



# **GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES**

# **CITY OF NANAIMO - GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES**

**Development Permits for commercial, institutional, multiple family and mixed commercial/multiple family construction in this Development Permit Area will be subject to the following Development Objectives, Design Principles and Design Guidelines.**

## **Part I – Development Objectives**

**The objectives of Development Permit Area designation are:**

**To ensure coordination and integration of design in new areas of development.** *Planning for development in previously undeveloped areas, particularly during periods of rapid growth, requires design coordination between projects. Regulation of site design and building character is necessary to ensure new projects are integrated and complementary in both form and function.*

**To ensure infill development in existing neighbourhoods contributes to the preservation of neighbourhood character.** *To preserve and protect existing neighbourhood identity, the design of new construction must complement and be sensitive to the neighbourhood context. Building setbacks, height and building character should respect existing adjacent development forms to create an integrated streetscape.*

**To ensure mixed commercial and multi family land uses are properly integrated.** *Future development, both new and infill development, will contain a greater mix of commercial and residential land uses. To mitigate against potential land use conflicts, coordination of building and site design is essential.*

**To improve the character of commercial development.** *Commercial development, especially on the Island Highway, has a history of design orientation to the automobile. Strip shopping centers, separated from roadways by large unbroken parking areas, have created a monotonous, somewhat barren and uninteresting streetscape. Designs need to soften the predominance of commercial parking and improve the “relationship” of buildings to the street. Greater street presence can be achieved by moving buildings closer to roadways.*

**To highlight the significance of community institutional buildings.** *Institutional buildings play an important role in shaping the character of the City. Their size and location, especially when in residential areas, requires a design that is compatible with adjacent uses.*

**To encourage a high level of design and quality of construction of all future development.** *Residents of existing neighbourhoods have rising design expectations of infill and new development projects. The form and character design guidelines prepared for commercial and multi family residential construction in Nanaimo set out minimum design performance criteria all new development will be required to meet. Design review of development proposals will result in a higher standard of design and construction.*

**To encourage pedestrian, bicycle and transit utilization.** *Future building and site design needs to encourage transit, pedestrian and bicycle modes of transport. Safe, more convenient pedestrian and cyclist areas are required to encourage people to walk and ride. Better on-site passenger transit facilities are required to provide shelter and security and to encourage non-automobile travel.*

## Part II – Design Principles

The following design principles are broad statements of character that development proposals are expected to exhibit. Development Permit applicants should ensure design proposals are consistent with these principles. (An elaboration of these design principles is contained in Appendix “A”, “Focus on Design”):

1. **Development must respect the past.** *Where significant historical and heritage features exist, the character of development must respect this context. For example, this may include “echoing” architectural themes or including historical elements in site landscaping.*
2. **Development must respect the present.** *Where development is proposed for an existing developed area, the design should be sensitive to the existing development context. In residential areas, the development should respond to, and be consistent with, existing neighbourhood character. Integrated landscaping, respect for views and access to sunlight, complementary architectural styles and building finishes and interconnection of road, pedestrian and bicycle networks are examples of design integration measures.*
3. **Development must relate to the natural environment.** *The natural environment is a fundamental aspect of the quality of life in Nanaimo. Building and site design should therefore complement and relate to the character of the site. Significant site features should be enhanced by the design of the project and important environmental site features should be preserved where practical. Most importantly, the development should not result in environmental degradation of the site or the surrounding area.*
4. **Development must relate to the street.** *City streets are a significant part of the community. The streets are where the private individual and the community meet and where much opportunity exists for social interaction. However, many new developments are “turning their back” on streets. Residential developments, particularly on major roads, are inclined to use high fences and barrier landscaping rather than distance to increase separation from street activity. New commercial buildings are separated from the street by large parking areas and walls without windows or displays facing the street.*

*A “presence” or prominence of homes or businesses on the street contributes to the security of the public and results in a blending of the edge between public spaces and private spaces. Designers can position units, windows, and entries, and prescribe paths of movement and areas of activity so as to strengthen the building’s relationship with the street. This makes the street an interesting and secure urban space.*

5. **Development should include significant and appropriate landscaping.** *Consistent with resident preference for “natural areas”, landscaping is essential for the enjoyment of the urban environment. Landscaping must be used to decorate and create a sense of place, and to separate service areas and incompatible uses from places of circulation and assembly.*
6. **Development character must be of a familiar form.** *The distinct forms of commercial, residential and institutional uses are important not only to their functional success but also to the diversity and interest of the urban landscape. For example, the softer architectural style and human scale of residential architecture is an important element in creating a warm, desirable place to live.*
7. **Development architecture must be durable.** *Sound design, good materials and workmanship will result in a superior urban landscape. Development proposals must reflect a commitment to superior, long lasting project design and construction practices. Durability includes social durability. Social durability is where the character and quality of development supports and nurtures positive human interaction and healthy lifestyles, where a sense of community and neighbourhood is promoted.*
8. **Development must be convenient and safe.** *Convenience includes both building in close proximity to and mixing amenities such as shopping and play areas with residential uses, providing for easy and preferably vehicle free access to these facilities. Safety includes, for example, designs that successfully integrate pedestrian and vehicle circulation, or project designs that promote social interaction and a sense of mutual responsibility for one another’s safety.*

