

LANEWAY HOUSING HOW-TO GUIDE

This guide provides an overview of laneway housing regulations. The examples shown in this Guide are illustrative only. For precise dimensions and particular requirements, refer to Section 11.24 of the Zoning and Development Bylaw.

October 2018

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OVERVIEW

A laneway house (LWH) is a small house at the rear of a lot near the lane. It is intended for a single household, and may or may not include an attached garage.

Laneway housing is allowed in the following zones:

- all RS zones
- RT-4, RT-4A, RT-4N, RT-5, RT-5N, RT-6, RT-11/11N
- RM-7, RM-7N, RM-7AN
- RM-8, RM-8N
- RM-9, RM-9A, RM-9N, RM-9AN and RM-9BN

The Development and Building Services Centre (604.873.7611) can help you determine whether your lot is zoned for laneway housing.

You can also access our web-based application Vanmap and turn on the Zoning Districts and the Zoning District labels under the Districts and Areas category to determine the zoning for your property.

A laneway house:

- is only allowed in conjunction with a one family dwelling, not a duplex;
- can be a rental suite, or can be for family use;
- can be permitted in addition to a secondary suite in the main house; and
- cannot be strata-titled.

A laneway house is different from an infill, which can be strata-titled and is only permitted as an incentive for character house retention in RS and RT zones.

Homeowners may add a laneway house while keeping their existing home, or build a laneway house along with a new main house.

SITE ELIGIBILITY

1. Lane access

In order to build a LWH, your site must:

- have access to an open lane; or
- be located on a corner served by an open or dedicated lane; or
- be located on a double fronting site served by a street at both the front and rear.

2. Site depth

Your site must be deep enough to allow for both a backyard and a LWH, which may extend up to 10.7m (35ft) inward from the rear property line for a one-storey LWH, or 7.9m (26ft) for a 1.5 storey LWH.

A minimum separation of 4.9m (16ft) between the LWH and the main house (including rear deck) is required.

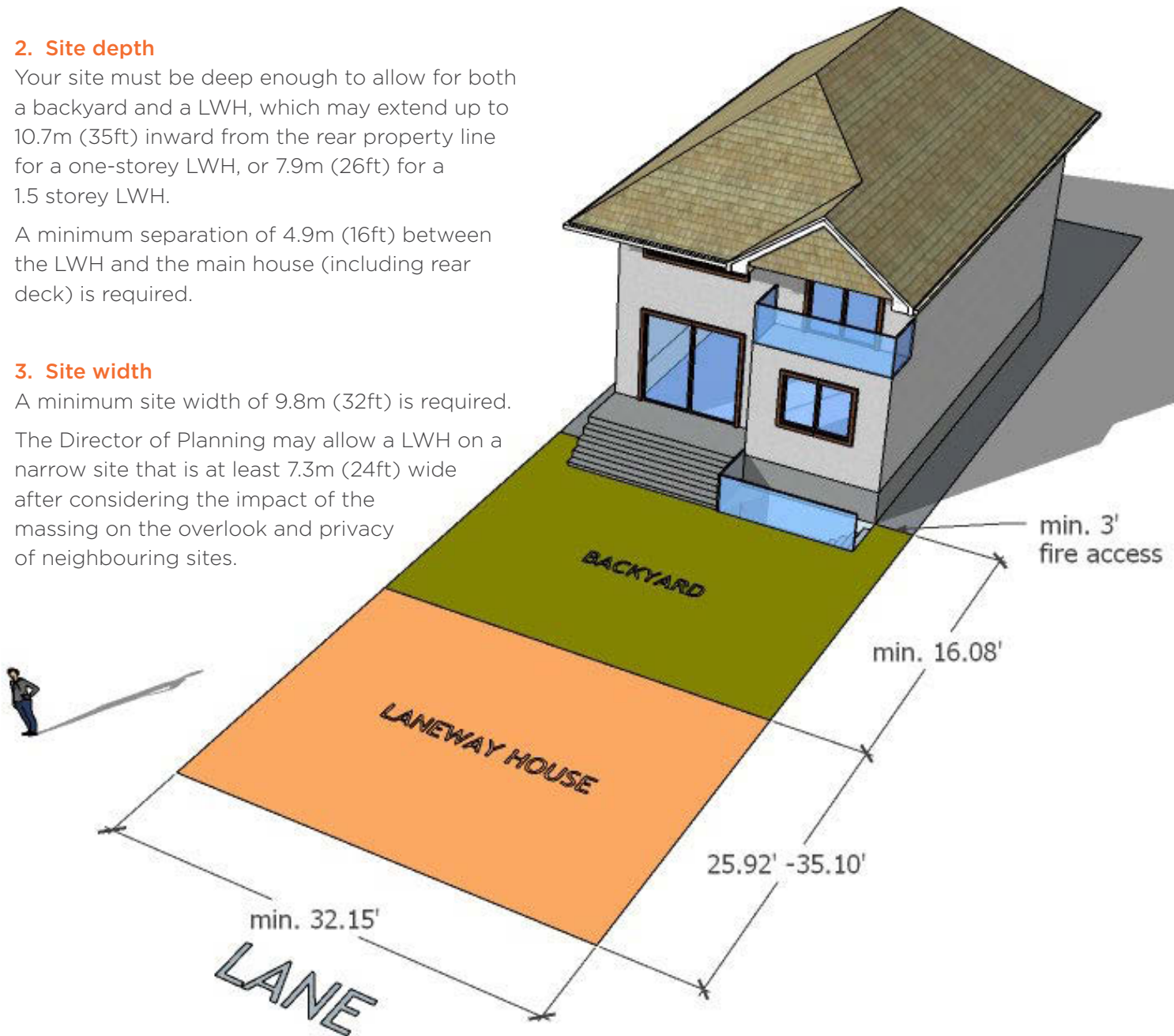
3. Site width

A minimum site width of 9.8m (32ft) is required.

The Director of Planning may allow a LWH on a narrow site that is at least 7.3m (24ft) wide after considering the impact of the massing on the overlook and privacy of neighbouring sites.

4. Fire fighter access

A fire fighter access path must be provided from the street to the entrance of the LWH. This path must be at least 900mm (3ft) in width and clear of any projections.



APPLICATION PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

Once you determine that your lot is eligible for a laneway house, your next steps are to investigate the costs (e.g. soft cost, utility costs) and prepare the necessary drawings and documents to apply for the combined development and building (DB) permit.

Refer to the Appendices for resources and contact information.

Site analysis includes, but is not limited to:

- utilities (e.g. sewer and water design, electrical servicing, gas line location);
- existing trees on site, on City property, and on adjacent sites that may impact the utility connections and the location of the laneway house;
- site restrictions (e.g. easements, transformers, zoning regulations).

Other requirements include:

- building and energy requirements;
- non-stratification covenant;
- New Home registration (BC Housing);

Hiring a design professional (house designer or architect) to coordinate the preparation of plans and application materials can be beneficial. In the case of a unique site, please consult the Planning Department about possible relaxations. Refer to the Appendices for contact information.

Once a permit application is prepared, you can submit the application to the Development and Building Services Centre. This walk-in service operates on a first come first served basis.

Site eligible for a laneway house

Prepare for submission

Site Analysis
(professionals may be required)

- Survey
- Arborist's report
- Architectural drawings
- Structural drawings (letter of assurance)
- Energy report
- New home warranty insurance
- Non-stratification covenant

Permitting process

- Water/sewer connection approval
- Application intake
- Staff review
- Revised drawings
- Staff review
- Permit issuance

