



# City of Vancouver *Planning By-law Administration Bulletins*

## Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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# CAMBIE CORRIDOR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

*Authority - Director of Planning*

*Effective June 1, 2012*

*Amended October 10, 2012*

*Superseded and replaced with [Cambie Corridor Plan \(2018\)](#)*

## Application and Intent

This bulletin provides applicants with supplemental information to better understand key components of the Cambie Corridor Plan, and to offer applicants consistent advice and guidance. The bulletin will also be used by City staff in evaluating proposals.

The bulletin is intended to:

- a) address the wide range of lot sizes, orientations, uses, and neighbouring buildings that occur in the Cambie Corridor, and to achieve compatibility among a variety of uses, as well as between existing and new development;
- b) guide building massing and design for neighbourliness, including mitigation of privacy and visual impacts on R-zoned residential, with particular consideration for situations where the adjacent area is not contemplated as a higher density area;
- c) ensure appropriate street scale, pedestrian interface, setbacks and treatments; and
- d) ensure an appropriate standard of livability for housing.

Where relevant, the section number and text of the Plan are included in italics.

## 1 *Maximum Building Height*

### a) *Maximum building height*

The Plan sets out the maximum height allowed on a site in storeys, which limits the number of levels at or above grade including mezzanines and partial floors. There is no support in the Plan for additional storeys.

### b) *Commercial retail space*

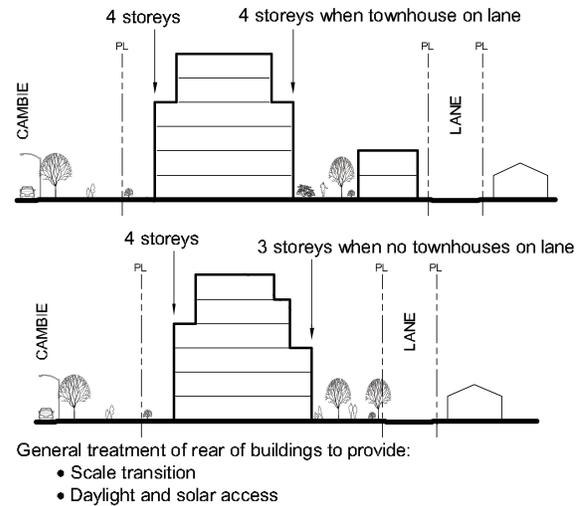
The Plan supports commercial activity in many locations, and building design can assist in the viability of retail space by providing generous interior heights. Fourteen feet from floor to floor is recommended as a minimum.

## 2 Building Steps

5.1.2 In general, provide a notable stepback above 4 storeys to reduce the overall building massing (4 storey streetwall). Taller buildings should have a similar stepback, however, the overall composition of the building needs to be considered.

5.2.1 For each of the mixed use areas along the Corridor, the following streetwall heights are recommended: Cambie Village, 4 storeys; Oakridge Town Centre, 5 storeys; Marine Landing where mid-rise buildings are anticipated, 4 storeys. Above the relevant streetwall height, buildings should have a notable stepback.

