



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

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RS-6 DESIGN GUIDELINES

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Note: These guidelines are organized under standard headings. As a consequence, there are gaps in the numbering sequence where no guidelines apply.

1 Application and Intent

1.1 Application

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the RS-6 District Schedule of the Zoning and Development By-law. These guidelines should be consulted in the consideration of development applications requesting discretionary increases and relaxations. As well as assisting the applicant, the guidelines will also be used by City staff in the evaluation of the proposed design.

1.2 Intent

The intent of these guidelines is to encourage a high standard of building design, materials, and landscape development while allowing design diversity rather than prescribing any particular architectural style.

1.3 Processing

The processing reference chart in Appendix A describes typical application types and their processing paths. For applicants seeking increased floor area or other relaxations, the requirements will be reviewed as follows:

- District Schedule Sections 4.17, 5.4 and 5.5, and Design Guidelines (except for the Landscape Section) to be reviewed by Development Planner, Facilitator or Home Renovation Centre Staff;
- Landscape Section of Guidelines (and Tree By-law) to be reviewed by Planning Department Landscape Architectural Technicians;
- Remainder of District Schedule to be reviewed by Permits and Licenses Staff with Planning Department input as required.

Section 5.4 of the RS-6 District Schedule applies to new house applications where the proposed design meets the general intent of this schedule and the referenced sections of 4.17 but not the specific requirements. In this situation, the application will be processed as a Development Application, complete with neighbourhood notification.

Section 5.5 of the Schedule applies to renovation/addition applications where either existing conditions or proposed work may meet the intent of the Schedule but not specific requirements of the referenced sections of 4.17. Since the intent of this schedule is to encourage retention of existing houses, neighbourhood notification (with the related additional application processing time) will only be carried out where a requested relaxation clearly raises issues of concern to abutting property owners and/or the surrounding neighbourhood.

For the administration of Sections 5.4 and 5.5 of the RS-6 District Schedule, the intent statements of this District Schedule and these Design Guidelines apply.

2 General Design Considerations

2.1 Neighbourhood Character

The building and landscape character in RS-6 District varies widely and, therefore, these Guidelines do not reference any specific design styles or require an applicant to use immediately surrounding buildings and properties as specific design precedents for a proposed development site. However, a few general ideas relevant to all RS-6 neighbourhoods serve as the basic principles for this Schedule and Guidelines:

- (a) the form of a new building or renovation/addition should be a reasonable design compromise between a neighbourhood's often existing older, smaller houses and the form of new, often larger houses;
- (b) the design of a new building or renovation/addition should result from a high level of care and craft by the architect or building designer. The selection, use and detailing of exterior materials should respect the materials' visual and technical characteristics, avoid arbitrary discontinuities, and generally relate to the overall building form; and
- (c) adequate landscape development should be provided to establish an image of a building complemented by varied plant materials (trees, shrubs, lawn, etc.) and other site elements (walks, fences, etc).

5 Architectural Components

5.1 Roofs

- (a) A variety of roof forms are approvable in the District Schedule. Considerations for roof design should include:
 - (i) for buildings or portions of buildings not exceeding 7.3 m in height above the horizontal datum plane, no minimum roof pitch is required; “flat roof” buildings or portions of buildings are permitted;
 - (ii) the height of the spring-point of main and any secondary pitched roof forms should attempt to mitigate size and scale differences between the proposed house and varying designs and sizes of existing neighbourhood houses. Attention should be given to overshadowing and privacy of adjacent properties;
 - (iii) for pitched roofs more than 7.3 m above the horizontal datum plane, no roof areas, except for approved decks and dormers, should have slopes less than 6:12;
 - (iv) the discretionary relaxation of roof slopes to a minimum of 4:12 for roofs exceeding 7.3 m above the horizontal datum plane should only be considered where significant roof overhangs or other compensating architectural features are provided; and
 - (v) where roof decks are provided above the second storey, they should be integral with the surrounding roof forms and set back from the building perimeter walls to minimize privacy intrusion into adjacent houses and yards.
- (b) Where gable end walls above 7.3 m are proposed to occur on more than two building elevations, or where more than one gable on a building elevation is proposed to be greater than 9.1 m above the horizontal datum plane, they should generally only be considered where the design:
 - (i) does not make the building appear excessively visually bulky above the second floor;
 - (ii) does not significantly increase the shadowing or loss of privacy to adjacent properties;
 - (iii) is on larger lots or corner lots; and
 - (iv) is architecturally coordinated with the overall building exterior design.
- (c) Dormers above the second storey should:
 - (i) not excessively increase the building bulk and make the overall form appear top heavy;
 - (ii) on lots less than 13.7 m wide, side yard facing dormers should be kept to a minimum to avoid overwhelming any lower buildings on adjacent properties or resulting in excessive building bulk above the second storey; and
 - (iii) generally, where a dormer or dormers are used on the second storey, dormers on the half storey above the second storey on the same roof face are discouraged.
- (d) Roofing materials which are not listed in the District Schedule but which may be approvable, should be:
 - (i) generally of materials which do not imitate another material's appearance;
 - (ii) other than reflective, shiny or brightly coloured; and
 - (iii) used and detailed in a manner consistent with the material's technical and visual characteristics.
- (e) Where a metal chimney flue, pipe or vent rises above a chimney form enclosure or roof, it should be visually screened so as not to present an unfinished image to the street.

