especially in less intensive areas. Strategies to achieve this include but are not limited to the following:
- i. Increased setback.
  - ii. Stagger windows to not align with adjacent, facing windows.
  - iii. Primary windows into habitable spaces, and also decks and balconies, should not face or be oriented to interior side-yards
  - iv. Locate and screen upper level windows, decks, and balconies to minimize overlook.
  - v. Use of skylights, translucent windows and clerestory windows are encouraged to minimize overlook of side yards.
  - vi. Landscape screening.
- e. Site, orient and design buildings to minimize shadowing impacts on adjacent properties.

*New developments should transition in height to existing adjacent residential buildings*



*End units should be set back to match or transition to existing neighbouring houses*



*Orientation and placement of windows, balconies and porches to respect privacy of adjacent development*

### 3. Mechanical equipment and service areas

**Objective:** *To site and screen mechanical equipment and service areas to minimize impacts on neighbours and the public realm.*

- a. Mechanical equipment, vents and service areas (e.g. for the collection of garbage or recycling) should be integrated with architectural treatment of the building, and screened with high quality, durable finishes compatible with building design.
- b. Mechanical equipment, vents and service areas should be located to minimize impacts on adjacent development by avoiding proximity to windows, doors and usable outdoor spaces.
- c. Location and installation of gas and electrical meters and their utility cabinets, as well as other mechanical or service apparatus should be carefully integrated into building and site design. Gas and electrical metres and utility cabinets on building frontages should be screened.

#### 4. Materials

**Objective:** To use materials which are high quality, weather gracefully, and contribute to the overall neighbourhood image.

- a. An integrated, consistent range of materials and colours should be used, and variety between buildings and building frontages should be provided that is consistent with the overall streetscape.
- b. In general, new buildings should incorporate substantial, durable and natural materials into their facade to avoid a 'thin veneer' look and encourage graceful weathering of materials over time. Materials such as masonry, stone, natural wood, etc. are encouraged. Vinyl siding, large areas of stucco, and imitation stone/rock are discouraged and should generally be avoided.



#### 4) Open Space Design

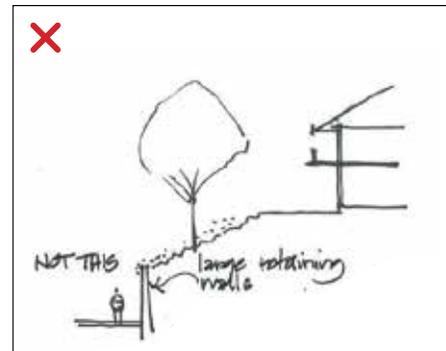
**Objective:** To enhance the quality of open space, support the urban forest, provide privacy where needed, emphasize unit entrances and pedestrian accesses, provide amenity space for residents, reduce storm water runoff, and to ensure that front and rear yards are not dominated by parking.

##### 1. Landscaping and site design

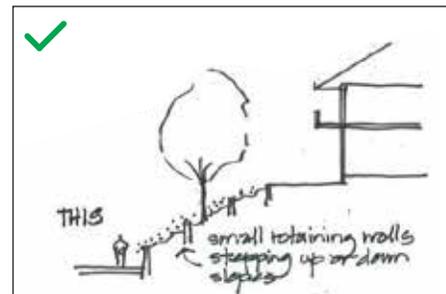
- a. Landscape treatments including use of front patios, accented paving treatments, fence and gate details, and other approaches are encouraged to help call out a residential entry and add interest along the street and sidewalk
- b. Areas within setbacks should incorporate plantings to create a green interface between buildings and streets
- c. Topographic conditions should be treated to minimize impacts on neighbouring development, for example by using terraced retaining walls of natural materials or by stepping a project to match the slope.
- d. Development should avoid significant reworking of existing natural grade.
- e. Where a building's ground floor is elevated above a pedestrian's eye level when on the sidewalk, landscaping should be used to help make the transition between grades. Some techniques for achieving this guideline include:
  - i. rockeries with floral displays, live ground cover or shrubs.
  - ii. terraces with floral displays, live ground cover or shrubs.
  - iii. low retaining walls with raised planting strips
  - iv. stone or brick masonry walls with vines or shrubs.
- f. Accessibility should be provided, where possible, in open space design.
- g. Landscape areas are encouraged to include a mixture of tree sizes and types
- h. Landscape on sites with significant natural features (e.g. significant trees, topography, rocky outcrops) should be located and designed to be sympathetic to the natural landscape.
- i. Consider planting tree species and other landscape plants that will tolerate a degree of drought and will survive the summer water restrictions and dry conditions of southern Vancouver Island.



