

# Garden Suite DESIGN GUIDELINES



Appendix N  
- Official Community Plan, 2008



## 1.1 Introduction

These design guidelines apply to garden suites, which are small detached houses located in the rear yards of single family dwelling lots, as designated in [Zoning Bylaw, 2003](#). They are accessory to the primary dwelling.

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish objectives for the form and character of Intensive Residential Development. They are meant to facilitate the thoughtful integration of garden suites into established residential neighbourhoods in a way that improves livability, enhances remaining green space, and minimizes impacts on neighbouring properties.

## 1.2 Categories

In accordance with [Section 488 \(1\)](#) of the [Local Government Act](#) the Garden Suite Development Permit Area has been designated for the following purposes:

- (a) Establish objectives to guide protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity;
- (e) Establish objectives to guide the form and character of intensive residential development;

- (h) Establish objectives to promote energy conservation; and
- (j) Establish objectives to promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

## 1.3 Location

Garden suites are permitted on RS-zoned (Figure 1) properties that meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the [Zoning Bylaw](#).

## 1.4 Justification

Residential neighbourhoods in Saanich are typically low density, composed predominantly of single family housing. Garden suites provide an opportunity for infill housing – housing that “fits” within an existing neighbourhood without significantly altering its character or appearance. They have the potential to:

- Add diversity and choice in housing;
- Increase the supply of rental accommodation and provide an alternative to secondary suites;
- Provide accommodation for family members or caregivers;
- Create accessible living accommodation;
- Promote water and energy conservation; and
- Provide rental income to homeowners.

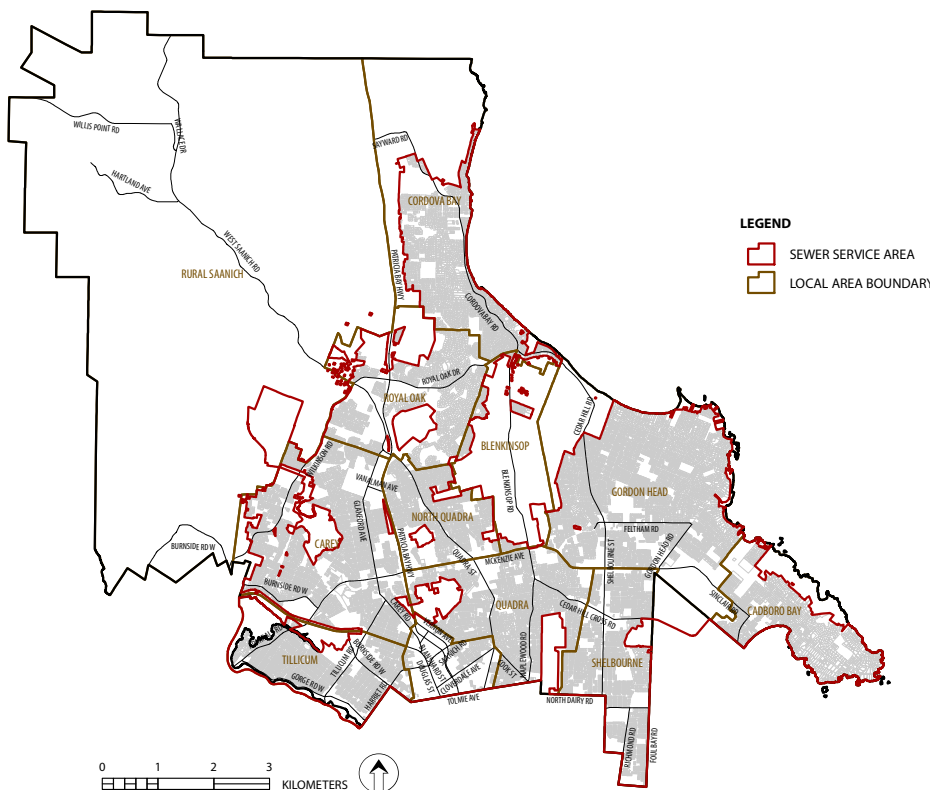


Figure 1: Map showing Garden Suite Development Permit Area boundary



Respecting neighbourhood character and appearance is a priority for garden suites. By considering key aspects of design such as site layout, building form and sustainability, garden suites can become thoughtful and welcome additions to established neighbourhoods.

Limiting impervious cover (e.g. roofs, driveways, parking areas, and hard landscaping), retaining existing vegetation and encouraging infiltration systems such as rock gardens on properties will help to minimize runoff volumes in receiving streams and municipal infrastructure.

Garden suites present an opportunity to incorporate energy and water conservation measures into the building and site design, which are consistent with Saanich's sustainability goals and will result in more efficient homes and properties.