5.2 Windows

- (a) Window glazing should generally be clear glass although leaded stained glass is also approvable. Reflective, mirrored or tinted glass is discouraged for windows although solar tinted glass may be considered for skylights. Frosted glass or glass block used for privacy is appropriate but window murals of coloured, frosted, or similar type glass, plastic or equivalent materials, visible from the street are discouraged. As per District Schedule section 4.17.33, side light and transom light glazing (to the maximum areas specified) are not subject to design control.
- (b) Windows on street facing building elevations should generally be consistent, coordinated, and related in their type. The mixing of an excessive variety of window types or sizes on a facade can result in a chaotic expression and is, therefore, strongly discouraged.
- (c) Windows above front entry doors or entries, porches or verandahs should generally be no larger than other windows on the same storey on the same building facade.
- (d) Use of curtain walls or large areas of glass block is generally discouraged.

- (e) The excessive and arbitrary use of bay windows or boxed out windows, whether projecting into required yards or not, is discouraged.

5.3 Entrances

The design of the front entrance and any associated entry, porch or verandah is significant in setting the public image of a new house or renovation. Though it is recognized that a front entrance may be the main feature of a house's street facade, the size, height, architectural scale and proportion of the entrance and related elements should not be excessive or overbearing. To achieve this, the design of the front entrance and associated elements such as entries, porches or verandahs, windows, stairs and guards should:

- (a) be of a single storey proportion (not double storey expression);
- (b) have adjacent window areas such as sidelights and transom lights of similar or smaller proportions and sizes than other windows on the same facade;
- (c) generally limit columns, posts, or similar vertical elements to the first storey;
- (d) be integral with the overall building design; and
- (e) be either a single or double door entry.

5.5 Exterior Wall Cladding and Finishing

- (a) Exterior wall cladding materials which are not listed in the District Schedule but which may be approvable, should be:
 - (i) generally of materials which do not imitate another material's appearance;
 - (ii) of other than reflective, shiny finish or brightly coloured;
 - (iii) used and detailed in a manner consistent with the material's technical and visual characteristics.
- (b) The number of different wall material systems used on and above the first storey should not be excessive. Generally, no more than two wall cladding materials should be used except where a wall extends to a partial third storey gable end wall or on dormers in which case a maximum of three wall cladding materials may be appropriate on one building elevation. Where a wall is generally vertically continuous for two and a half storeys, a minimum of two wall cladding materials is strongly encouraged to reduce the visual height and scale of the wall.
- (c) The use of wall cladding materials on front building elevations which are not used at all or in a lesser proportion on side elevations visible from the street produces a "false front" effect and is strongly discouraged.
- (d) The design and finishing around windows and exterior doors should visually enrich the building elevation. Significant recessing of windows and doors, wood trim boards, or equivalent treatments are strongly encouraged. Nail-on metal windows set flush with adjacent plain cladding (such as stucco) without trim or adequate equivalent detailing, for example, is strongly discouraged. Generally, treatment around all windows and doors should be of a consistent or coordinated design.

5.9 Basements

Areas of the basement or cellar that project horizontally beyond the first storey floor area should be designed to minimize their above ground bulk and be an integral part of the overall building design. To accomplish this:

- (a) projecting basement or cellar areas extending toward a street to which the front entry is oriented should be fully concealed under decks, patios, or planters; and
- (b) basement or cellar areas that project toward a street other than as described in 5.9 (a) should be no closer to the property line than the closest portion of the first storey.

8 Landscaping

8.1 Image

A site's landscape development is of equal importance to building design in the appearance of a new house or major renovation/addition project. The landscape design should provide adequate trees, plant materials, and other elements to enhance the building's setting and assist in providing a visual transition between adjacent properties and buildings of different styles and designs. The most

important aspect of this is the front yard which should present an image primarily defined by plant materials. No specific style of landscape design is prescribed.

8.2 Topography

Generally, the site grading should follow the area's natural topography. Abrupt, arbitrary grade changes are not encouraged although subordinate areas of raised planters are generally approvable as well as lowered lightwell surfaces permitted under the District Schedule.