Examples of high quality materials in buildings and landscape elements



Avoid large retaining walls and significant reworking of natural grade.



Transition sensitively between grades.

- j. In considering tree placement along boulevards or in the front yard setback adjacent to street rights-of-way, consider tree sizes and spacing indicated by the City's specifications and policies for street trees.
- k. Landscaped screening along circulation and parking areas which abut lot lines is strongly encouraged, while maintaining site lines and enabling casual surveillance. Other surface parking areas should be screened with landscaping.
- l. Integration of landscaping to soften hardscape areas associated with vehicle circulation and parking is encouraged.
- m. Site design should integrate features to mitigate surface runoff of stormwater. This may include a variety of treatments (e.g. permeable paving for driveways and parking areas, landscape features designed for rainwater management, cisterns or green roofs, and/or other approaches) which are consistent with approved engineering practices and other city policies.
- n. Non-glare lighting should be provided at residential unit entrances, along pedestrian paths and common areas to contribute to safety. Lighting strategies that mitigate undue spill-over for adjacent residential units are strongly encouraged.

**2. Provide Outdoor Amenity Space for Residential Units**

- a. Residential units, including suites, are strongly encouraged to have direct access to usable outdoor amenity space. This may include a patio, porch, balcony, deck, or similar feature of sufficient size and dimensions to be usable, attractive and comfortable. At a minimum, access to a shared yard or amenity space should be provided.
- b. Consider factors such as privacy and access to sunlight in locating and designing amenity spaces.



*Example of a multiplex (houseplex) showing individual units with usable outdoor amenity spaces for each unit.*



*Example of upper-storey balcony designed with consideration for usable dimensions, access to sunlight, and balancing outward views with privacy concerns.*



*Examples (two photos above) of usable outdoor amenity space for ground-oriented units, with screening for privacy and sufficient dimensions for usability.*