Figure 1 – Building Steps



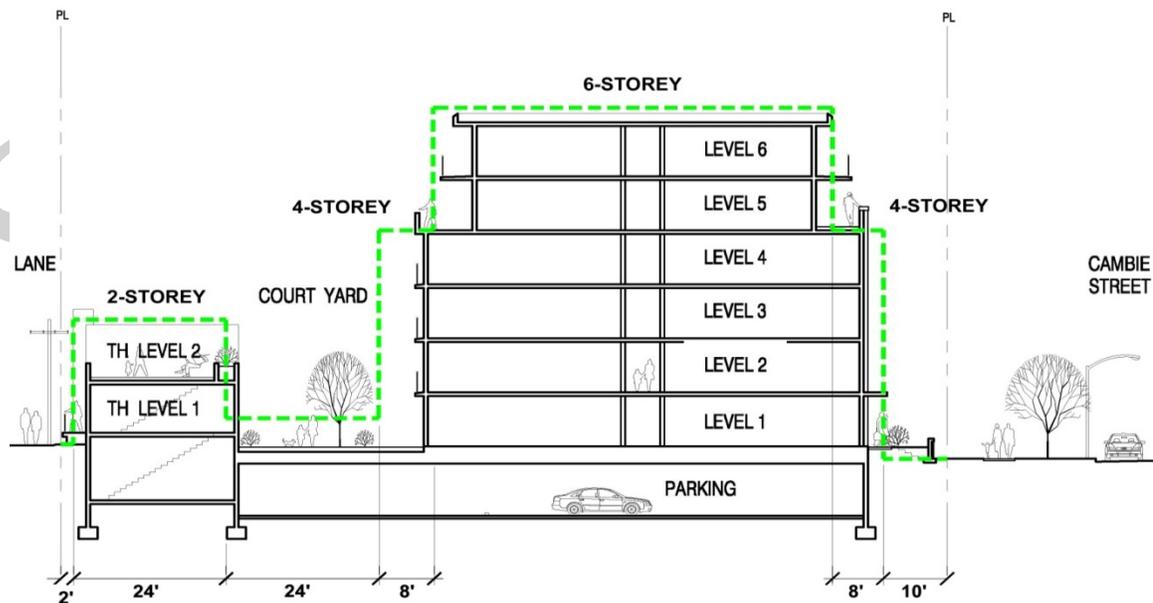
A minimum offset dimension of 8 to 12 feet from the wall of one storey to the next is recommended to produce a notable stepback, depending on building mass, transition of scale, and shadowing.

Building shoulders or steps should wrap to flanking elevations to provide continuity of form and scale.

The side of the main building facing the lane should step back above the 3rd storey on sites without lane housing, and above the 4th storey where lane housing intervenes (fig. 1).

The following site section illustrates the various design parameters in the Cambie Corridor Plan as they would apply to a six-storey site with a townhouse on the lane (fig. 2). This envelope may be used to assess the effect of a proposed form as compared to the intended urban design performance.

Figure 2 - Site Section



In this example, the envelope is a dashed line based on the following sections of the Plan:

4.3.2 *Residential buildings will be allowed up to six storeys. Above four storeys, upper floors will be stepped back from Cambie street.*

The illustration in the Plan also notes a 6 storey residential, with transitional scale to lane.

5.1.2 *In general, provide a notable stepback above 4 storeys to reduce the overall building massing (4 storey streetwall).*

5.1.3 *Buildings should stepback at the rear, reducing the scale of the building towards the lane and should minimize the amount of shadow cast onto adjacent properties.*

5.1.6 *Building setbacks should accommodate the desired streetscape condition. For residential areas, setbacks should range in depth from 10 - 15 ft.*

Building setback should also consider the space available between the street curb and the property line.

5.1.14 *For projects that include laneway buildings, the space between the primary fronting buildings and the lane buildings - the courtyard - needs to be large enough to ensure the liveability of all units. A minimum 24 ft depth is suggested.*

5.3.1 *Where feasible and where lot dimensions allow, lanes should be edged with smaller scale residential buildings in the form of townhouses or other compatible building forms to reinforce the intimate scale and character of the lane. They can be up to 2 storeys in height and should generally consider the design conditions for overlook and privacy found within the City's Laneway Housing policy.*

5.3.3 *Lane buildings should generally consider similar setbacks as the City's Laneway Housing policy to allow for edge elements such as landscaping.*

In the Laneway Housing guide, the depth of the laneway house is generally limited to 26 feet from rear property and a minimum 2 foot setback.

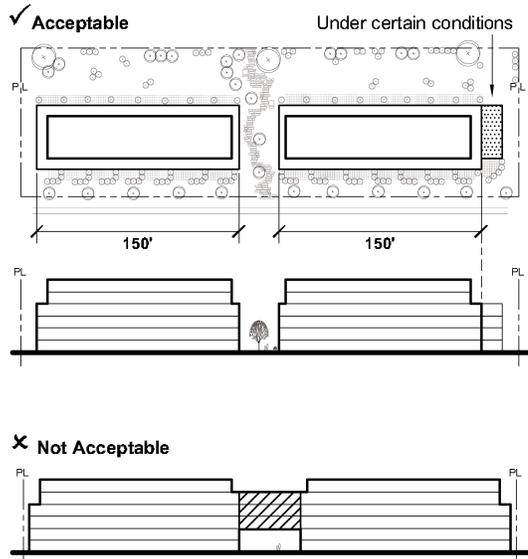
### 3 Building Width

5.1 *Buildings should be limited in length, both real and perceived to allow for sunlight, views and general feeling of openness.*

The frontages of buildings should present a building increment and scale similar to RM developments. Proposed developments will likely require a circulation core, (stair and elevator) in each building (Section 5.1.3).

