
Duplex Design Guidelines

Also applies to Triplex

City of White Rock
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Duplex/Triplex Design Guidelines

City of White Rock

1.0 Intent

These guidelines describe the design expectations for duplex and triplex buildings throughout the City. The guidelines are intended to encourage high quality design which is compatible with the design of single family homes within the City.

1.2 Application of the Design Guidelines

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the RT-1 and RT-2 provisions of the City of White Rock Zoning By-law. Both these guidelines and the Zoning By-law should be consulted by applicants wanting to build duplexes and triplexes. The guidelines will also be used by the Planning Department and the Advisory Design Panel in evaluating duplex and triplex development applications.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their proposal with City staff before submitting an application.

1.3 Design Principles

There are three paramount design principles which must be taken into consideration when designing a duplex or a triplex. These are:

- ***neighbourhood context*** – the design should be consistent with, complement, or improve upon the design character of the immediate neighbourhood.
- ***variety in design*** – the duplex or triplex should incorporate design elements which help break up the mass of the building, provide for individuality in the design of each dwelling unit, and which are interesting to look at.
- ***landscaping*** – the design should incorporate front yard landscaping that reinforces the individuality of the dwelling units, softens the edges of the building, and screens parking areas/driveways.

In order to ensure that these design principles are achieved, the design guidelines set out the following:

- design guidelines for addressing neighbourhood context (Section 2.1 and Appendix "A")
- design guidelines for building form and building elements (Section 2.2)
- design guidelines for front yard landscaping (Section 2.3).

Submission requirements for duplex or triplex applications are summarized in Appendix "B".

2. Design Guidelines

2.1 Neighbourhood Context

In order to ensure that the neighbouring context of the proposed duplex or triplex site is taken into consideration, a streetscape analysis is required. This is described in Appendix A.

The low density residential neighbourhoods of White Rock are primarily characterized by single family detached houses. In order to ensure that a duplex or triplex development is consistent with the character of its neighbourhood, as established through the streetscape analysis, the design will address the following:

- The character of the streetscape will be reflected in the siting and massing of the building.
- The quality of the design and materials will make a positive contribution to the streetscape.
- The design will incorporate distinctions between the units comprising the duplex or triplex, giving each its own visual identity. Distinctions in design, layout, landscaping and colour can all be used to differentiate between the dwelling units comprising a duplex or a triplex building. This can help reinforce the individuality of each unit, and avoid the creation of a monotonous streetscape.
- Alternatives to the traditional side-by-side duplex building will be investigated, including front/ rear and top/bottom layouts, as may be appropriate to the location. Similarly, alternate layouts for a triplex will be encouraged, such as side by side with a unit on top.

In areas of town which are in need of revitalizing, the proposed design will be evaluated in the context of the range of high-quality house designs found in the City, rather than in the context of the immediate neighbourhood.

2.2 Building Form and Elements

The basic building form is controlled through the Zoning By-law, which delineates a "building envelope" within which the building can be located. This building envelope is defined by setbacks, height limits, lot coverage limits, and in some cases, angular plane restrictions. The guidelines set out below are intended to promote a high quality design which provide greater articulation to the building than set out in the Zoning By-law controls.

Detailed design considerations for building elements are described below. It should be kept in mind, however, that variations from the guidelines set out below may be considered if they can be rationalized through the streetscape analysis described in Appendix "A" of these guidelines.

a) Pitched Roof

The predominant roof type in the City is the pitched roof, and it should generally be used. Flat roofs may be considered in certain hillside locations, where this is a more common building form. The streetscape analysis should inform as to the type of roof appropriate to the site.

- Sloped roofs should incorporate a considerable amount of articulation in order to break up the mass of the building and make it visually more interesting.
- In duplexes or triplexes built on the hillside, the building should be terraced to reflect the sloping terrain. When a flat roof is used, terracing or other technique for minimizing expanses of flat roof must be incorporated into the design.



Figure 1 - articulated sloped roof

b) Gables and Dormers

Dormers are generally encouraged in sloped roof duplex and triplex developments. Dormers are building elements which add character and articulation to a building, and can also help to break up the mass of a large building such as a duplex or a triplex.



