

CITY OF VICTORIA

General Urban Design Guidelines

Victoria 2050 OCP Schedule 2A



Publishing Information

Title:	General Urban Design Guidelines
Prepared by:	City of Victoria Planning and Development Department
Status:	June 2025
Printing Date:	2025
Contact details:	The City of Victoria Planning and Development Department Victoria City Hall, 2nd Floor 250.261.0382 Electronic versions available on the City of Victoria website: victoria.ca

Diagrams and photos used in this document are for illustrative purposes only.

Table of Contents

Part 1: Introduction and Overview..... 4

1.1. Purpose and Use	4
1.2. Context	5
1.3. Requirements for Large Sites and Sites with Tall Buildings.....	6
1.4. Design Fundamentals.....	6

Part 2: Design Guidelines 9

2.1. Site Planning and Building Orientation	9
2.1.1. General Guidelines.....	10
2.1.2. Vehicular Access, Parking and Back-of-House.....	14
2.2. Building–Open Space Interface	18
2.2.1. General Guidelines	18
2.2.2. Commercial and Mixed-use Buildings	21
2.2.3. Residential Buildings	24
2.3. Building Composition and Expression.....	26
2.4. Landscape and Open Space Design	30
2.4.1. General Guidelines	30
2.4.2. Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)	34

Part 3: Special Considerations..... 38

3.1. Accessibility	38
3.2. Industrial Buildings	40
3.3. Buildings with Work/Live and Live/Work Units	42
3.4. Tall Buildings.....	44

Part 1: Introduction and Overview

1.1. Purpose and Use

These guidelines are meant to guide form and character of multi-family residential, commercial and industrial developments and to support the evolution of neighbourhoods, villages and key transportation corridors throughout Victoria. This includes ensuring individual development projects enhance and do not compromise development opportunities on adjacent sites and in so doing, contribute to positive and cohesive urban design outcomes at the site, block, neighbourhood and city scale.

The guidelines are intended to foster innovative, creative and unique design responses to individual site conditions, opportunities and constraints by applying the broader design principles and goals established in the City's Official Community Plan and Rezoning and Development Policy.

The guidelines provide clear direction for designers, architects and property owners who are actively planning or considering a new building, retrofit or addition to an existing building within specified areas of the city. They are also an important evaluation tool for City staff and decision-makers when reviewing new development applications to ensure that a proposed development reflects principles of good urban design and Victoria's values and identity.

It is important to note that the design guidelines are not intended to be an absolute checklist for all developments. Rather they function as a benchmark and design framework to ensure that careful thought and consideration has been given to important design objectives while still supporting creativity, innovation and design excellence. Where alternative design approaches are proposed by an applicant, they will be reviewed against the statements of design intent to ensure that key design objectives are still being achieved. Applicants may be required to provide additional diagrams and studies to support the proposed design solutions.

Greater discretion and a broader interpretation of the design guidelines is envisioned when reviewing institutional, civic, religious and cultural buildings given the different programming and use requirements of these buildings. Proposals within existing master planned communities should maintain design consistency with the established urban design while also adhering to the General Urban Design Guidelines.

The Design Guidelines support the implementation of the City of Victoria's zoning regulations by providing guidance on the circumstances where variances to zoning parameters may be supportable, contingent on technical review and a proposal's alignment with the intent of the guidelines.

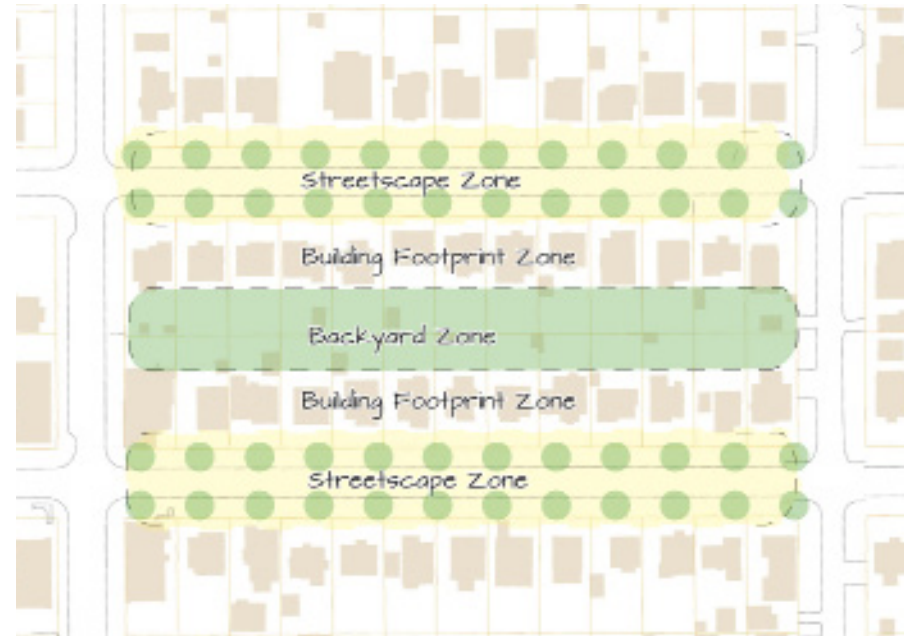
1.2. Context

Victoria's neighbourhoods are diverse and unique. Many neighbourhoods are premised on a "15-minute" community: a place where a mix of housing types are located within walking distance of urban villages and amenities that provide goods, services and social opportunities for daily living. Victoria's neighbourhoods contain a mix of housing developed from the late 1800s to the present day, along with distinctive urban villages which have evolved over time. Within these areas are unique conditions related to lot and block size, topography, natural features and built environment, which will affect how these guidelines are applied in any location.

Victoria's residential areas are generally 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 the diversity of residential areas throughout the city, 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 Garry Oak Meadows.

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

A defining feature of many residential areas is a pattern of "perimeter blocks," with primary residential buildings located near the front of the lot, and rear yards dedicated to open spaces, creating a contiguous open space at the interior of blocks. These guidelines have been formulated to respond to these key features.



Victoria's residential areas are characterized by the presence of front and back yards, with tree-lined streets, and a generally defined building footprint zone.

1.3. Requirements for Large Sites and Sites with Tall Buildings

In order to meet principles and objectives in the *Official Community Plan* and the *Rezoning and Development Policy*, proposals for large sites and sites with tall buildings within Development Permit Area 1 (General Urban Design) should include a Comprehensive Development Plan, as described in the *City of Victoria Rezoning and Development Policy and Development Permit Areas (DPA)*.

Large sites are defined as sites of sufficient size to accommodate multiple residential and/or mixed-use buildings and that merit internal pedestrian networks and significant on-site open space amenities (approximately 4,000 sqm or greater).

Proposals within communities that were developed under past Comprehensive Development Plans (such as Master Development Agreements) should maintain design consistency with the existing community unless significant changes in land use, density, public realm elements and mobility network are sought.

Tall buildings are defined as buildings taller than 21 m or seven storeys or greater in height.

1.4. Design Fundamentals

Urban design is the comprehensive and cohesive combination of buildings, streets, and open spaces which has, as its objective, the creation of high quality, memorable and people centred public spaces. Urban design is fundamentally concerned with the spaces between buildings, the experience of the city at eye-level and by the relationship between the public and private realm at street level. Comfortable and enjoyable streets, squares and plazas scaled towards pedestrian activity and social connection are essential elements in creating functional, aesthetic and vibrant places.

Design Principles

The following principles are the foundation for supporting creativity, innovation and design excellence, and represent a design framework applicable to all development projects.

1



New buildings and open spaces that contribute to the envisioned urban form through **thoughtful building and site designs** that have positive relationships with surroundings.

2



High quality design for buildings that support street vitality, visual interest and safety for pedestrians and building users, and contribute to active and attractive public spaces.

3



High quality, pedestrian oriented streetscapes and open spaces that are welcoming and comfortable, support the urban forest and foster year-round social gathering and celebration

4



Design with nature using green infrastructure to mimic natural systems, provide stormwater management and habitat areas while supporting watershed health, urban food systems and the urban forest.

5



Livable and inclusive buildings and open spaces that provide equitable access to open space, the urban forest, daylight and fresh air as well as family friendly environments and all ages and abilities designs.