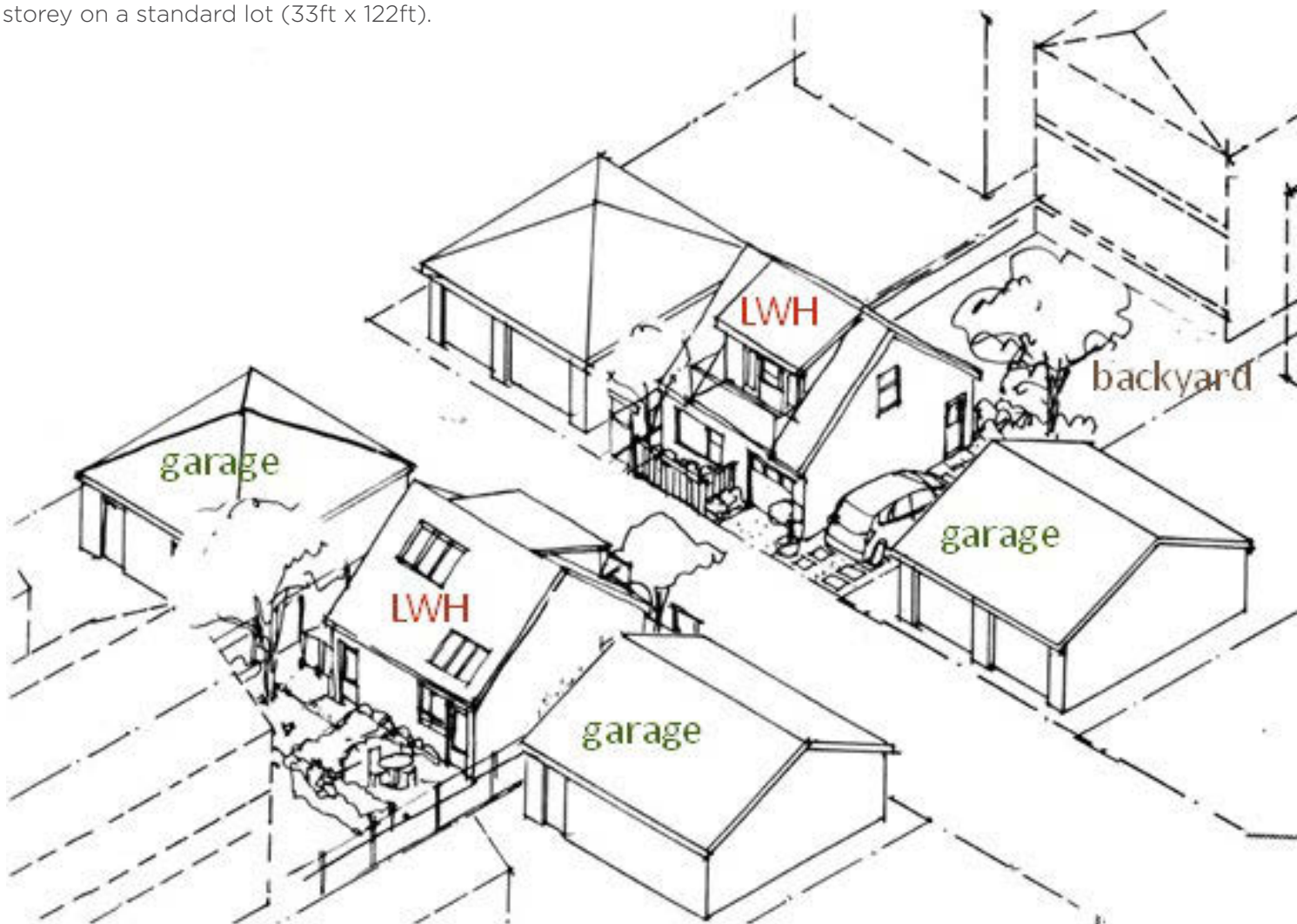
DESIGN IN CONTEXT

Laneway housing regulations allow for a range of architectural approaches and building forms, from traditional to contemporary. Special design considerations apply to upper storeys, windows, landscaping, and lane frontages to enhance neighbourliness and livability. This section illustrates those design features.

The drawings in this section illustrate a 60m² (644ft²) laneway house with a partial upper storey on a standard lot (33ft x 122ft).

Shown is a laneway house with both a garage and an open parking space as viewed from the lane on one side and from the back yard on the other.

Main houses are shown in dashed lines. The garage illustrations show the height and size that is allowed for accessory buildings.



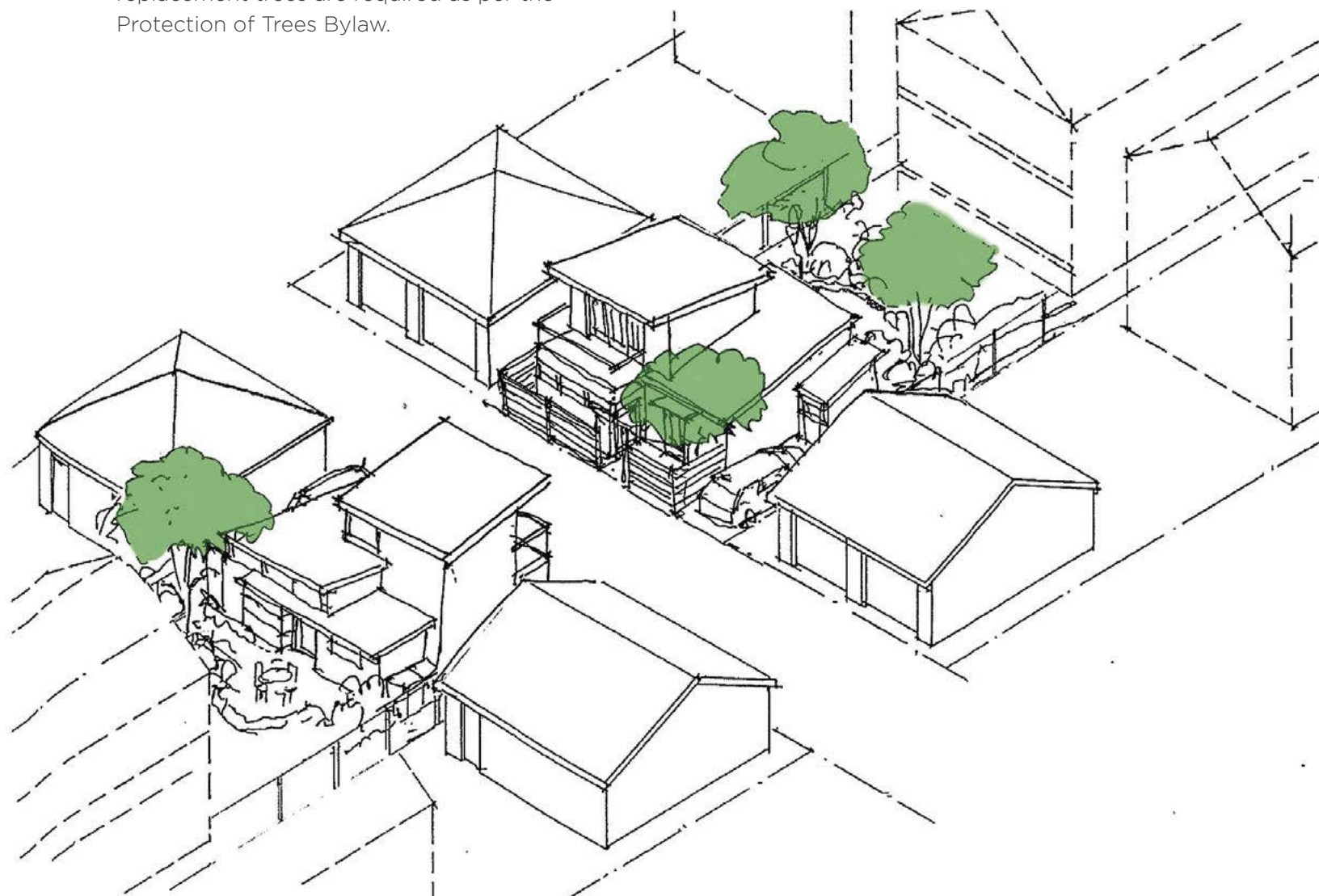
TREE PROTECTION

A laneway house should be located and designed to preserve existing trees, including those on neighbouring properties and City property.

After you have obtained an arborist's report, contact the Development and Building Services Centre to arrange a consultation with one of the City's landscape development specialists.

All existing onsite and offsite trees must be retained where possible. Relaxations for laneway house location, massing, and parking standards may be allowed in order to retain significant trees. A permit is required to remove a tree and replacement trees are required as per the Protection of Trees Bylaw.

Deciduous trees, drought-tolerant plantings, green roofs, and green walls are encouraged. See suggested list of drought-tolerant plants in the Appendices.



LANEWAY HOUSE LOCATION AND MASSING

1. Lane setback

A laneway house must be set back 0.9m (3ft) from the lane. This setback should be permeable and landscaped with plantings that add visual interest to the lane.

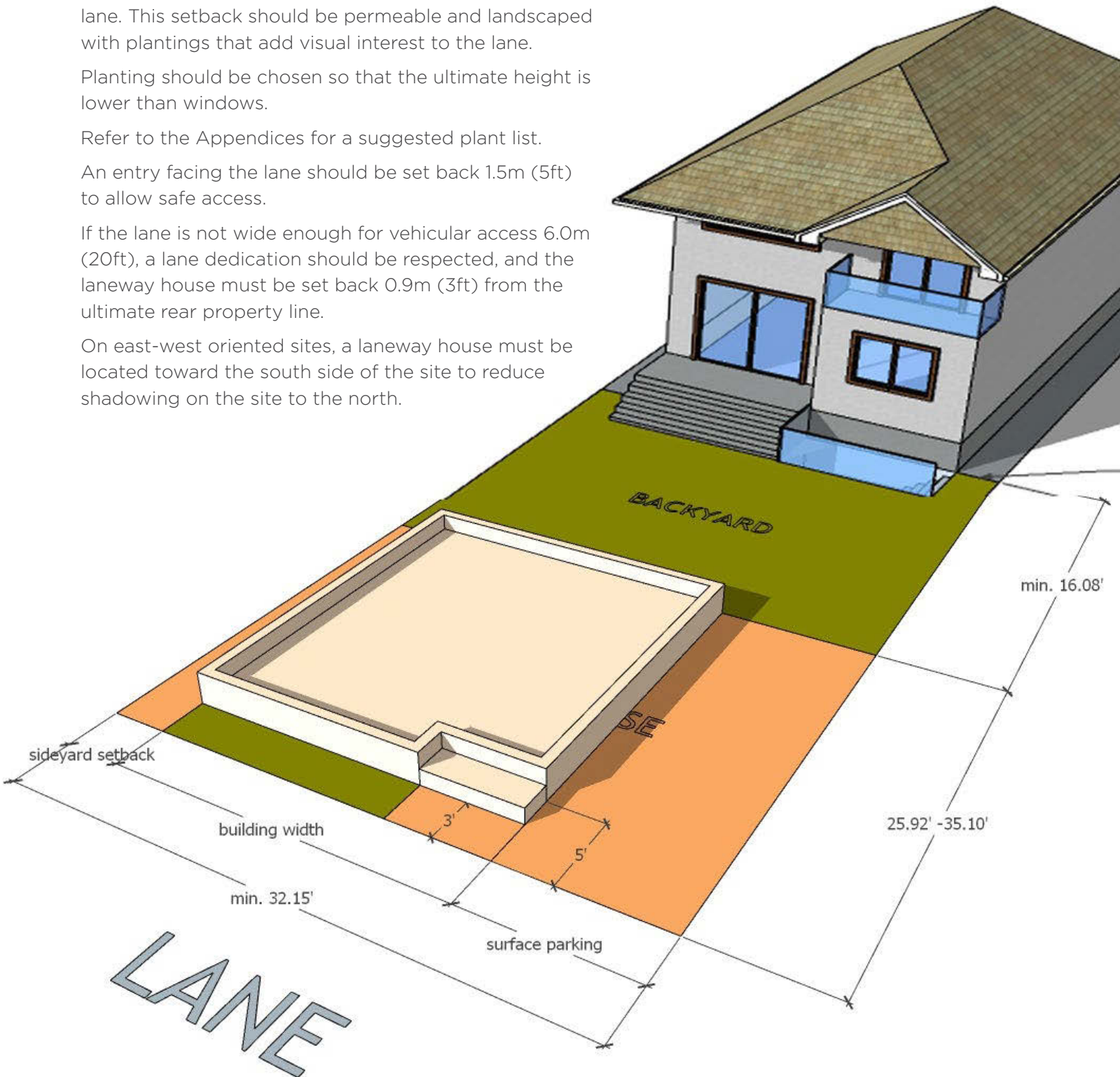
Planting should be chosen so that the ultimate height is lower than windows.