Where topography necessitates retaining walls, the use of stone, brick, split face block, timber cribbing and similar materials is encouraged. Generally, retaining walls should be planted with spreading ground covers, vines or shrubbery to soften the appearance of the wall and help incorporate the wall into the surrounding landscape. In the front yard, use of ordinary concrete block for retaining walls is not encouraged.

Where basement and cellar areas project beyond the first storey, foundation planting should be designed to ease the visual transition of this semi-underground structure to the general site topography. The screening of projecting basement areas may necessitate providing plant materials in addition to those noted in section 8.3 below.

Where possible, existing significant stone or brick retaining walls should be retained, relocated or replaced with any necessary modifications and integrated into the new landscape and site development.

8.3 Planting

- (a) General
Existing trees, hedges and major shrubs should be maintained or relocated wherever possible.

Lawn should be used in the City boulevard between curb and sidewalk. The “inside” boulevard (between sidewalk and property line), is also City property and should also be lawn.

If possible (depending on site size and private on-grade open space) a portion of the front yard adjacent to the property line should also be landscaped to increase visual amenity to the street. The impact of this planting, to reduce unrelieved fences and/or hedges, should be enhanced through layering of planting (e.g. vines on any fences or walls located behind it).

A significant portion of the yards should be planted to complement the lawn area and building. As a guide, a minimum of 15 percent of the front yard should be planting beds composed of shrubbery, flowers and/or ground covers. Planting beds in the side and rear yards should comprise a minimum of 10 percent of these combined yard areas (accessory building areas to be first deducted).

- (b) Trees
Consideration should be given to preserving all healthy, mature trees in good form whenever possible.
- (c) Shrubs
Every site should be planted with a minimum of 3 shrubs of a no. 5 pot size* and 4 shrubs of a no. 2 pot size per 2 m² of planting bed area. All shrubs to be to British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects/British Columbia Nursery Trades Association Landscape Standards.

***Note:** Since a no. 5 pot size is no longer available, a no. 3 pot size or equivalent size will now be accepted.

- (d) Lawn and Ground Cover
Except for areas of buildings, paving, pools or planting beds, the remainder of the site should be planted in lawn, ground covers, or other similar plant materials.

Except for necessary walkways, driveways, or areas between shrubbery, the use of gravel, bark mulch, and similar materials is discouraged.

8.4 Paved Walks, Patios, and Driveways

- (a) Paving
Areas visible from the street should not present large expanses of paving materials. Where paving is used, unit pavers, brick, stone, or similar paving materials with sub-divisions are encouraged.
- (b) Fences
At front and exterior side yards, screening, fencing, or walls should generally be coordinated with the materials and colours of the building. Some types (lattice, low walls with higher planting and subtle elevation changes) allow views and light to penetrate and are more suitable to create a friendly appearance near the street, or to allow informal surveillance from the street into the property for security. In front yards, white or brightly coloured metal fencing is not encouraged. More solid walls or fences may be used at interior side yards and around rear yards where complete privacy may be desired.
- (c) Feature Elements
In the front yard, the use of feature elements such as fountains or sculpture should not be visually dominant.

8.5 Site Lighting

- (a) Site lighting, adequate to illuminate walkways and entries is appropriate, but should not be excessive.
- (b) Site lighting should not be intrusive into neighbouring yards or adjacent building's windows. Site lighting should not present an institutional appearance nor should it project unnecessary glare to the sidewalk, street, or other nearby properties.
- (c) Short term, motion-activated security lighting, oriented away from adjoining properties and buildings, may be used.

Processing Reference Chart

	Above Basement Maximum FSR	Total Maximum FSR	Relaxations Requested to District Schedule	Relevant Documents	Neighbourhood Notification	Application Type
New Houses						
1	0.16	0.60	No	District Schedule	No	JA
2	0.16	0.60	Yes	District Schedule Design Guidelines	Yes	DA/BA
3	0.24	0.64	No	District Schedule Design Guidelines	No	JA
4	0.24	0.64	Yes	District Schedule Design Guidelines	Yes	DA/BA
5	Other		Yes	District Schedule Design Guidelines	Yes	DA/BA
Renovations & Additions						
6	0.20	0.60	No	District Schedule	No	JA
7	0.20	0.60	Non-Conforming (For Existing Building Only)	District Schedule	Discretionary	JA or DA/BA
8	0.20	0.60	Yes	District Schedule Design Guidelines	Yes	DA/BA
9	0.24	0.64	No	District Schedule Design Guidelines	No	JA
10	0.24	0.64	Non-Conforming (For Existing Building Only)	District Schedule Design Guidelines	Discretionary	JA or DA/BA
11	0.24	0.64	Yes	District Schedule Design Guidelines	Yes	DA/BA
12	Other		Yes	District Schedule Design Guidelines	Yes	DA/BA

Key: JA Joint Application (Planning and Permits & Licenses)
 DA Development Application (Planning only)
 BA Building Application (Permits & Licenses only)