



# HOW-TO GUIDE FOR LANEWAY HOMES

SEPTEMBER 2023



RENDERING BY MATTHEW THOMSON DESIGN

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
Overview	3
How To Use This Guide	4
<b>REGULATIONS &amp; DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>5</b>
Lot Eligibility	5
Ownership	6
Units Per Lot	6
Lot Coverage	6
Lot Layout	7
Height	8
Size	9
Being a Good Neighbour	10
Parking	11
Outdoor Space	11
Energy Efficiency	12
Rainwater Management	12
Plant Selection	13
Tree Protection	13
Access and Addressing	14
Servicing and Utilities	15
<b>GETTING STARTED</b>	<b>16</b>

## CONTACT US

City of Burnaby, Planning and Development Department

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# INTRODUCTION

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## OVERVIEW

This guide is for property owners who are interested in developing a laneway home on their property. It includes regulations and design recommendations for planning and designing both a laneway home and the open space surrounding it.

The City's regulations and design recommendations for laneway homes have been created to benefit laneway home residents, property owners, neighbours, and the larger community. They have been developed through best practice research and consultations with the community. They support the City of Burnaby's broader community goals and policies for housing choices, climate action, livability, and more.

Please note that some of the numbers in this Guide have been rounded.

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### What is a Laneway Home?

Laneway homes are smaller homes generally built in the rear yard of a property and, where a lane exists, facing the lane. Laneway homes can provide additional space for families or serve as a new source of rental housing, while also providing income for the homeowner.



*Image Credit: Lanefab*



*Image Credit: Lanefab*



*Image Credit: Lanefab*


# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Guide contains both regulations and design recommendations. The regulations are required by bylaw and must be followed.

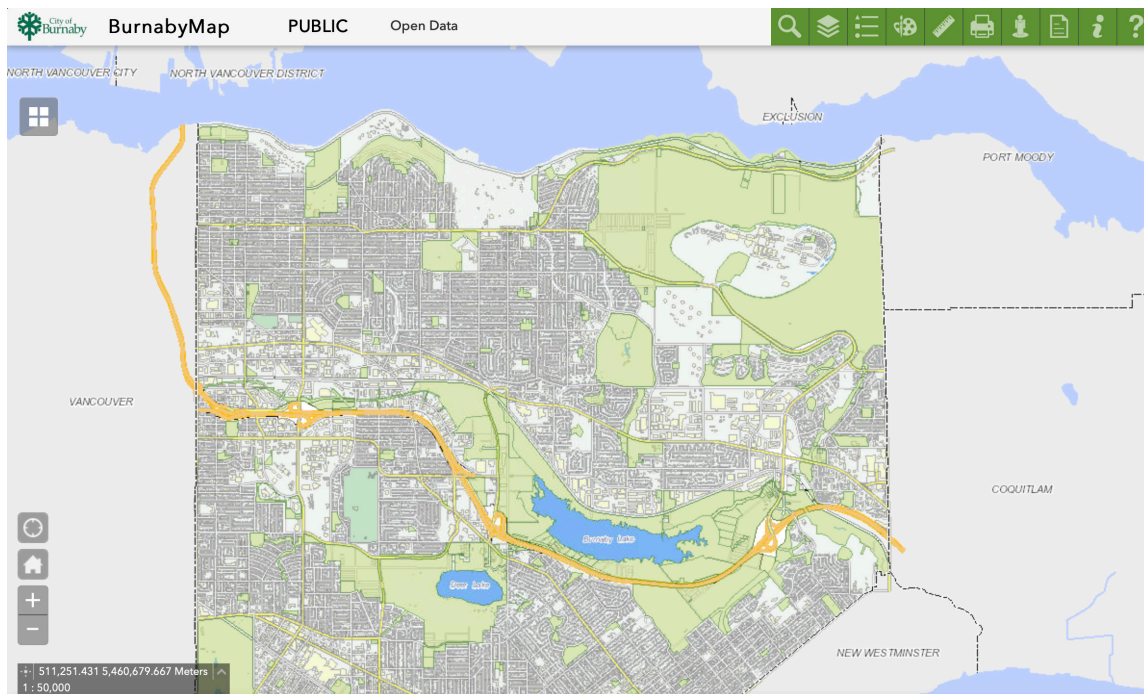
The **design recommendations** are strongly supported by the City and will help ensure that laneway homes work well for residents of laneway homes, property owners, neighbours, and the community in general.

Some regulations are different across zones in Burnaby. For example, allowances for the height and size of the laneway home may differ depending on the zone in which the property is located.

## Find Your Zone

1. Visit [gis.burnaby.ca](https://gis.burnaby.ca) to find your Zone on BurnabyMap.
2. The link will take you to a Terms of Use agreement. If you agree to the Terms of Use, a map will open.
3. Click the search icon  at the top of the page to enter your street address. Once your property has been found, look at the tab in the right portion of the screen.
4. Find your zone under “Zoning” and you can open the hyperlink to find your zone specific regulations.

Example: **Zoning**  
**R4**



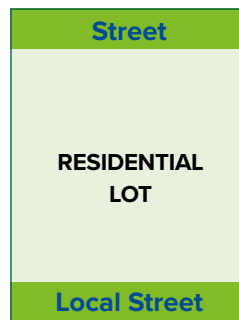
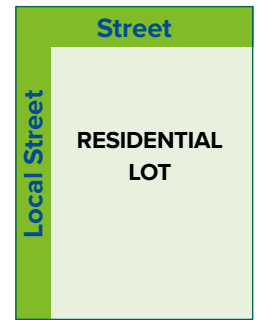
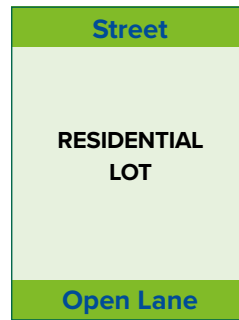
**Above: BurnabyMap** - This is the homescreen of the BurnabyMap interface.