## 1.5 Exemptions

A development permit is not required for a garden suite located in the **Garden Suite Development Permit Area** when:

- Only internal alterations are made to the garden suite;
- Minor exterior renovations to a garden suite or a single family dwelling on a lot with a garden suite are proposed that would not significantly alter the footprint or character of the building.

## 1.6 Interpretation of language

Where *shall* is used in a guideline, the guideline is mandatory. At the discretion of the Director, variations may be acceptable, where the intent of the guideline is achieved, to address a unique circumstance that would otherwise render compliance impractical or impossible.

Where *should* is used in a guideline, the guideline is strongly encouraged, but can be varied where unique circumstances require other actions that will still meet the intent of the guideline.



## 2.1 Preliminary Site Design and Layout

### Intent:

Preliminary site design and layout for garden suites prioritizes privacy of neighbours, access to the suite and retention of green space. It also emphasizes design that adapts to the natural topography of the site.

### Guidelines:

- 2.1.1 The location of the garden suite should minimize opportunities for overlook and shading on adjacent properties.
- 2.1.2 Protecting and retaining mature trees should be a key consideration during the early phases of planning for a garden suite. A garden suite, including associated parking and access areas, should be located and designed to preserve existing trees on the subject property, as well as adjacent properties.
- 2.1.3 Hard (impervious) surfacing on a lot should be minimized. Limiting hard surfacing in front yards including parking areas and pathways is of key importance.
- 2.1.4 Access to the garden suite shall be provided by a minimum 1.0 m wide path that is clearly legible and provides direct access from the street to the garden suite.
- 2.1.5 Siting of a garden suite should respond to the natural topography of the lot. Significant excavation and/or retaining is discouraged.
- 2.1.6 Garden suites may be considered through a variance process by Council on lots with two frontages (two front yards). Context will be a key consideration on properties where a garden suite is proposed in the second front yard. A development variance application should evaluate the following:
  - The nature of the frontage where the garden suite is to be constructed (e.g. is it an unconstructed road right-of-way or developed street); and
  - The pattern of setbacks on adjacent properties.



