



# ACTIVE DESIGN GUIDELINES

**In Support of Daily Physical Fitness  
& Social Interaction in Buildings**

Last Updated on September 30, 2015

**“Encourage active, healthy lifestyles and the opportunity for more social connections through planning and active design principles that encourage physical fitness and contribute to enhanced walkability and active streets, sidewalks, and public spaces.”**

CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER  
2014 OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN  
LAND USE OBJECTIVE 1.3.10

# Content

INTRODUCTION Page 4  
CHECKLIST Page 13

**2 SECONDARY STAIRS**  
(Page 7)

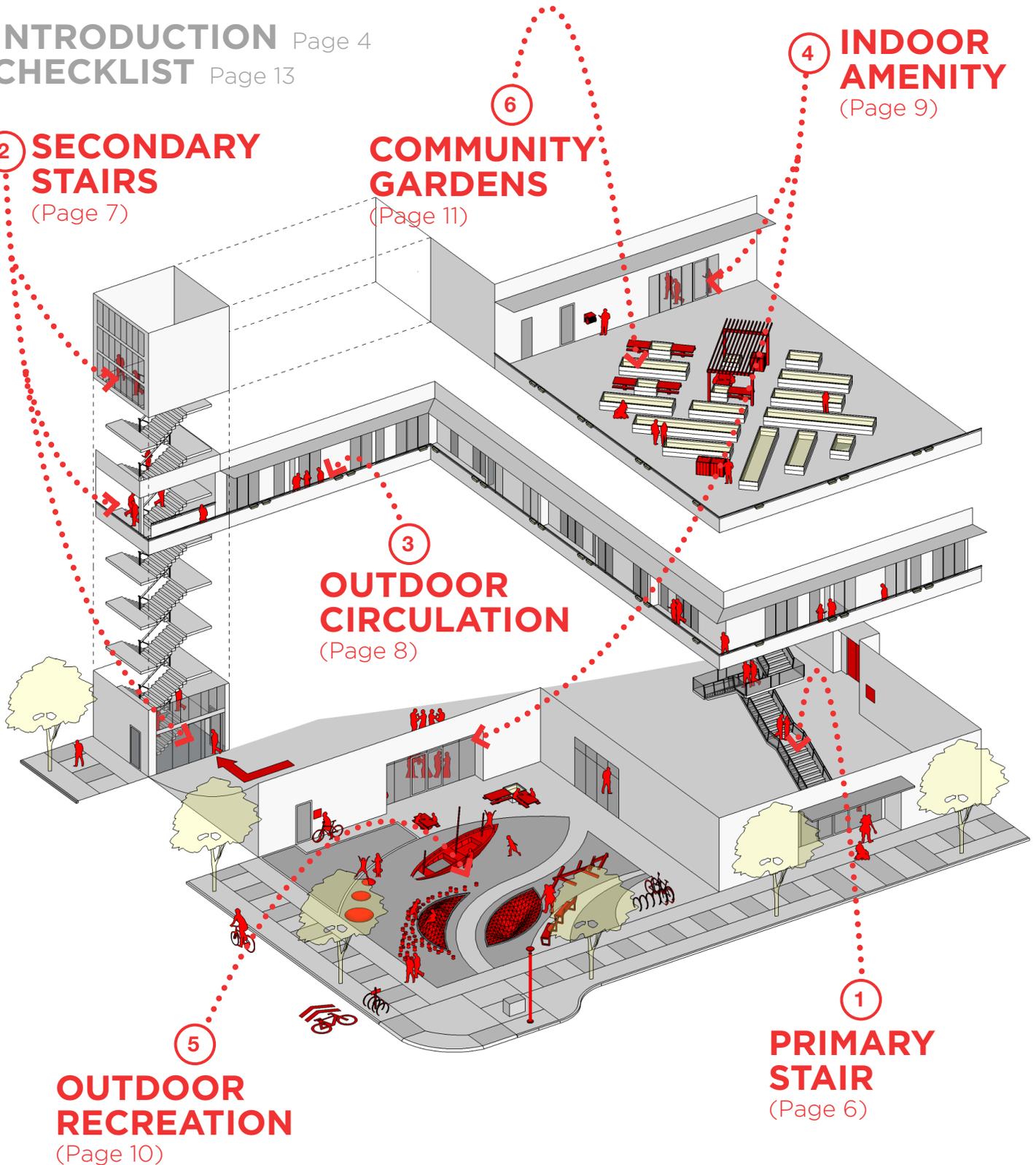
**6 COMMUNITY GARDENS**  
(Page 11)

**4 INDOOR AMENITY**  
(Page 9)

**3 OUTDOOR CIRCULATION**  
(Page 8)

**5 OUTDOOR RECREATION**  
(Page 10)

**1 PRIMARY STAIR**  
(Page 6)



# Introduction

## What is Active Design?

Active Design is an approach to the development of buildings that uses architecture and urban planning to make daily physical fitness more inviting and to encourage social interaction in buildings.

