



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

## Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

453 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4 | tel: 3-1-1, outside Vancouver 604.873.7000 | fax: 604.873.7100  
website: vancouver.ca | email: planning@vancouver.ca

# WEST END – TOWER FORM, SITING AND SETBACKS

*Authority - Director of Planning*

*Effective January 11, 2017*

*Amended June 8, 2017 and October 17, 2018.*

## General Information

This bulletin provides guidance on new residential towers (siting and massing) in the West End. It should be used in conjunction with the C-5A and C-6 (West End Commercial Districts) and RM-5D (West End Residential) Districts Schedules, the *West End RM-5, 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D Guidelines* and the *West End Plan*. It also should be used for guidance in preparing rezoning applications and considered in conjunction with the *Rezoning Policy for the West End* and the *West End Plan*.

Key considerations for the form, siting and setbacks of towers shall be:

- The size and the width of the frontage of sites;
- Minimizing shadowing on parks, public open spaces and the West End Davie, Denman and Robson “Villages;”
- Addressing visual privacy by achieving a minimum distance between towers;
- Allowing for the future development of a tower on an adjacent site by providing a sufficient setback from an interior property line to address separation between towers; and
- Shaping towers so they read as point towers rather than ‘slab’ towers.

For the purposes of considering setbacks, towers are defined as those floors of a building exceeding a height of 18.3 m (60 ft.).

## Shadowing of Parks, Public Open Spaces and the West End “Villages”

Shadowing impacts may result in the maximum height identified in the zoning or the *West End Plan* not being achievable.

Shadows generated by proposed developments must be minimized on the following prioritized hierarchy of spaces:

1. Parks, public open spaces and the West End “Villages”;
2. Semi-private open spaces; and
3. Private open spaces.

Building height and mass should minimize shadowing on parks, public open space and the West End Shopping “Villages” between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. P.D.T. at the equinox. In the “Villages” during these hours, shadows should not extend beyond the curb of the sidewalks on the north side of the street. In the case of parks, depending on the activities in the parks (e.g. school yards), shadow analysis over a longer time frame may be required.

## Minimum Distance between Towers

The minimum distance between towers shall be 24.4 m (80 ft.).

## Minimum Site Frontage for Towers

The minimum frontage for a site that can be considered for a tower shall generally be 39.6 m (130 ft.) Corner sites with lesser frontage may be considered for the development of a tower. However, provision of the minimum distance of 24.4 m (80 ft.) from possible future and existing towers on adjacent sites is a key consideration in these cases (see also section on Setbacks on page 3).

For the purposes of identifying the frontage of a site, it shall be considered as the width of the site on the fronting street. Most sites in the West End have a depth of 40 m (131 ft.). The depth of a corner site shall not be considered as the frontage of a site.

## “Tower in the Park” and “Tower on Podiums”

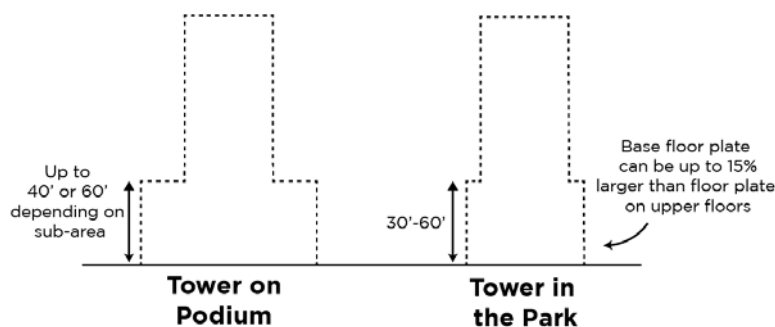
Towers proposed for sites on Lower Robson and Davie Streets (Jervis Street to Denman Street) shall be “towers on podiums” (see Figures 2 to 4).

**Podiums on Davie and Robson Streets:** In locations where podiums are supported (e.g. Lower Robson and Lower Davie), the heights of podiums shall be a minimum of 9.1 m (30 ft.) high and a maximum of 12.2 m (40 ft.) high. The maximum height of podiums on sites zoned C-5A is two storeys. For sites zoned C-6 and RM-5D, the maximum podium height is three storeys.

**“Tower in the Park”:** The distinguishing feature of a “tower in the park” form is that the tower meets the ground without the presence of a podium element. Towers proposed on sites east of Thurlow (except those on Davie Street or Burrard Street, or north of Haro Street) that can be considered for rezonings under the rezoning policy should be “towers in the park”. On these sites, a front yard and side yard on a side street setback shall be a minimum of 3.7 m (12 ft.). In these cases, the base of a “tower in the park” can be up to 15% larger than the floor plates above a height of 18.3 m (60 ft.).