# REGULATIONS & DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

## LOT ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to add a laneway home, a property must meet the following criteria:

- It must be in a zone that allows single-family homes. These zones are the R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R9, R10, R11, R12, and RM6 Districts.
- It must have a single-family home on it. The single-family home may also contain a secondary suite.
- It must have an open lane or local street access to the rear yard.
- Lots close to streams may be subject to additional restrictions and assessments for feasibility.
- Lots with access from two streets (but no lane) will require Engineering Department approval. Examples of these types of lots are corner lots and double-fronted lots.



**Above: Examples of Eligible Lots** – Access is required to add a laneway home.



*Image Credit: Smallworks*



*Image Credit: Lanefab*



*Image Credit: Smallworks*



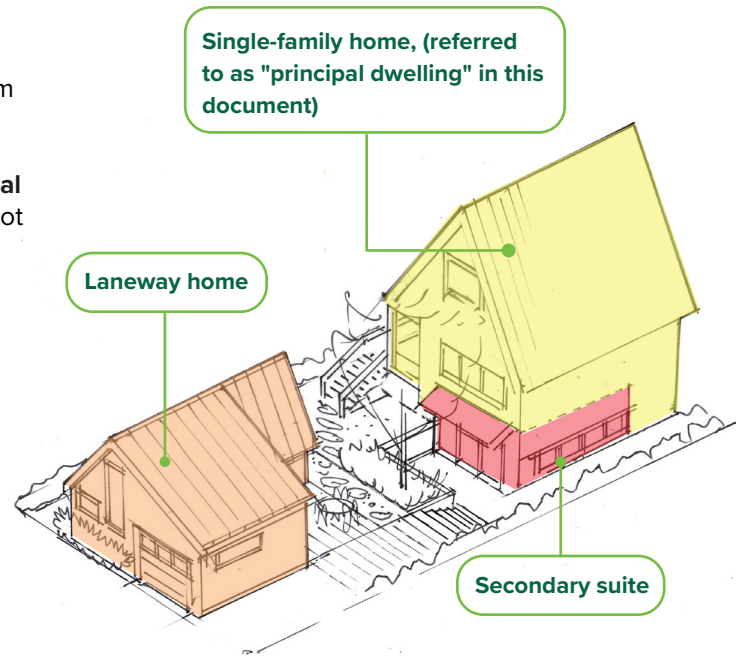
## OWNERSHIP

### A laneway home must remain under a single title.

This means that a laneway home cannot be stratified or otherwise subdivided, and cannot be sold separately from the main home.

**A laneway home may be rented out as a long term rental unit.** Short term rentals that are fewer than 30 days are not permitted.

**The owner is not required to live on the property.** If the owner lives off-site, an annual house rental business license will be required.



**Above: Units Per Lot**

## UNITS PER LOT

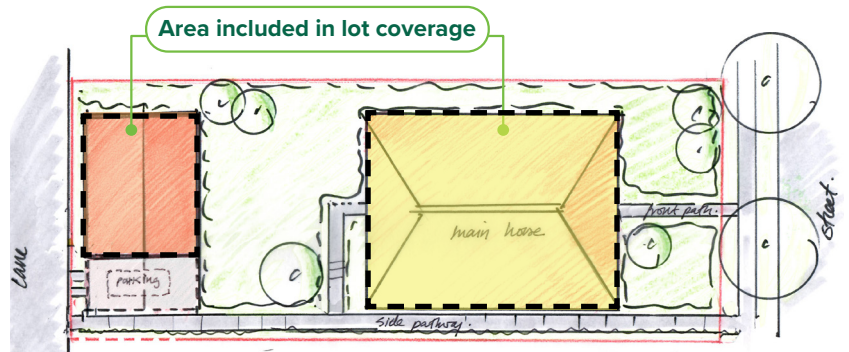
Eligible lots may have up to three units:

- A single-family home;
- A secondary suite in the single family home; and
- A laneway home.

## LOT COVERAGE

**The maximum lot coverage for a property with a laneway home is 45%.** This includes the footprints of all structures including both the laneway home and the main residence.

**The maximum impervious surfaces for a property with a laneway home is 70%.** In addition to the areas included in lot coverage, these include surfaces such as sidewalks, driveways, and parking areas that are constructed with concrete or asphalt. Impervious surfaces prevent the infiltration of water into the soil, and contribute to increased flooding, erosion, and pollution of waterways.



**Above: Maximum Lot Coverage** - The combined building footprints of the principal dwelling and laneway house cover no more than 45% of the lot's total area.

# LOT LAYOUT

## Laneway homes must be located in the rear yard.

On double-fronted lots, where there is no rear yard, a laneway home should be located behind the principal dwelling.

