



Design Guidelines for Attached Residential Development

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Design Guidelines for Attached Residential Development

Introduction

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.

These guidelines apply to residential developments of three or more self-contained units on a site, each having direct access to the outside at grade level, and at least three of which share common walls. Attached Residential Developments can be designed in different forms (e.g. townhouses, rowhouses, etc.). They can also be designed in different configurations, and may involve more than one building complex on a site, which may be organized in more than one row where supported in plan policies and permitted by zoning.

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.

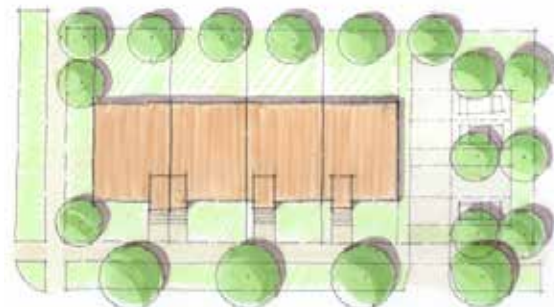
- a. Building Placement
 - i. Attached residential buildings should be designed parallel to the street with unit entrances oriented to, and directly accessed from, the fronting street. Both front and rear yards should be provided.
 - ii. For properties that include buildings of heritage value (Heritage Designated or listed on the City's Heritage Register) alternative siting of new buildings or additions may be considered to facilitate heritage conservation.



Townhouses can contribute positively to streetscapes and the overall neighbourhood, supporting walking and creating greater housing diversity within existing neighbourhoods.

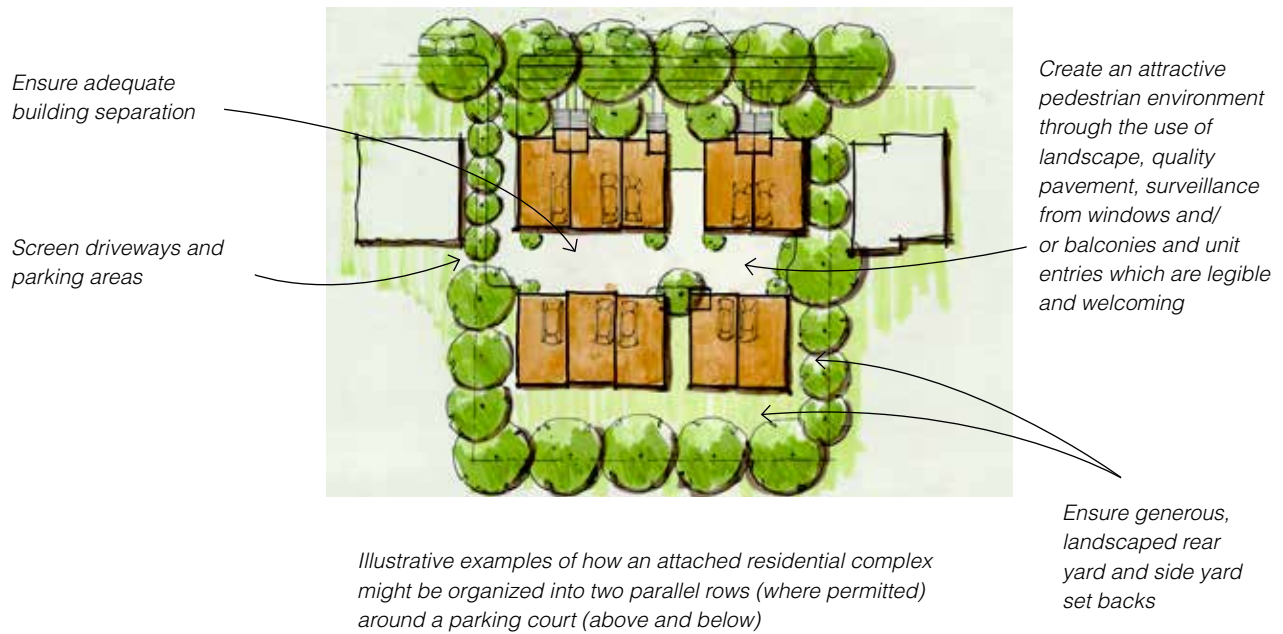


Illustrative examples of how townhouses along a street might be arranged with well-articulated street frontages (above and below).