Refer to the Appendices for a suggested plant list.

An entry facing the lane should be set back 1.5m (5ft) to allow safe access.

If the lane is not wide enough for vehicular access 6.0m (20ft), a lane dedication should be respected, and the laneway house must be set back 0.9m (3ft) from the ultimate rear property line.

On east-west oriented sites, a laneway house must be located toward the south side of the site to reduce shadowing on the site to the north.



LANEWAY HOUSE LOCATION AND MASSING

2. Building width

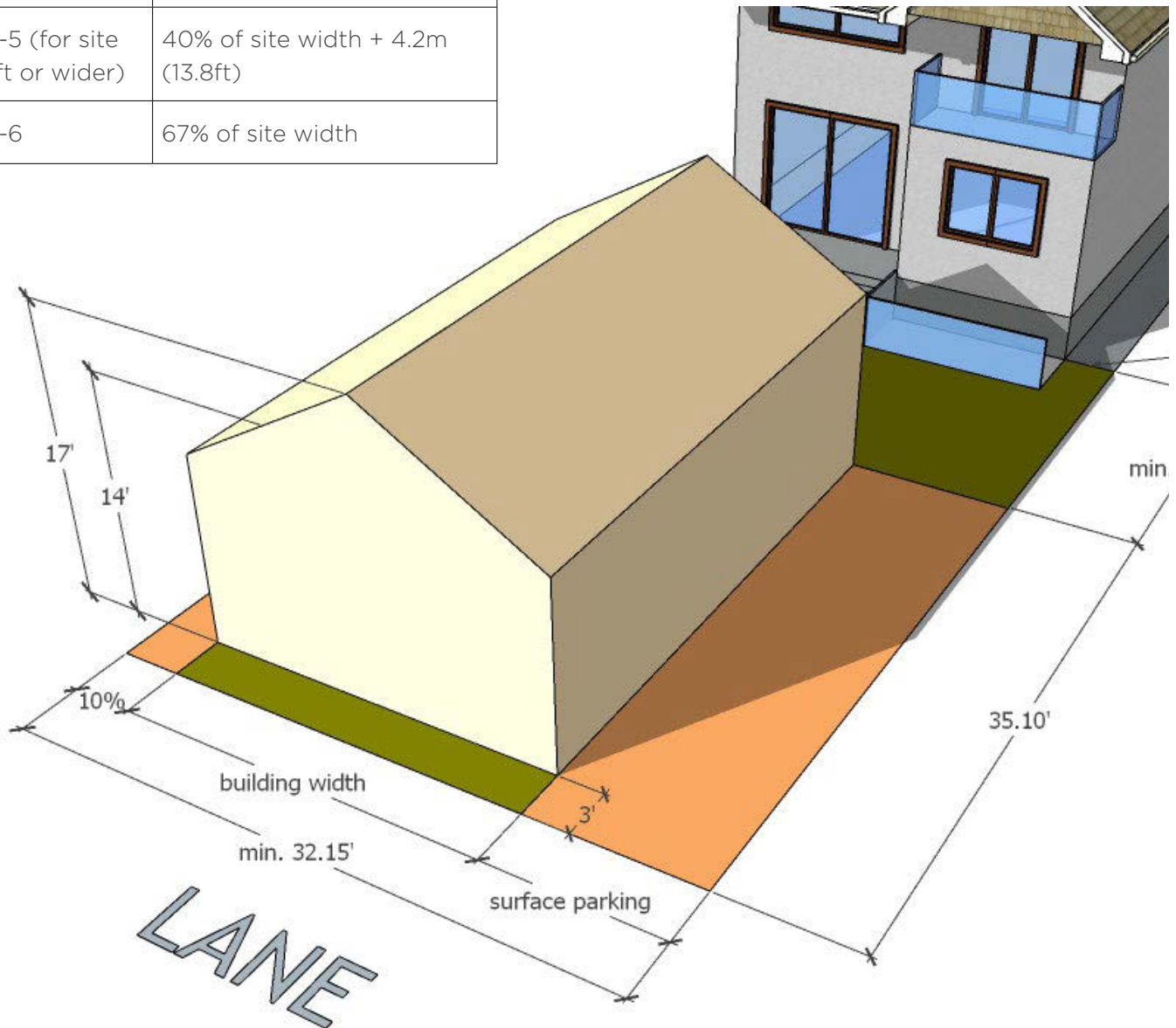
The width of the laneway house is limited by the required side yard setbacks, the surface parking requirement, and landscaped strip.

In the following zones, the laneway house must not exceed the width of the accessory building outlined under the District Schedule.

| Zone | Maximum laneway house's width |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| RS-3/3A | 50% of site width |
| RS-5 (for site 55ft or wider) | 40% of site width + 4.2m (13.8ft) |
| RS-6 | 67% of site width |

3. Separation between laneway house and principal house

There must be a minimum separation of 4.9m (16ft) between the laneway house and main house, including any rear decks. This is to ensure that there is a reasonable amount of open space between the two structures to provide sunlight, outdoor living, urban agriculture, and permeability. Sunken patios and landings with a maximum size of 3m² (32ft²) may project into this separation.



LANEWAY HOUSE LOCATION AND MASSING

4. Laneway house with a single storey

4.1. Location in rear yard

A single storey laneway house is located within the rear 10.7m (35ft) of the site, measured from the rear property line.

4.2. Side yard setback

The required side yard setback on each side of the property is 10% of the lot width.

This requirement may be reduced to 0.6m (2ft) for one side to help achieve the permitted floor area at grade. This may result in no window glazing on the wall adjacent to the reduced side yard as per Vancouver Building Bylaw.

4.3. Building height

A single storey laneway house must not exceed 4.3m (14ft) if the roof is flat, or 5.2m (17ft) if roof is sloped.

5. Laneway house with a partial second storey

5.1. Location in rear yard

A laneway house with a partial second storey is to be located within the rear 7.9m (26ft) of the site measured from the rear property line.

5.2. Side yard setback

The required side yard setback is the same as the required side yard setback for the main house.

5.3. Building height and upper level massing

See table below

Table 5.3

| | Minimum roof pitch of 7:12 | Roof pitch less than 7:12 |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| Building height | 6.7m (22ft) | 5.8m (19ft) |
| Spring height | 4.0m (13ft) | n/a |
| The face of dormers to be set back | 0.6m (2ft) from the wall below * | 0.6m (2ft) from the wall below * |
| Upper-level setback from the walls below | n/a | 0.6m (2ft) from the wall below * |
| Upper level floor area (after exclusions) | 60% of the footprint | 50% of the footprint (applied only if roof pitch less than 3:12) |

* Except that a single portion, not exceeding 35% of the width of the floor below, may project into the setback

PARKING REQUIREMENT

1. Number of parking spaces

At least one surface parking space must be provided on site. This parking space must be unenclosed and uncovered, and located adjacent to the laneway house. It may be for the use of any of the dwelling units on site.

Additional parking spaces may be provided but not required.

An attached garage or carport may be provided in the laneway house but it will be counted as part of the permitted floor area.

2. Location of surface parking

For corner sites, the surface parking should be located at the interior side yard.

For east-west oriented sites, surface parking should be located on the north side to reduce shadowing on the property to the north. This does not apply in the case of a corner flanking lane.

3. Surface parking material

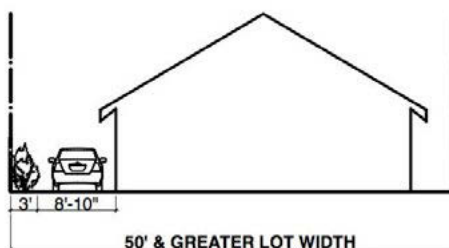
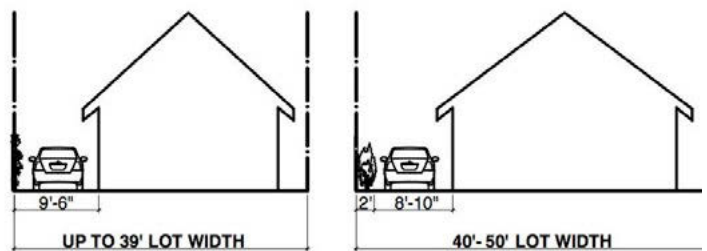
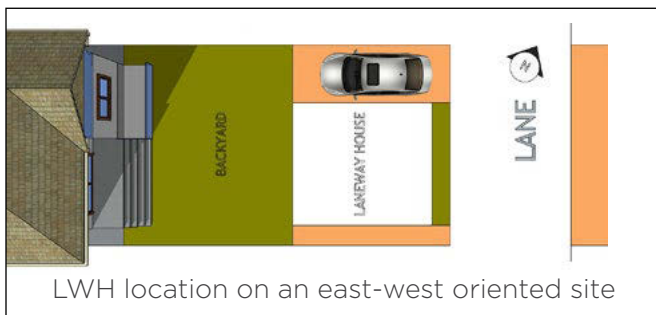
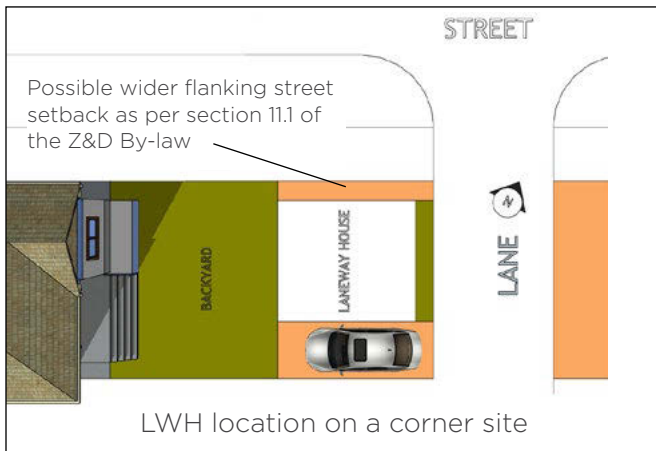
Surface parking material must be permeable. Examples of permeable materials include permeable pavers, gravel, grass-crete or a mix of concrete wheel paths and landscape strips. However, for the purpose of calculating the amount of impermeable site coverage, these materials are considered impermeable, except gravel.