Laneway homes must have minimum setbacks from the side and rear property lines, as well as from the main home, detached garage, and other accessory buildings. A setback refers to the required minimum distance between a building and a property line. Required setbacks for laneway homes are as follows:

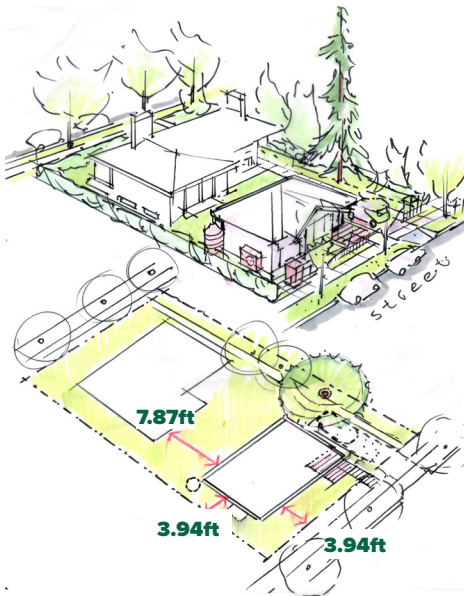
- To lane: 1.2 metres (3.94 feet)
- To side property line: 1.2 metres (3.94 feet)
- To principal dwelling and other accessory structures: 2.4 metres (7.87 feet)

## Other considerations:

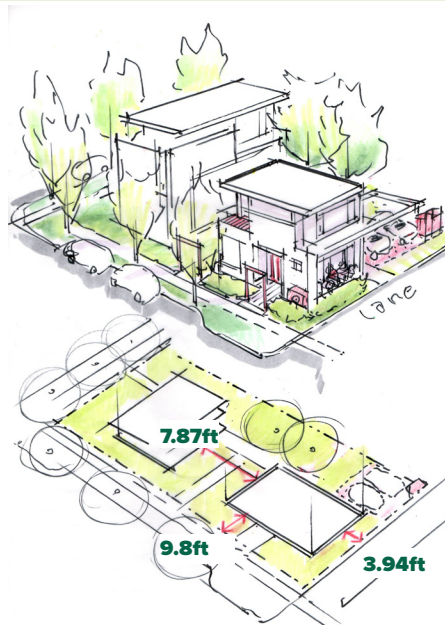
- For laneway homes on **corner lots**:
  - The rear yard is the area furthest from the front property line. The front property line is usually narrower than the side property lines.
  - The minimum side yard setback from the flanking street for the laneway home is the same as that of the principal dwelling.
- If a property is near an intersection of a street and lane, **clear sightlines** must be maintained for safety reasons. For more information visit [Burnaby Zoning Bylaw Section 6.13](#)
- If a laneway home is **not sprinklered**, it must be located within 45 metres (148 feet) of a lot line abutting a road.
- Properties must have a **parking space** (refer to [pg. 11](#)) and a **path** connecting the front street to the laneway home (refer to [pg. 14](#)). It is also recommended that they have a **private outdoor space** (refer to [pg. 11](#)) and an **area dedicated for garbage storage** (refer to [pg. 11](#)).

**Below: Example Lot Configurations** - The lot configurations illustrated below meet draft program requirements for lot layout.

Double-fronted Lot with Two Streets



Corner Lot with Rear Lane (R12 zone)



Lot with Fronting Street & Rear Lane



# HEIGHT

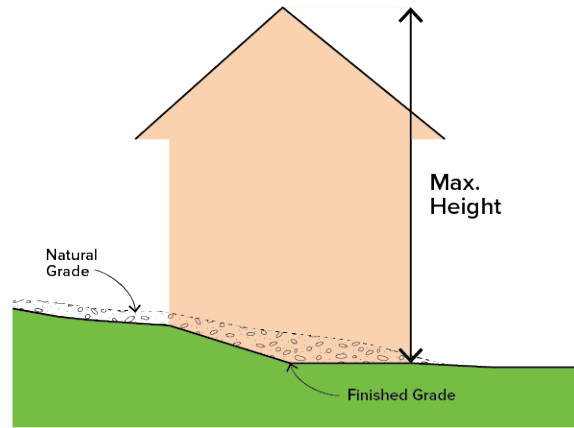
**The maximum height for a laneway home is two storeys.** Depending on the zone (see Table 1 below), it can be up to 7.6 metres (25 feet) high if it has a sloping roof, or up to 6.7 metres (22 feet) high for a flat roof. A basement in a laneway home counts as one storey. The building form of a laneway home could be:

- 1 storey
- 1 storey with basement
- 1.5 storey
- 2 storey (including 1 storey over a garage)

**Cellars and crawl spaces are not permitted in laneway homes.**

**Other considerations:**

- The height of the laneway home is measured from the lowest point on the perimeter of the laneway home. The lowest point is the lower of the natural grade or finished grade.
- The height of the laneway home cannot exceed the maximum height permitted for the main residence.



**Above: Measuring height** - The height of the laneway home is measured from the lowest point on the perimeter of the laneway home. The lowest point is the lower of the natural grade or finished grade.

**TABLE 1: MAXIMUM HEIGHT OF LANEWAY HOMES**

Zoning District	Max height of laneway home (sloping roof)	Max height of laneway home (flat roof)	Additional height for energy efficient laneway homes*	Max height of principal dwelling (sloping roof)	Max height of principal dwelling (flat roof)
R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R12, RM6	7.6 m (24.9 ft)	6.7 m (22 ft)	0.5 m (1.64 ft)	9 m (29.5 ft)	7.4 m (24.3 ft)
R10	7.6 m (24.9 ft)	5.8 m (19 ft)	0	7.6 m (24.9 ft)	5.8 m (19 ft)
R11 (principal dwelling 3,500 sq. ft.+)	6.1 m (20 ft)	6.1 m (20 ft)	0	6.1 m (20 ft)	6.1 m (20 ft)
R11 (principal dwelling under 3,500 sq. ft.)	7.62 m (25 ft)	6.7 m (22 ft)	0	7.6 m (25 ft)	6.7 m (22 ft)

\*refer to [pg. 12](#) for more regulations on the energy efficiency of laneway homes.