6



Healthy, climate-friendly and future-forward buildings and open spaces with small environmental impacts and big positive design outcomes for residents, users and their broader communities.

7



Placemaking and storytelling that express the values of our city, embrace diverse narratives and promote designs attentive to distinctive features of Victoria's Downtown Core, Legislative Precinct, Midtown Employment District, Town Centres and Villages.

Urban Design Fundamentals

The General Urban Design Guidelines are structured around the following design fundamentals:



2.1 Site Planning and Building Orientation

to create a perimeter block form of development



2.2 Building – Open Space Interface

to create vitality and interest



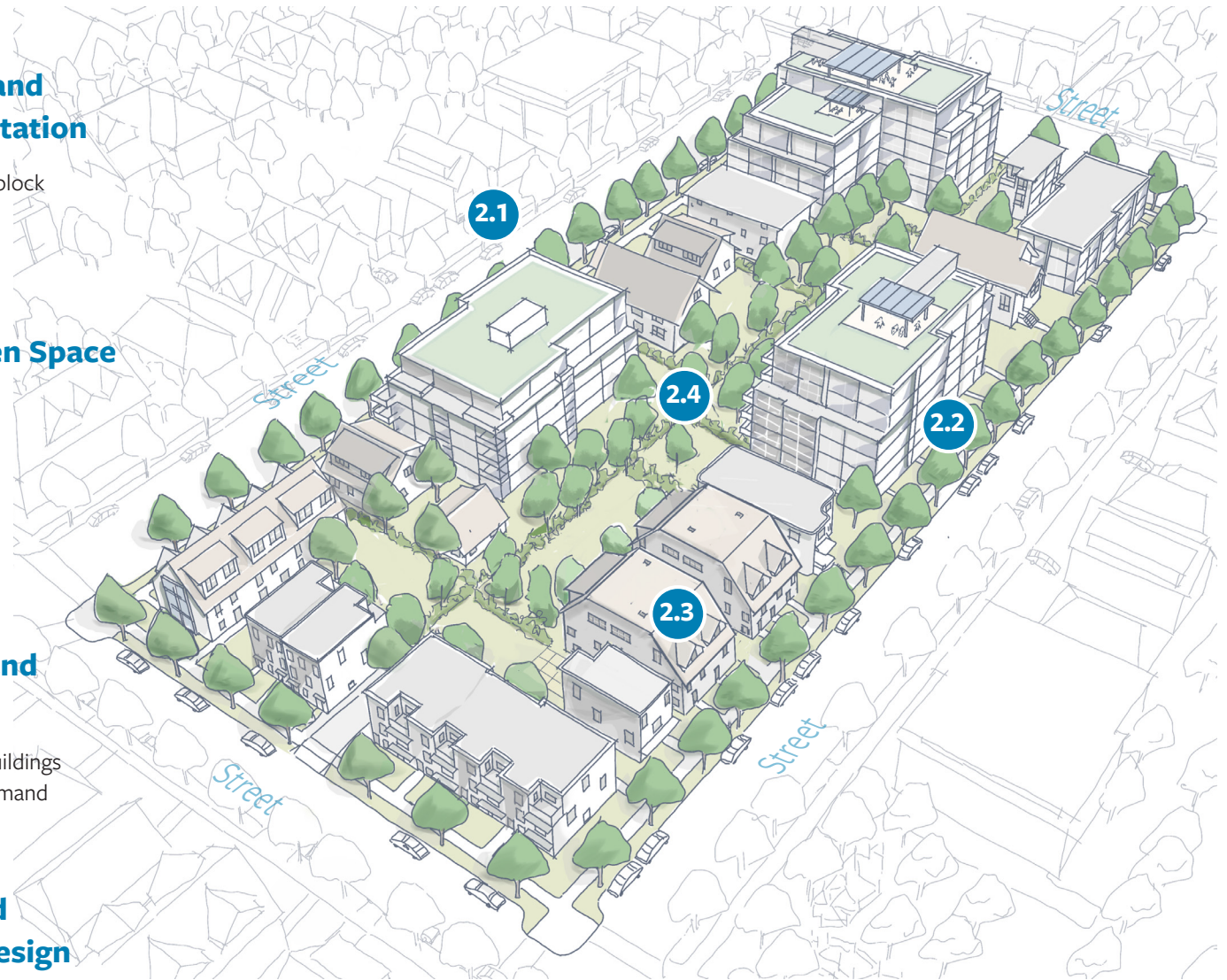
2.3 Building Composition and Expression

to ensure attractive buildings that reduce energy demand



2.4 Landscape and Open Space Design

to enhance amenity, ensure liveability and bring nature into the city

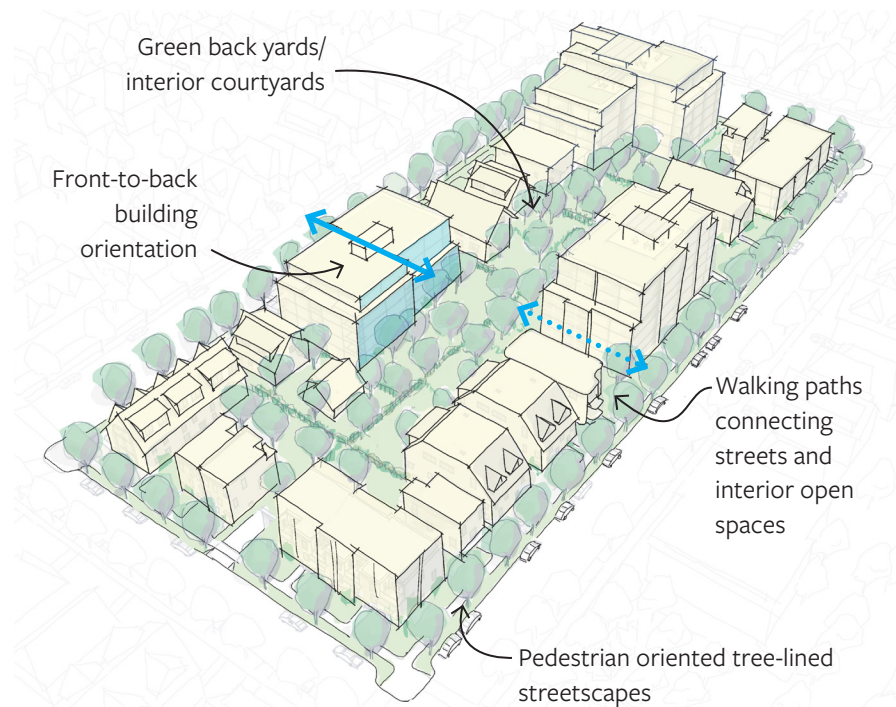


Illustrated impression of a typical city block outside of Victoria's downtown, including a variety of housing options and the City's urban design fundamentals

Part 2: Design Guidelines

2.1. Site Planning and Building Orientation

Intent: To ensure new development contributes to high quality, pedestrian-oriented streets and open spaces, and enhances liveability.



Front-to-back oriented buildings result in a perimeter block urban form, where the adjacency of rear yards lead to a green core supporting outdoor amenity areas and the urban forest.



2.1.1. General Guidelines

- a. Site and design buildings with a front-to-back orientation with primary facades facing streets and interior open spaces (rear yards) to achieve a perimeter block form of development. Alternative forms of site planning may also be considered if the Urban Design Fundamentals of these guidelines can be met.
- b. Provide outdoor amenity spaces that create and contribute to a cohesive, green interior courtyard experience within the block.
- c. Site and design buildings to respond to and, where possible, protect significant existing natural features (e.g., significant trees, topography, ecological features, rocky outcrops) and ensure integration of required tree plantings and stormwater management facilities. Consider clustering buildings and reducing and clustering parking.
- d. Punctuate highly visible sites, corner sites or street-end views (buildings at terminated street corridors), for example, using distinctive massing, building articulation, and architectural treatments such as roof treatments.
- e. Site and design buildings to minimize shadowing impacts on adjacent public areas including streets, open spaces and cultural landscapes. Strategies may include incorporating upper storey step-backs on the north, east or west facing facades for buildings over four storeys.
- f. Where a variance to building height is proposed, a shadow study should be provided to demonstrate shadowing impacts of the incremental height increase above existing zoning allowances.
- g. Consider incorporating a break in the façade of longer buildings integrated with building form and composition, for example a ground level lobby or entryway.