## How does Active Design impact me?

The built environment exerts powerful influences on our health and well-being. As a result, the City has made significant effort to promote a complete, compact and connected community to increase opportunities for active transportation (e.g. walking and cycling), reduce trip times between destinations (e.g. compatible land uses that incorporate amenities, work and home in close proximity) and provide numerous recreational opportunities.

Research has also shown that building design - not just community design - has a significant influence on our physical health and well-being. This is not surprising as we spend the majority of our time indoors. Changes to building design can influence how we engage with our neighbours and the availability of physical fitness at work, school, home and during leisure time. These opportunities can improve the health and well being of residents, create stronger community bonds, and decrease long-term health care costs.

Recognizing that the majority of City residents live in higher-density buildings and neighbourhoods and that physical fitness and social interaction are key components of healthy lifestyles, the City encourages and enables healthy fitness through a variety of measures.

## Interested in learning more?

### Center for Active Design

<http://centerforactivedesign.org/>

### City of North Vancouver - Official Community Plan

<http://www.cnv.org/Your-Government/Official-Community-Plan>

### Vancouver Foundation - Connections and Engagement

<https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/our-work/initiatives/connections-and-engagement>

### Vancouver Coastal Health - Improving the environments in which we live

<http://www.vch.ca/your-health/population-health/built-environment/>

### Provincial Health Authority - Healthy Built Environment Toolkit

[http://www.phsa.ca/Documents/linkagestoolkitrevisedoct16\\_2014\\_full1.pdf](http://www.phsa.ca/Documents/linkagestoolkitrevisedoct16_2014_full1.pdf)

### City of North Vancouver - Bicycle Master Plan

<http://www.cnv.org/City-Services/Streets-and-Transportation/Cycling/Bicycle-Master-Plan>

### City of North Vancouver - Child, Youth + Family Friendly Strategy

[http://www.cnv.org/~/\\_media/F7215B6638CD46148D9BF6CBAD1D83CE.pdf](http://www.cnv.org/~/_media/F7215B6638CD46148D9BF6CBAD1D83CE.pdf)

## Applicability

The Active Design Guidelines are used in the review of all rezoning applications for new developments with greater than 10 residential units and/or greater than 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> of commercial, industrial or institutional floor area and are intended to be consulted early in the design development process. Not all elements of the guidelines will be applicable to all projects. The Active Design Guidelines were prepared in coordination with the North Vancouver Recreation and Culture Commission.

Current Building Code and Zoning regulations indirectly result in building designs that can discourage the use of stairs and social interaction. These Guidelines include Architectural and Building Code suggestions to better encourage physical fitness and social interaction in new developments.

## Considerations

### Universal Access

- **The City's Active Design Guidelines are to be used in concert with the Adaptable Design Guidelines. Special attention should be made to maintain a highly accessible means of travel to/from and within the building for people with mobility limitations.**

### Sustainability

- **The City's Active Design Guidelines are to be used in concert with the Sustainable Development Guidelines which are centred around the six topic areas of the Sustainable City Framework.**
- **Find synergies between Active Design elements and passive building design to ensure a more comfortable and durable building (e.g. thermally broken balconies/corridors, solar shading, and natural ventilation), when possible.**

### Cost

- **Cost will determine the feasibility of design elements. Design teams should work collaboratively towards common project goals to optimize the Active Design elements in relation to the needs of existing and future residents.**

### Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

- **Employing CPTED principles, such as views onto common areas can limit the potential occurrence of undesirable activities. Furthermore, locating amenity areas centrally and nearby each other will increase the use and safety of the space.**

### Compatibility

- **Consider existing neighbourhood resources, such as adjacent parks and recreation opportunities, to ensure amenities are in alignment with neighbourhood needs.**

# Primary Stairs

**Encourage the everyday use of stairs at the building's primary point of entry/exit.**

Stair use is a simple method to incorporate physical activity into our daily routines. The location, design and visibility of the stairway influence whether people will naturally take the stairs and engage in physical activity or not. The Primary Stairs should be the most visible and inviting means of vertical travel while still maintaining elevator access for people with mobility limitations.