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

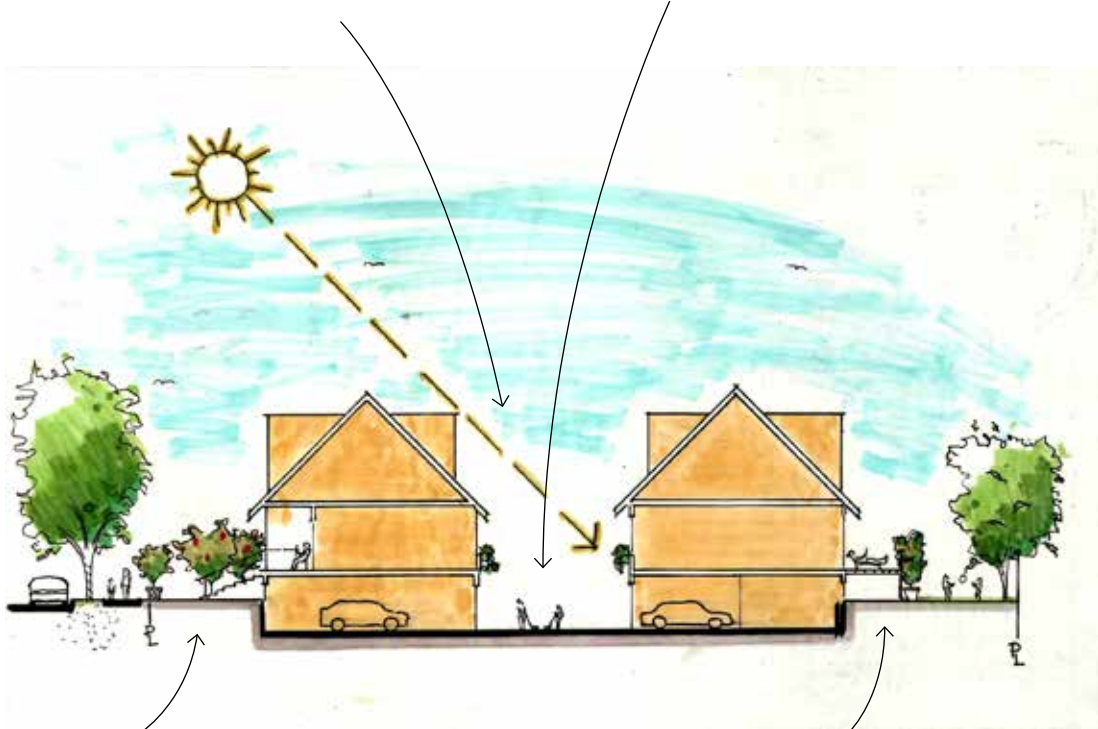
- iii. For properties that include significant natural features (e.g. significant trees, topography, rocky outcrops), buildings and landscape should be sited and designed to respond to natural topography and protect significant natural features wherever possible. Strategies to achieve this include but 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. Some locations and lot sizes, as noted in local area or neighbourhood plan policies, may permit developments sited in more than one building complex on a site (i.e. more than one row). For these developments, the following should be achieved:
 1. Site planning should ensure that dwelling units face the street;
 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. vi. 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.
 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.
- v. “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, and typically provides less landscaped open space.

