Central Saanich Design Guidelines for *INFILL HOUSING*

Corporation of the District of Central Saanich
Planning Department

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Purpose - *What Design Guidelines do*

Design Guidelines for Infill Housing are intended to assist land developers and home builders to plan and build new homes that are compatible with the existing neighbourhoods in which they are to be located. As communities evolve and mature over time it is important to ensure that new infill housing supports the social and aesthetic values already established within the neighbourhood.

Infill home builders are required to meet all requirements outlined within the municipal approval process. The design guidelines outline several key planning principles and building and landscaping design options for consideration when planning an infill development.

Objectives - *The big picture*

- *To encourage new construction that is harmonious with existing homes in building massing, character, style, open space development and street presence*
- *To maximize quality of life for all residents, existing or new, within a neighbourhood*
- *To follow environmental principles when developing a lot for infill housing*

Building Schemes

New subdivisions for infill housing projects are usually required to submit Building Schemes to be registered on the land title. Proposed developments will be required to register Restrictive Covenants where appropriate. The design of infill housing should attempt to meet the spirit of the design guidelines outlined within this document.

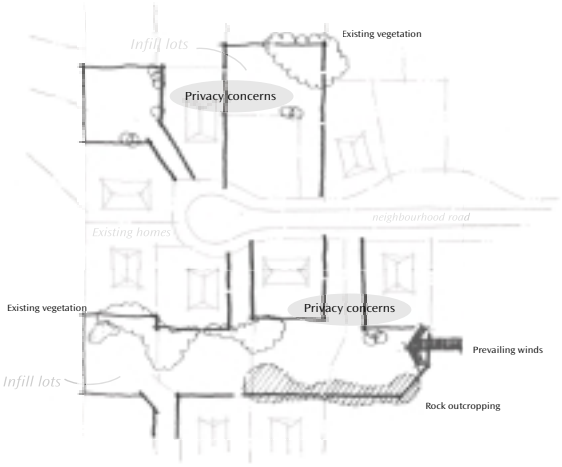
Design Guidelines - *Making it work*

The Natural Character

A single infill housing lot is part of a much larger environment. The existing landforms, vegetation, soils and drainage patterns affect both the conditions on-site as well as adjacent properties. Working in harmony with the existing physical conditions will assist in retaining the environmental integrity of the land. In addition, existing neighbours will not be negatively impacted by the new infill development.

Site Features

Prior to starting development all existing significant site characteristics should be identified including: slopes, rock outcroppings or shallow rock, native trees and shrubs, and drainage patterns. Where possible the building envelope should allow for the retention and incorporation of these site features. Modifications to the natural conditions should not adversely affect adjacent homes through increased water runoff, habitat destruction or elimination of views. Natural qualities lost through lot development should be replaced with new landscaping.



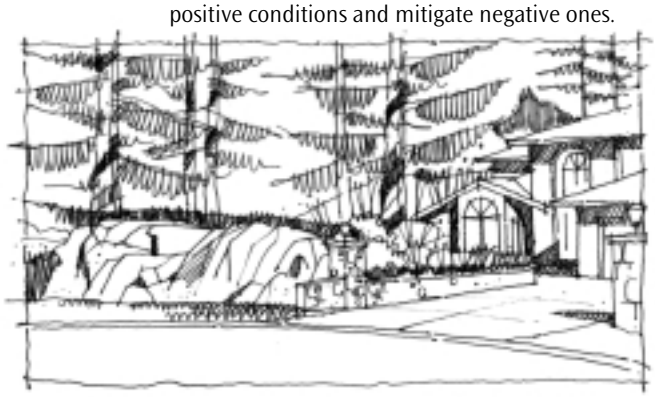
Site characteristics investigation

Site Drainage

Maintaining similar on-site drainage patterns is important for the long term health of the existing vegetation on and adjacent to, the development site. Modifying site drainage may impact downstream water quality, habitat values, amphibians, fish and other biological systems. Changes to the drainage patterns should be minimized to reduce the concern of slope or retaining wall failure or subsurface building drainage issues on site or within the neighbourhood. All surface water must be dealt with within the lot boundaries.

Microclimate

While all residents of Central Saanich enjoy the same general climate, variations in microclimates exist from home to home. Sun orientation, vegetation cover, topography, wind flow and moisture regime contribute to a unique microclimate at the individual lot level. New housing should carefully consider the environmental factors that affect the lot to take advantage of positive conditions and mitigate negative ones.