# SIZE

The minimum floor area of a laneway home is **32.52 m<sup>2</sup> (350 sq. ft.)**.

The maximum floor area is up to **20% of the lot area, but no larger than 140 m<sup>2</sup> (1507 sq. ft.)**.

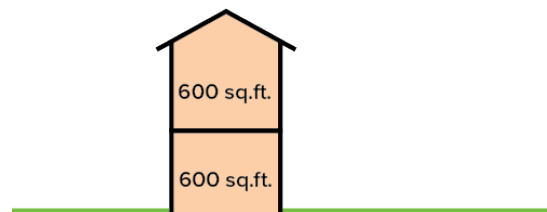
Floor area calculations for laneway homes **include** the floor areas of:

- Garages attached to the laneway home

Floor area calculations for laneway homes **do not include** the floor areas of:

- The main residence
- Carports attached to the laneway home
- Any accessory buildings that are not attached to the laneway home. Examples include garages, sheds, workshops, and bike sheds/lockers

For more information on floor area calculations, visit [Burnaby Zoning Bylaw Sections 6.20 and 6.21](#).



*Example One: Maximum floor area of laneway home on a 6,000 sq.ft. lot split between two equally-sized levels.*



*Example Two: Maximum floor area of a laneway home on a 6,000 sq.ft. on one level.*

### **Above: Maximum Floor Area**

**TABLE 2: MAXIMUM SIZE OF LANEWAY HOMES ON TYPICAL LOTS**

Lot Area	20% of Lot Area	Maximum Laneway Home Size
9.1 m (30 ft) wide x 33.5 m (110 ft) long = 306.6 m <sup>2</sup> (3,300 sq. ft.)	306.6 x 20% = 61 m <sup>2</sup> 3,300 x 20% = 660 sq. ft.	61 m <sup>2</sup> (660 sq. ft.)
14.2 m (50 ft) wide x 36.6 m (120 ft) long = 557.4 m <sup>2</sup> (6,000 sq. ft.)	557.4 x 20% = 111 m <sup>2</sup> 6,000 x 20% = 1200 sq. ft.	111 m <sup>2</sup> (1,200 sq. ft.)
18.3 m (60 ft) wide x 36.6 m (120 ft) long = 668.9m <sup>2</sup> (7,200 sq. ft.)	668.9 x 20% = 134 m <sup>2</sup> 7,200 x 20% = 1440 sq. ft.	134 m <sup>2</sup> (1,440 sq. ft.)
24.4 m (80 ft) wide x 36.6 m (120 ft) long = 891.9m <sup>2</sup> (9,600 sq. ft.)	891.9 x 20% = 140 m <sup>2</sup> 9,600 x 20% = 1,920 sq. ft.	140 m <sup>2</sup> (1,507 sq. ft.)

# BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

## Design Recommendations:

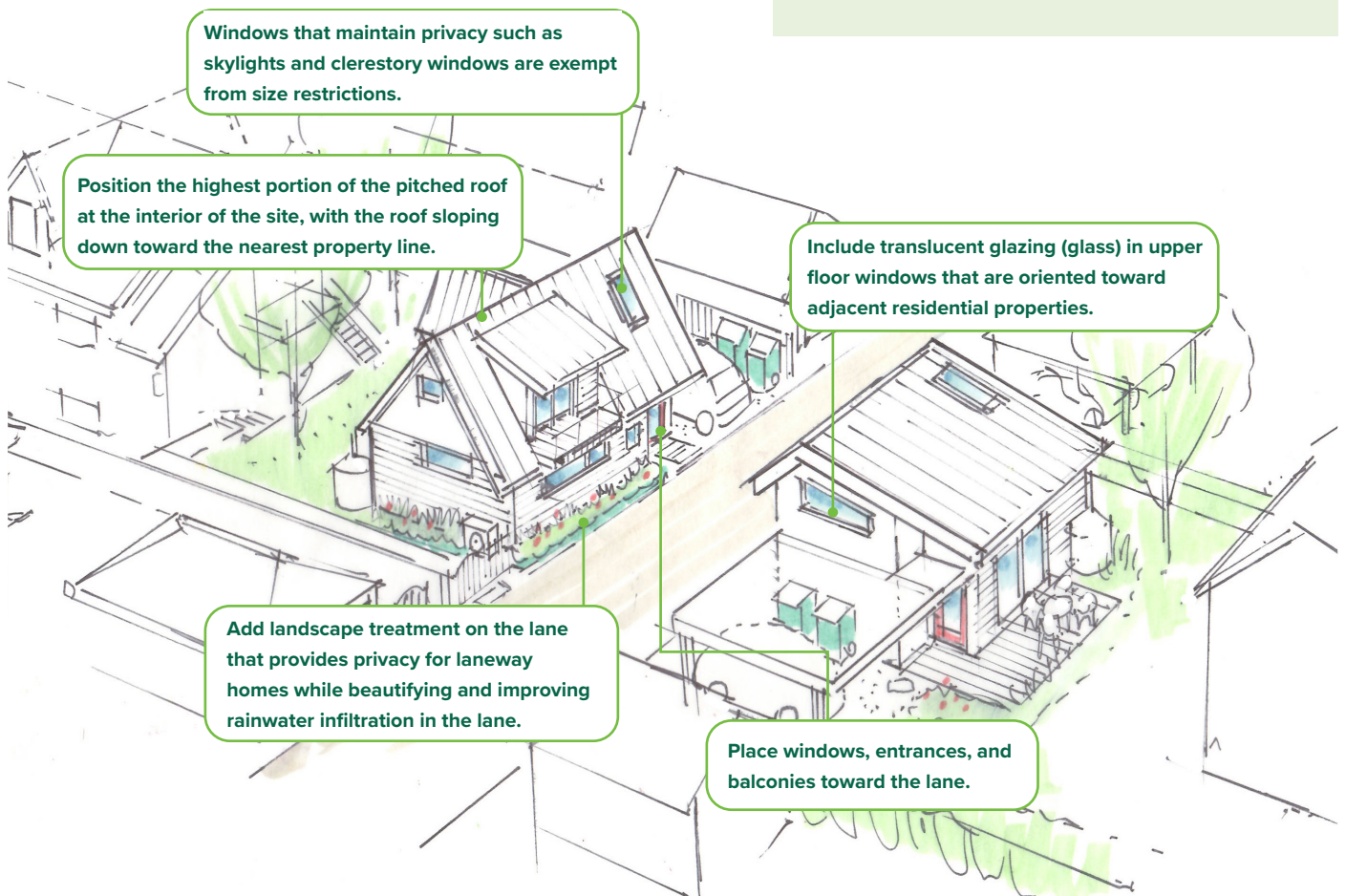
- Place windows, entrances, and balconies toward the lane
- Include translucent glazing (glass) in upper floor windows that are oriented toward adjacent residential properties.
- Include windows that maintain privacy, such as skylights and clerestory windows, which are exempt from size restrictions.
- Include down-lit features for lights higher than 2.4 metres (8 feet)
- Position the highest portion of the pitched roof at the interior of the site, with the roof sloping down toward the nearest property line
- Add landscape treatment on the lane that provides privacy for laneway homes while beautifying and improving rainwater infiltration in the lane.