4. Landscaped setback

A 1.0m (3.0') landscaped setback is typically required adjacent to the side property line for surface parking spaces.

Depending on the site width, the landscape setback beside surface parking may be reduced as follows:

| Lot width | Landscaped setback |
|----------------------------|---|
| Up to 12.2m (40ft) | n/a. Instead plant vines. Plans should provide a fence detail showing vine supports. |
| 12.2m (40ft) - 15.2m (5ft) | 0.6m (2ft) |
| More than 15.2m (50ft) | 1.0m (3ft) |



UPPER STOREY

Maximum upper floor area

If the roof pitch is 3:12 or more, the upper floor area cannot exceed 60% of the main floor area (after exclusions).

If the roof pitch is less than 3:12, the upper floor area cannot exceed 50% (after exclusions).

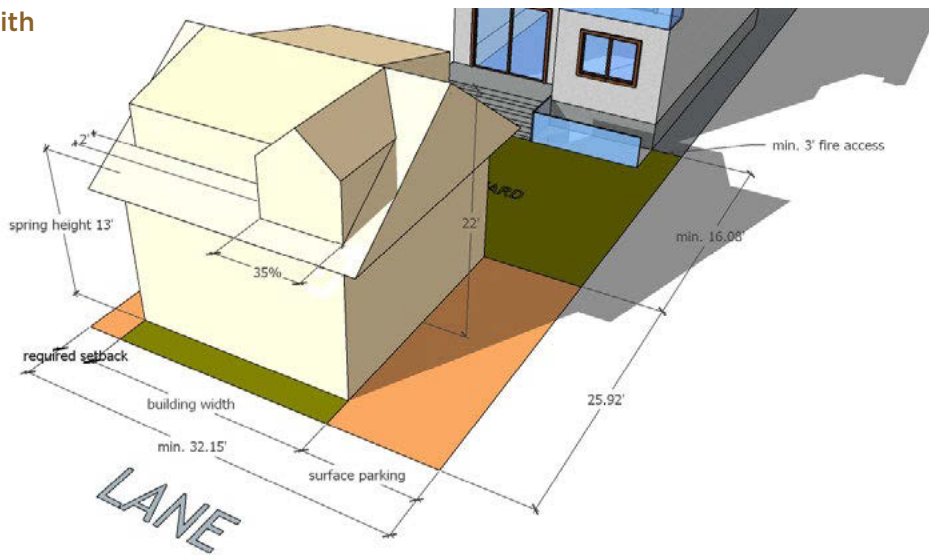
Inset exterior walls

If the roof pitch is 7:12 or more, the face of all dormer walls must be set in 0.6m (2ft).

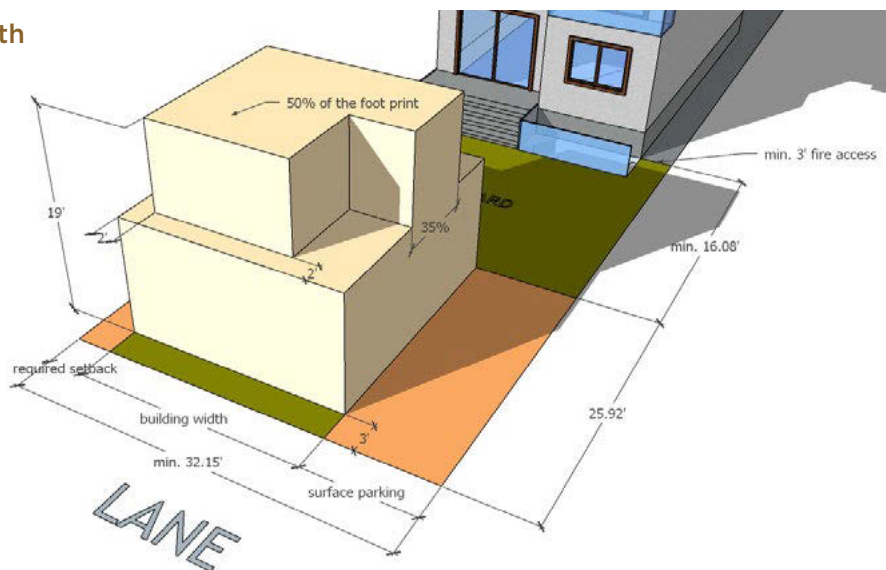
If the roof pitch is less than 7:12, all upper exterior walls must be set in 0.6m (2ft).

Note: A 35% portion of an upper wall can be flush with the wall below (for example, to accommodate stairs.)

Laneway house with roof pitch 7:12



Laneway house with flat roof

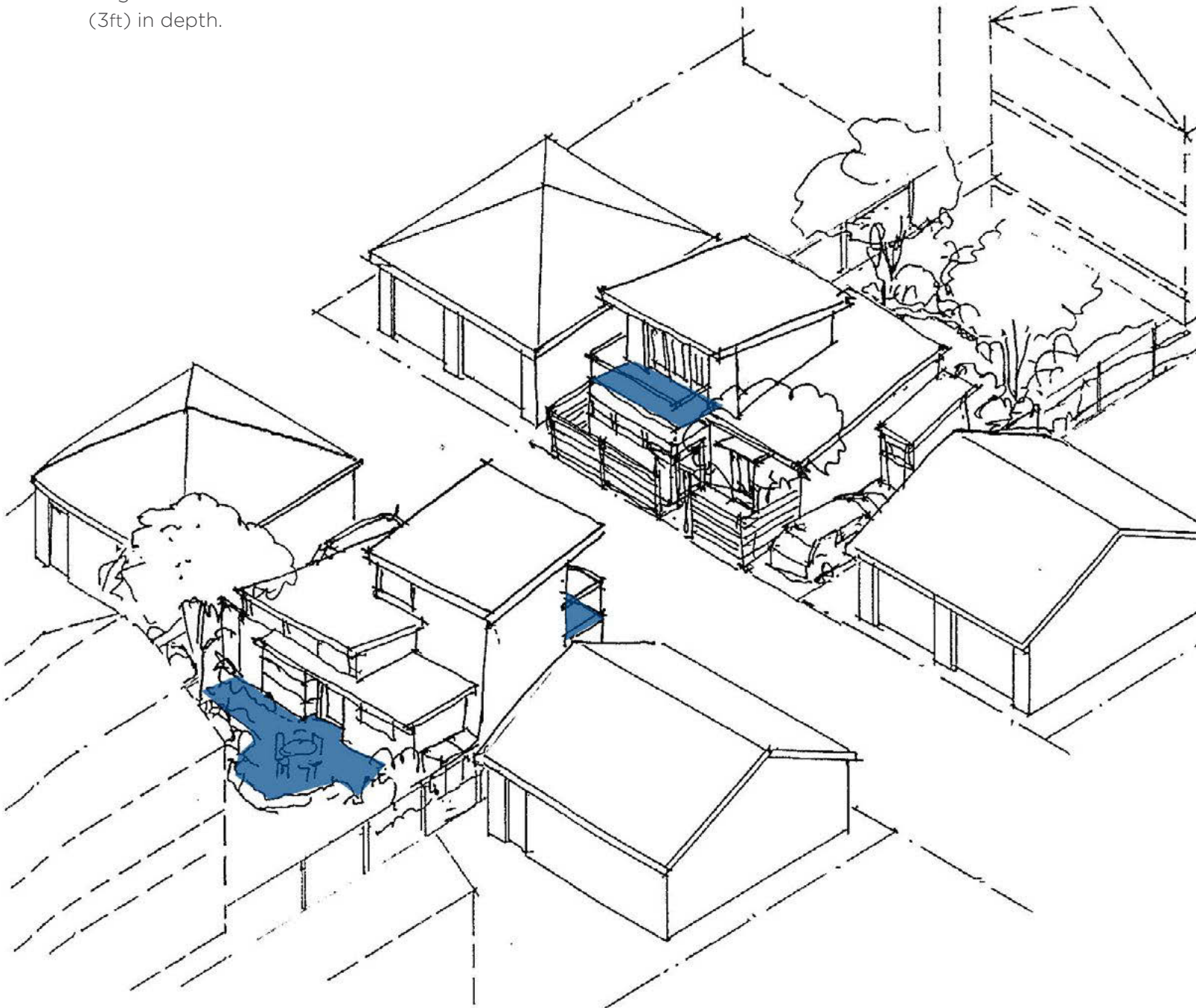


OUTDOOR SPACE

An at-grade patio or roof deck is required.

An at-grade patio must be a minimum of 3.7m² (40ft²), and a minimum of 1.5m (5ft) in depth.

Upper decks must face a lane, or flanking street (not the backyard or side neighbours) to enhance neighbourliness. A deck should be at least 1m (3ft) in depth.