Figure 2 - Dormers

Gable end detailing can add character. Consideration should be given to varying the design of gable and dormer details from one unit to the next, in order to accentuate the individuality of the units.



Figure 3 – Gable end detailing



c) Exterior Wall Cladding

- Two or three types of cladding materials should be used in order to avoid large expanses of uniform material.
- Consideration should be given to incorporating a secondary material into vertical design features. This can help to break up the mass of the building. Accent colours can also be used to the same effect.
- In order to highlight the individuality of each dwelling unit, different colours or variations in colour tint may be used for each unit.



Figure 4: Use of a variety of materials

d) Entrances and Window Treatment

- For corner sites, consideration should be given to orienting one entry to each street. Consideration should be given to front/back or top/bottom duplexes on hillside or narrow lot duplex sites.
- Distinction between the dwelling units should be made through use of differences in the dimensions and/ or location of windows.

e) Driveways

The amount of pavement on the front yard should be as limited as possible and therefore driveway widths should be minimized. Where a driveway leads to a double garage, it should be narrowed near the street, and the wider portion near the garage should be screened with landscaping.

- In certain instances, such as where the two garages of a side-by-side duplex building are adjacent, a shared driveway access from the street should be used.



Fig. 4: Shared driveway leading to rear parking

f) Garages

- Access to parking should be accommodated off a laneway if it exists. Rear-lot garages should be designed to a high standard and may incorporate some of the design elements of the house - for example, a similar style roof, cladding materials, and colours.
- Where a lane access is not available and a parking garage must be integrated into the building and accessed from the street, the facade of the building should be designed to ensure that the garage doors do not visually overwhelm the building.

2.3 Landscape Design

Front yard landscaping is an important element to "softening" the hard edges of a large building such as a duplex or triplex.

- Landscaping should be designed so as to emphasize that there are two or three distinct residences – uniformity or "mirror image" landscape layouts should be avoided.
- Where feasible, landscaping should be used to screen parking areas.
- Groupings of a variety of shrubs and trees are preferable to uniform planting of a single species. This is in keeping with typical White Rock front yard landscaping. Planting of one or more small or medium size species of tree is encouraged.

2.4 Streetscape Analysis

A streetscape analysis is required as part of any duplex or triplex application. The intent is to illustrate the physical context of the proposal, and to ensure that the proposed design is in keeping the image and scale of the surrounding streetscape. A building design which is sensitive to the surrounding streetscape can be a good neighbour by compatibly integrating the architectural patterns and landscaping of the surrounding streetscape. In areas of the City which are being redeveloped, and where the existing streetscape does not provide adequate guidance for the form and character of new buildings, the design should be consistent with the form and character of typical high quality homes found in the City.

The elements of the streetscape that should be included in the analysis are the building height, building form, materials and landscaping of adjacent properties. These streetscape elements should be illustrated by a series of photographs of adjacent properties which clearly indicate building details and landscaping visible from the street.

For mid-block sites, the streetscape analysis should be comprised of, at a minimum, the two neighbouring houses on both sides of the site. For corner sites, at least the two nearest houses on the same block and the houses located on the other three corners should be included in the streetscape analysis.

A brief written explanation of how the design responds to the surrounding streetscape should also be included as part of the streetscape analysis.

Appendix A: Submission Requirements

1. Site Analysis

Photographs of the site are to be submitted prior to Advisory Design Panel considering the project. The objective is to illustrate the particular conditions of the subject site.

2. Streetscape analysis

A streetscape analysis as described previously is to be submitted prior to the Advisory Design Panel considering the project. The streetscape analysis should comprise a series of photographs of the neighbouring properties, showing landscaping and building facades. The objective is to illustrate the design and landscaping details of the neighbouring homes. The photographs should illustrate the scale, design, materials and landscaping. A brief written explanation of how the design responds to the surrounding streetscape should also be included as part of the streetscape analysis.

3. Sample Board

Samples of exterior materials and colours are to be submitted prior to the Advisory Design Panel considering the project.

4. Plans

The following plans should be submitted at the time of rezoning application:

- topographic survey
- site plan
- floor plans
- building sections
- building elevations
- landscape plan