## Design for Neighbourliness

Being a good neighbour means considering the broader context of the property. The placement and design of the laneway home should be done in a way that: supports privacy; optimizes sunlit areas for both the laneway home and neighbouring properties; reduces light pollution; and creates a positive relationship with the lane.

Many of the regulations in other sections of this Guide were developed in support of being a good neighbour. These design recommendations are included as further considerations to support neighbourliness through design.

Consider discussing your building plans with your neighbours to see if there are other ways you can make your laneway home fit well into the neighbourhood.



# PARKING

One parking space is required on the property, and can be used by the laneway home, house, or suite.

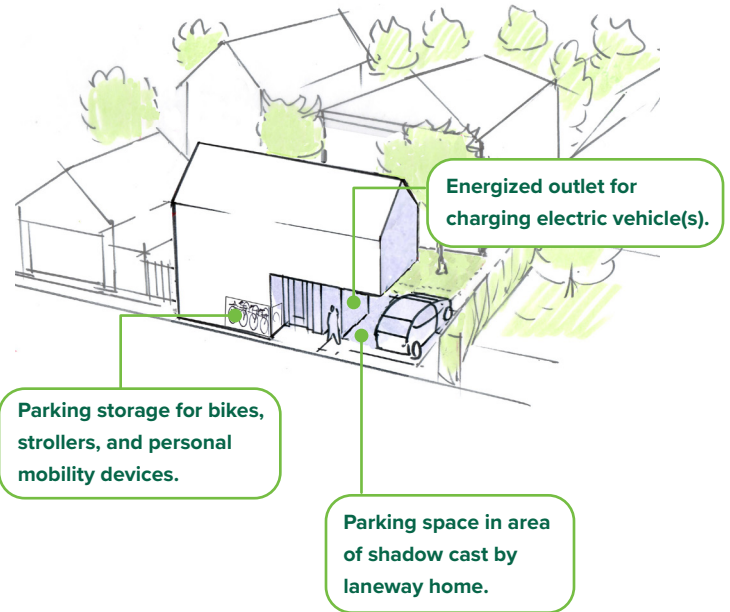
- The required parking space must be uncovered or in a carport, and does not include an existing garage.
- Parking must be accessed from a lane. If there is no lane, subject to approval of the Directory of Engineering, it may be accessed from the side street on a corner lot or the rear street on a through lot.
- Review the Zoning Bylaw regulations in [Section 800.3.1](#).

The parking space may be located within the side yard setback, as long as it allows for sightlines at intersections as per Zoning Bylaw regulations [Section 6.12](#).

The parking area must include an energized outlet capable of providing Level 2 charging for an electric vehicle.

### Design Recommendations:

- **Parking/storage for bikes, strollers, and personal mobility devices is strongly encouraged**, and can be provided in detached accessory buildings, attached “bikeports,” or bike lockers.
- **Additional parking spaces may be provided on the property but are not required.** These may be uncovered, in a carport, or in a garage.
- **Where possible, the laneway home should be situated where it creates the least amount of shadowing on neighbouring open spaces.** Parking spaces can be situated in areas where the laneway home casts a shadow.

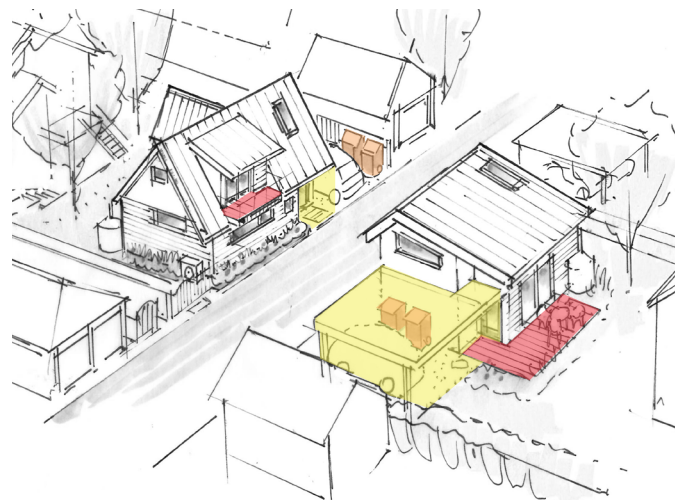


**Above: Example parking layout** - Required parking dimensions: Length: 5.5m (18.0 ft), Width 3.4m (11.2 ft), Height of 2.3m (7.6 ft)