LIVABILITY

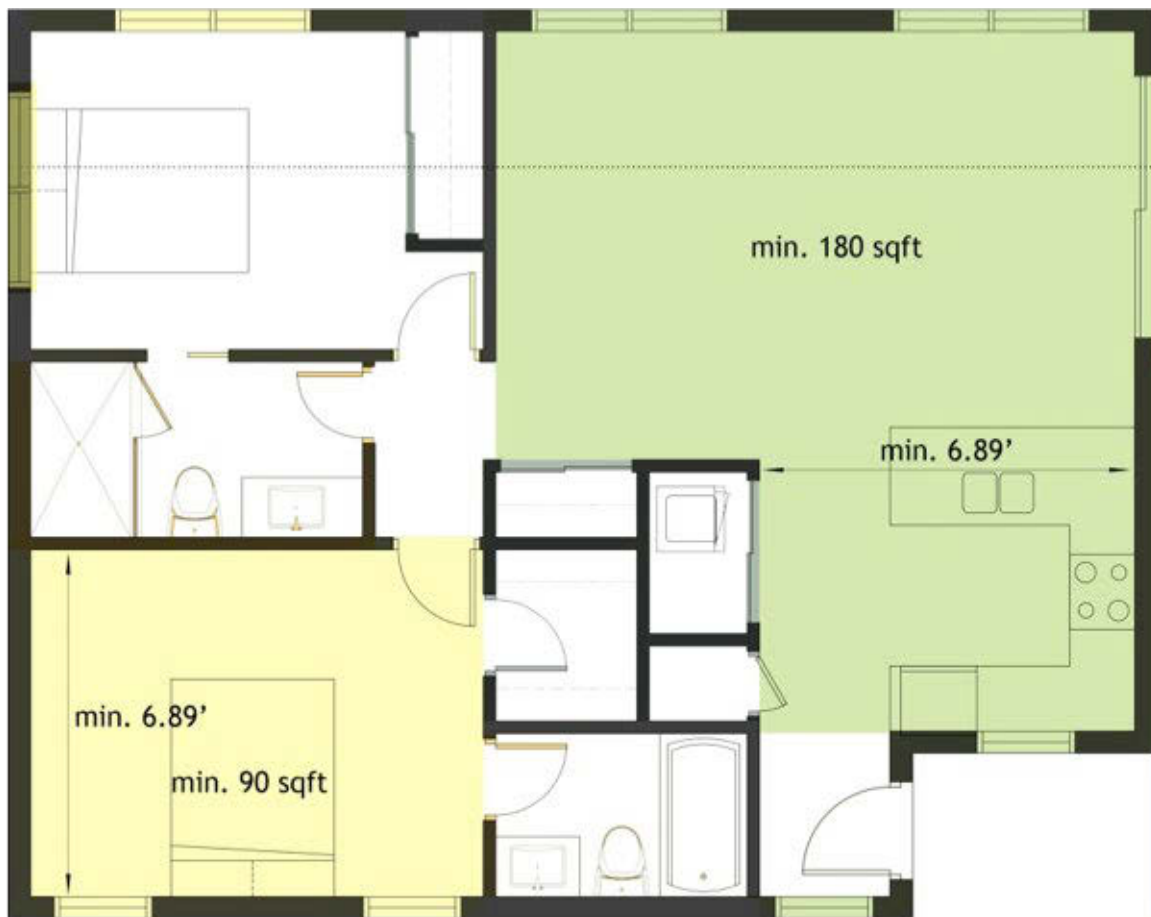
Laneway houses on standard size lots (33ft x 122ft) were intended to provide studios and one-bedroom units. Larger LWHs on larger lots were intended to provide up to two-bedroom units.

Small LWHs that are built with multiple bedrooms and no shared living space are not permitted.

One shared living space that is at least 16.7m² (180ft²) must be provided for a combined kitchen/living/dining area (not a bedroom). All units, other than studio units, must provide at least one bedroom that is minimum size of 8.5m² (90ft²).

These rooms should have a minimum dimension of 2.1m (7ft) measure between the finished wall surfaces.

Hallway, storage, and stairs are not included in these areas.



WINDOWS

Main windows toward lane

The general orientation of windows should be to the lane. One main-floor-level window must be at least 1.1m² (12ft²) in area.

Windows facing a narrow side-yard

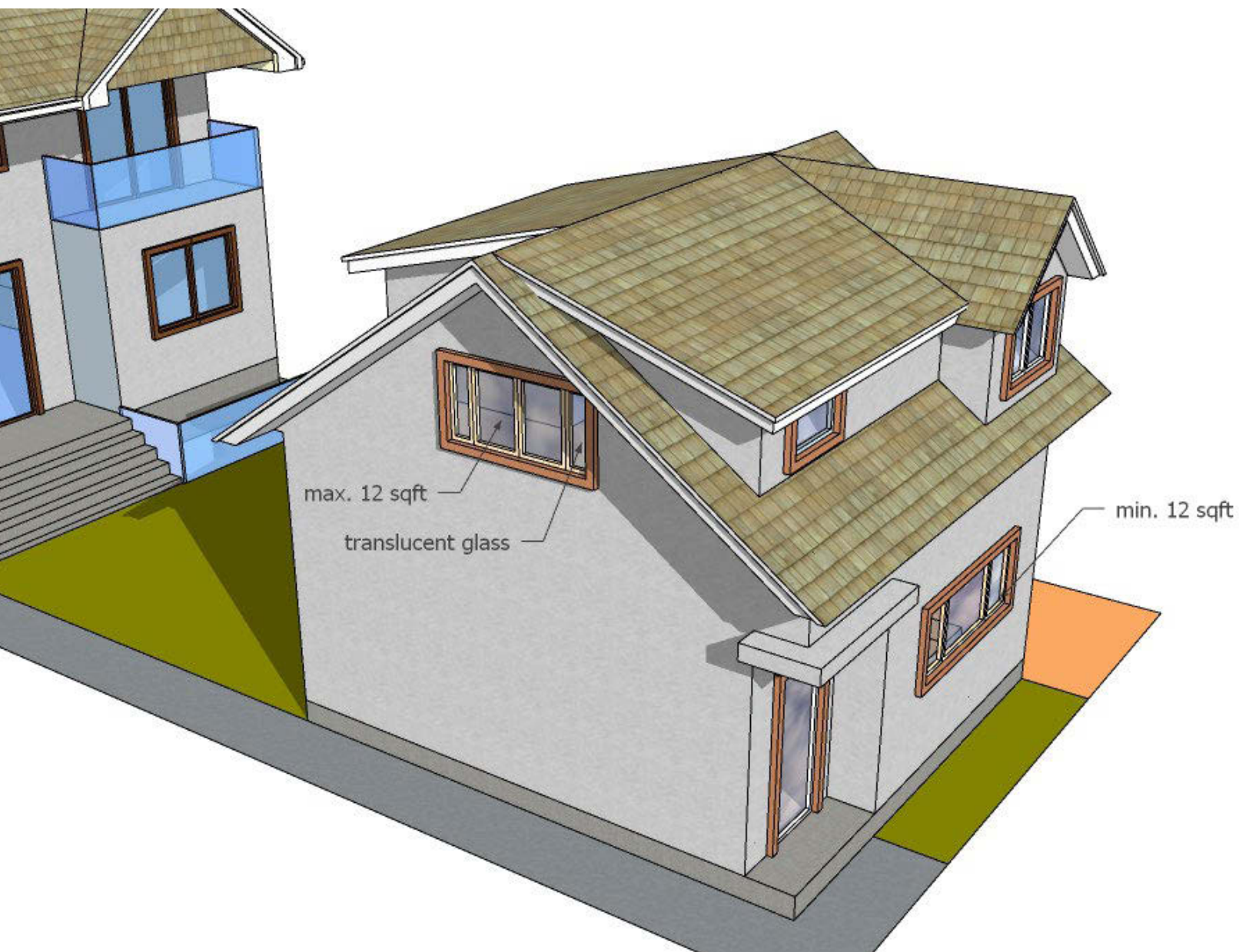
If a 0.6m (2ft) side-yard setback is allowed for a one storey laneway house, windows are not permitted along the wall facing the side-yard.

Upper-level windows

Upper-level windows facing sideyards and gardens need to maintain privacy and reduce overlook on neighbouring properties.

The maximum size of an upper-level window is 1.1m² (12ft²). Any glazed area exceeding 1.1m² (12ft²) must be translucent glass.

Windows that maintain privacy may be exempt from size restrictions. (eg: skylights and clerestory windows)



LANE DESIGN

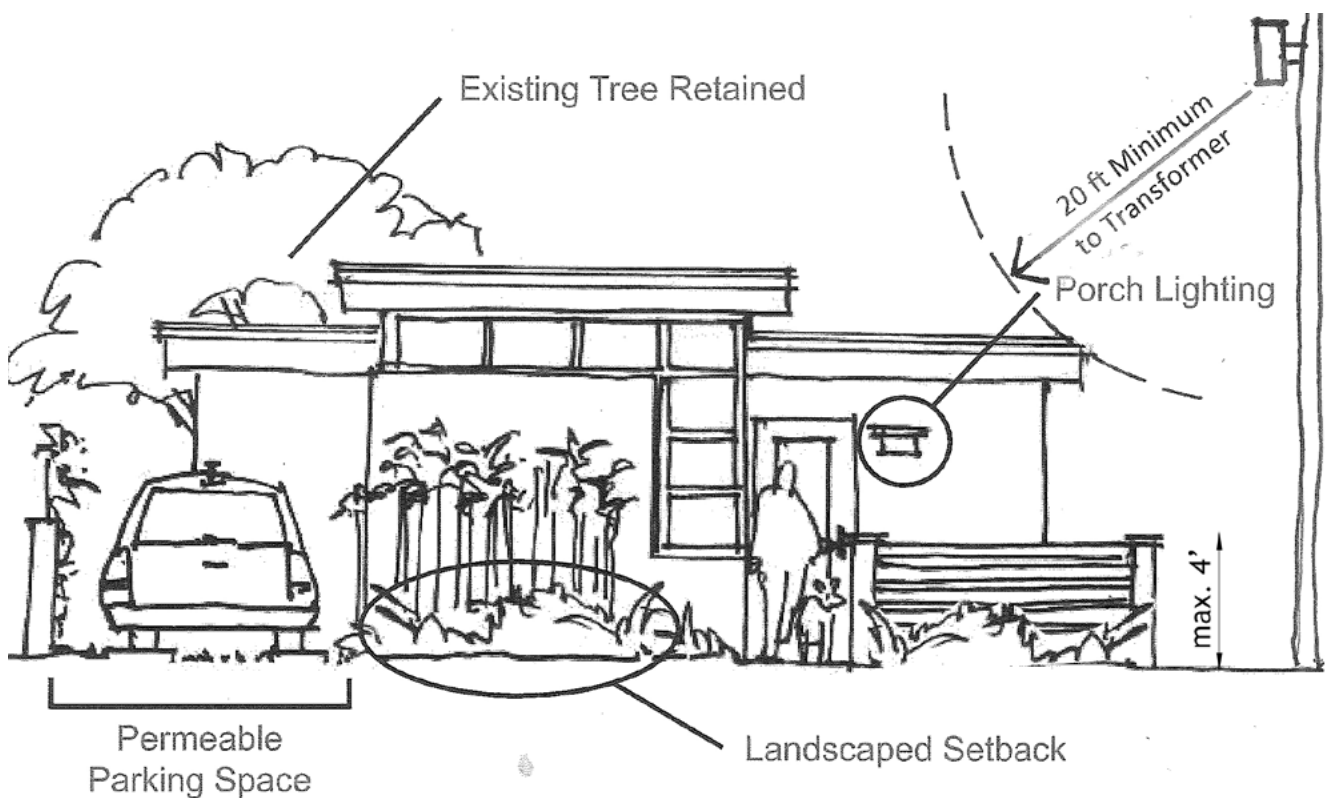
Landscaping is required along the edge of the lane. All fences should be located behind the landscaped strip, and no more than 1.2m (4ft) in height in order to enliven the lane.

