



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

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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## **BALCONY ENCLOSURE FOR NEW BUILDINGS**

*Authority - Director of Planning*

*Effective January 24, 2012*

*Amended July 24, 2020 and November 14, 2022*

This Bulletin, including illustrations, demonstrates how enclosed balconies will be considered as part of a requested floor area exclusion through the rezoning and development application processes. Applicants should recognize that the illustrations provided are not intended to suggest a singular formulaic solution. Applicants must refer to the Balcony Enclosure Guidelines to ensure that all aspects of the guidelines, applicable to their building proposal, have been addressed.

There are two principal design aspects of the enclosed balcony which are assessed when consideration is given for a requested floor area exclusion:

- the construction and interior relationship of the enclosed balcony within the unit layout; and
- the exterior appearance and character.

The following text in normal face are excerpts, from the Balcony Enclosure Guidelines. *Italicised text within this bulletin clarifies further the intent of the Guidelines.*

### **General Design Considerations**

The purpose of an enclosed balcony is to afford an occupant the year round enjoyment of those uses to which a balcony normally would be used in fair and warm weather.

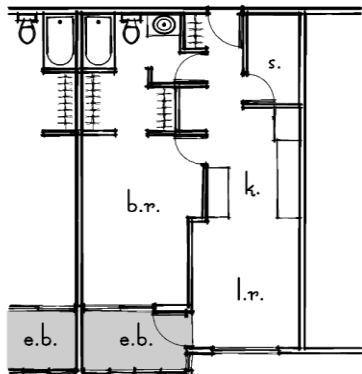
While a balcony enclosure may provide many attractive uses for the occupant, careful attention should be given to creating an identifiable architectural element such as through a distinctive shape and a predominance of clear glass.

- *Enclosed balconies seeking FSR exemptions should be positioned, configured and finished to function similar to a balcony (solarium or indoor garden) rather than as a den or bedroom.*
- *Balcony enclosures should be designed to be distinct but integrated within the overall architecture of the building.*
- *In plan, enclosed balconies should have their own discrete identity, from neighbouring façade elements and not intrude into the unit's living space layout.*

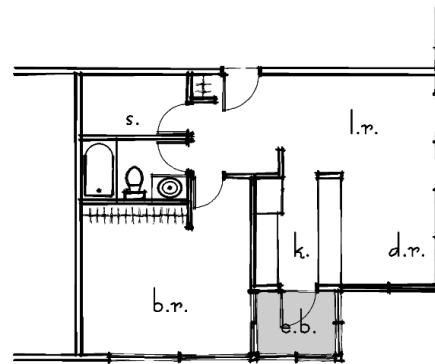
Figures A and B below illustrate supportable approaches for addressing the primary design principle for where enclosed balconies should be positioned and configured similar to a balcony, resulting in a distinctive identity for the enclosed balcony within the façade composition. In order to address the primary design objective as an identifiable architectural treatment, the amount of projection should be no less than 450 mm.

Floor Plans

**Figure A**



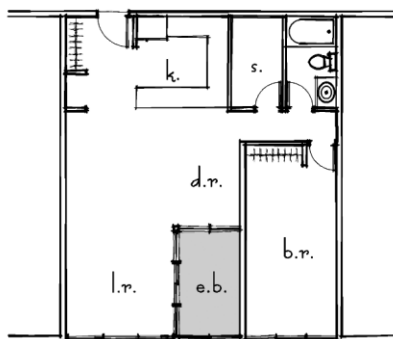
**Figure B**



Figures C, D, E, F and G illustrate examples that are not supportable as they generally do not result in a discrete identity, intrude in to the living space, function as a den or bedroom and are not readily convertible to an outdoor amenity. To maximize daylight penetration into a dwelling unit, dimensional attributes of the enclosed balcony should have its longer dimension parallel with the exterior.

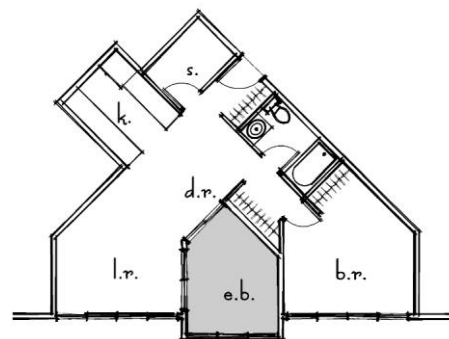
**Figure C - not supportable**

- compromises internal living space within the dwelling unit and lacks exterior expression