Street wall buildings and green rear yards and courtyards characterize a sustainable and livable urban fabric with a lush urban forest (left) and newly planted trees (right.)

- h. On corner sites, develop both street facing facades as front elevations. This may entail the use of L-shaped massing and floorplate configurations, supported by potential variances to side yard and rear yard requirements.



The top-floor step-back at a five-storey multi-family residential development helps improve solar access for the rear yard outdoor amenity area.



Shading impact of nearby development on a park is reduced by a measured approach to building heights in a mixed-use development.



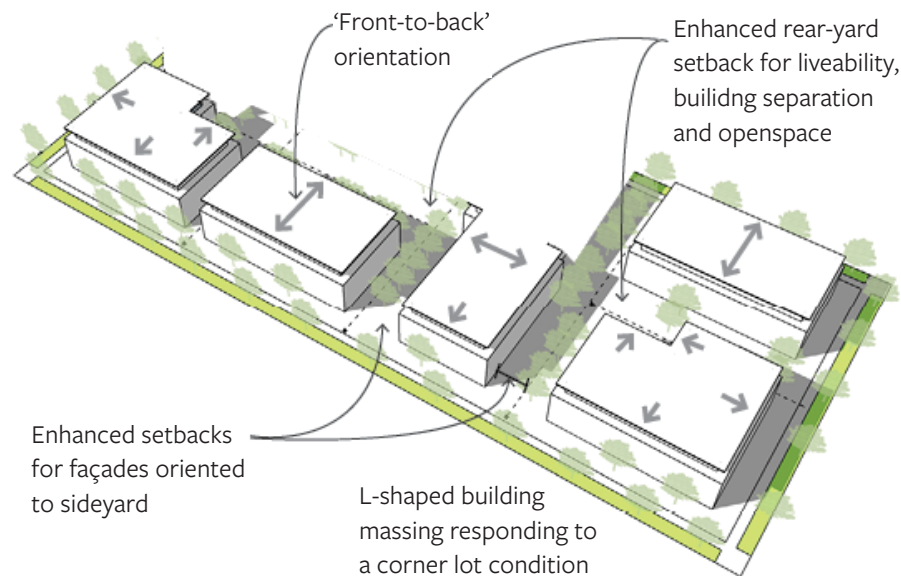
Building siting and through-block walkway location responds to the grounds of a significant site of civic and heritage importance.

- i. Residential buildings should be set back sufficiently from property lines to provide comfortable pedestrian spaces at the street or adjacent public open space, areas for landscaping and stormwater mitigation, and sun and air access for neighbouring buildings:
 - i. Generally, front yard setbacks should maintain an average of 4 m and a minimum of 3 m along fronting public streets and open spaces, depending on the adjacent street and open space context and ground floor use.
 - ii. Consider reduced front yard setbacks where lot depths are constrained, where the ground floor may have a more active frontage, like a storefront, or where the lot fronts onto a generous boulevard or green open space, while avoiding impacts on existing or future street trees.
 - iii. Consider increased front yard setbacks adjacent to streets with higher traffic volumes and/or to create sufficient space for tree roots and mature tree canopy where there is an existing significant tree.
 - iv. Consider greater setbacks for north facing side yards to mitigate shadowing impacts.
 - v. Avoid projection of underground parking or other structures into setback area to maintain sufficient soil volumes for trees and landscaping.
 - vi. For properties that include a road dedication, consider setbacks from the new property line; Variances to setbacks to enable public realm objectives may be considered.
- vii. For properties that include buildings of heritage value (Heritage Designated, listed on the City's Heritage Register, or having heritage merit as per the heritage values framework), variances to setbacks to enable alternative siting of new buildings or additions may be considered.
- viii. Where balconies, patios or ground-level entries are provided on side yards, incorporate a more generous side yard setback.
- j. Where multiple buildings with residential uses are located on a single lot, the following minimum separation spaces between primary facades are recommended as follows:
 - i. 6-8 m for buildings up to approximately three storeys
 - ii. 12 m for buildings up to approximately four storeys
 - iii. 16 m for buildings up to approximately six storeys



Trees and shrubs enhance livability and usability of private patios at a multi-family residential development.

- k. Unless in conjunction with the designation of a heritage building, subdivision is strongly discouraged – especially subdivision that results in panhandle lots.
- l. Development on parcels that are both deep and narrow, and where buildings are sited in more than one row, site buildings to maintain a generous rear yard in support of the perimeter block pattern and consider a reduced scale for the rear building.
- m. Provide private outdoor amenity space in the form of balconies or porches for individual residential units, with a minimum depth of 1.8 m, a minimum width of 2.4 m, and a minimum overall size of 4.6 m².



Perimeter block definition and livability is improved by enhanced setbacks for primary façades facing side yards and L-shaped massing on corner lots.

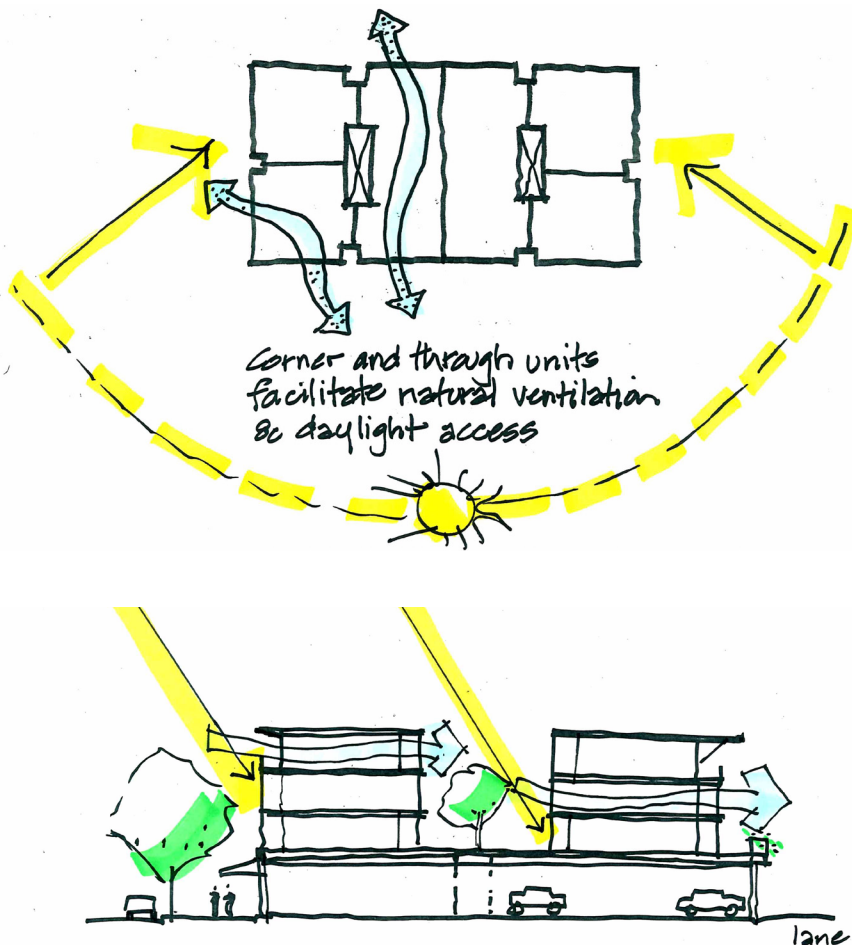
- n. Provide shared open space in the form of courtyards, green spaces, terraces, yards, play areas or rooftop gardens. Consider buildings with upper-level step-backs to provide opportunities for balconies and upper storey terraces that take advantage of sunlight and views.
- o. Design buildings to allow direct access to air and natural light for individual units and common areas. Buildings should be designed to maximize the number of individual homes that receive daylight and natural ventilation from at least two sides of the building (such as a corner or from front and back) or, from one side and a roof.



Mixed-use residential development responds both streets with front elevations, including active at-grade uses and upper-level openings.

2.1.2. Vehicular Access, Parking and Back-of-House

- a. Design and locate parking, circulation and access to minimize impacts on adjacent streets and open spaces including the urban forest.