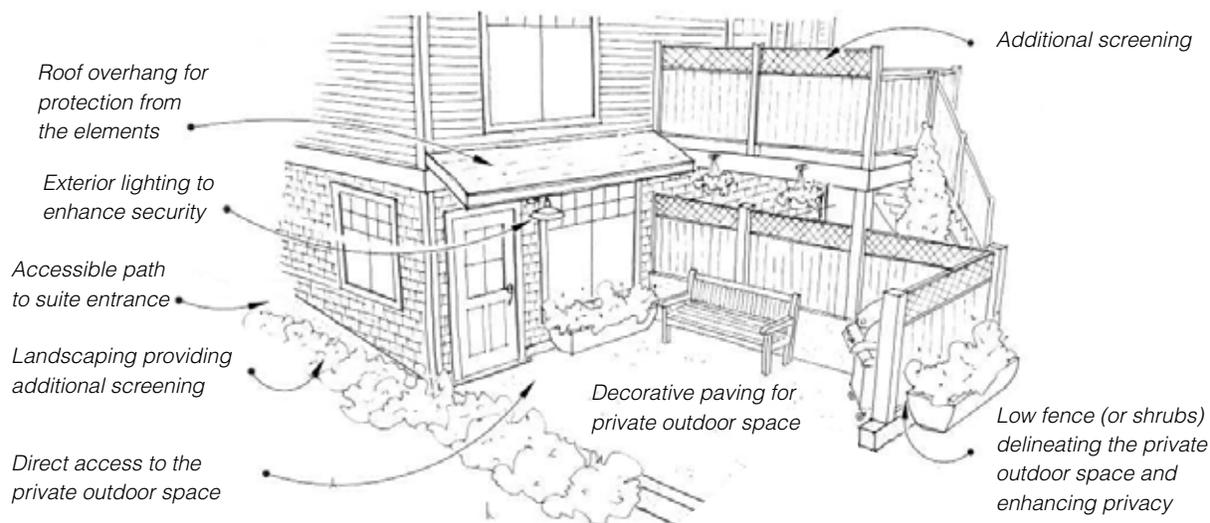


Illustration of strategies for effective design of usable outdoor amenity space for a suite.

## 5) Additional Livability Guidelines for Suites

Some forms of housing may have suites (e.g. lock-off suites). In addition to the guidelines elsewhere, the following guidelines apply:

### 1. Design for Livability

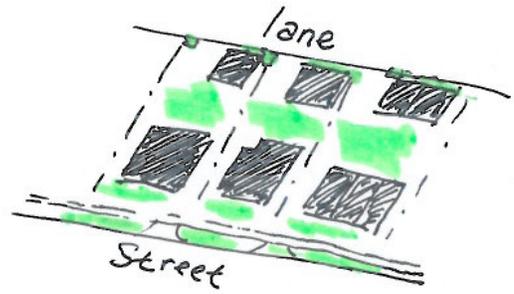
- a. Suites should be provided with windows of sufficient size and orientation to provide for sunlight and outward views.
- b. Where a suite is located in a basement, smaller windows or light wells with obstructed views should not be the primary window orientation.
- c. Avoid locating at-grade windows directly adjacent to parking spaces. Windows in these locations should generally contain landscape separation from the parking space.
- d. Where topography and basement suite location do not allow for outward looking windows and entry, consider the creation of a sunken patio, generally located at the rear or side of a building (also see part 4), section 2, of these guidelines regarding outdoor amenity space).
- e. Exterior pathways and entries leading to basement-level or at-grade suites should be designed to be accessible wherever possible.
- f. Taking advantage of grade changes on a site can help locate suites in a way which provides for access to sunlight, amenity space, and accessible entry.
- g. Provide adequate storage space including bicycle storage for suites.

## 6) Additional Guidance for dwelling units adjacent to laneways

Some infill housing types may include dwelling units which are located adjacent to a laneway. While laneways are typically seen as service areas which access parking, they also provide a unique character to blocks where they are found. While few in number, many of Victoria's laneways are bordered by landscaping and serve as areas where pedestrians and slow car traffic mix. While allowing for access and parking, housing units located adjacent to laneways are encouraged to create a welcoming laneway frontage, provide for casual surveillance, and retain or enhance landscape along the laneway.

- a. Development of housing adjacent to a laneway should:
  - i. create a welcoming frontage through the inclusion of legible entries, gates or pathways, and fenestration oriented to the laneway

- ii. provide for casual surveillance of the laneway through the location of windows or balconies
  - iii. include a modest setback from the laneway's edge to accommodate landscape or pedestrian areas between the edge of the lane (or parking) and the building
  - iv. be sited to preserve mature trees and provide tree planting spaces which enhance the appearance of the laneway
  - v. provide low-glare, downward facing lighting at entries and to enhance a sense of safety
  - vi. minimize stormwater runoff onto the laneway
- b. Massing and location of windows, porches and decks should limit overlook and shadowing of adjacent back yards.
  - c. Green spaces should be provided to the centre of the lot as compatible with existing patterns.
  - d. Sites with laneway housing should provide a legible, accessible pathway from the front (street) to laneway housing units.
  - e. Consider pedestrian safety in siting of gates and entries along the laneway by providing visibility for pedestrians and drivers.



*Example of primary building oriented to the street and laneway units in the back with greenspace in the middle of the lot, fitting into the existing pattern.*