# OUTDOOR SPACE

### Design Recommendations:

- **A minimum of 4m<sup>2</sup> (43 sq. ft) of private outdoor space for the laneway home is encouraged.** Examples include yard space, patios, decks, or balconies.
- **Covered entrances are encouraged** in order to offer protection from adverse weather.
- **A dedicated outdoor area in the rear yard for garbage and recycling bins should be provided.** This area should be located away from bedroom windows. It could be separate or shared with the other residences on the property.



**Above: Variety of Outdoor Spaces** - Private outdoor space (pink), covered entrances (yellow), and dedicated area for garbage and recycling (orange).



# ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Laneway homes must meet BC Energy Step Code Level 3.

Laneway homes may be an additional 0.5 metres (1.6 feet) in height if they meet or exceed BC Energy Step Code Level 5 and/or BC Zero Carbon Step Code EL-4.



## BC Energy Step Code

The BC Energy Step Code is a performance-based Provincial standard that provides an incremental and consistent approach to achieving more energy-efficient buildings. It establishes measurable requirements for energy efficiency in new construction. It supports the City of Burnaby's Climate Action Framework.

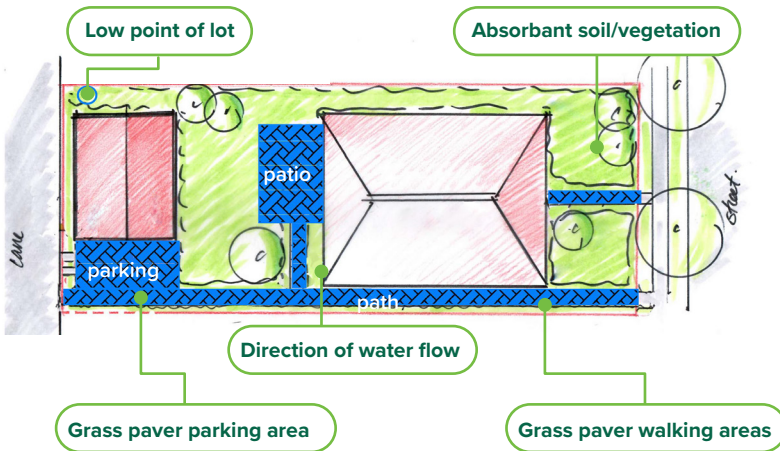
Step 3 requirements, such as making homes more airtight, result in 20% greater energy efficiency. Learn more here: [Energy Step Code](#).

# RAINWATER MANAGEMENT

While a maximum of 70% of the lot may be impermeable (refer to [pg. 7](#)), this percentage can be further reduced through measures shown in the illustrations to the right. Permeable surfaces include green roofs, rain gardens, grass paver parking areas, and infiltration trenches.

## The Value of Permeable Surfaces

The purpose of decreasing impermeable surfaces (or increasing permeable surfaces) is to increase the amount of rainwater that infiltrates the soil. This infiltration replenishes groundwater, reduces run-off, lowers localized flood risk, and filters out many pollutants and sediments from the rainwater before it arrives in downstream waters. Further best practices can be found here: [Homeowner's Guide to Stormwater Management, Metro Vancouver](#).



**Left: Permeable Surfaces** - The diagram visualizes the relationship between permeable green spaces that allow for rainwater infiltration and impermeable surfaces, such as standard roofs and streets.

# PLANT SELECTION

## Design Recommendations:

- **Living or green walls – which are walls designed to support climbing plants – should be incorporated into laneway homes wherever possible**, particularly along the exterior walls abutting the lane.
- **Non-invasive, eco-friendly plants should be selected wherever possible to create and maintain a sustainable garden, lawn space, or balcony containers.** The following resources provide recommendations for garden designs and plants that are unique to the climatic conditions in the Lower Mainland: [Grow Green Guide \(Metro Vancouver\)](#) and [Gardening with Native Plants in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley](#).

## Benefits of Living or Green Walls

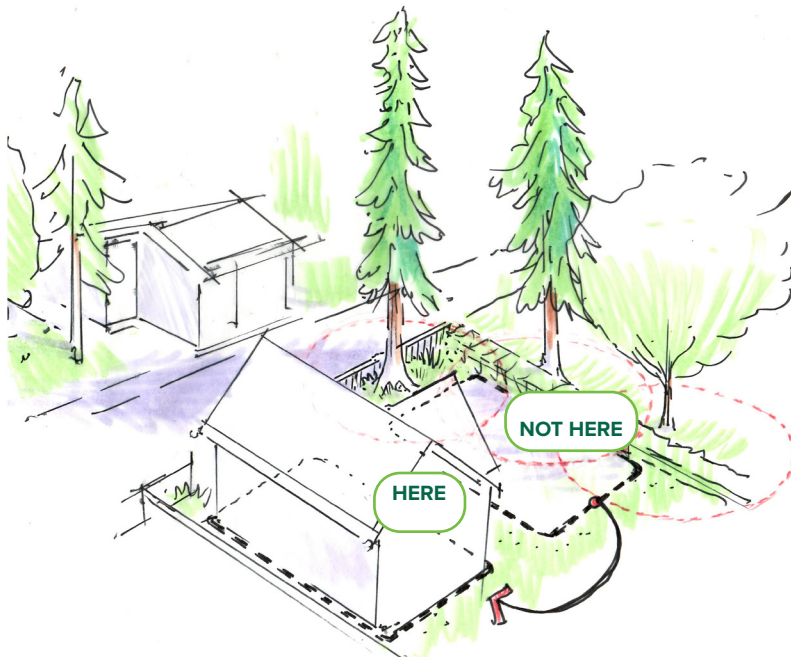
Living or green walls act as extra insulation with a layer of air between the plants and the wall. They reduce noise levels by reflecting, refracting and absorbing acoustic energy. They also act as insulation helping to regulate a building's temperature, keeping it warmer in winter and cooler in summer.

