

# PR3

---

## MULTI-UNIT HOUSING INTERFACES

These guidelines provide general direction, at the concept or schematic design stage, on building facades, and the design of terraces, patios and similar public / private transitions within front and side yards of multi-unit housing.

These guidelines should be applied to multi-unit housing (e.g. row housing) and those portions of multi-unit housing (e.g. tall building podiums) with private amenity spaces accessed directly from streets, alleys or civic spaces; however, the guideline may be applicable to other housing typologies (e.g. cluster housing).

These guidelines identify design considerations in addition to *Zoning Bylaw* regulations related to front and side yard setbacks.

For developments that incorporate both commercial and residential uses, these guidelines should be read in conjunction with *PR2 Commercial + Mixed Use Interfaces*.

**Street oriented multi-unit housing contributes to walkable, attractive and inclusive streetscapes and civic spaces by creating appropriate public / private transitions while promoting activity and natural surveillance.**

### GENERAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Ensure that facade design, including entrances and private amenity spaces (e.g. patios), wrap around corners and contribute to a consistent and active streetscape on corner sites.
- All residential units on the ground floor should have direct access to a street or amenity area.
- Common entrances for multi-unit housing should be welcoming and differentiated from individual street-oriented residential units through architectural and landscape treatments (Figure 1).
- Residential address signs should be limited to wall and low-profile sign types, located in close proximity to the main building entrance serving as a visual marker of the entrance.
- Limit the placement of air intakes, exhaust, air conditioning, water drainage and similar mechanical equipment along the public realm (e.g. sidewalks), in front yards or otherwise visible from adjacent streets. If their placement is unavoidable, orient them away from the sidewalks or other pedestrian circulation paths as necessary to minimize their effect on the public realm. Screen as appropriate using landscaping or other such means.
- The placement of windows at the ground level residential units fronting a street, civic space or amenity area should enhance privacy for the residents while maintaining "eyes on the street" (Figure 2).
- Entrances to ground floor residential units should be at grade, or include minimal grade changes, to provide universal access. Minimal or no grade changes allow for greater degree of adaptability in possible conversion to commercial in future. Residential units in mid-rise development, or a podium of a tall building that are raised above grade, may require universal access provided via an internal corridor.
- Multi-unit housing fronting onto a civic space or amenity area should be designed in a similar fashion as when fronting onto a street.

# PR3

---

## MULTI-UNIT HOUSING INTERFACES

### **PUBLIC / PRIVATE TRANSITIONS**

- Multi-unit housing interfaces should reflect the established character of its context in terms of treatment of public-private transitions within front and side yards.
- Minimum setbacks are defined in the Zoning Bylaw, but consideration should be given to establishing setbacks which accommodate functional private amenity spaces (e.g. patios), landscaping and adequate separation and buffering which reflects the nature and character of the streetscape and roadway (Figure 3).
  - In very unique conditions (e.g. alley housing) it may be appropriate to greatly reduce setbacks (Figure 4).
- Public / private transitions can be further enhanced by:
  - Landscape screening using trees and shrubs, with sufficient space and soil volume to be provided (particularly in landscape over structure conditions) (Figure 5);
  - Decorative fencing or walls (1.2m maximum) which utilizes materials, colours, etc, which are consistent with or complement the building architecture; and/or
  - Minor changes in grade (Figure 6). Note that grade changes over 0.6m in height may limit accessibility, and require a railing or other barrier which may change the nature of the separation and buffering.

### **CLIMATE RESILIENCE**

- Priority should be given to accommodating large canopy shade trees within front yard setbacks, particularly where no boulevard exists.
  - The ultimate size of the front yard setback should accommodate both the growth habit and mature spread of the tree, as well as its soil volume requirements.

### **FACADE DESIGN FOR ROW HOUSING TYPOLOGIES**

- For multi-unit housing which utilizes a row housing typology, key design considerations include:
  - Articulating residential units as separate units through changes in facade design and materiality, to contribute to a human scaled streetscape (Figure 6).