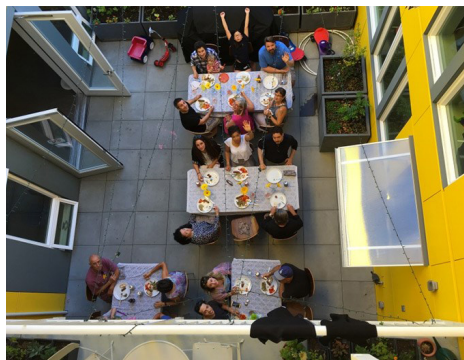
Dual-aspect homes enable enhanced access to daylight and natural ventilation.



An upper-floor courtyard area offers both shared outdoor amenity to building residents and private patios for homes in a mixed-use residential development.



A single-loaded corridor configuration improves the livability of the inside corners on the L-shaped residential floors of this multi-family residential mixed-use building (left) and skylights and roof monitors enable these dual-aspect townhomes that are otherwise flanking a central community atrium (right.)

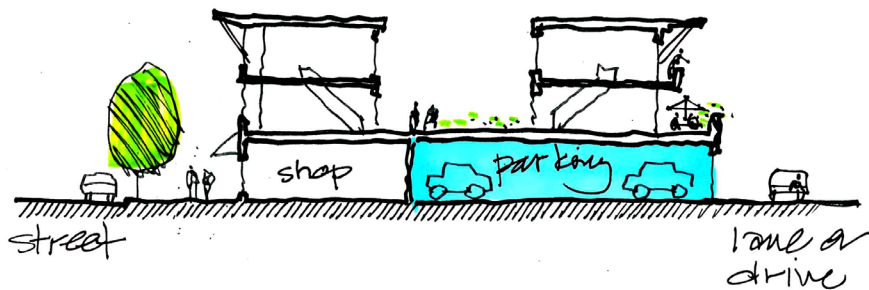


A multi-family mixed-use residential building boasts connected outdoor amenity areas for a variety of activities.



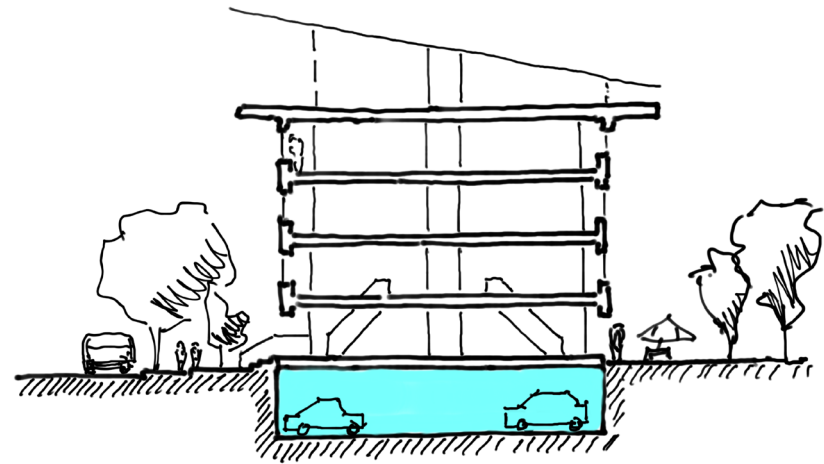
Outdoor gathering spaces and amenity areas organized around a multi-purpose open space, located on an upper floor of a mixed-use residential building.

- b. Parking should be located underground or tucked near the rear or side of buildings so as to minimize the impact on streetscape appearance, pedestrian circulation and to maximize ground level and underground space for trees and landscaping and appropriate soil volumes. Consolidate driveway access points where possible, to minimize curb cuts and impacts on the pedestrian realm or common open spaces.
- c. Minimize the extent of site area dedicated to servicing, vehicular access and parking through shared infrastructure and efficient layouts. Prioritize tree retention vs provision of parking.
- d. For some locations and lot sizes, providing the space needed for the main building(s) and satisfying the zoning's required minimum open site space may limit the achievable surface parking spaces. Where a variance to the zoning requirements is requested, the variance should focus on reducing the parking requirement, rather than reducing the required open site space.



Underground and tuck-under parking minimizes impacts on the public realm.

- e. Proposals that incorporate car share vehicles shall conform with the providers' dimensional and operational requirements.
- f. Incorporate a minimum 1 m landscape buffer where a drive isle or surface parking is located adjacent to the side or rear property line.
- g. Design driveways and parking areas to also function as multi-functional hard surface open areas, including play spaces for children.
- h. Short-term parking areas and drop-off pull-ins should be designed so that pedestrian areas are distinctly delineated from vehicular traffic areas.
- i. Avoid locating at-grade windows directly adjacent to parking spaces. Windows in these locations should generally contain landscape separation from the parking space.



- j. Bicycle parking areas should be visible and secure. Short-term bicycle parking should be sheltered, in well-lit and highly visible locations, accommodate a range in bicycle types, and be clearly visible from a main building entrance and/or public street. Long-term bicycle parking areas should be in a well-lit common room, easily accessible and nearby pedestrian activity.
- k. Plan for adequately sized waste management and recycling areas that are located and designed to minimize impacts on the public realm while balancing access and operational needs.
- l. Locate pad-mounted transformers (PMT) on private property within development projects. Where possible, place transformers within the building envelope and locate external transformer room doors along the service street façade and ensure adequate space is provided on private property to service the utility. Coordinate access to PMT's for BC Hydro maintenance with proposed driveway access to minimize impacts to streetscape, and public realm infrastructure.
- m. Ensure utility areas are clearly identified at the development permit stage and are located to minimize negative impacts on public or common open spaces.



Short-term parking and loading areas are differentiated from pedestrian areas by surface materials, trees and urban furniture at a mixed-use residential development.

2.2. Building–Open Space Interface

Intent: To support street vitality, pedestrian activity, visual interest and safety through building designs that contribute to active, attractive and high-quality public streets and open spaces.



Sketch showing building and landscape design to support pedestrian vitality, comfort and safety

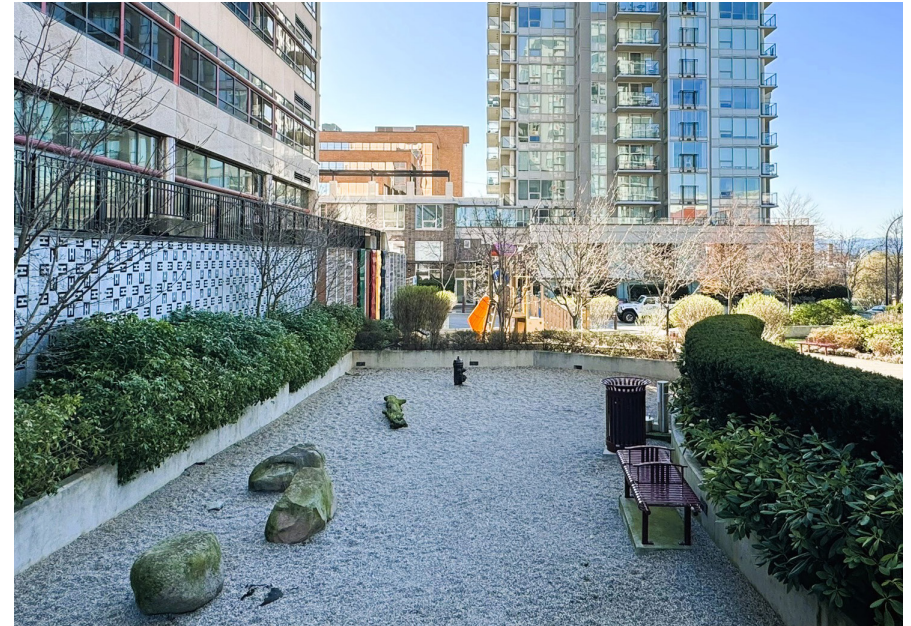
2.2.1. General Guidelines

- Design building facades to support pedestrian activity, sociable open spaces and ‘eyes on the street’ by integrating and orienting entryways, windows, patios and balconies to overlook sidewalks, walkways, parks and other open spaces.
- The primary building entrance should have clear sight lines and be directly accessible from the public sidewalk or open space.
- Emphasize entrances to buildings with a combination of architectural detail, lighting, weather protection or other design strategies. Entrances accessed off side yards should be avoided where possible.
- Incorporate weather protection such as awnings, canopies, and overhangs to support pedestrian activity and comfort.
- Use lighting to highlight building features and illuminate the public realm, while avoiding over illumination that projects light into the sky or spills over on adjacent buildings.
- Pedestrian scale lighting standards and fixtures, in addition to general area and street lighting, is encouraged for nighttime visibility, comfort and security as part of overall lighting level requirements.
- Minimize the size of service openings and garage doors visible from public streets and open spaces. Consider design and landscape solutions that can minimize visual impacts, including recessing garage doors behind the main building line, and incorporating plantings to soften and frame driveways and garage entries.