# TREE PROTECTION

Burnaby's Tree Bylaw applies to development on private property and includes requirements for replacement tree planting, if removal of a significant tree is required for development. The Tree Bylaw is currently under review to better protect mature trees. More information can be found here: [Burnaby Tree ByLaw FAQs](#).

## Design Recommendations:

- **Laneway homes should be planned and designed to retain existing trees where possible and prioritize opportunities to plant new trees.**



## What Are Non-invasive, Eco-friendly Plants?

Non-invasive, eco-friendly plants thrive in the local climate without needing chemicals or lots of water. They help conserve water, absorb rainwater, control invasive species, and increase biodiversity.

## Why Do We Strive to Protect Trees?

Trees offer a diverse range of valuable functions, including shading, canopy cover, soil stability, weather protection, and more. Trees and shrubs improve soil and water conservation, store carbon, moderate local climate by providing shade, regulate temperature extremes, increase wildlife habitat, and improve the land's capacity to adapt to climate change.

## ACCESS AND ADDRESSING

A minimum 0.9 metre (3 feet) wide pathway is required from the street to the laneway home. This is required for fire access as well as pedestrian access.

An apartment-style address will be added to the main address to identify laneway homes (e.g. L1 – 1234 Main Street).

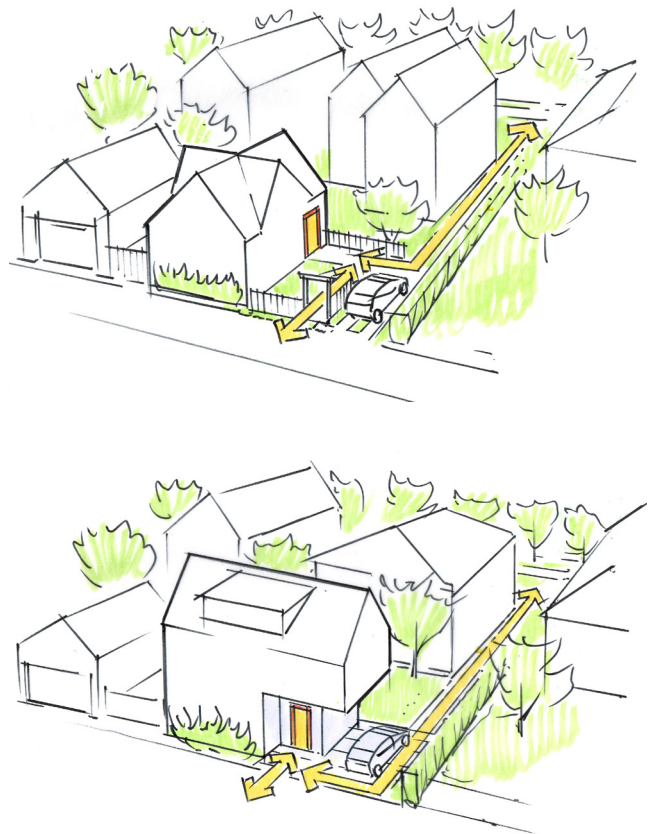
### *Design Recommendations:*

- Laneway homes should also be visitable by people who have difficulty climbing up and down steps, or who use wheelchairs or walkers. Accessibility considerations include:
  - building single-storey rather than multi-story homes; and,
  - providing at-grade, no-step entrances.
- Universal design is encouraged.

### **What is Universal Design?**

Universal Design can be applied to the design and construction of a home so that it can be adapted easily and cost-effectively to keep pace with changing accessibility needs without the need for costly upgrades or renovations. A home that is universally designed may also be more marketable. For more information review the [SAFERhome Standards](#).