## Part III – Design Guidelines

**Design Guidelines are specific design attributes that Development Permit applications will be required to exhibit.**

### Site Design

#### 1. Parking, Loading and Vehicle Circulation

##### General

- Off street parking should be provided in a number of small parking areas separated by areas of landscaping.
- Visual screening of parking from the street and adjacent non-commercial and non-industrial uses should be provided.
- Where possible, the site should be graded to lessen the visual impact of parking.
- The use of ground cover in parking space overhangs is encouraged to minimize the extent of hard surfacing.
- Curb stops or wider sidewalks are required to protect pedestrian paths and sidewalks.
- Underground parking is encouraged.
- Parking garage entrances and interiors should be well lit and signed for security purposes.

##### Multiple Family

- Slopes in parking areas should generally be less than eight percent.
- Slopes for internal roads and other vehicle circulation areas should generally be less than fifteen percent.
- On-site parking should be provided in the rear and/or side yard areas of the lot and should not be isolated by distance, landscaping or lighting.

##### Commercial

- Slopes in parking areas should generally be less than five percent.
- Slopes for internal roads and other vehicle circulation areas should generally be less than ten percent.
- The provision of on-site parking in the rear yard of the lot is encouraged.
- Loading zones should be screened and located away from public entrances and 'front' building activity.
- Loading areas should not restrict pedestrian or vehicle circulation on site.

##### Mixed Commercial/Residential

- Building and site design must assure public access to commercial parking spaces.

##### Institutional

- Parking must not dominate the area between the street and the structure.
- Where appropriate, site planning should facilitate transit route integration to provide for sheltered, convenient and safe bus stops.

## 2. Pedestrian Circulation

### General

- Paths should be provided around parking areas to separate pedestrian and traffic circulation on a site.
- Pedestrian access to the site and to buildings on site should be inviting and well marked.
- Pedestrian paths should be located in consideration of pedestrian connections to adjacent sites.
- Site design should minimize vehicle and pedestrian conflicts.
- The use of small seating areas, entry areas, plazas and other meeting places in conjunction with pedestrian areas is encouraged.
- Pedestrian access to main and secondary entrances should be well marked, free of vehicles, and emphasized by building and site design.

### Multiple Residential

- Development of a walkway network is encouraged that provides access to important onset and off-site destinations.

### Commercial

- Mid-block walkways and walkways connecting adjacent commercial projects are encouraged for convenience of pedestrian traffic.
- Building and site design should include “public gathering places” (e.g. outdoor plazas) and encourage pedestrian uses.
- Walkways of a minimum 1.8 metres are required in front of stores in non-enclosed malls.

## 3. Bicycle Facilities

### General

- Site vehicle circulation should provide for safe bicycle routes across the site to building entrances.
- Bicycle parking should be provided in a sheltered location convenient to building entrances.
- Bicycle parking should afford an opportunity to secure bicycles against theft.

### Commercial and Mixed Commercial/Residential

- Building design should incorporate shower and change facilities for employees travelling to work by bicycle.

## 4. Open Space and Site Design

### General

- Site design must promote the “presence” of development on major roads and public streets; i.e., Site design should not turn its back on public streets.

#### Multiple Family

- The layout and design of buildings on site should contribute to a sense of “neighbourhood identity” and security without creating barriers to adjacent streets.
- Site design should create large blocks or areas of useable open space.
- Open space areas should be naturally supervised by overlooking residential units.
- Open space design should serve as a meeting area and as an area for recreation.
- Open space areas should contain uses that encourage activity, e.g., playing fields, play areas for small children, garden plots, horseshoe pits, etc.
- To facilitate supervision, open space play areas for small children should not be secluded from view of adjacent residential uses.

### 5. Landscaping

#### General

This section amplifies the requirements of the Landscaping Bylaw.

- Landscaping and building construction should retain and integrate existing vegetation where appropriate.
- Landscaping that permits view penetration into the site from adjacent streets is encouraged.
- Landscape materials should be appropriate to the task; i.e., suitable for screening, visual interest, soil stabilization, etc.
- Plant materials should generally be hardy and easily maintained plant species.
- Where appropriate, landscaping should use plant materials that have low watering and maintenance requirements.
- Hard landscaping features should be durable, decorative and complement building finishes.
- The use of irrigation systems should be used for all new planting areas.
- Slopes should be suitably graded and landscaped to ensure slope stability and to facilitate use.
- Steep slopes are discouraged.
- Retaining walls should receive high quality finishing and/or be large concealed by vegetation.

#### Commercial

- Landscape design should provide for attractive and inviting public outdoor space.
- Landscaping should not impede the building interface with the street.
- Landscaping should reinforce the pedestrian nature of the street.

#### Multiple Family

- Landscape design should provide for useable, attractive and secure private and common outdoor space.



Mixed Commercial/Residential

- Areas intended for private residential use should be separated from areas intended for public use.