Rezoning proposals for towers located on Alberni Street can be either “tower in the park” or “tower on podium” depending on the context. See Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Tower Typology**



Any portion of a building above 18.3 m (60 ft.) should be sculpted to provide variety, identity, and scale as part of the skyline.

## Setbacks

The minimum distance between a tower and an interior property line shall be 12 m (40 ft.). A reduced setback can be considered where a minimum of 24.4 m (80 ft.) can be achieved from an existing tower or the likely location of a future tower on an adjacent site, subject to urban design analysis.

Sites in the Burrard Corridor (except sites on Davie Street or Burrard Street) shall provide a minimum front and side yard setbacks of 3.7 m (12 ft.). Sites fronting on Burrard Street will provide a minimum setback of 5.5 m (18 ft.) measured from the curb to the building face.

Sites in the Georgia Corridor will have a minimum front yard setback on Alberni Street of 7.6 m (25 ft.) measured from the curb to the face of the building. This can be varied due to a unique context such as the setback of an existing building on-site that will be retained. The minimum side yard setbacks shall be 5.5 m (18 ft.) measured from the curb to the building face. In some cases, a greater setback may be required to provide for a wider sidewalk or a bike lane.

Sites fronting on Davie and Robson Streets shall provide a front yard setback of a minimum 2.1 m (7 ft.).

Engineering may have additional setback requirements for the face of buildings facing a City street or lane.

The West Georgia Street Tree and Sidewalk Guidelines (1998) should be consulted for guidance on the West Georgia Street frontages of development. <http://guidelines.vancouver.ca/G001.pdf>

## Maximum Tower Floor Plates

*The West End Plan and the Rezoning Policy for the West End* should be consulted for guidance on the maximum size of tower floor plates. “Floor Plate” is the total gross floor area of a single level of a building, excluding podium levels. It includes elevator cores, storage, stairs, enclosed balconies, etc., but excludes open cantilevered balconies.

The maximum size of tower floor plates identified will not be achievable on some sites due to the requirement to set the tower back from an interior property line, the size of the site or the presence of an existing tower, and the requirement to ensure there is a minimum of 24.4 m (80 ft.) between the proposed tower and existing and future towers on adjacent sites.

The following are recommended dimensions for achieving a floor plate up to 511 m<sup>2</sup> (5 500 sq. ft.). This maximum floor plate size applies in the C-5A, C-6 and RM-5D Districts and for rezonings, in the Georgia Corridor, west of Cardero Street, and in the Burrard Corridor, south of Davie Street. The maximum width of a tower can be increased in cases where a minimum distance of 24.4 m (80 ft.) from possible future or existing towers on adjacent sites can be achieved. Upper levels of a tower should be ‘tapered’ with setbacks.

The sculpting of the tower floor plate must be within these maximum tower floor plate widths and depths:

- Corner sites with a frontage of less than 39.6 m (130 ft.), noting that the maximum floor plate and density may not be achievable:
  - Depth: maximum 26 m (85 ft.)
  - Width: maximum 14.3 m (47 ft.) – 24.4 m (80 ft.), depending on frontage
  - Floor plate: 511 m<sup>2</sup> (5 500 sq. ft.) may not be achieved, depending on frontage
  
- Corner sites with frontages of 39.6 m (130 ft.) or more:
  - Depth: maximum 26 m (85 ft.)
  - Width: maximum 21.3 m (70 ft.) – 24.4 m (80 ft.)
  - Floor plate: up to 511 m<sup>2</sup> (5 500 sq. ft.)

- Interior sites with a frontage of less than 39.6 m (130 ft.), noting that the maximum floor plate and density may not be achievable:
  - Towers may not be achievable due to the setback requirements from interior property lines.
  - Depth: maximum 26 m (85 ft.)
  - Width: maximum determined by setbacks from interior property lines.
  - Floor plate: 511 m<sup>2</sup> (5 500 sq. ft.), may not be achievable depending on frontage
- Interior sites with a frontage of 39.6 m (130 ft.) or more:
  - Depth: maximum 26 m (85 ft.)
  - Width: maximum 15.8 m (52 ft.) – 21.3 m (80 ft.), depending on frontage
  - Floor plate: up to 511 m<sup>2</sup> (5 500 sq. ft.), depending on frontage