## Guiding Principles

- Provide a clear visual path into and out of the stairs by leaving the stairs open to two or more floors;
- Locate the stairs in a prominent location near the building's main entrance;
- Visually emphasize the stairs while maintaining elevator access for those with mobility limitations;
- Provide stairs that have daylight and views to/from common areas;
- Select high-quality, inviting, and visually appealing materials and finishes;
- Provide visible signage to encourage and direct stair use at the elevators; and,
- Design stair widths that can accommodate groups traveling in two directions.



### City of North Vancouver Policy

To incentivize and better allow for active stairs, the City allows a Gross Floor Area exclusion for:

*"(17) Stairways and landings where:*

*(a) the staircase is visible from the principal point of entry and no turns or obstacles prevent visibility of, or accessibility to, the qualifying staircase;*

*(b) signage is located at elevators and escalators to encourage stair use;*

*(c) the staircase is open to surrounding floor area or includes transparent glazing at each floor level of at least 0.93 square meters (10 square feet);"*

### British Columbia Building Code

Fire separations are typically required between exits and adjacent floor areas. However, an alternative solution approach to Code compliance may permit windows and other openings in these separations.

The BCBC permits an exit to discharge through an entry lobby in certain circumstances. Be mindful of these limitations.

The BCBC includes provisions for self-closing or hold-open devices on exit doors in certain circumstances.

# Secondary Stairs

**Encourage the everyday use of stairs at the building's secondary entries/exits.**

Stairs have increasingly been moved to uninviting parts of the building and designated as emergency-use only. This is especially true for additional stairs near the building perimeter required for fire-exiting. These Secondary Stairs can provide an additional alternative to the elevator when made inviting and safe to residents. Beyond the immediate benefits of increased physical activity, residents will also become more familiar with emergency exiting options.

## Guiding Principles

- **Provide a clear visual path into and out of the stairs by:**
  - Leaving the stairs open to the environment while still providing overhead rain protection;
  - Enclosing the stairs within a fire-rated glass enclosure with interior views;
  - Enclosing the stairs within a fire-rated glass enclosure with exterior views;
  - Eliminating the locks between the stairs and surrounding floor area (e.g. hold-open devices);
- **Provide stairs that have daylight and views to/from common areas;**
- **Select high-quality, inviting, and visually appealing materials and finishes; and,**
- **Provide visible signage to encourage and direct stair use at the elevators.**



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*“(17) Stairways and landings where:*

- (a) the staircase is visible from the principal point of entry and no turns or obstacles prevent visibility of, or accessibility to, the qualifying staircase;*
- (b) signage is located at elevators and escalators to encourage stair use;*
- (c) the staircase is open to surrounding floor area or includes transparent glazing at each floor level of at least 0.93 square meters (10 square feet);”*

### British Columbia Building Code

Fire separations are typically required between exits and adjacent floor areas. However, an alternative solution approach to Code compliance may permit windows and other openings in these separations.

Floor-to-floor fire separations must be maintained.

The BCBC includes provisions for self-closing or hold-open devices on exit doors in certain circumstances.

# Outdoor Circulation

**Encourage the use of Outdoor Circulation as a place to meet neighbours naturally.**

External Corridors can extend the outdoor opportunities available to building residents. These areas can be used as a place for neighbours to meet naturally, look out onto other common areas, and aid in passive design goals (e.g. mitigate solar gain and facilitate natural ventilation).

## Guiding Principles

- Provide a clear visual path into and out of the outdoor corridor by leaving the corridor open to the environment while still providing overhead rain protection;
- Providing the corridor with daylight and views to/from indoor and outdoor common areas;
- Select high-quality, inviting, and visually appealing materials and finishes;
- Visually highlight and articulate the dwelling entrances; and,
- Provide places to pause, look onto outdoor amenity areas and meet neighbours naturally.



### City of North Vancouver Policy

To provide design flexibility and encourage external corridors, the City allows for a Gross Floor Area exclusion for:

*“(10) Open Appendages, up to a maximum of 8% of Gross Floor Area, including:*

*(a) balconies, Porches, sun decks;*

*(b) corridors, stairways, and landings that provide required access to habitable rooms, and open onto an interior courtyard;*

“Open Appendage” means an exterior space which is at least 25% unenclosed based on the total of all side and overhead planes as illustrated in Figure 2-2 of the Zoning Bylaw.