- h. Access to on-site loading and service areas for all uses should be as unobtrusive from the public realm as possible, appropriately shielded and protected from public streets.
- i. Entries to interior bicycle parking areas should be protected from rain and, where possible, should be accessible and visible from the building – public realm interface.



Transparent shopfronts with displays and seating spilling out into the sidewalk, help animate and create visual interest along the street.



Lighting in this outdoor amenity area helps provide a sense of safety and wayfinding in this multi-family residential development.



Examples showing design treatments to minimize visual impacts of parking entrances.



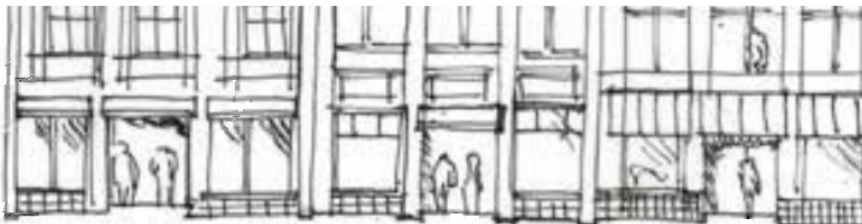
Screening at the public realm interface of a loading court serving multiple back-of-house areas of a mixed-use institutional-residential development.



Weather-protected entrance to bicycle parking space at a commercial building supports the use of active transportation facilities.

2.2.2. Commercial and Mixed-use Buildings

- a. Locate publicly-oriented commercial uses at grade to enable street activity such as browsing, outdoor cafés and street entertainment, as well as to enable placement of outdoor seating.
- b. Incorporate frequent entrances along commercial frontages to create visual interest and support pedestrian activity. Consider a maximum spacing distance between commercial entries of approximately 8 metres where feasible.
- c. Locate large-format commercial uses on upper floors or below grade to minimize impacts on ground-floor frontages. Where at-grade locations are necessary, locate large-format uses toward the building interior and incorporate frequent entries, shop windows and where possible, smaller retail units around the periphery.
- d. Consider recessed entries to provide punctuation and increased weather protection along the street.
- e. Incorporate a high proportion of transparent glazing at the street level to enhance the visual presence of ground floor uses and increase the interactions between pedestrians and interior spaces. Consider bird-safe glazing or treatment to minimize bird collisions.



Frequent entries create visual interest and activity.



Frequent entries for smaller commercial retail units surround large-format retail in a mixed-use residential development.

- f. Smaller buildings, and portions of the front facade of larger buildings, may be set back from the front property line to accommodate features such as patios, courtyards or seating areas.
- g. Incorporate a minimum floor-to-floor height for ground-floor commercial space of approximately 4.5 m for natural light, spaciousness and street interface.
- h. A minimum floorplate depth of approximately 10 m is recommended to accommodate a range of ground floor commercial uses. Shallower depths may be considered where smaller retail units are incorporated around the periphery of an internal, larger format commercial use.
- i. Avoid at-grade blank walls over 5 m in length. Where blank walls are unavoidable along a street, mitigate them through screening, landscaping, public art, patios, special materials or other solutions to make them more visually interesting.
- j. Larger commercial buildings are encouraged to consider incorporating an atrium to expand and enhance the public realm network.
- k. Incorporate integrated lighting, signage and weather protection to support pedestrian activity and to articulate commercial frontages as an extension of the building's architectural expression. Strategies to achieve this include but are not limited to:
 - i. Utilizing canopies with translucent or frosted glazing to maximize winter sunlight, particularly for north-facing facades. Avoid continuous opaque (solid) canopies that run the full length of facades. Use bird-friendly glass on canopies that incorporate glazing.



A large format commercial use incorporating smaller retail units and frequent entries around the periphery, and housing above.



The parking and loading areas of a mixed-use commercial development are 'lined' by street-fronting light industrial and office spaces.

- ii. Limiting signage in number, location and size to reduce visual clutter and make individual signs easier to see.
 - iii. Ensuring signs on buildings are located to be easily identified and are scaled to pedestrians. Projecting two-dimensional or 'blade' type signs suspended from canopies and awnings, flush-mounted fascia signs, externally lighted signs and vertical banners are preferred.
- I. New developments adjacent to transit stops, particularly on routes designated by local and regional transit plans (e.g., designated "Transit Priority" or "Frequent Transit" routes) are encouraged to incorporate canopies, seating and lighting into their facades or street-fronting setbacks to create waiting areas for transit passengers.



A commercial building atrium is connected to the public realm network.



Integration of transit-supportive public realm amenities into the building frontages support streetscapes and development on transit-priority streets.

2.2.3. Residential Buildings

- a. Residential use at street level should have strong entry features and building designs that encourage interaction with the street while considering privacy and liveability for individual homes.
- b. For ground floor homes, incorporate individual entrances oriented towards and connecting to adjacent public sidewalks, courtyards or other open spaces.
- c. Residential uses should be set back approximately 3-4 metres from the fronting property line to accommodate a landscaped transition zone and a semi-private or shared open space such as a patio or porch.
- d. Consider integrating appropriately sized trees within the landscaped front yard setback area in consideration of the location of upper storey balconies.
- e. Where commercial uses, or live/work or work/live units of a commercial character are integrated into the ground floor of a residential building, they may incorporate reduced front yard setbacks.
- f. Porches, steps, alcoves, raised terraces, forecourts, landscaping or other design features are encouraged to make transitions from the public realm of the street and sidewalk to the private realm of residences.
- g. All homes in a residential building should be provided with windows of sufficient size and orientation to provide for sunlight and outward views.

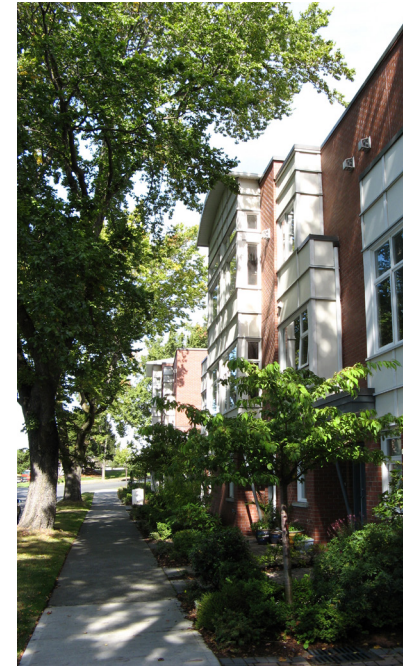


A generous front yard setback allows for a landscaped transition zone and semi-private and shared open spaces at multi-family residential developments.

- h. For all bedrooms within a residential building, provide at least one operable window of 0.35 m² in area with no dimension less than 380 mm.
- i. Where rooms other than a kitchen, storage room, toilet, bathroom, sauna room, hallway, or stairway are located on a sunken level (such as a basement), there should be at least 1.1 m between grade and the finished ceiling height to provide adequate space for an operable window.
- j. Where a primary facade faces a side yard, ensure that street-facing facades and units engage the fronting street by way of entries, architectural interest, high-quality materials, private outdoor spaces and/or vegetation.



The street-facing homes in a galley-style townhouse development engage the street while their primary facades (living/dining spaces and patios) front the side yards.



Reduced setbacks on a street with mature trees and a landscaped buffer.

2.3. Building Composition and Expression

Intent: To encourage development that is long-lasting, functional, energy-efficient and sustainable. To encourage design that fosters diversity and visual interest, comfort, livability, and a positive relationship between the outstanding natural environment of Victoria and its buildings.