# PR3

## MULTI-UNIT HOUSING INTERFACES

### Key considerations for the design of multi-unit residential interfaces

Front setback (A) accommodates functional private amenity areas (e.g. patios), landscaping (e.g. tree planting), while reflecting built form context (e.g. streetwall). Ultimately, the nature of the public / private transition is a function of the street character, traffic and other factors.

Common building entry articulated clearly and separately (B).

Townhouses articulated as separate units with clearly defined primary unit entrances (C).

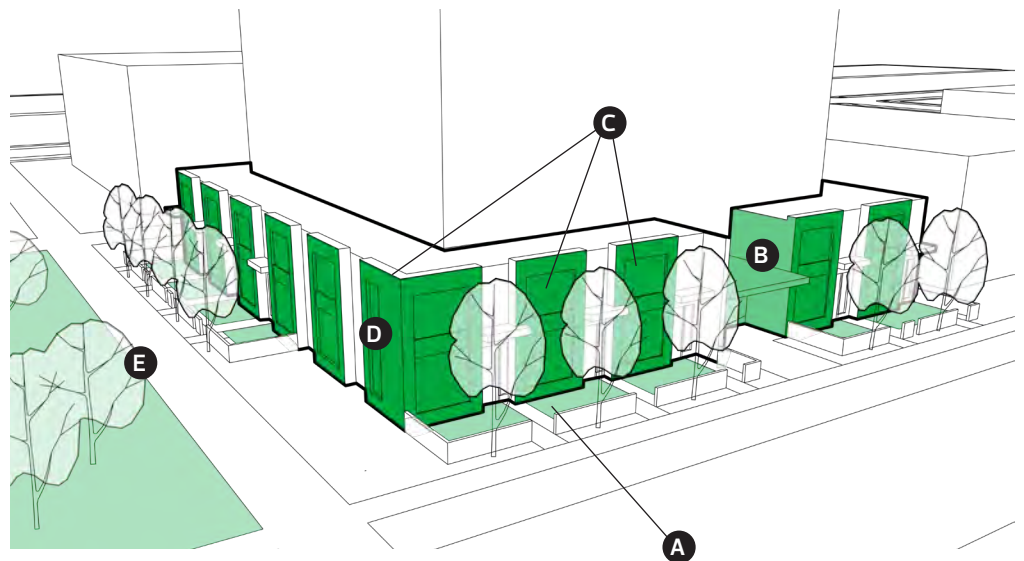
Facade treatment wraps building corner (D).

Building facade facing civic space treated as an active frontage (E).

- Providing separate and clearly visible access points to each ground floor unit with clear sightlines from the street, and design these as viable primary entrances (Figure 7).
- Consider inset doorways and weather protection (e.g. canopies) to improve the functionality of entrances.
- Consider enhancing the legibility of ground floor entrances by incorporating well designed features such as stoops, porches, shared landings and canopies.

### LIVE-WORK UNITS AND COMMERCIAL CONVERSIONS

- In commercial or commercial transition areas, there may be opportunities for row housing typologies to be designed as live-work units, or convertible to future commercial use. Design considerations include:
  - High ground floor ceiling heights (e.g. 4.5m);
  - Increased glazing (i.e. storefront expression);
  - Minimal signage well integrated into the building facade or front yard (Figure 8); and
  - Minimal or no grade changes for universal accessibility – otherwise ramps may be required.



# PR3

## MULTI-UNIT HOUSING INTERFACES

- 1 Common entrance differentiated through architectural and landscape treatments, Vancouver.
- 2 Generous use of windows provide 'eyes on the street' while maintaining privacy, Vancouver.
- 3 Generous front yard setback accommodates both boulevard tree planting and a functional private amenity space.
- 4 Alley housing with reduced setback, Calgary.
- 5 Public to semi-private transition created through landscaping and decorative fencing, Vancouver.
- 6 Public to semi-private transition created through landscaping and grade changes, Vancouver.
- 7 Clearly defined and well designed entrances, Vancouver.
- 8 Clearly defined live-work units with integrated signage, Calgary.