Ensure adequate building separation to enable natural daylight penetration (8 metres is desired)

Design driveways and parking access as flex-use shared spaces

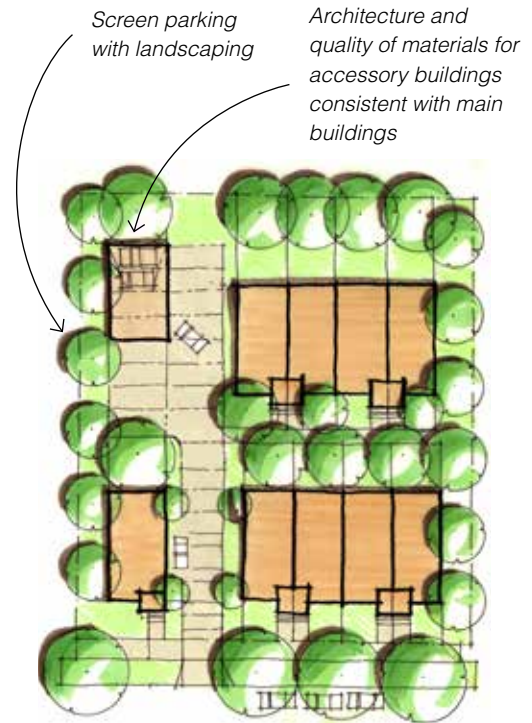


Orient and animate entry ways towards public streets

Incorporate semi-private and private usable outdoor amenity spaces for residents

vi. 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 minimize extent of driveways and eliminate need for driveway access to individual units (refer to site plan showing shared/clustered parking);
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 and emphasized through design features.
- 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
 - 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 delineate 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.

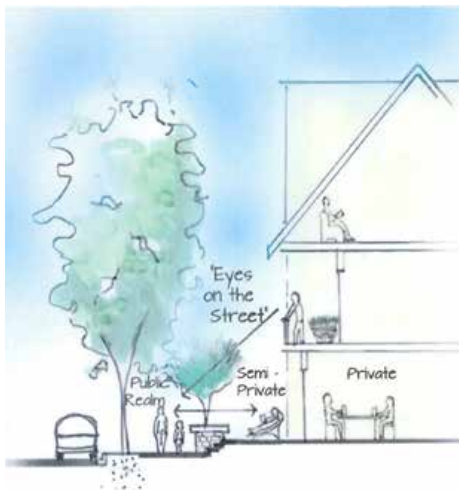


Illustration of interface with street.



Example of delineation of private front yard and visible entrance.

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. 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.

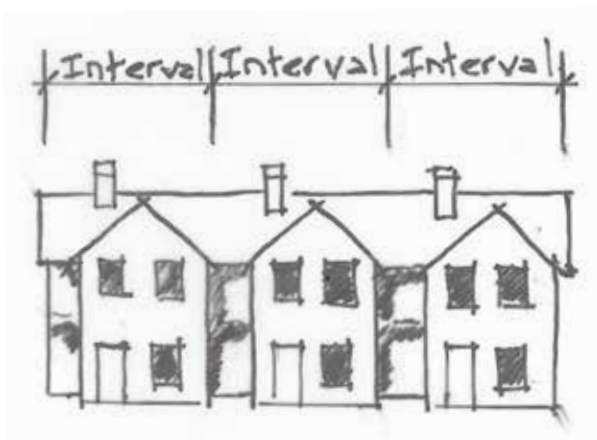


Development which exhibits a cohesive architectural expression, with variation in units, clear front entries, and architectural interest for pedestrians.



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).

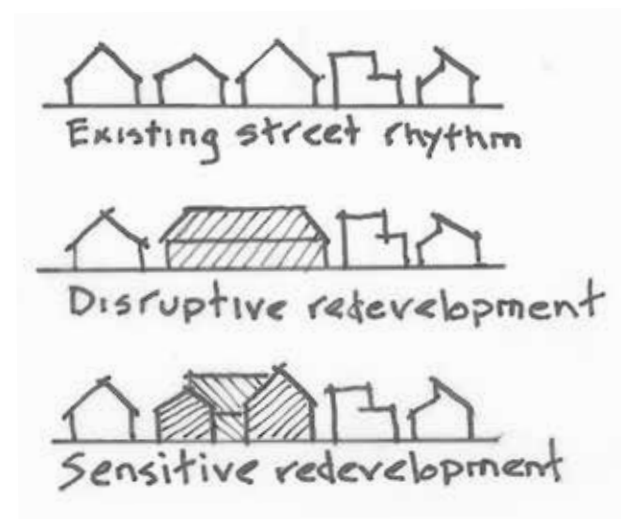
- d. Entrances should be located and designed to create building identity, to distinguish between individual units, and generally create visual interest for pedestrians. Well-considered use of architectural detail and, where appropriate, landscape treatment, should be used to emphasize primary entrances,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