Building articulation and other architectural features incorporated into a highly energy efficient multi-family residential development.

- a. Consider building designs with simple forms and massing to address building performance objectives (including for building energy performance) while incorporating variation in facade treatments to achieve architectural interest. Strategies include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Introducing bays, façade breaks or step-backs.
 - ii. Articulating building façades into a series of intervals, through placement and treatment of windows, entries and balconies, materials, colours and textures.
 - iii. Integrating architectural features and details such as punched windows, trim details and moldings, treatment of siding (e.g., the use of score lines, textures, different materials or patterning to distinguish between different floors).
- b. A building's roofline should be distinguished from its walls through features like a cornice, projecting overhang, decorative motif or other element or architectural strategy.
- c. Design and use materials and connections for balconies that minimize thermal bridging.
- d. Integrate balcony designs into the architectural expression of the building
- e. Interior and exterior parking and loading entrances or areas, storage and work yards, rooftop mechanical equipment and utility meters should be architecturally integrated into the building design and screened from the public realm with high-quality materials and finishes.

- f. Ventilation shafts, grates and other above-ground mechanical or site servicing equipment should be located away from the public sidewalk, open spaces and tree planting.
- g. Incorporate high-albedo roofing finishes and/or vegetated roof systems to mitigate urban heat island effect. Consider incorporating rainwater harvesting features such as cisterns and downspouts and express them through building design.
- h. Design and orient roofs and surfaces to accommodate solar energy systems where possible.
- i. Consider the design and articulation of each building facade to respond to changes in solar orientation and increase opportunities for natural ventilation.



A façade break helps provide architectural interest, highlight the building entrance and provide a transition between different architectural expressions of a streetwall mixed-use residential building.



Thermally broken balconies and decks help create private and semi-private outdoor spaces for residents at a high-performance multi-family residential development.

- j. Include operable windows, where possible and especially in habitable rooms, to provide natural ventilation and help reduce mechanical heating and cooling requirements.
- k. Locate and design glazed areas to reduce bird collisions. Strategies to achieve this include but are not limited to:
 - i. Avoid large areas of glazing and fly-through conditions such as glass bridges and walkways, outdoor railings, free-standing glass or other conditions where birds can see through them to the sky or habitat on the other side.
 - ii. Avoid mirrored glass and glass with high reflectivity.
 - iii. Incorporate design treatments that increase the visibility of glass for birds such as etched, ceramic fritted, sand blasted and textured glass. Other external visual markers can also be used, including spandrel panels, mullions, screen shutters, ornamental grills, external blinds, shutters, sunshades, grilles, louvres or artwork.
- l. Use façade cladding and materials that are of high quality and durable, utilized to weather gracefully over time.
- m. Prioritize the use of higher quality materials, architectural features and details in feature areas of the building envelope, especially at grade and on lower storeys, and for soffits facing the public realm.
- n. Consider variation in colours and materials between buildings along the street.
- o. Consider colour palettes that reflect the full variety of historic and natural colours found in the area.

- p. Incorporate intangible and cultural heritage into the design of new buildings through public art, culturally appropriate design features and colours, material choices and landscape elements.



Frit pattern glazing supports bird-friendly design at a research and teaching facility.

- q. New buildings should strive to incorporate substantial, durable and natural materials into their façade that are reflective of the materials used in nearby historic properties. Materials such as masonry and natural wood are encouraged. Regionally sourced materials and finishes with low carbon footprints are strongly recommended.
- r. Fences, gates and shutters should be designed to provide security when necessary, while also providing visual interest and avoiding a “fortress” appearance.



A combination of ornamental grill work and landscaping to screen mechanical equipment on a rooftop amenity space.



Different environmental control strategies for different elevations and solar exposures help improve building energy performance and provide occupant comfort at a multi-family residential development.

2.4. Landscape and Open Space Design

Intent: To ensure a landscape and open space design that strives to re-introduce nature into the city and supports the urban forest, mitigates heat island effect, and retains and absorbs stormwater on-site; To ensure new development provides a range of shared or common outdoor amenity spaces that encourage social interaction, play, urban food systems and access to nature.

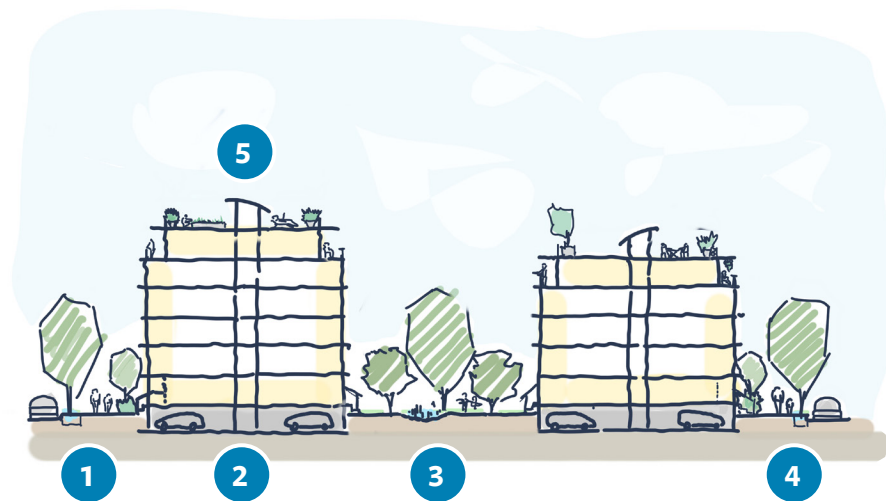


Open space at the core of a perimeter block development offers residents outdoor amenity.

2.4.1. General Guidelines

- a. Design on-site open space that is usable, attractive, ecologically functional and is well-integrated with the adjacent open space, streetscape and building design. Incorporate and integrate required stormwater management facilities, urban forest and amenity spaces into site planning and design from the outset.
- b. Landscape treatments, including use of front patios, accented paving treatments, plantings, fence and gate details and other approaches are encouraged to help call out a residential entry and add interest along the street and sidewalk.
- c. Incorporate plantings at entryways, patios and pathways to create a green interface between buildings and streets.
- d. Use a combination of architectural and pathway lighting to light pedestrian areas and help accentuate building and pathway entries.
- e. Design and landscape rear yards to create shared outdoor amenity spaces that are integrated with the urban forest, stormwater management facilities and other ecological functions.
- f. Consolidate open site space to maximize contiguous soil volumes that facilitate successful tree health and useable green space.
- g. Integrate comfortable, accessible and landscaped pathway connections from the fronting street to rear yards and interior courtyards.

- h. Incorporate permeable surface materials for driveways, pathways, patios and other hard surface areas, where feasible.
- i. Consider seating and lighting at pathway entries and main building entries.
- j. Development should avoid significant reworking of existing natural grade and large retaining walls next to open space. Where retaining walls are required, they should be terraced. Consider incorporating floral displays, ground cover or shrubs, varied tree height within terraces and low retaining walls, and use of stone or brick masonry walls, to create a desirable and approachable transition between grades.
- k. For infill development or renovations on properties that include buildings of heritage value, for example where Heritage Conserving Infill is permitted under zoning, and where there is limited or constrained on-site open space, emphasis should be placed on maximizing landscaping within setbacks and other required open space areas.
- l. Limit the footprint of below grade construction such as underground parking to the foot print of the building.
- m. Integrate a continuous planting of trees to frame and define streets and interior courtyards and open spaces.
- n. Use soil cells where trees are planted within hardscape surface areas or where they are needed to provide necessary soil volumes for mature, healthy trees.



Conceptual sketch notes strategies to help ensure the health and quality of open spaces within and around perimeter blocks.

Site Design for Ecology

- 1 Setbacks for activity and landscaping
- 2 Limit under ground parking to building footprint
- 3 Green interior courtyard trees, stormwater and play
- 4 Boulevard streets with green stormwater infrastructure
- 5 Green roofs with amenities, gardens, rainwater capture and release

- o. Landscape design should consider the local climate and water efficiency, including through selection of drought-tolerant plants, efficient irrigation systems or design of unirrigated landscapes, use of run-off for irrigation, integration of rain gardens and other approaches.
- p. A minimum of 30 per cent of the required common landscaped areas should include a diverse combination of plants and vegetation that are either native to southern Vancouver Island, food-bearing (capable of being harvested for food and medicine) or that provide pollinator habitats, or a combination of these.
- q. The rear yard and, where possible, side yards of buildings adjacent to lower-scale residential development should provide landscaping and trees that mitigate the appearance of massing and contribute to a transition in scale.