Figure 2: Site layout prioritizes tree retention

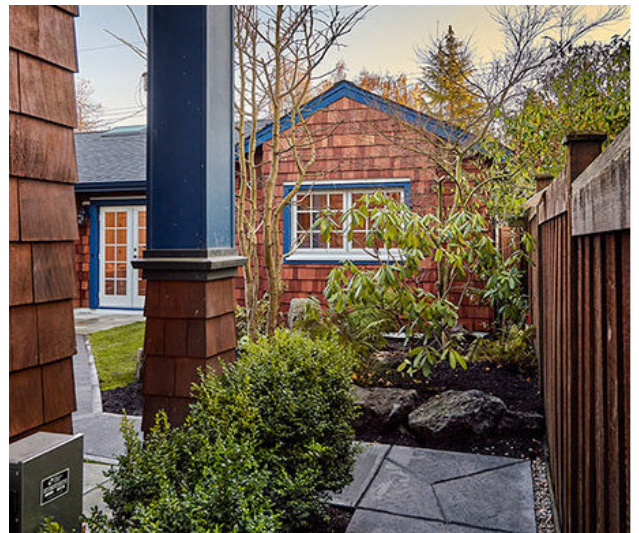


Figure 3: Clear access pathway to a garden suite in the rear yard



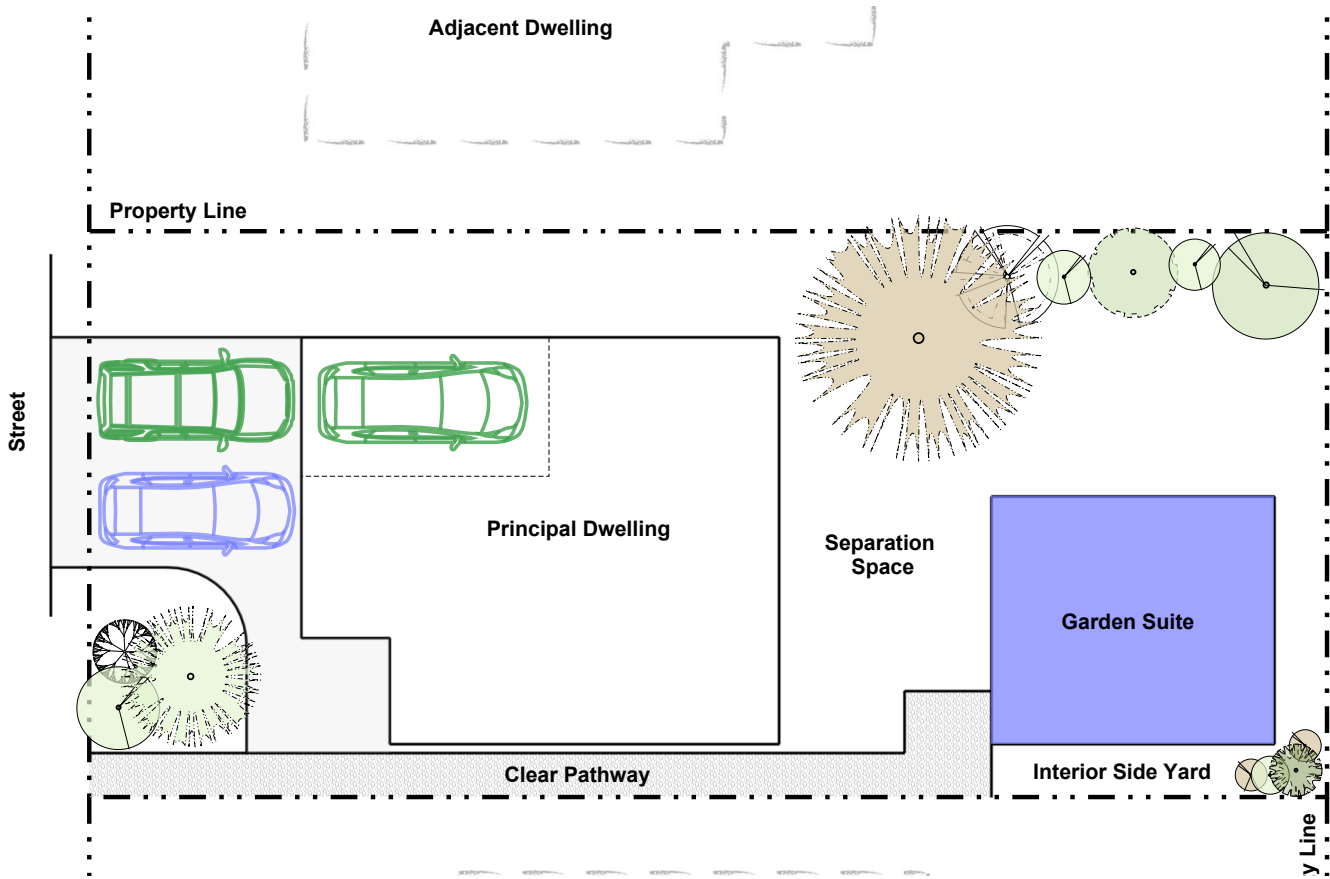


Figure 4: Consider key elements in the early design and layout of your site

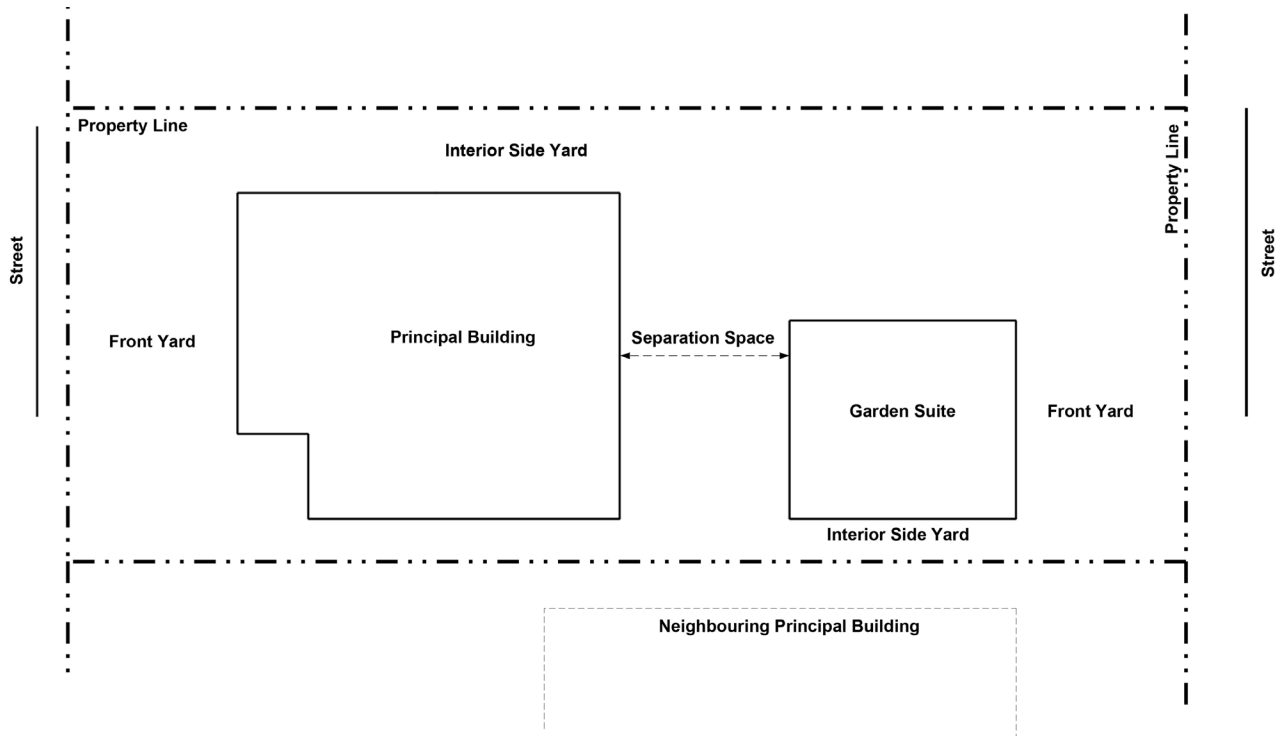


Figure 5: Context is important when locating a garden suite on a lot with two frontages