2) Neighbourliness/Compatibility

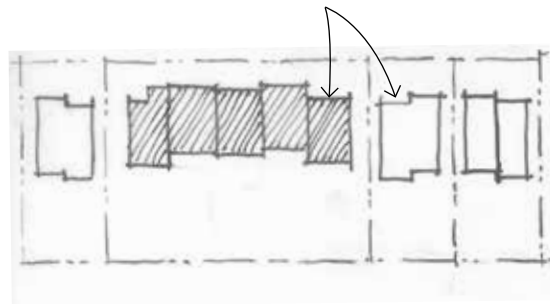
Objectives: To respond to the established form and architectural characteristics of surrounding buildings in order to achieve new buildings which are compatible with their context and minimize impacts on neighbours..

- 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 aspect 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:
 - 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.

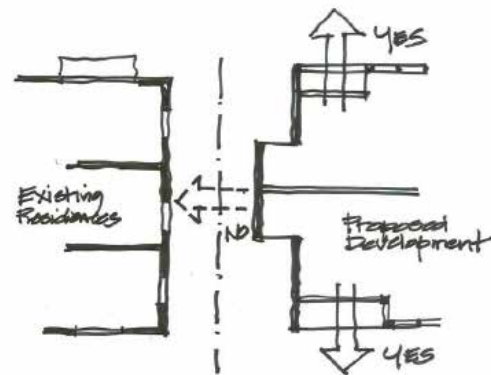
End units should be set back to match or transition to existing neighbouring houses



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.



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

New developments should transition in height to existing adjacent residential buildings





High quality materials in buildings and landscape elements

4) Materials

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

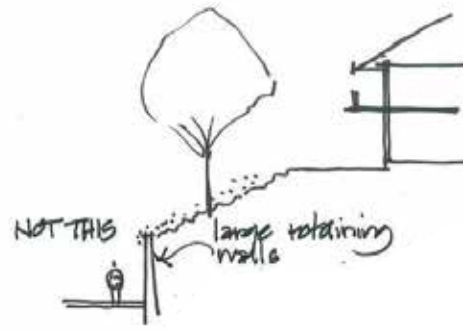
- a. An integrated, consistent range of materials and colours should be used, and variety between buildings and building frontages should be provided that is consistent with the overall streetscape.
- b. In general, new buildings should incorporate substantial, durable and natural materials into their 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 and large areas of stucco are discouraged and should generally be avoided.

4) Open Space Design

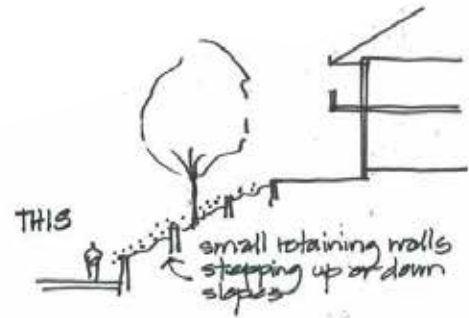
Objective: *To enhance the quality of open space, support the urban forest, provide privacy where needed, emphasize unit entrances and pedestrian accesses, reduce storm water runoff, and to ensure that front and rear yards are not dominated by parking.*

- 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.
- 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.
- o. A minimum of 30% of the required common landscaped areas should include a diverse combination of plants and vegetation that are native to southern Vancouver Island, food-bearing (capable of being harvested for food and medicine) or that provide pollinator habitats.
- p. The design of landscaped areas should avoid the location of plants and trees immediately adjacent to air intakes on mechanical equipment and should also consider potential impacts from plant-based allergens within common outdoor gathering spaces.



Avoid large retaining walls and significant reworking of natural grade.



Transition sensitively between grades.