Rooftop amenity areas include urban agriculture opportunities for each home in a multi-family mixed-use residential development.

- r. Incorporation of common gardens, fruit bearing trees, beekeeping, and other forms of urban food production are encouraged to support social interaction and general health and well being.
- s. Incorporate the following Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in site planning and landscape design for increased safety:



A walkway flanked by planting provides connectivity through a perimeter block housing development.

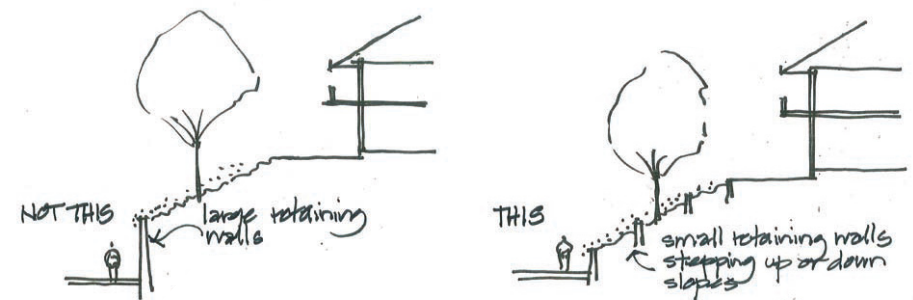
- i. Avoid entrapment spots (small areas shielded on three sides).
- ii. Provide lighting (others' faces should be visible and blinding glare avoided).
- iii. Maintain sightlines (ability to see the route ahead and open spaces from buildings).
- iv. Design for visibility by others (seeing and being seen).



Trees help provide a transition in scale between mid-rise and low-rise buildings in neighbouring residential developments.



A small plaza with seating, lighting and vegetation at the building entrance of a housing development offers residents and neighbours opportunities for social interaction.



Terracing and shorter retaining walls allow for sensitive transitions of grade while avoiding significant re-working of natural grade.

2.4.2. Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)

Intent: To encourage the provision of active and attractive publicly accessible open spaces as an extension of the pedestrian and open space network.

- a. The provision of compact forms of open space such as a patio, plaza, atrium or green space that are privately owned and maintained but designed to allow for public access, are encouraged where they complement the adjacent public realm.
- b. Ensure the usability of POPS by ensuring the are of sufficient size to incorporate larger maturing trees and seating, and providing visibility and access from adjacent public streets, parks and other public spaces. Allow for at least one edge open to the public sidewalk, and consider its orientation to maximize sunlight access throughout the day with uses that take advantage of a sunny location (e.g., cafes and patios).
- c. Provide sufficient soil volumes and depths to support large, maturing trees and use soil cells where trees are planted in areas of hardscape. Avoid locating underground parking underneath POPS, particularly locations where trees are located.
- d. Line the edges of POPS with active uses at grade, including building entrances, to animate and support the open space, and encourage spill out spaces such as patios, displays and seating. Provide at least one primary building entrance facing the plaza, where possible.
- e. Provide pedestrian-scale lighting at appropriate locations.



Privately owned, publicly accessible open space provide access to nature to the residents of this multi-family residential development and its neighbourhood alike.

- f. For larger plazas, provide weather protection in the form of canopies or arcades at the perimeter of the space, define smaller sub-areas within the plaza for ample seating and gathering in the sun and shade, and consider incorporating play features and public art.
- g. Design POPS to enhance views of special features, heritage sites and landmarks in the area, where possible.
- h. Design POPS to complement character-defining elements of adjacent heritage buildings through use of materials and spatial proportions.
- i. Incorporate intangible and cultural heritage into the design of POPS. Consider:
 - i. Interpretive signage
 - ii. Murals and other public art
 - iii. Culturally appropriate design features
 - iv. Landscape elements



Privately owned, publicly accessible open space provide access to nature to the residents of this multi-family residential development and its neighbourhood alike.

Through-block Walkways

- j. Consider providing a through-block walkway where their provision improves or expands an existing pedestrian network.
- k. Where a through-block walkway is provided, design buildings facing the walkways to include ground floors with active edges oriented to the walkway. This may include entrances and windows facing the walkway to activate and provide casual surveillance of pedestrian areas.
- l. Provide clear sight lines at all access points and ensure adequate lighting, to increase public safety.
- m. Ensure that if gates are provided at walkway entry and exit points, that they are attractive and designed in a manner to be fully opened and do not impede access during public use hours.
- n. Use signage to identify connecting streets, adjacent buildings or open space.
- o. The width of a through-block walkway should relate to its expected level of pedestrian traffic, whether it accommodates seating, needs for emergency access, and other factors. Generally, a minimum width of 3.6 m is desired.



Above and Opposite: Built and conceptual examples show through-block walkways dimensioned and equipped to suit surrounding uses, building heights, natural features and vehicular access needs.



Part 3: Special Considerations

In addition to relevant guidelines in *Part 2: Design Guidelines*, the following section provides additional design guidance for accessibility, industrial buildings, work/live and live/work units and tall buildings.

3.1. Accessibility

Intent: To address the needs of all users, including people who have disabilities, through site, building and landscape design

- a. Ensure accessible paths of travel between public sidewalks and pedestrian areas to common building entries.
- b. Barrier-free access should be appropriately designed and clearly visible from the main entrance.
- c. When provided, access ramps and related elements, such as walls and guardrails, should be visually integrated with the overall building design and site plan.
- d. Accessible paths of travel should be evenly graded and have finishes that facilitate year-round barrier-free access.
- e. Vertical disruptions along pedestrian routes should be avoided for ease of use by people with wheeled mobility devices, strollers and bicycles. Uneven surfaces should be mitigated.
- f. Exterior accessible paths of travel should:
 - i. Have a minimum clear width of 1.5 m to allow room for mobility devices and service animals going both ways along a path.
 - ii. Have minimum head room clearances of 2.1 m to ensure paths are free of obstacles overhead that white canes cannot detect.
 - iii. Have firm, stable and slip-resistant surfaces that canes, crutches or the wheels of mobility devices will not sink into.
 - iv. Be free of stairs or other barriers to mobility aids.
- g. Grates or grilles should generally be located to one side of accessible paths of travel.
- h. Any change in the level of a path should have a slope or ramp. Similarly, sidewalks with steep or depressed curbs should have curb ramps.
- i. Accessible paths of travel should have a minimum number of curb cuts to keep the accessible path of travel as level as possible.
- j. Where steeply sloping landscaped areas are located adjacent to pedestrian routes and where slope exceeds 3:1 (horizontal to vertical), a clear boundary edge, such as an up-stand curb or retaining wall (minimum 150 mm high), is desirable as a locational aid for persons who have visual limitations.

- k. Common building entryways should be clearly lit and be fully accessible.
- l. Benches, bike racks, bins and other furnishings should be located to one side of accessible entryways and pathways and maintain a minimum pathway clear zone of 1.5 m.
- m. Benches should be mounted on a firm and level base with space made available beside the bench for at least one person using a wheelchair or scooter with a minimum hard surface clearance area of 1.0 m by 1.2 m.
- n. Signage should generally be designed using highly visible and contrasting colours.
- o. Accessible entrances should provide basic protection from the weather and include doors and vestibules that are usable by persons with varying abilities.
- p. Main entrance doors and other accessible entrance and exit doors are encouraged to be a minimum of 915 mm wide to allow safe passage of persons who use mobility aids.
- q. Entryways should be well-lit and clearly visible.
- r. In buildings where there is a significant amount of glazing at grade, it is recommended that door frames be clearly colour-differentiated to aid in locating the entrance.
- s. Provide common spaces that are accessible to users of different abilities (e.g., areas for seating, gardening).



Access ramp and its elements are designed to be integrated into the building and site at a heritage church.

3.2. Industrial Buildings

Intent: To ensure development on Victoria's employment lands reflect and support industrial use, while contributing to a high-quality public realm in areas where industry, arts and innovation activities are prioritized.