Where the maximum permitted floor plate is up to 604 m<sup>2</sup> (6 500 sq. ft.) or 697 m<sup>2</sup> (7 500 sq. ft.) the following shall apply (see the *Rezoning Policy for the West End*):

- Depth: maximum 26 m (85 ft.)
- Width: maximum 27.4 m (90 ft.), depending on frontage and setbacks

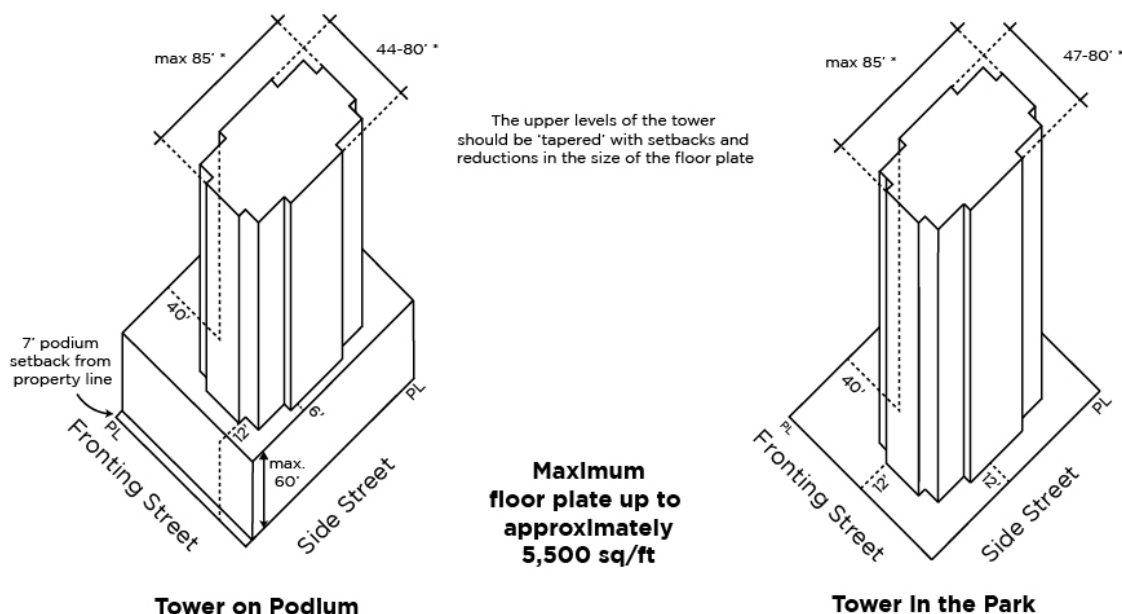
Setback requirements from existing buildings and existing and future towers will determine the setbacks from interior property lines.

Balconies and architectural appurtenances can extend up to 1.8 m (6 ft.) into the setback areas. However, architectural appurtenances will not be supported cases where they significantly contribute to building bulk, shadowing and view blockage. In such cases, the architectural appurtenances should be located within the setback areas and the areas defined by the maximum permitted floor plates identified in the *Rezoning Policy for the West End* and the *West End Plan*.

