MULTI-UNIT RESIDENTIAL

ILLUSTRATED DESIGN GUIDELINES

DISTRICT OF OAK BAY

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Illustration credit Calum Srigley, Modus Associate.

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to support the interpretation of the Multi-Unit Residential Development Permit Area Guidelines. It is for general informational purposes only and does not replace Oak Bay bylaws, policies and processes.

Oak Bay residents care deeply about the form and character of development in the community. Throughout the process to update the Official Community Plan (2025), there was fairly universal interest in guiding new development to fit with the local context and character of Oak Bay. With the land use changes introduced as part of this OCP update, the District anticipates an increase in the number of applications for multi-unit residential development. Development guidelines can shape the form and character of new buildings while also addressing some of the concerns about sustainability.

The intent of these guidelines is to set sufficient limits to exclude new projects that are obviously out of character with Oak Bay (e.g., large grey concrete walls with no windows or detailing), and to be flexible enough to allow creative designs that borrow enough characteristics of established neighbourhoods to blend with the diversity that already exists. The guidelines will enable successful projects that encompass innovation, environmental practices, and features that meet the needs of existing and future residents.

2 MULTI-UNIT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA GUIDELINES

Oak Bay is a cherished community characterized by historic and character homes and buildings, tree lined streets, lush west coast vegetation, and iconic views of the Salish Sea. As newcomers continue to be drawn to the community and new development occurs it is important to preserve the elements of Oak Bay that make it so special.

Objectives

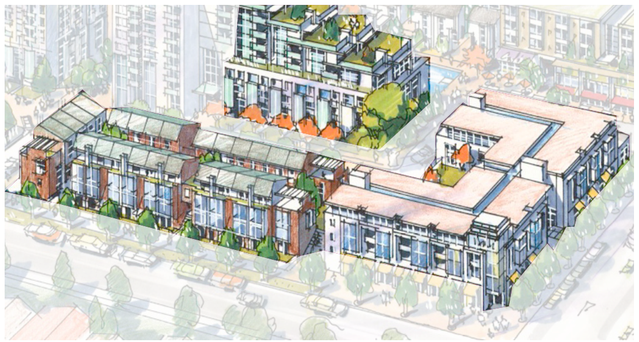
The objectives of the Multi Unit Residential Development Permit Area are to promote developments and redevelopments that accomplish the following:

1. Support a sustainable and compact community
2. Respect and integrate with neighbourhood character and streetscapes
3. Provide housing diversity to meet the changing needs of residents throughout their life cycle, including the needs of persons with physical and developmental disabilities
4. Provide landscapes that include vegetation and rainwater management
5. Support safe pedestrian access and accessibility
6. Consider the impacts of new construction on adjacent residents

Site Planning

Context, Scale and Massing

1. Design and build new development to contribute to the cohesion, visual identity and the quality of streetscapes.
2. Incorporate building elements that are complementary to other buildings on the street, such as street walls, façade rhythm, and horizontal cornice lines.
3. Add visual interest to the streetscape including laneways through variations in building height, rooflines and massing. Break up the perceived mass of large buildings by incorporating visual breaks in façades.
4. Step back the upper storeys of large buildings and arrange the massing and siting of buildings to consider shadowing on lower level units, adjacent buildings, as well as public and open spaces such as sidewalks, plazas, and courtyards. Building articulation may consider the use of balconies, trellises and architectural features to reduce the impact of larger buildings. Articulation may be considered in lieu of setbacks through the use of balconies, trellises and architectural features.



5. Avoid blank, windowless walls along and/ or visible from streets or other public open spaces. Where blank walls cannot be avoided, features such as texture, graphics, reveals, and colours may be incorporated into the façade.
6. Incorporate subtle vertical and horizontal recesses / articulation on large primary façades (e.g. cladding details).
7. Contribute to both streetscapes including laneways if the building is located on a corner site.
8. Locate and design the building massing to provide a transition between the form, character and scale of the surrounding neighbourhood and the character of commercial areas or arterial and collector roads that are close to or adjacent to the property being developed. Consider future land use when designing the transition in building heights from taller to shorter buildings both within and adjacent to the site.

Community and Privacy

9. Respect the privacy of adjacent properties by reducing overlook between buildings and neighbouring properties.
10. Limit shadowing of public outdoor use areas and adjacent residential properties.
11. Retain prominent views of nearby or distant landscape features from public spaces.
12. Orient building frontages and main entrances to the dominant street frontage where possible, with well-defined entries and direct pedestrian access to the entries from the street.
13. Retain large front setbacks where there is substantial green space and trees that contribute to the character of the streetscape. Flexibility should be considered to accommodate courtyards and other features between buildings that would result in building façades up to the minimum front yard setback.
14. Apply Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to building and site design, balancing these with objectives related to landscaping, sustainability and tree retention.