Incorporate the existing natural character (rock outcroppings, mature vegetation) within the infill house lot

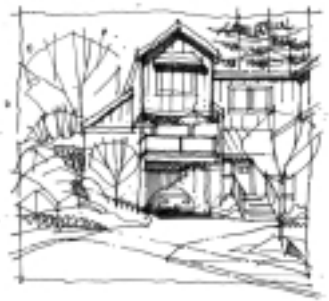
Locating the Home

The location of the proposed home on the lot has the greatest impact on the new homeowners and the existing neighbours. Site grading, building massing and orientation on the lot contribute to how well an infill home harmonizes with the existing neighbourhood.

Grading

Consideration should be given to the retention of existing landforms and vegetation, sitelines and views and access. Homes should be designed to work with the natural contours of the site rather than to impose a structure on the land. Split level housing or terraced structures should be utilized where grades are challenging in order to maintain the integrity of the land and reduce neighbourhood impacts. Perched structures and exposed deck supports are discouraged.

Minimize the impact of the car by placing garages under buildings or decks above

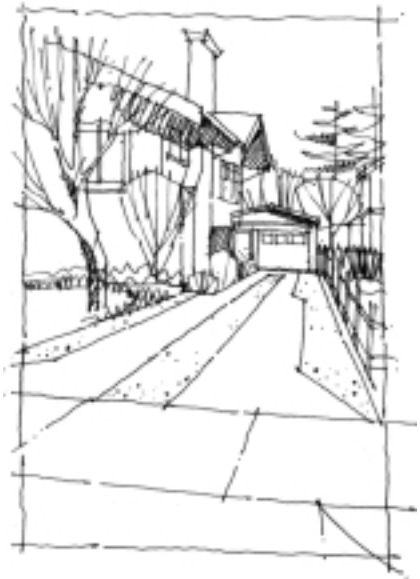


Siting

Building site locations should have a strong connection with the neighbourhood at the pedestrian level. Pedestrian access should be considered equally important as vehicular access. Front doors should be clearly visible from the public street. On lots where house entrances are obscured, gateway elements such as signage, lighting or other landscape features should be utilized.

Driveways, Parking and Garages

Long driveways and garages doors should not dominate the view from the public street and should have landscaped edges. Driveways and garages should be located to work with existing grades and have the least impact on adjacent neighbours. Shared driveway accesses are encouraged where possible. Paving for access and parking should be kept to a minimum. Creative solutions to driveway and parking surfaces should be considered including permeable paving such as gravel, interlocking pavers or 'grasscrete' (reinforced paving/grass) to increase on-site water retention. Garages and carports should be recessed into the building face, angled away from the public street, or screened with trellises and arbours. Stand-alone garages should be designed in the same style as the home including roof slopes, building materials and colour choices.



Minimize paving where possible and utilize permeable materials

Views and Privacy

When developing infill housing, view corridors should be maintained wherever possible. Impacts of new housing on existing neighbourhoods should be minimized through careful building siting and design, natural feature retention and the addition of suitable landscaping. The layout of interior spaces should take advantage of inherent view opportunities rather than relying on 'stock' building plans. The location of building doors, windows, patios and decks should take privacy concerns into consideration.

Designing the Home

One way to successfully integrate infill housing into existing neighbourhoods is to use familiar architecture and landscaping. An infill home that sits comfortably in the neighbourhood has the appearance of being developed at the same time as adjacent homes. The scale, massing, character and detailing are respectful of the larger neighbourhood.

Building siting and massing should harmonize with the neighbourhood

Building Massing, Scale and Proportion

Infill houses should be designed to be sympathetic with the building massing, scale and proportion of neighbouring homes. Variety in building massing and form is encouraged through the use of projections, recesses and detailing, as opposed to monolithic solutions. New homes should not dominate neighbouring homes in size or form. The number of floors, building elevations and amount of glazing that is visible from the public realm should be compatible with existing values. Buildings should be designed harmoniously with the character of the lot. Terraced building forms are recommended on lots with challenging grades to minimize the visibility of foundations and extensive deck supports.

Architectural Design & Building Elevations

The exterior walls of a home are usually visible from the street and become part of the public domain. Using housing forms, exterior finishes and architectural details that are familiar will help to establish a comfortable fit between new housing and existing neighbours. Familiar elements to borrow from may include: roof slopes, window styles, dormers, cornices, eaves, and chimneys. Some variation on the standard house design practices is encouraged to create interest. Building elevations should emphasize the basic principle of creating a bottom, middle and top through the use of materials, colours and detailing. Indentations within the elevations are encouraged to create shadow lines. Weather protection at entrances is encouraged.