Pedestrian-friendly lighting, such as porch lights or bollard lights, is encouraged to help make the lane a safe and welcoming public space.

Where the clearance of the transformers does not comply with Canadian Electrical code (ie.

less than 6.0m), a barrier with non-combustible surface or materials must be constructed between the transformer and windows, ventilation openings or combustible surfaces of the building that are located within 6.0m (20ft) of the transformer.

Garbage/recycle bins should be located away from outdoor space and the lane, but within easy access to the lane.

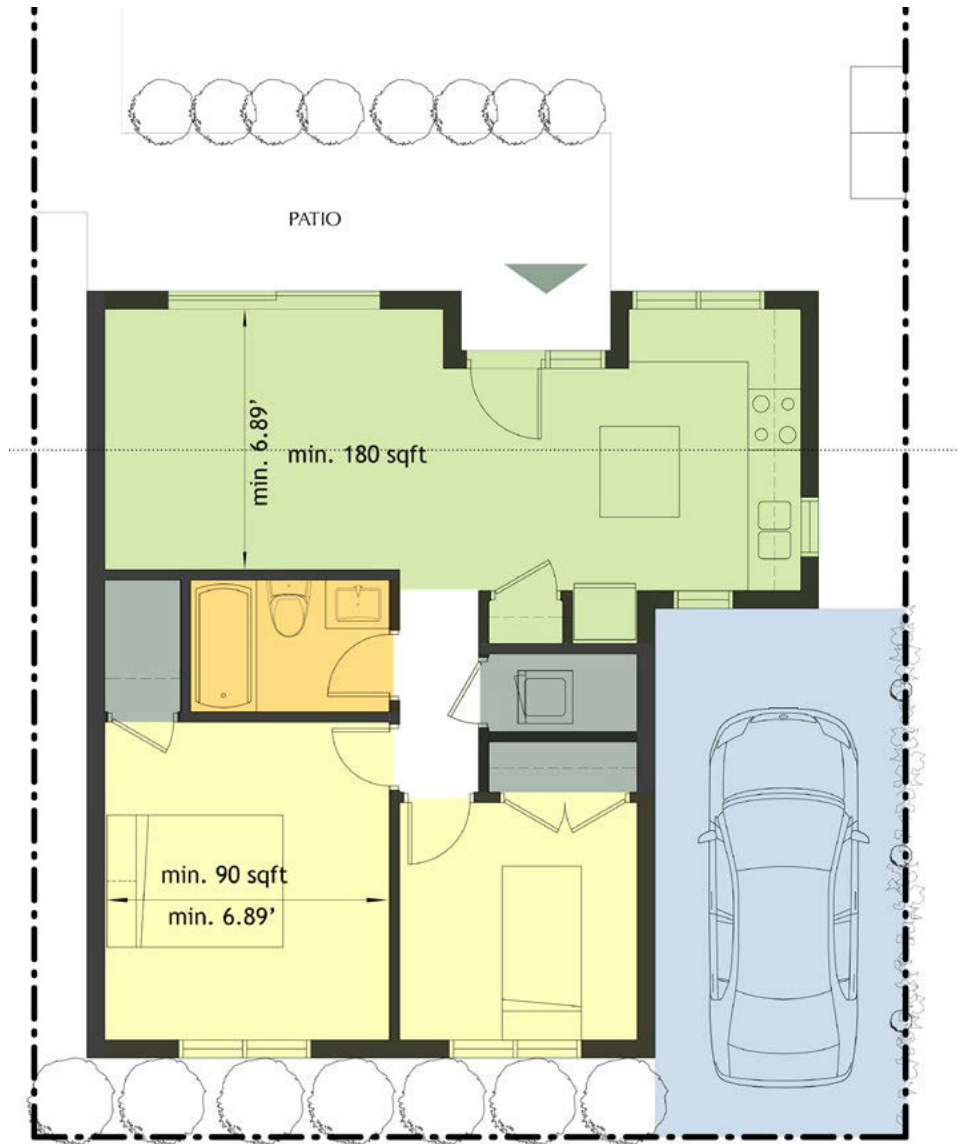


EXAMPLES

Concept 1A

33ft wide lot

- Single storey design
- 644ft² (after exclusions)
- 2 bedrooms
- 1 exterior parking space



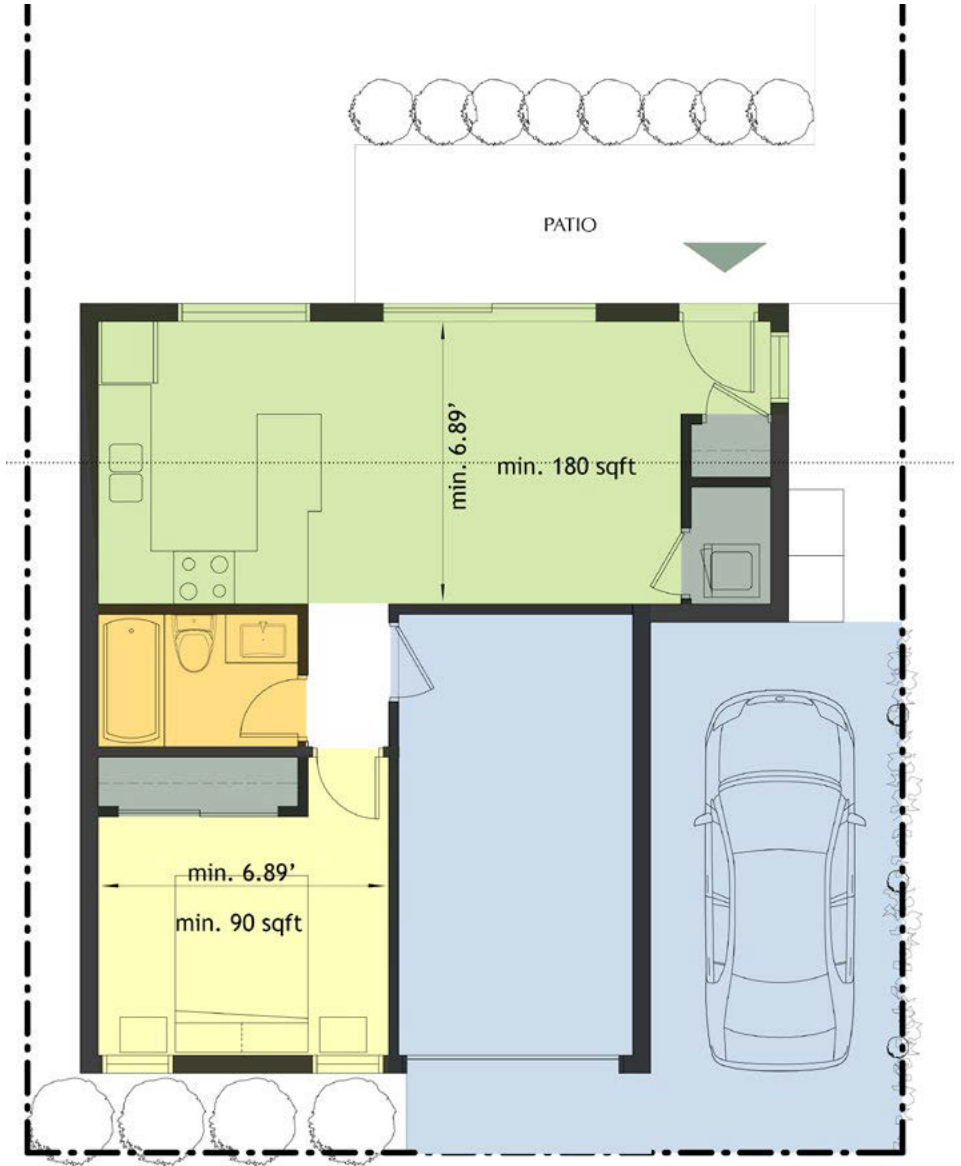
The conceptual plans on the following pages are illustrative examples only. They are intended to be diagrams of possible configurations and may not be fully resolved as final plans. Other configurations are also possible.