### Tower Setbacks on Podiums

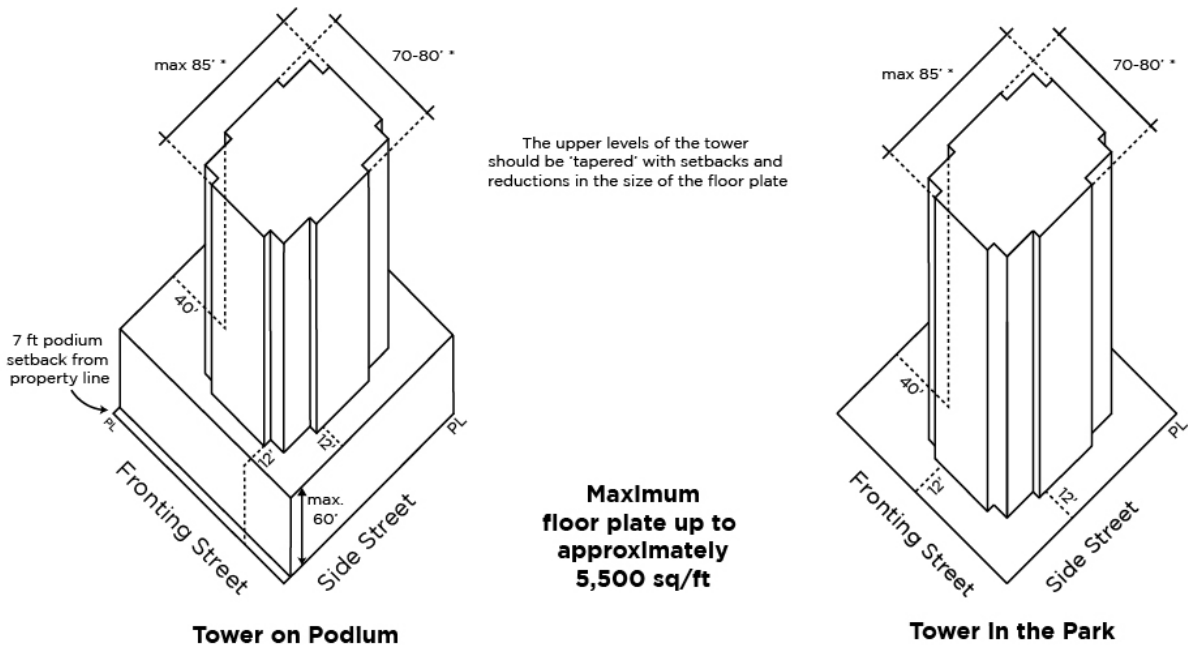
On corner sites, the tower should be setback a minimum of 1.8 m (6 ft.) from the face of podium facing a side and fronting street.

**Figure 2: 99-131 ft wide corner sites**

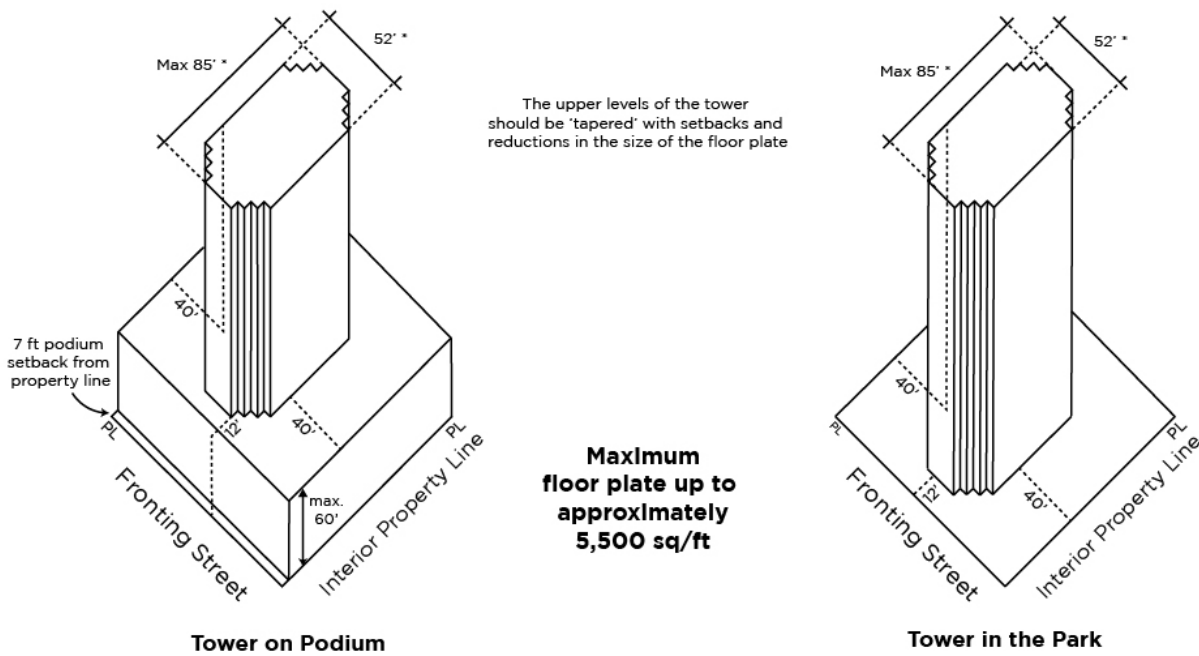


\*Depth and width does not include appurtenances and balconies.  
Any appurtenances and projecting balconies can extend into the setback up to 6' on each face of the building.

**Figure 3: 132 ft+ wide corner sites**



**Figure 4: 132 ft+ wide interior sites**



\*Depth and width does not include appertenances and balconies.  
Any appertenances and projecting balconies can extend into the setback up to 6' on each face of the building.