Familiar building forms and high quality materials and detailing are encouraged

Details and Colour

Design detailing and material choices should be of high quality and built for durability to support neighbourhood stability. Indigenous materials such as wood and stone should be used where suitable. Colour choices for building exteriors, landscape structures and paving should reflect neighbourhood patterns with an emphasis on natural shades. Buildings should utilize several coordinated, complementary colours to highlight architectural features. Monotone or 'tropical' colour palettes are discouraged.

Private Outdoor Space

The character and design of open space associated with the lot is equally as important as the architectural style in ensuring that infill development is compatible with the community. Site landscaping acts as a physical and visual transition between the private home and the public street. A thoughtfully integrated, well landscaped, infill home will be a welcome addition to an established neighbourhood.

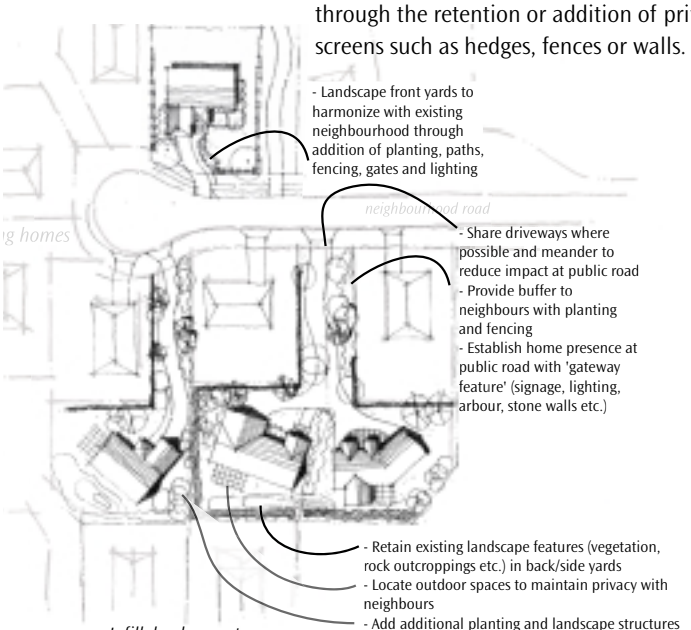
Maintaining privacy in outdoor spaces of existing homes is important when planning new infill developments. Outdoor space should be designed to support the homeowner's lifestyle, enhance the lot and neighbourhood and maintain privacy between neighbours.

Private landscaping in front yards should help create a cohesive neighbourhood image in addition to enhancing the home

Landscape Character

Lot landscaping should be considered in the initial planning stages of the project not as an after-thought "to pretty up the edges". The design of the open spaces should be carefully considered in the context of the greater neighbourhood and specific lot characteristics.

Initially, a review of the character of the neighbourhood landscaping should be undertaken with emphasis on open spaces visible from the pubic street. Elements to consider include: degree of openness or privacy of homes at the street edge, amount, type and maturity of planting, occurrence of landscape structures, walls, fencing/gates and lighting. Special attention should be afforded to maintaining privacy with adjacent neighbours through the retention or addition of privacy screens such as hedges, fences or walls.



Infill developments should enhance the natural character of the lot and neighbourhood livability

Landscaping should enhance the existing character of the lot (landforms and vegetation), existing and proposed views, pedestrian and vehicular movement and intended uses. The private landscaping should harmonize with the character of the neighbourhood.

Landscape Grading

Lot grading involving slope cutting or filling, around existing vegetation is discouraged to maintain plant stability and health. Re-graded slopes should be smoothed to give a natural appearance and should not exceed a 2:1 maximum grade. All grading should occur within the lot boundaries.

Plants

Landscaping utilizing plants native to the region reflects the value and beauty of local flora and fauna. Indigenous plants also require little maintenance or irrigation once established. Native landscaping should be retained, replaced or reintroduced wherever possible. Native plants should be used as they are found in natural habitats - with companion plants (such as hedge-rows), rather than in isolation. The moisture regime in vegetation retention areas should be retained.

Paving

Patio and parking paving should be minimized where possible. The use of porous materials is encouraged to decrease storm water runoff.

Landscape walls and fences

In neighbourhoods with sloping topography, landscape elements such as fencing and retaining walls, are often visible to the public realm. Retaining walls used to terrace lots should be kept under 1.2m in height to reduce visual impact. Long expanses of retaining structures are discouraged. Natural and durable materials such as stone and wood, should be used for walls and fencing where possible.

Accessory Buildings & Recreational Vehicles

Storage sheds, garbage enclosures, compost bins and other landscape structures should be located on site to minimize impact on adjacent neighbours. Support facilities should be designed to be consistent with the home in character and materials. Recreational vehicles stored on site should be screened from public view using fencing, trellises and site grading.