### British Columbia Building Code

Exterior exit passageways are defined in the BCBC as a way to enhance life safety due to openness of exit corridors. Making corridors open to the environment may simplify Code compliance.

Fire separations may be required between common areas and corridors. However, an alternative solution approach to Code compliance may permit windows and other openings in these separations.

# Indoor Amenity

**Provide an indoor area that can support socializing, dining, and/or recreation.**

A common room can offer residents a space for social gatherings and indoor physical fitness. The room can be a meeting place for residents and enable a sense of community within a building.

## Guiding Principles

- **Provide an indoor amenity area that is held in common ownership with the following:**
  - Provide at a minimum, the lesser of 1.4 sqm (15 sqft) per unit or 2% of Gross Floor Area;
  - A reduction to the minimum area required may be considered when an adjacent outdoor amenity is provided but at no time should the indoor amenity room size be less than 37 sqm (400 sqft);
  - Provide a universally accessible washroom, small kitchenette, and storage room nearby.
- **Locate the area in a central, above grade location with universal access;**
- **Locate the amenity room nearby other common areas with views to/from these areas;**
- **Provide sufficient sound proofing between the area and adjacent residential units;**
- **Indicate how the amenity room is to be used (space planning); and,**
- **Seek organizations that can help program / advance the maximum use of amenity rooms.**



### City of North Vancouver Policy & Useful Links

Amenity areas are excluded from floor area calculations as follows:

*“(14) non-commercial social, recreational and amenity area, provided for the common use and enjoyment of residents and held in common ownership, up to a maximum 5% of total Gross Floor Area;*

### British Columbia Building Code

Amenity areas may be required by the BCBC to be designed to be accessible for persons with disabilities, including egress doors, toilet rooms, and cooking facilities.

The BCBC requires a minimum Sound Transmission Class rating (STC) of 50 between dwelling units and the remainder of the building. Designers may choose to go beyond this minimum standard.

# Outdoor Recreation

**Provide an outdoor recreation area for the enjoyment of all ages and abilities.**

Play allows us to try new things, test our boundaries, to learn from our mistakes and to have fun. It can also help us build strength and stamina, and improve our mobility and health. Outdoor recreational areas can also provide opportunities to create new friendships, have fun and get connected with the community.

## Guiding Principles

- **Provide an outdoor recreation area that is held in common ownership with the following considerations:**
  - Include physical fitness opportunities for multiple age groups;
  - Include activities that incorporate a range of movement types: Manipulative Movement (eg. bouncing, throwing, catching), Non-locomotor Movement (eg. balancing, bending, stretching), Locomotor Movement (eg. walking, running);
  - Incorporate natural and unstructured play areas for children;
  - Encourage the use of the area during winter months by providing protection from the rain, celebrating rain through design elements, and co-locating with other indoor/outdoor amenity areas;
- **Locate the area in a central, sunny location with universal access;**
- **Locate the amenity nearby other common areas with views to/from these areas;**
- **Partner with a community-based organizations that can offer programming support for the space; and,**
- **Consideration will be given to designs that utilize adjacent city boulevards and engage the surrounding public realm.**



*City of North  
Vancouver Policy  
& Useful Links*

*Child, Youth + Family Friendly Strategy*

<http://www.cnv.org/~media/F7215B6638CD46148D9BF6CBAD1D83CE.pdf>

*British Columbia  
Building Code*

No significant impacts.

# Outdoor Garden

**Provide an outdoor garden area where residents can grow food, plants and socialize.**

Outdoor garden areas provide residents access to locally-grown, affordable food. In addition to enhanced food security, gardening can also provide light physical fitness for all ages and create a sense of community and connection to the environment.

## Guiding Principles

- **Provide a community garden area that is held in common ownership for building occupants.**
  - Provide one garden plot 2.2 sqm (24 sq.ft.) for every four dwelling units;
  - Encourage the use of the space during winter months by providing protection from the rain, celebrating rain through design elements, and co-locating other indoor/outdoor amenity areas;
  - Provide a nearby hose bib, rodent-resistant compost bin and storage room/tool shed;
  - Provide a common area for the cooking, storage and processing of food; and,
  - Provide a nearby seating area for rest and socializing.
- **Locate the area in a central, sunny location with universal access;**
- **Partner with a community-based organizations that can offer programming support for the space; and**
- **Consideration will be given to designs that utilize adjacent city boulevards and engage the surrounding public realm.**



*City of North  
Vancouver Policy  
& Useful Links*

*[Urban Agriculture & Food Security in the City](#)*

*<http://www.cnv.org/Your-Government/Living-City/Local-Food>*

*[City of North Vancouver Food Strategy and Action Plan](#)*

*<http://www.cnv.org/~media/071D6B018CE54860AD92909858E73184.ashx>*

*[Edible Garden Project](#)*

*<http://ediblegardenproject.com/>*

*British Columbia  
Building Code*

No significant impacts.