Connecting elements such as walls, bridges, glazed lobbies and atria should be avoided (fig. 3).

**Figure 3 – Building Width**



#### 4 Separation Between Buildings

On sites with multiple buildings along the street, provide a minimum separation of 24 feet between buildings. Buildings should meet the minimum separation to provide for neighbourly relationships with adjacent units, access to views and daylight.

Portions of the building should provide more separation to increase to improve unit privacy, improve outside space, or to address special site condition or urban design context.

#### 5 Building Returns

The built form diagrams provided in the Plan for each sub-area show a building in section that is set substantially back from the rear property line. In some cases the applicant may propose to continue a lower portion or 'wing' of the building back toward the rear property line. This solution is especially appropriate for corner lots located at the intersection of two major streets, but can be considered for other locations.

In any case, building massing is expected to transition down from larger scale elements facing Cambie Street to lower scale elements facing neighbours that are not in the current phase of the Cambie Corridor Plan.

- a) The height of each portion of the building return should be comparable to the diagram heights for that part of the site, which are typically:
  - Two stories next to the lane, and
  - Three stories at the main building shoulder where there is no townhouse, or
  - Four stories at the main building shoulder where there are townhouses
- b) Increased height may be considered where the building return is adjacent to:
  - Arterial streets, local collector streets, and mid-block pedestrian links,
  - Approved development at three or more stories,
  - Approved development with matching setbacks, or
  - Open spaces, if they will not be affected by shadowing
- c) Lower than typical height should be used where the building return is adjacent to:
  - Private open spaces, especially rear yards,
  - Interior property lines,
  - Rear property lines with no adjacent lane,
  - Anticipated future development of three stories or less, or
  - Open spaces affected by shadowing, such as mini-parks

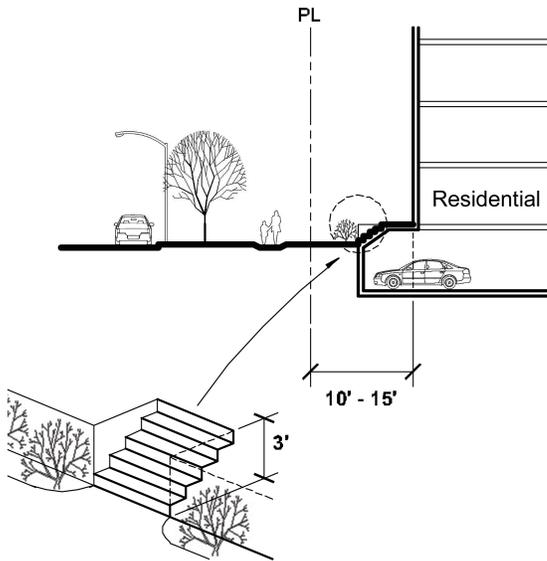
Where shoulder lines are recommended for the street-facing portions of the building, these should generally be continued around the building return as well.

#### 6 Relationship to Finished Grade and Public Realm

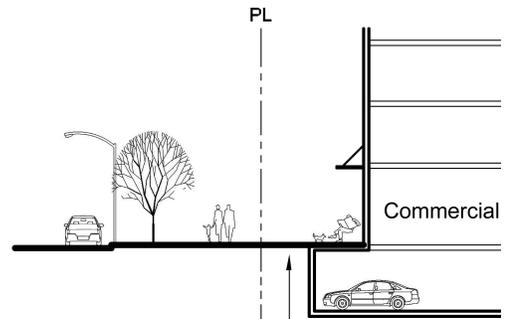
The establishment of floor elevations needs careful consideration to respond to existing site topography (fig. 4, 5, 6). While there will be a need to define outdoor amenity spaces for units, the landscape design should sensitively meet the public realm. Use of singular landscape retaining walls should be avoided. Use of natural grading and landscaping solutions are preferred.