15. Finish other building elevations visible from the street to a similar standard as the street-fronting façade.

16. Screen roof-top mechanical and ground-level equipment from views in a manner that is consistent with the architectural design of the building, and so as not to cause visual, noise or vibration impacts on project residents or adjacent residential lots.

17. Avoid locating utility infrastructure (such as electrical meters, HVAC units etc.) on the front facade of buildings where alternative locations are feasible and that are screened to minimize visual impact from the street and neighbouring properties.

18. Locate garbage and recycling rooms in underground or covered parking areas where feasible. Where not feasible, exterior garbage or recycling areas may be considered with landscaping and screened to minimize a visual impact from public view.

19. Encourage community connection with the street through the use of balconies, patios, and work-live units (where permitted).

Sustainable Design

20. Use sustainable and green building practices and technologies such as water and energy conservation, waste reduction, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, solar panels, geothermal energy and other emerging systems.

21. Apply passive solar siting principles to reduce the energy needed for lighting and heating, e.g., penetration of sunlight and natural light into interior spaces.

22. Incorporate planted roofs and roof-top gardens on buildings for use by residents, with care taken in design to minimize the impact on privacy of neighbours.

23. Provide charging stations for electric vehicles and secured storage for bicycles in accordance with District bylaws.

Landscape Guidelines

1. Design the site layout and building locations to retain and conserve as much natural vegetation, rock outcrops, existing hydrology, and unique site features as possible, including Garry oaks, other large trees, and significant vegetation.

2. Respect the existing topography, minimizing the need for cut and fill, major blasting, or tall retaining walls.

3. Use low impact development practices such as the following:
   - o maximize the extent of landscaped areas on site with absorbent soils and minimize the amount of impervious surfaces to increase the natural infiltration (absorption) of rainwater and to provide a more natural or landscaped character
   - o reduce the amount of impervious paving and use permeable materials where possible, e.g., permeable pavers, permeable asphalt or concrete, decks, reinforced grass
   - o consider the use of bioswales, rain gardens, and other design techniques that allow greater infiltration of water, including within and around parking areas
   - o use rainwater collection/re-use systems that collect rainwater for irrigation

4. Use native, low maintenance (drought resistant, low water requirement) concepts in landscape plans.

5. Design the landscape to retain, and if possible to increase, the tree canopy on the site.

6. Make sites accessible to people of all abilities through the use of universal design principles.

7. Consider energy efficiency and conservation in landscape design, e.g., provide shade in summer, moderate wind, while allowing sunlight and daylight into buildings.

8. Incorporate outdoor amenities such as benches, courtyards, food gardens, dog relief areas, and recreation facilities to provide opportunities for residents to socialize and to contribute to a sense of community.

9. Screen surface parking areas and service areas where necessary to reduce impacts on neighbouring residences and the public realm. Use planting for screening where possible.

10. Design the front yard landscape to include a significant proportion of vegetation, and design fences to allow views into the property.

11. Locate and design directional signs and any similar features to be low profile, ground-oriented and externally lit with low intensity fixtures accentuated by landscaping. Do not use flashing lights, neon signs and similar bright lights.

12. Locate refuse and recycling container areas where they are accessible to residents and to container pick-up trucks, screened with an appropriate durable enclosure, and provide landscaping around the perimeter of the enclosure where possible. Avoid direct exposure of refuse and recycling areas to public streets.

13. Design and select outdoor light fixtures based on dark sky principles, e.g., shielded to direct light downward to ground surfaces only and avoid direct lighting of building faces and trees.

Access, Circulation and Parking Area Guidelines

1. Design the internal road and parking system for efficient circulation of all types of vehicles, with a layout that discourages speeding, and provide safe pedestrian routes from parking lots to building entrances.

2. Include internal landscaping within large areas of surface parking in order to “break-up” the hard surface area.

3. Locate parking to the rear or side yard, underground or under the building where possible.

4. Locate access points and route driveways to minimize impacts on existing trees.

5. Garage entries should be located on rear or side façades of buildings. If this is not possible, they should be receded behind the front building face and incorporate architectural detailing to avoid a streetscape that is auto-centric. Garage doors visible from the street should include glazing, design features, and materials/colours to soften the impact.

6. Consider the use of laneways for access where they exist.

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