**Please detach and include the next 2 pages with applicable development applications**

# Checklist

## Primary Stairs

	Y	N	N/A
● Provide a clear visual path into and out of the stairs by leaving the stairs open to two or more floors;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Locate the stairs in a prominent location near the building's main entrance;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Visually emphasize the stairs while maintaining elevator access for those with mobility limitations;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Provide stairs that have daylight and views to/from common areas;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Select high-quality, inviting, and visually appealing materials and finishes;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Provide visible signage to encourage and direct stair use at the elevators; and,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Design stair widths that can accommodate groups traveling in two directions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Secondary Stairs

	Y	N	N/A
● Provide a clear visual path into and out of the stairs by:			
○ Leaving the stairs open to the environment while still providing overhead rain protection;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Enclosing the stairs within a fire-rated glass enclosure with interior views;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Enclosing the stairs within a fire-rated glass enclosure with exterior views;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Eliminating the locks between the stairs and surrounding floor area (e.g. hold-open devices);	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Provide stairs that have daylight and views to/from common areas;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Select high-quality, inviting, and visually appealing materials and finishes; and,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Provide visible signage to encourage and direct stair use at the elevators.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Outdoor Circulation

	Y	N	N/A
● Provide a clear visual path into and out of the outdoor corridor by leaving the corridor open to the environment while still providing overhead rain protection;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Providing the corridor with daylight and views to/from indoor and outdoor common areas;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Select high-quality, inviting, and visually appealing materials and finishes;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Visually highlight and articulate the dwelling entrances; and,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Provide places to pause, look onto outdoor amenity areas and meet neighbours naturally.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Indoor Amenity

	Y	N	N/A
● Provide an indoor amenity area that is held in common ownership with the following:			
○ Provide at a minimum, the lesser of 1.4 sqm (15 sqft) per unit or 2% of Gross Floor Area;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ A reduction to the minimum area required may be considered when an adjacent outdoor amenity is provided but at no time should the indoor amenity room size be less than 37 sqm (400 sqft);	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Provide a universally accessible washroom, small kitchenette, and storage room nearby.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Locate the area in a central, above grade location with universal access;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Locate the amenity room nearby other common areas with views to/from these areas;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Provide sufficient sound proofing between the area and adjacent residential units; and,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Partner with a community-based organizations that can offer programming support for the space.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Outdoor Recreation

	Y	N	N/A
● Provide an outdoor recreation area that is held in common ownership with the following considerations:			
○ Include physical activity opportunities for multiple age groups;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Incorporate natural and unstructured play areas for children;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Encourage the use of the area during winter months by providing protection from the rain, celebrating rain through design elements, and co-locating other indoor/outdoor amenity areas;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Locate the area in a central, sunny location with universal access;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Locate the amenity nearby other common areas with views to/from these areas;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Partner with a community-based organizations that can offer programming support for the space; and,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Consideration will be given to designs that utilize adjacent city boulevards and engage the surrounding public realm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Outdoor Gardens

	Y	N	N/A
● Provide a community garden area that is held in common ownership for building occupants:			
○ Provide one garden plot 2.2 sqm (24 sq.ft.) for every four dwelling units;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Encourage the use of the space during winter months by providing protection from the rain, celebrating rain through design elements, and co-locating other indoor/outdoor amenity areas;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Provide a nearby hose bib, rodent-resistant compost bin and storage room;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Provide a nearby seating area for rest and socializing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Locate the area in a central, sunny location with universal access;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Partner with a community-based organizations that can offer programming support for the space; and,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Consideration will be given to designs that utilize adjacent city boulevards and engage the surrounding public realm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Other Elements

	Y	N	N/A
● Enhanced bicycle facilities for commercial / office / institutional development :			
○ Incorporate bicycle pump/repair stands, tools, air;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Include enhanced change facilities with clothes dryers, ironing tables and other features;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Consider prominent location of bicycle facilities and highlight these areas using signage and glazing;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Use automatic door openers, hold open doors, bicycle integrated stair ramps and other features to facilitate bicycle circulation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Have a design element not captured in this document? We want to hear how it encourages daily physical activity or social interaction!

Y  N  N/A

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