Continuous parking structures should not be evident above the natural grade.

**Figure 4 – Residential building**



**Figure 5 - Mixed use building**



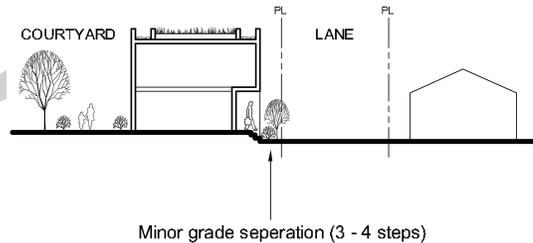
Flush conditions or minimal vertical separation to ensure consistent environment.

**5.3.5 Walls towards the lane or exaggerated floor relationships are to be avoided.**

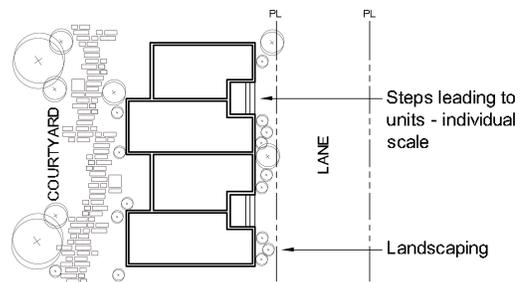
On sites without townhouse development at the rear, landscape and site design should follow natural grading. Evidence of the parking garage appearing above natural grade is to be avoided.

Pedestrian circulation around the lane entries, especially on mixed use sites, needs to account for the other vehicles that travel through and park in the lane right of way. Landscape and site design should provide for the safety of pedestrians as they transition between public and private property. The interface should be designed to provide clear sight lines and physical barriers to prevent vehicle and pedestrian conflicts.

**Figure 6 - Lane Buildings**



Minor grade separation (3 - 4 steps)



## 7 Internal Living Spaces

The application of similar principles for multi-residential projects in C and RM zones will apply to Cambie Corridor projects with respect to internal rooms and Horizontal Angle of Daylight parameters. Windowless living spaces should be avoided.

Reference: Access to Daylight, Views, and Ventilation in Dwelling Units (Bulletin)

## 8 Sustainable Design

The minimum sustainable design requirements for Cambie Corridor projects are set out in the Green Buildings Policy for Rezoning, and in Section 11.2 of the Cambie Corridor Plan.

Larger sites should also refer to the Rezoning Policy for Greener Larger Sites.

Sustainable design solutions should be evident as an integral component of the project design.

Building siting, orientation, wall to window ratios, and window locations should reflect passive design principles.

Reference: Passive Design Toolkit (Sustainability Group)

## 9 Landscape

Key features and guiding principles for landscape design include:

- a) Green edge at the interior property lines, except where a continuous street wall is recommended
- b) Substantial planting medium
  - Soil depths should be better than minimums
  - Design slab over parkade to drop as needed
- c) Replication of natural systems
  - Use of native plants
  - Creation of natural habitat
  - Retention of soil resources
  - Elimination of herbicides
  - Recycling of green waste
- d) Urban agriculture
  - Edible landscaping
  - Areas (planters or plots) suitable for urban agriculture activity
  - Supporting infrastructure, such as tool storage, hose bibs and a potting bench
  - Maximize sunlight
  - Integrate into the overall design
  - Provide universal access

Reference: Urban Agriculture Guidelines for the Private Realm

- e) Rainwater Management Plan  
Provide a plan that utilizes sustainable strategies such as infiltration, retention, treatment and utilization of rainwater. Strategies could include:
  - High efficiency irrigation
  - Use of drought tolerant plants and mulching
- f) Provide a landscape design for public realm
  - Include inside and outside boulevard
  - Planting or hard surface depending on context

Reference: COV Engineering Streets Guidelines for Planting City Boulevards