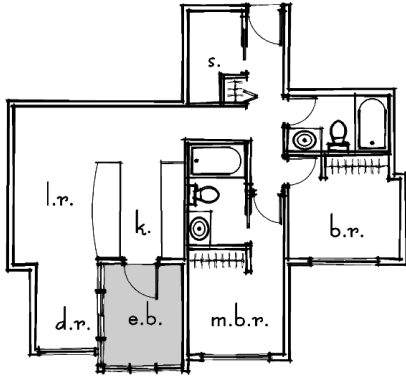
**Figure D - not supportable**

- configured as a separate room



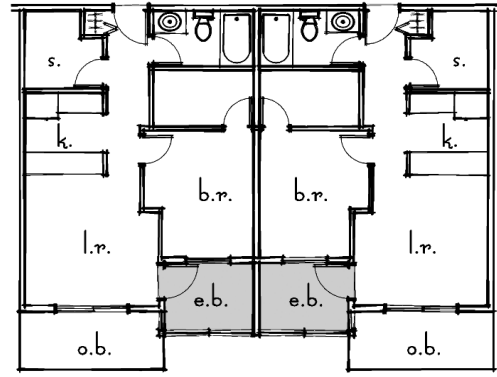
**Figure E** - not supportable

- enclosed balconies (longer dimension of enclosed balcony should be along the exterior wall)



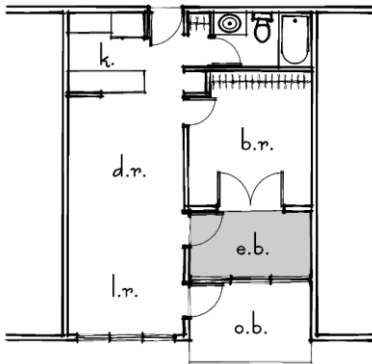
**Figure F** - not supportable

- inverted



**Figure G** - not supportable

- tandem open and enclosed balconies (inverted enclosed balconies)



Elevations

**Figure H** - supportable

- an identifiable architectural element with a distinctive shape and a predominance of clear glass



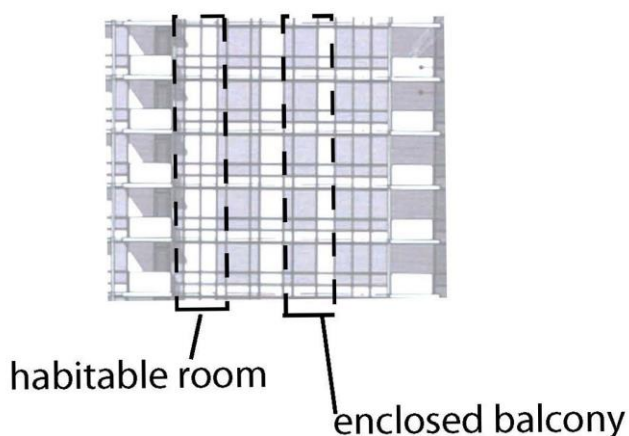
**Figure I** - supportable

- balcony enclosures to be distinct but integrated with the overall architecture of the building



**Figure J – not supportable**

- exterior treatment indistinguishable from other habitable rooms, stacking of enclosed balconies above/below habitable rooms without distinction with the exterior treatment



**Enclosed balconies should:**

- be identifiable as a distinct façade component, typical expressed as a distinct shape and through a predominate of clear glazing (i.e. floor-to ceiling for the full exterior perimeter of the space which will also mitigate additional building bulk by maximizing the glass area of the enclosure and its ‘lightness’);
- have a minimum clear horizontal dimension of 1.8 m and a minimum area of 4.5 m<sup>2</sup>;
- maximize glass area to admit natural light to the interior space beyond and have windows openable from the inside to facilitate natural ventilation. Openable windows should be absolutely maximized to allow the space to be utilized in a manner similar to a balcony whenever desired by the resident;
- be grouped so as to maintain and enhance visual interest. Visual interest achieved through façade modulation and the play of solids against voids should be respected;
- have impervious floor surface such as tile to allow the space to be used as a greenhouse solarium (e.g. gardening );
- be limited to one balcony enclosure per dwelling units, although additional enclosures may be appropriate for large-sized dwelling units, having regard for the potential increase in the building bulk;
- be generally limited to lower floors in high-rise development noting the views, shadow and building bulk impact that can result from enclosure of balconies in towers; this may offer noise buffering in certain locations, such as on busy arterial streets. *Be located so as to maximize acoustic buffering of the unit;* and
- Incorporate a narrow (up to 0.6 m (2 ft) in depth open ‘balconette’ or French balcony as an extension of the enclosed balcony may, where appropriate, expand the usability of this space. Access to the French balcony should be through full height sliding or French (hinged) doors so that the enclosed balcony can function similar to a balcony when so desired. Guardrails should be open rail or glass to maximize natural light penetration.