



## DECKS IN RS-1 AND RS-1S ZONING DISTRICTS

*Authority - Director of Planning*

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By-law regulations regarding decks are somewhat complex due to the many sensitive issues involved (views, overlook problems, noise, apparent density of development, safety, and so on). Taken as a whole, however, they form a logical set of restrictions and are based on the same criteria used to govern the location and size of the Principal Building (i.e., the house) on the lot. It is therefore helpful to restate the basic regulations through which the location and size of the Principal Building are controlled.

In the RS-1 and RS-1S Districts, the location of the Principal Building on the lot is generally governed by the following regulations:

Front Yard	• a minimum of 20% of the lot depth;
Building Depth	• a maximum of 35% of the lot depth;
Rear Yard	• a minimum of 45% of the lot depth;
Side Yards	• a minimum of 10% of the lot width (on each side of lots 18.3 m wide or less), increasing to a minimum of 20% of the lot width (on each side of lots 30.5 m wide or greater). (See Section 4.5.1 of the RS-1 District Schedule.)

The figures for front and rear yards shown above can vary in some circumstances in response to the size and location of existing houses on adjacent lots.

In addition, there are also regulations limiting Height, Site Coverage, and Floor Space Ratio (FSR) of the Principal Building.

Decks located 0.6 m or more above finished grade (see No. 5) are affected by these regulations in the following ways:

- (1) Decks are considered to be part of Building Depth and are therefore subject to maximum Building Depth restrictions. A 9.1 m long house with a 3.1 m rear deck is considered to have a 12.2 m Building Depth and may or may not be permitted depending on the maximum permitted Building Depth for the lot in question.
- (2) Decks cannot be built in any required yards. It is possible, however, to reduce the depth of the required Rear Yard by up to 3.1 m to permit a rear addition (including a deck) to an **existing** house (built before April 12, 1988), provided that the overall Building Depth does not exceed the maximum 35% of lot depth. For reasons of privacy for adjacent lots, any decks located within that portion of the original Rear Yard relaxed by this regulation cannot be located any higher than the first floor level of the house.

It is also possible to reduce the depth of the required Rear Yard if the existing house on each side of the lot in question **both** already have Rear Yards less than that of the subject lot. In such cases, the Rear

Yard of the subject lot may be reduced to the depth of the Rear Yard of the adjacent lot with the larger Rear Yard, and the house (or deck) on the subject lot can extend back to this line, regardless of the resulting Building Depth. A maximum height of 3.7 m is permitted for any structure, including a deck, built within that part of the Rear Yard relaxed in this manner.

- (3) Decks may or may not be counted in Floor Space Ratio (FSR) calculations depending on a number of circumstances, some of which are listed below:
- a) Uncovered decks built above other floor areas (i.e., above other areas included in FSR) are considered to be 'roof decks', and are not counted in FSR. Roof decks are permitted anywhere within the permitted Building Depth of the Principal Building. For reasons of privacy, roof decks are **not** permitted over an Accessory Building (e.g., a garage), unless that building is also located within the permitted Building Depth of the Principal Building. Roof decks are not included in the 8% limit on FSR deck exclusions.
  - b) Uncovered decks constructed on posts over an earthen floor are not included in FSR if the area of all such decks does not exceed 8% of the total permitted floor area for the lot (i.e.,  $0.08 \times 0.6 \times \text{lot area}$ ). The amount by which the area of all such decks exceeds this number is added to both the total and above (finished) grade floor area of the house.  
The areas underneath such decks are also generally not included in FSR as long as they are completely open on at least two sides. An exception to this rule is the case of uncovered decks where the space underneath is used as a carport and the entire structure is attached to the house. In such cases the area under the deck (i.e., the carport) is not counted in FSR **only if**:
    - i) the lot has no secondary access (i.e., no lane or no flanking street borders the lot); **and**
    - ii) the carport and deck are completely within the permitted Building Depth.
  - c) Decks **are** counted in FSR if they are roofed over or have any overhead structure whatsoever (e.g. light roof panels, trellises, perimeter beams, etc.). If a deck is roofed over, and therefore counted in FSR, then the area under that deck is also counted in FSR if the height of that area is 1.2 m or greater.
- (4) Decks, if excluded from Floor Space Ratio, are also excluded from Site Coverage calculations.
- (5) Decks which are **less** than 0.6 m above normal finished grade are exempt from all By-law restrictions and may be built anywhere on the lot. In order to be exempt from By-law restrictions, no part of the deck structure (including handrails, built-in benches or planters, etc.) may extend above the 0.6 m level.

## Permits

Because most decks are governed by both the Zoning and Development By-law and the Vancouver Building By-law, both Development and Building Permits are required.

If the proposed deck conforms completely to the RS-1/RS-1S District Schedules of the Zoning and Development By-law, then two sets of drawings are required and the applicant may apply for what is called a Combined Development and Building Permit. The processing time for a combined permit varies with the workload, but is generally between three days and one week.

If the proposed deck does not conform to all the yard regulations of the RS-1/RS-1S District Schedules, the Director of Planning can consider relaxing these provisions of the District Schedules in some instances. In such a situation, the applicant must first apply for a Development Permit (approximate processing time three to four weeks) to request the required relaxations. Should a Development Permit be granted, a Building Permit may then be applied for (processing time three days to one week). A total of three sets of drawings are required for the separate Development Permit and Building Permit processes.

If the extent of the relaxation is relatively minor, Housing Renovation Centre staff can in some instances provide 'over the counter' relaxations of the RS-1/RS-1S District Schedules. This allows the applicant to use the Combined application process, resulting in a shorter processing time.

All persons considering adding a deck, or undertaking any additions or renovations in the RS-1 and RS-1S Districts, should contact the Housing Renovation Centre for advice early in the design process. A small amount of useful advice at the beginning of a project can often result in major savings in both time and frustration. The services of the Housing Renovation Centre are available to all homeowners, architects, designers, contractors or developers doing additions or renovation work in the RS-1 and RS-1S Districts in the City of Vancouver. The telephone number for the Housing Renovation Centre is 873-7092.