EXAMPLES

Concept 1B

33ft wide lot

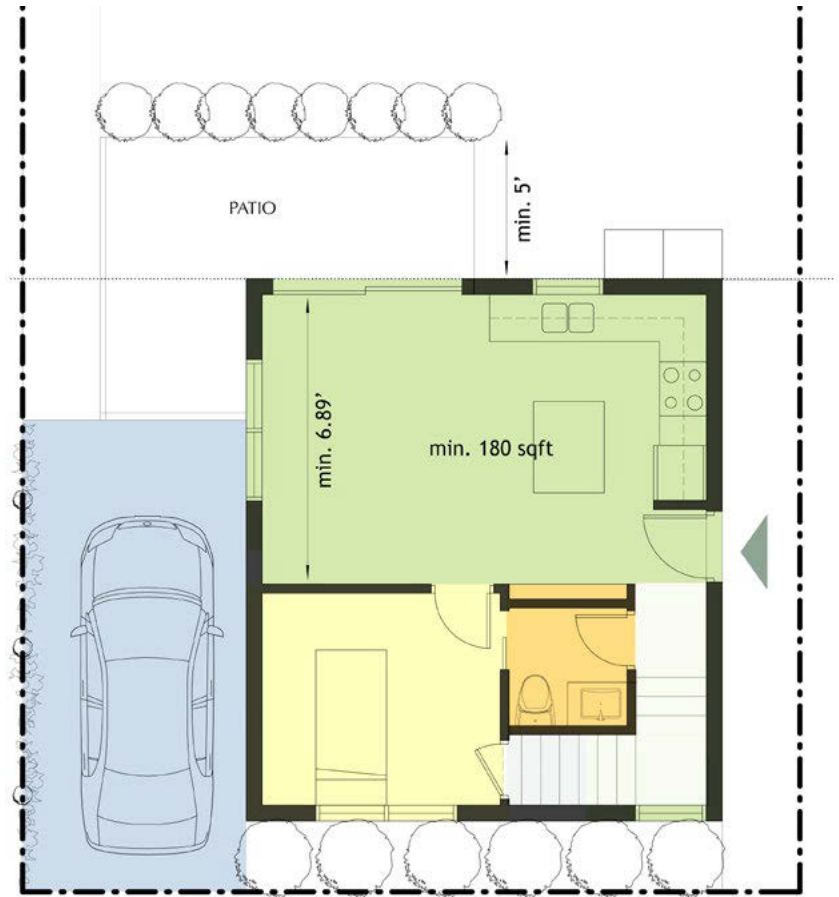
- Single storey design
- 644ft² (after exclusions)
- 1 bedroom
- 1 exterior parking space
- 1 garage



EXAMPLES

Concept 2A

- 33ft wide lot
- 1.5 storey design
- 644ft² (after exclusions)
- 2 bedrooms
- 1 exterior parking space



Main Floor

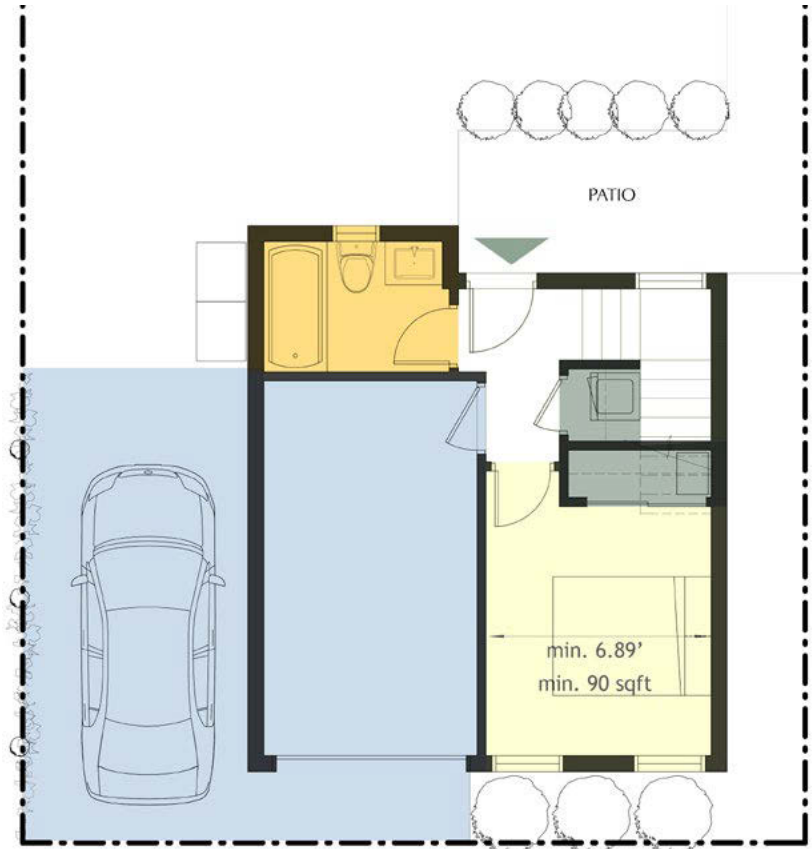


Second Floor

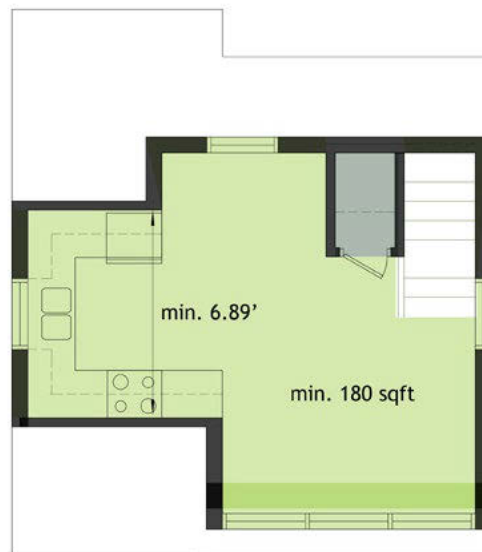
EXAMPLES

Concept 2B

- 33ft wide lot
- 1.5 storey design
- 644ft² (after exclusions)
- 1 bedroom
- 1 exterior parking space
- 1 garage



Main Floor



Second Floor

EXAMPLES

Concept 3A

- 50ft wide lot
- Single storey design
- 900ft² (after exclusions)
- 2 bedrooms
- 1 exterior parking space



EXAMPLES

Concept 3B

50ft wide lot

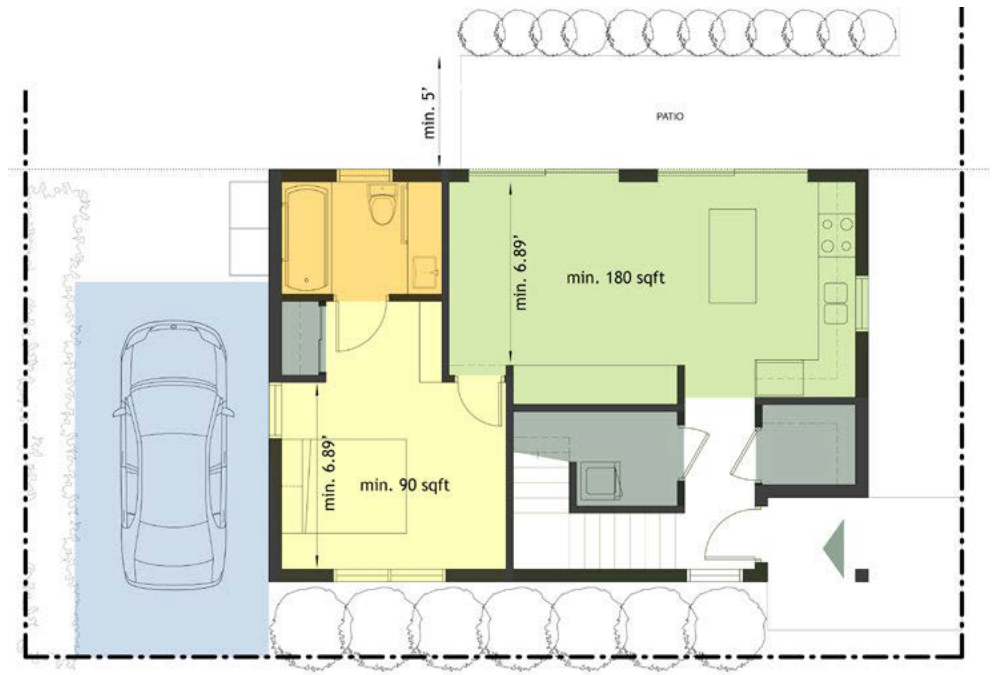
- Single storey design
- 900ft² (after exclusions)
- 2 bedrooms
- 1 exterior parking space
- 1 garage



EXAMPLES

Concept 4A

- 50ft wide lot
- 1.5 storey design
- 900ft² (after exclusions)
- 2 bedrooms
- 1 exterior parking space



Main Floor

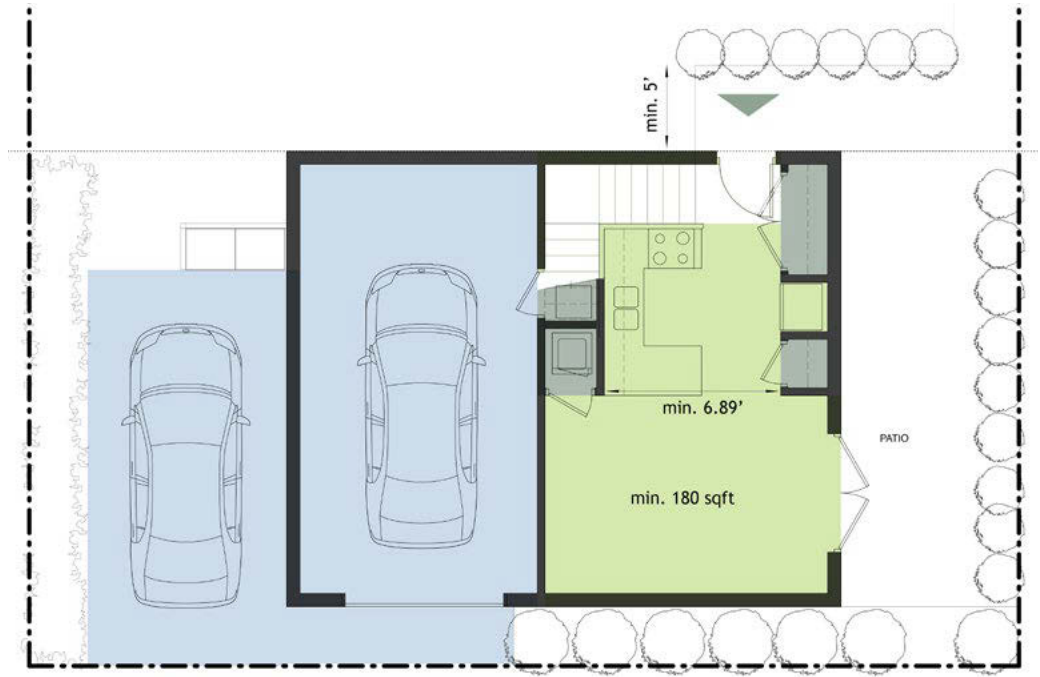


Second Floor

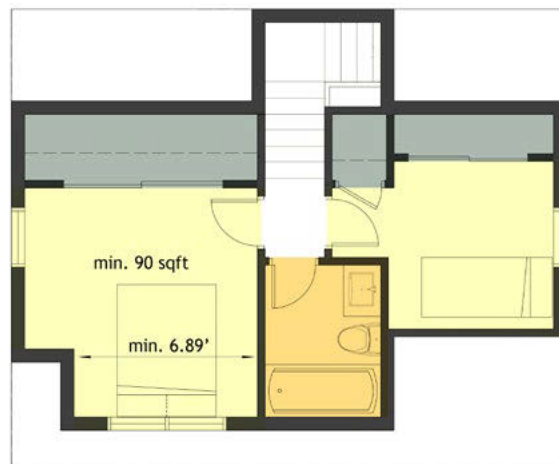
EXAMPLES

Concept 4B

- 50ft wide lot
- 1.5 storey design
- 900ft² (after exclusions)
- 2 bedrooms
- 1 exterior parking space
- 1 garage



Main Floor



Second Floor

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There is a lane in the rear of my property but it is not open and wide enough. Can I still have a laneway house?