6. Setbacks and Buffers

General

- Setbacks and buffers should provide adequate separation from conflicting adjacent uses.
- Building setbacks, particularly front yard setbacks, should be sympathetic to adjacent properties.
- Sound attenuation measures should employ planting, grade changes and greater separation of uses in preference to fences.
- Buffers and setbacks should not sever or block the “presence” of building on the street.

Multiple Family

- Front and yard fences should be limited in height to less than one metre.
- Fences and buffers should permit view penetration onto the site from adjacent sidewalks.

Commercial

- Front yard fences are strongly discouraged.
- View penetration onto the site from adjacent street sidewalks and roads is essential.

Mixed Commercial/Residential

- Separation of commercial and residential uses on site should be achieved through site layout, landscaping, grade changes and building design.
- Front yard fences are strongly discouraged where commercial uses front on the street.

Institutional

- Gates and formal entrances to parking areas and the building should be considered for larger institutional uses.

7. Safety and Security

General

- Lighting should permit identification of a face at 25 yards.
- Adequate lighting should be provided for pedestrians and bicycle routes.
- Fences and landscaping should not limit visibility or offer opportunities for concealment next to pedestrian thoroughfares.
- “Leftover” spaces that could provide environmental opportunities for crime should not be created by site and building design.
- Entrances and exits should be well marked and lit to indicate their location.

- Parking should be integrated with other site uses.
- Ramp and elevator entrances for persons with disabilities should also be well lit, secure and not located in isolated areas.
- Loading entrances and parking garages should be secure.
- All parking garages should include safe lighting and signage to indicate exit location and routes (with two or more possible escape routes).
- Walls, fences, shrubs, changes in grade or other site features should not obscure vehicle driver vision of pedestrian or bicycle routes.

## Building Design

### 1. Form

#### General

- Buildings should relate to major roads and public streets.
- Buildings should be integrated into the context of the streetscape.
- Repetitive and monotonous building designs are discouraged.

#### Multiple Residential

- Greater building setbacks should be used in preference to fences, berms, dense landscaping and other barriers that sever the relationship of residential buildings with the street.
- Building mass should be compatible with adjacent buildings and the streetscape.
- Large, bulky buildings out of scale with adjacent developments are discouraged.
- The incorporation of building outdoor use areas such as roof decks and interior courtyards is encouraged.
- Entrances should front on main streets and be emphasized by building design.

#### Commercial

- Site design should front buildings on adjacent major streets; i.e., no rear yards on the street.
- Building form, proportion, and fascia treatment should complement the existing streetscape.
- Rooflines and roof types should be complementary to existing adjacent buildings.
- The incorporation of outdoor use areas (such as roof decks) on the building is encouraged.
- Building architecture should be “human scaled” and inviting.

#### Mixed Commercial/Residential

- Building form should be consistent with the context of the site; i.e., mixed use sites in “Commercial areas” should also meet the form and character guidelines of commercial buildings, while mixed use sites in “Residential areas” should also meet the form and character guidelines of residential buildings.

#### Institutional

- Building form should reflect the intended use.
- Building character should harmonize with any adjacent existing residential uses.

## 2. Height

### General

- The height of buildings should respect adjacent building heights and employ techniques such as building stepping to integrate built form.

### Multiple Residential

- Building heights should be designed in consideration of views from overlooking properties, access to sunlight of adjacent properties, and provide for privacy from overlooking adjacent uses.

## 3. Facades

### General

- Building materials should be durable, high in quality and complement the surrounding streetscape.
- Buildings should be well detailed to maintain appearance and to contribute to longevity.
- Use of building projections and areas of recess should be encouraged to create building interest.
- Window fenestration should complement building design and proportion.
- Building entrances should be emphasized by facade design.
- Building entrances should be located on major roads in prominent locations and away from areas of potential vehicle conflict.
- Building facades should employ a degree of ornamentation and building articulation to create interest and reduce apparent mass.

### Commercial

- Ground floor grade levels should be at street level.
- Glazed storefronts should face continuously along sidewalk areas. Blank walls on sidewalks are strongly discouraged.
- Building design and building elements, such as canopies, should shelter sidewalk areas from inclement weather.

### Mixed Commercial/Residential

- Private residential entrances should be separated from public circulation areas.

### Institutional

- Facades and entrances should assume a grandeur to distinguish institutional uses from other uses.

## 4. Building Siting

### General

- Buildings should be located to preserve the privacy of adjacent residential land uses.

- Building siting should preserve site amenities and emphasize positive site characteristics.

Multiple Residential

- Building siting should consider view and sunlight access of adjacent land uses.
- Building siting should result in significant areas of useable open space.

Commercial

- Building siting should consider view and sunlight access of adjacent non-commercial or industrial land uses.

Institutional

- The structure should not be lost in a “sea” of parking.

5. Signage

Commercial and Mixed Commercial and Residential

- All buildings should incorporate a comprehensive signage design program that integrates building signage with the building facade.
- The sign program should specify the location, appearance, type, number and design of signs and describe how signs will be illuminated.
- Excessive signage and free-standing signage are discouraged.

Institutional

- Large institutional uses should incorporate signage into formal entrance features.

/asr

g:\DSDSystem\Handouts\Planning\dsnguide