**Below: Access** - Laneway homes may be accessed by foot from either the lane, or flanking street via the sideyard.





# SERVICING AND UTILITIES

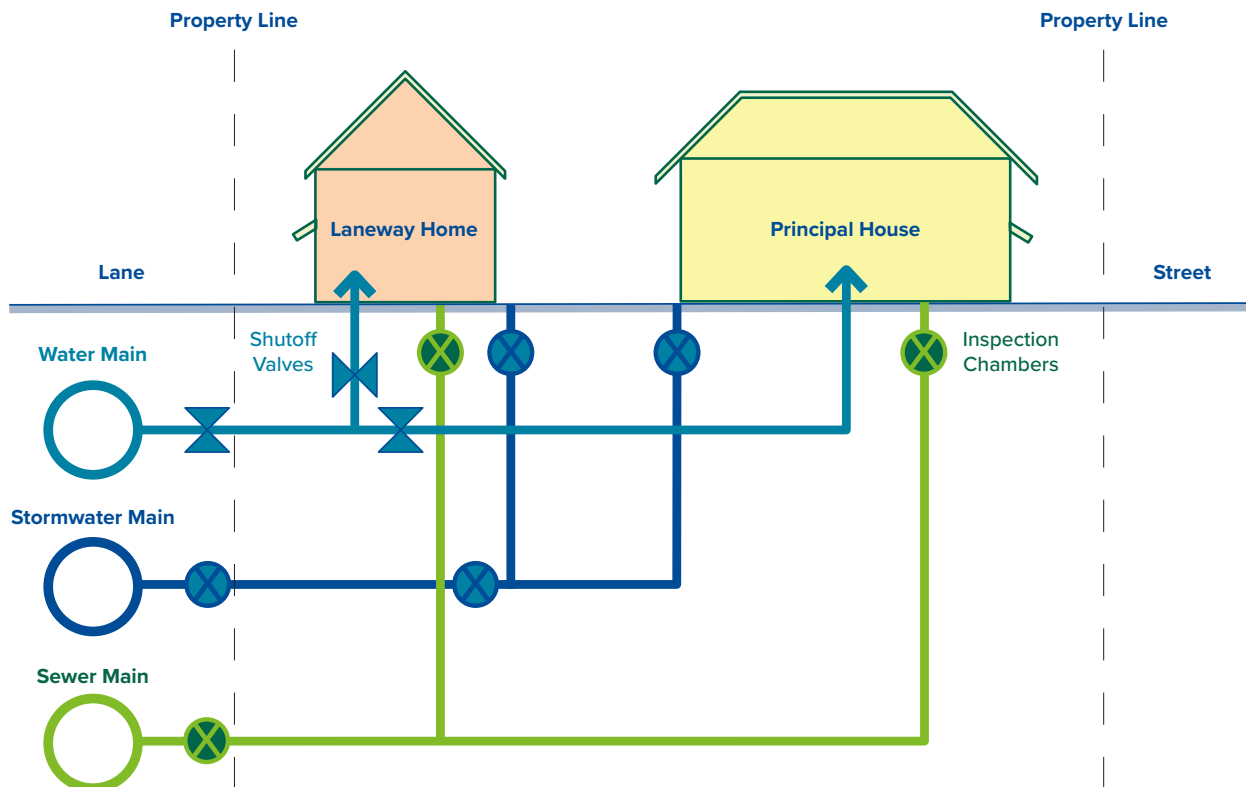
Separate sewer, water, and power services will be required for the laneway home. An annual supplementary utility fee will be charged for laneway homes. Further information can be found here: [Residential Utility Fees](#).

Electrical requirements, such as the location of proposed electrical meter and servicing connections, will require careful consideration. Where possible, the meter should be located out of sight, beside the laneway home rather than at the lane. BC Hydro has minimum clearance requirements and should be consulted prior to planning and designing a laneway home.

A second garbage container is not required, however owners may upsize to a 360 litre container. If 360 litres is not sufficient, the owner may request one additional 120 litre container. Standard residential garbage rates will apply, based on the size of the container. Garbage disposal fees can be found here: [Residential Utility Fees](#).

## Design Recommendations:

- Consider siting requirements for optional electrical needs such as heat pumps or electric vehicle charging stations.



**Above: Servicing** - How laneways will be serviced.

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# GETTING STARTED

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## Building Permit

To build a laneway home in Burnaby, you will need a building permit. A building permit provides assurance that the building complies with life safety, health, and zoning requirements of the Province and City. The building permit process includes the following steps:

- 1** **Get started.** Refer to: [Laneway Homes](#) for informational brochures and guides on how to get started. Also refer to: [Development, Permits & Construction](#) for general building information and other applications.
- 2** **Apply for Engineering preapplication approval.** Staff will review your property and provide direction on what is needed for the Building Permit Application.
- 3** **Submit a complete building permit application.** Staff will assess the application prior to intake. You may be asked to provide additional information at this time.
- 4** **Plan review.** Staff will review the submitted plans for compliance with municipal and provincial regulations. You may be asked to provide additional information at this time or submit revised documentation.
- 5** **Receive your Building Permit.** When the application is approved, you will then receive a building permit to start construction.
- 6** **Start construction.** Construction must start within 180 days of receiving a building permit. Any revisions to the plans at this stage will require a revision to be submitted and a revision fee will be charged.
- 7** **Schedule inspections.** You will receive a detailed list of the inspections that are required. You will need to schedule these inspections at the work progresses.
- 8** **Certificate of occupancy.** When the final inspection has been completed, you will receive a Certificate of Occupancy and can move in!

## Variations

If you are unable to meet all of the zoning regulations due to hardship and require minor changes to the laneway home development, you may be able to apply for a variance. Potentially permitted variations include encroachments into required setbacks, heights, number of storeys, and building depth. Variations on density are not permitted.

## Heritage

The City of Burnaby's heritage program offers incentives for owners of heritage houses to preserve and retain older character homes in the City.

For more information about opportunities available for your property, please contact [heritage@burnaby.ca](mailto:heritage@burnaby.ca) or 604-294-7435.

## Preapproved Plans

The City is setting up a pre-approved plan program to assist with the development process. This will involve providing access to building plans that demonstrate best design practices and comply with BC Building Code and City of Burnaby regulations. Pre-approved plans will still need to be reviewed for site-specific compliance as part of the building permit process. More information on this program will be provided on the Housing Choices website as soon as it is available.

**CITY OF BURNABY**  
PLANNING AND  
DEVELOPMENT

**Phone**

Building Permits:  
(604) 294-7986

Other Enquiries:  
(604) 294-7400

**Email**

housingchoices@burnaby.ca

**Website**

[https://www.burnaby.ca/our-city/  
programs-and-policies/housing/  
laneway-homes](https://www.burnaby.ca/our-city/programs-and-policies/housing/laneway-homes)