Possibly. The lane must be able to provide vehicular access. A lane dedication may not be taken, but the laneway house should be located further away from the rear to allow vehicular manoeuvring and respect future lane dedication. Contact Engineering Client Service for more information on lane dedication.

Why is the allowable upper-level floor area of laneway house with a flat roof smaller than that of laneway house with a sloped roof?

A flat roof laneway house is perceived to have more massing, and causes more shadowing impact on adjacent houses. The reduced floor area will mitigate these impacts.

Are basements allowed in laneway houses?

Yes, basements are allowed. The floor area of the basement counts toward the total allowable floor area. Crawlspace are also allowed, but must be internally interconnected with the rest of the laneway house.

Are garages allowed in laneway houses? How big can they be?

Yes, garages are allowed. Garage floor area is included in the maximum floor area allowed for the laneway house, and the parking space must conform to the minimum size as prescribed in the Parking Bylaw. A small car garage 4.6m x 2.7m (8'10"x15'1") may be permissible.

Can I provide a garage in lieu of surface parking?

No. An open surface parking must be provided. An attached garage may be allowed in addition but it counts as part of the permitted laneway house floor area.

Can I have a garage in addition to the required exterior parking space? Can I keep my existing garage and build a separate laneway house?

Possibly. Your lot size determines the floor area permitted for buildings in the rear yard of residential lots, as well as the number of parking spaces allowed. Contact the Development and Building Services Centre for further advice.

Will adding a laneway house have property tax implication?

Yes. Adding a laneway house will increase the assessed value of your property, as would any addition or renovation to your home. This increased value may be reflected in increased property tax and may impact your eligibility for the Homeowner Grant.

However, as of 2016 homeowners with a laneway house may qualify for partitioning, which allows the value of the property to be divided by the number of residences. To find out if you are eligible to partition your property please contact the Province of British Columbia (gov.bc.ca)

My lot is steeply sloped. Can I still build a laneway house?

Likely, but design compromise may be required. Contact the Development and Building Services Centre and/or a design professional to explore the possibilities for your site.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I have both a laneway house and a basement suite in the main house?

Yes, you can have both a laneway house and a secondary suite.

Is there any restriction on the width of dormers?

No. As long as the dormer face is set back a minimum 0.6m (2ft) from the main floor below, it can extend across the building.

However, all areas more than 2.1m (7ft) in height count toward the permitted floor area. Only 10% of the maximum allowable floor area is excluded for area between 1.2m (4ft) and 2.1m (7ft) in height.

Are bay windows allowable in a laneway house?

Bay windows are allowed and they will count as floor area. They must be located within the allowable location of the laneway house.

Section 10.7 of the Zoning and Development Bylaw is not applicable since there is no provision of required yard in laneway house regulations.

Can I park in the setback from the lane?

No. The space between the lane and the laneway house is intended for landscaping and other permeable surface areas to enhance the lane

Is there a minimum requirement for the depth of balcony?

The intent of floor area exclusion for balcony or sun deck is to allow an outdoor space for family use. It is anticipated that a balcony has a minimum depth of 0.9m (3ft) for usable seating. If it is not achievable, an at-grade patio is recommended.

What types of permeable paving can be used for surface parking?

There are a number of options; permeable pavers, concrete grass grid, and gravel are some of the most common choices. Acceptable designs include a combination of paved wheel paths with ground-cover planting in the centre and along the sides.

Please note that while permeable surface is required, it is considered impermeable area in the calculation of permeable and impermeable area, except gravel.

Can the main access walkway come from the lane, or must it come from the street?

Vancouver Building Bylaw requires a fire fighter access path that is at minimum 3ft wide from the street to the entrance of the laneway house. This path should be clear of the surface parking space.

What is the difference between a laneway house and an infill?

A laneway house is a small house built in the rear yard of a property. It is allowed as a rental unit; strata titling is not permitted. Laneway house must comply with Section 11.24 of the Zoning and Development Bylaw.

An infill is a small house built in the rear yard of a property with an existing character house (pre-1940). It can be strata tiled (if the main house is upgraded). The infill must comply with the applicable District Schedule and Design Guidelines.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There is a specimen tree in the rear yard. Can I remove the tree to build the laneway house there?

It is recommended that you prepare an arborist report and consult with a Landscape Specialist at the Development and Building Services Centre. Relaxations may be considered if the tree needs to be retained.

My site is very difficult and will need a lot of relaxations to accommodate a laneway house. What can I do?

Engage a design professional to explore the possibilities for your site, and prepare a design scheme, then contact the Development and Building Services Centre for preliminary advice. Staff may direct you to the Housing Review Branch for further advice.

More Questions?

For permitting information and site-specific inquiries, please contact the Development and Building Services Centre at **csg.enquiry.centre@vancouver.ca**, or call **604-873-7611**.

For questions about laneway housing policy, please email us at **laneway.housing@vancouver.ca**

For more information on the Laneway House Program, please visit: **vancouver.ca**

APPENDICES

Suggested Plant List

| | Name | | Exposure | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|------------|-------|
| | Botanical | Common | Sun | Part-shade | Shade |
| Groundcover | <i>Fragaria chiloensis</i> | Coastal Strawberry | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> | Kinnikinnick (Bear berry) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Rubus calycinoides</i> | Creeping Raspberry | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Sedum</i> spp | Stonecrop | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Thymus</i> spp | Creeping Thyme | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Cotoneaster dammeri</i> | Bearberry Cotoneaster | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Perennials | <i>Achillea</i> spp | Yarrow | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Echinacea purpurea</i> | Purple Coneflower | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Iris germanica</i> | German Iris | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Liriope muscari</i> | Lily turf | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Hemerocallis</i> spp | Daylily | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Tiarella trifoliata</i> | Foamflower | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Bergenia crassifolia</i> | Heartleaf Bergenia | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Grasses and Ferns | <i>Festuca glauca</i> | Blue Fescue Grass | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Stipa</i> spp | Feather Grass | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Pennistenum alopecuroides</i> | Dwarf Fountain Grass | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Dryopteris</i> spp | Wood fern | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Polystichum munitum</i> | Western Swordfern | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Vines and Climbers | <i>Vitis</i> (various) | Grapevine | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Clematis armandii</i> | Evergreen Clematis | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Clematis montana</i> | Anemone Clematis | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Wisteria</i> | Wisteria | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Shrubs | <i>Lavandula augustifolia</i> | English Lavender | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Rosa nutkana</i> | Nootka Rose | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Buxus sempervirens</i> | Boxwood | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | <i>Azalea</i> | Japanese Azalea | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Gaultheria Shallon</i> | Salal | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <i>Mahonia nervosa</i> | Dull Oregon Grape | | ✓ | ✓ |

Plants should be chosen and located by an experienced landscape designer. The suggested plant list is compiled primarily with five factors in mind:

1. low-maintenance,
2. drought-tolerance & hardiness,
3. scale (all plants under 3ft high not including vines & climbers),
4. variety & interest

The plants identified for each category represent a small selection of possibilities. Sun exposure (sun, part-shade, shade) is indicated for each plant.

Note: Sunlight reflected off the lane might provide enough light to a north-facing yard to support plants that require full sun. Please research the plants to understand whether its characteristics and needs, including watering requirements, can be met by the specifics of your site.

APPENDICES

City Contacts

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Development and Building Services Centre | 515 West 10th Avenue (Ground floor) 604.873.7611 csg.enquiry.centre@vancouver.ca walk-in service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Information • Design & Landscape Questions • Application Requirements • Regulations & Guidelines • Application Submission |
| Engineering Client Services | 507 West Broadway (5th Floor) 604.873.7323 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewer Connections • Water Service |

City Regulations

The following documents are available online at vancouver.ca

Zoning and Development Bylaw

- Laneway Housing Regulations (Section 11.24)
- Applicable District Schedules

Application Forms and Submission requirements

Water Wise Landscaping Guidelines

Green Building and Renovating

Protection of Trees By-Law

APPENDICES

Other Resources

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--|
| BC Hydro | 1.877.520.1355 | www.bchydro.com |
| Fortis BC | | www.fortisbc.com |
| Natural Gas | 1.888.224.2710 | |
| Electricity | 1.866.436.7847 | |
| BC Housing | 1.800.407.7757 | www.bchousing.org |

Professional Associations

| | |
|---|--|
| Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association | www.gvhba.org |
| Association of British Columbia Certified Land Surveyors | www.abcls.ca |
| Architectural Institute of British Columbia | www.aibc.ca |
| BC Society of Landscape Architects | www.bcsla.org |
| International Society of Arboriculture | www.isa-arbor.com |