



Building Inspections

Residential Use – Site and Height Guidelines

Building Inspection staff examine applications to ensure that siting and height of buildings meet the City of Nanaimo Zoning Bylaw requirements. As a supplement to the information contained within the Zoning Bylaw, the following information has been compiled to assist you in the drafting of plans.

SITE INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS:

- A scaled site plan is always required, complete with lot and building dimensions (minimum scale 1/16" = 1') on letter or legal sized paper. The site plan shall indicate:
 - a) Front, rear, and side yard dimensions from the property line to the foundation wall of the dwelling unit and accessory buildings; as well as distance between dwelling unit and accessory building foundations.
 - b) Locations and dimensions of decks, covered porches, cantilevered projections, and chimneys;
 - c) Location of two off-street parking spaces or three spaces for dwellings with secondary suites and the driveway access (**note:** maximum allowable width of access at street is 6 m [20 ft]);
 - d) Location and dimension of any easements and established rights-of-way (**note:** no roof overhangs, decks, stairs or building projections are permitted over an easement or right-of-way); and
 - e) Location of watercourse setbacks and "Top of Bank" or "Natural Boundary" (**note:** location must be confirmed by a British Columbia Land Surveyor).
- A letter of supervision by a British Columbia Land Surveyor (BCLS) to ensure setbacks will be met, is required prior to issuance of a building permit when the:
 - a) Building front and rear setbacks and/or sideyard setbacks are within 150 mm (6 inch) of the minimum permitted by the Zoning Bylaw,
 - b) Building requires a height survey,
 - c) Lot is within the Old City (roughly the area bounded by Comox Road, Wallace Street, Victoria Road and Pine Street) or in other areas where no property pins are known to exist or
 - d) Lot is steep or has an unusual configuration and in the opinion of the Building Inspector it is necessary to confirm the required setbacks can be met.

HEIGHT INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS:

- Scaled elevation drawings are always required as part of residential permit applications. The natural grade*/subdivision grading plan grade (whichever is applicable), finished grade**, height of sidewalk/road, proposed garage slab/main floor elevation, and the proposed and maximum height are to be drawn on the elevations.
- A height survey certificate is required from a British Columbia Land Surveyor when:
 - a) The building is close to the maximum height permitted (**note:** check zoning and development variance permit requirements for maximum heights for specific lots);
 - b) The building is in excess of one storey;
 - c) The lot is sloped and, in the opinion of the Building Inspector, does not reflect the elevations on the plans submitted;

- d) The ground has been disturbed and/or filled and natural grade* cannot be determined;
- e) The maximum height is to be determined from the centre of the curb****; or
- f) A Board of Variance Appeal is applied for a site or height variance.

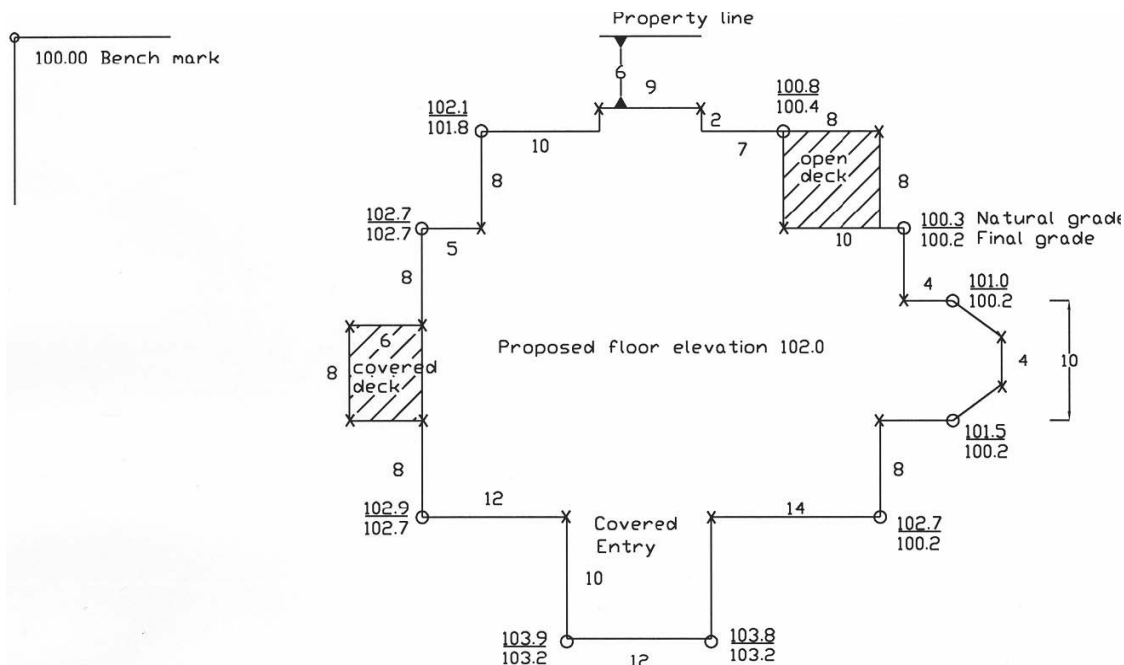
HEIGHT REGULATIONS AND CALCULATIONS:

- In single family residential and residential duplex zones, height is measured either of two ways:
 - 1) Vertically from the subdivision grading plan where a grading plan exists or from the average **natural grade*** level or average **finished grade****, **whichever is lower** to the highest part of the building **or** as approved by Council through a Development Permit.
 - 2) Vertically from the **curb level ****** at mid-point of the property frontage to the highest part of the building, where lots are <1666.66m2 and within R1, R1a, R2, R9, & R10 zones.

If height from grading plan or natural / finish grade Method 1 is used:

- The grade calculation uses all outermost corners of the **building foundation*****, including covered decks and entries, but does not include cantilevered projections and **open decks****** supported on posts. To be included as an outermost corner, foundation projections must be **both** larger than 0.6 m (1.97 ft) in depth **and** 3 m (9.84 ft) in width.
- To calculate the maximum building height, the subdivision grading plan grade elevations at the outermost corners are added together and divided by the number of corners used in the calculation. Where a subdivision grading plan does not exist the same process is followed with both the final grades and natural grades. The permitted building height is added to the lower of the two averages to determine the maximum ridge height permitted. Check the zoning bylaw and development variance permits for your specific lot to determine the maximum allowable building height.
- The following illustration demonstrates which corners of a building foundation are considered “outermost” and which are not. A survey by a British Columbia Land Surveyor (BCLS) should include the type of information shown below.

O = outermost corners, X = not included in height calculation.



If height above the curb Method 2 is used:

- A British Columbia Land Surveyor must establish the height of the curb to determine the maximum height of the building. The maximum height above curb is 5.5 m (18ft) for sloped roofs $\geq 4:12$ and 3 m (9.84 ft) for flat roofs $< 4:12$.

When a height survey is required, a follow-up BCLS survey must be done when the roof cap has been installed and prior to framing approval to confirm height regulations have been met.

PERIMETER WALL HEIGHT:

This is the maximum vertical distance measured at the outermost building face, excluding open decks, from finish grade (typically 8" below top of foundation) to the top of the wall plate. Maximum height for exterior walls in R1, R1a, R2, R4, R10 zones is 7.32 m (24 ft).

Exemptions and exceptions are as follows:

- Exemptions from the calculation are allowed for gable ends, dormers to a maximum of 25% of the wall length, and localized depressions in the rear wall face.
- The rear and internal side yard perimeter wall height can be increased to 9.14 m (30 ft) if the following conditions are met:
 1. The rear wall face is a minimum 10 m (32.8 ft) from the rear property line;
 2. If the wall face is 7.32 m (24 ft) or less in width and offset by a minimum of 0.61 m (2 ft) from any adjacent wall face over maximum height; and
 3. If any eave or gable end associated with an overheight wall face does not exceed 8.53 m (28 ft) in width and is offset a minimum 0.61 m (2 ft) from any adjacent eave or gable end associated with an overheight wall.

The most restrictive of either maximum building height or maximum perimeter wall height limit the overall height of your building.

NOTES:

* **Natural grade** means the elevation of the surface of the undisturbed natural ground as of 2004-JAN-01 as determined by a BC Land Surveyor.

** **Finished grade** means the elevation of the surface of the ground at the outermost corners of a completed development.

*** **Foundation** means a system or arrangement of foundation units (i.e. structural members of the foundation of a building such as a footing, raft, or pile) through which the loads from a building are transferred to supporting soil or rock.

**** **Open deck** means a structure connected to the principal residential building which:

- a) Is elevated a minimum of 0.6 m (1.97 ft) from ground level.
- b) Is supported on a foundation or cantilevered.
- c) May be covered by a canopy or trellis, which is not structurally, nor in appearance, part of the roof system of the principal building.
- d) May have a railing system, but no solid walls. This includes structures forming a border or walking area surrounding a hot tub, unless the hot tub is at ground level.

***** **Curb height** means the elevation at the top of curb or edge of pavement at the midpoint of the property frontage.

This Guideline should not be used as a substitute for existing building codes and other regulations. The building owner is responsible for compliance with all codes, bylaws and other regulations whether or not described in this Guideline.