- a. Express the buildings' internal function and use, including expression of structural and mechanical systems, to create a unique identity and visual interest within employment and industrial areas.
- b. Incorporate generous floor heights for ground floor light industrial and commercial spaces with a minimum floor-to-floor height of 4.5 m (or 6 m where a mezzanine level is provided) to allow for flexible use, building systems, spaciousness and daylight access.
- c. Minimize and consolidate vehicular access to as few access points as operationally possible.
- d. At heavy industrial site–public realm interfaces, minimize the width of driveway crossings and curb cuts as operationally possible. Integrated lighting illuminating the public realm and interpretative displays of industrial uses are encouraged. Chain-link fencing is discouraged.
- e. Explore opportunities for internalized mews to facilitate direct and common at-grade loading where development parcel width and depth permit.
- f. Consider incorporating through-block laneways, where feasible, for vehicular access and loading and open space activation, especially on larger sites. Consider locating open space amenities and any secondary entrances or storefronts along the laneway.



Strategically located corner plaza, colonnade at a biomedical research facility with a coffee shop serving local workers and visitors.



A transparent and operable storefront provides a public interface to arts-production uses.

- g. Focus retail (ancillary or standalone) and other public realm-activating uses at key locations, including at corners of multi-modal streets with active transportation and transit emphasis.
- h. Use lobbies and circulation areas of industrial, arts production and office areas as opportunities for interpretive displays at the building–public realm interface.
- i. For mixed-use buildings where residential uses are permitted in addition to industrial uses:
 - i. Express each use through building and open space design.
 - ii. Mitigate the anticipated impacts from adjacent or nearby industrial uses, such as overlook, noise and odours through building and open space design.
- j. Address citywide urban forest objectives with strategies such as prioritizing street tree planting and employing soil cells or structural soils to provide adequate growth medium volumes along development site frontages.
- k. Soften the high-lot coverage development through the integration of green roofs, stormwater detention or other low-impact development measures.
- l. Through massing and building articulation, define and support small park and plaza spaces where opportunities exist, especially on larger sites and along multi-modal streets with transit and active transportation.



Lobby spaces double as interpretive displays about cancer research at a biomedical laboratory and office development.

- m. Select plant species known for phytoremediation potential (or the ability to manage and remove hazardous contaminants in soil, air or water) such as sunflowers, mustard, or field pennycress. Select plant species based on the specific contaminants present or anticipated.



A publicly accessible and barrier-free outdoor amenity space is located on the roof of a biomedical research facility.

3.3. Buildings with Work/Live and Live/Work Units

Intent: To ensure the success integration of work/live and live/work uses with light industrial and commercial uses.

This section provides design guidance for development including areas where work activities (e.g., light industrial or commercial uses and artist studios) are pursued on the same property that can be used as the home(s) of the worker(s). Work/Live areas prioritize work components of intensity and continuous priority use while the residential use is incidental and optional. Live/Work areas, on the other hand, have both work and residential uses at equal, interchangeable priority where the flexibility between work and residential or concurrent use is anticipated. The residential components of work/live or live/work units may be incorporated directly into the work areas or be separate but immediately adjacent to them or be nearby on the same property.

- a. For all work/live and live/work areas:
 - i. Design building systems (e.g., structural, mechanical and electrical) to be suitable for work use (light industrial use and/or commercial use per zoning), with adequate spatial separation to prevent reversion to purely residential use.
 - ii. Provide adequate storage, circulation, loading and waste management areas for light industrial and commercial equipment and goods to ensure the viability of work uses.

b. For work/live and live/work areas for specific use cases:

- i. Where work/live areas are incorporated within the ground floor of light industrial or commercial buildings, provide at least 4.5 m of floor-to-floor height (6 m recommended) and a storefront appropriate for commercial use and walk-in grade, fronting the public realm.
- ii. Where work/live areas include artist studios, design buildings to provide visibility and facilitate customer walk-ins and access to arts and culture.
- iii. Where live/work units are incorporated within the ground floor of a residential, commercial or mixed-use building, provide at least 4.5 m of floor-to-floor height (6 m recommended) and a storefront appropriate for commercial use and access from the public realm. Patios at grade should be designed to allow future modifications to suit both commercial or residential uses and be barrier-free.



The lower level of a two-storey purpose-built artist work/live unit enables a cultural event with guests.



Patio areas of a live/work unit includes a public storefront area and a semi-public residential entrance area for its 'work' and 'live' components, respectively.

3.4. Tall Buildings

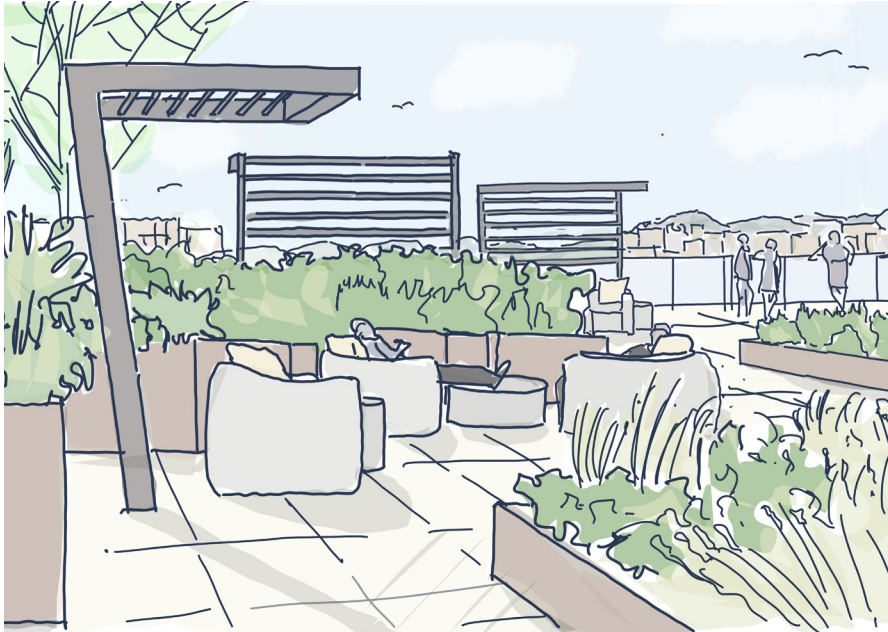
Intent: To preserve sunlight access and quality of public spaces that are adjacent to tall buildings and ensure livability for individual homes.

- a. Minimize massing and shadowing impacts of tall buildings through strategies that provide a sensitive transition in scale. Strategies to achieve this transition include but are not limited to:
 - i. Setting tall buildings back from streets, parks, open space and neighbouring properties to reduce visual and physical impacts;
 - ii. Expressing the base, middle and the top of tall forms in a differentiated manner;
 - iii. Consider a variety of building heights for developments that include multiple buildings, assembled in a manner that relates to adjacent properties.
 - iv. Provide a shadowing study to demonstrate shadowing impacts and how they are being mitigated
- b. To ensure enhanced livability and reduced shadow and wind impacts, a minimum rear and side yard setback of 12 m for portions of the building above 18 m in height are recommended.
- c. Where a development site contains more than one tall building, a minimum separation distance of 24 m between the closest points of the tall building is recommended.
- d. Incorporate slender floor plate sizes and orient buildings in a north-south direction for portions of the building above 18 m in height to minimize shadowing impacts on nearby public open space and sidewalks.
- e. Locate, orient and design tall buildings to minimize adverse wind tunnel impacts on adjacent streets, parks and open spaces, at building entrances and in public and private outdoor amenity areas. Strategies to achieve this include but are not limited to:
 - i. Step back the tower from the building base to dissipate down drafts.
 - ii. Incorporate landscaping into roof areas of building bases and terraces to further reduce wind speeds.



Mixed-use residential development with multiple building components provides transition in scale, yet is unified in its colour and materials.

- iii. Incorporate taller screens on balconies / common amenity areas that are identified through a wind study as having higher than desirable wind effects
- f. Where a proposed development is likely to result in significant wind tunnel effects on the pedestrian realm, a wind tunnel study may be required.



Landscaping and screens enhance the livability of rooftop amenity areas by reducing wind speed.



City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6
planning@victoria.ca
victoria.ca