## 2. Design Guidelines

## 2.2 Building Design

### Intent:

Seamless integration of a garden suite in an established neighbourhood requires careful attention to architectural style and elements of building design.

Garden suite design should strive for a high degree of livability and comfort for tenants.

### Guidelines:

#### Design and Massing

- 2.2.1 Textured, durable, high quality cladding materials should be used to reinforce the residential character of a garden suite.
- 2.2.2 Consideration may be given to modular and pre-fabricated housing provided the residential character and permanence of the garden suite is reinforced.

#### Sloping Sites

- 2.2.3 The scale and mass of the garden suite should respond to the topography and natural features on the lot.
- 2.2.4 Garden suites should step in plan and section along the natural slope of the land.
- 2.2.5 On steeply sloping sites any vertical portion of the garden suite is discouraged from being greater than the prescribed maximum building height.



Figure 6: Building materials are durable and high quality



Figure 7: Modular housing may be an option

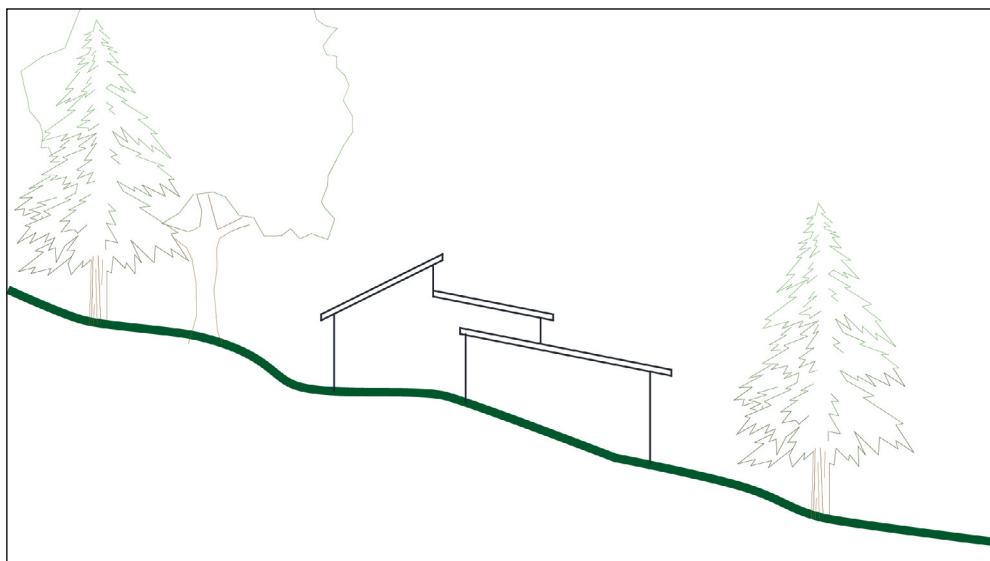


Figure 8: Garden suite design responds to the topography of the site



## Windows and Lighting

- 2.2.6 The size and placement of garden suite windows should minimize overlook and be sensitive to neighbours' privacy.
- 2.2.7 Second storey windows facing adjacent properties and the space between the garden suite and the principal building should be designed to promote privacy and reduce overlook.
- 2.2.8 Skylights, clerestory windows and obscured glazing are encouraged.
- 2.2.9 Clear eye level windows may be permitted where it can be demonstrated that privacy and overlook on neighbouring properties are not issues.
- 2.2.10 Operable windows are encouraged to increase air flow and natural ventilation in the garden suite.
- 2.2.11 Lighting for the garden suite should complement the building and landscape design.
- 2.2.12 Lighting should be kept to a minimum necessary for pedestrian safety and visibility. Consideration should be given to the number, location, and style of light fixtures, as well as the negative effects of light spilling into adjacent properties.
- 2.2.13 Light fixtures should be recessed. Fully-cut off fixtures are encouraged. Motion sensor lights are discouraged.



Figure 9: Natural light through clerestory windows improves livability



Figure 10: Skylights allow natural light and maintain privacy



Figure 11: Fully-cut off light fixtures create a safe environment with minimal light spill



**Entrances**

- 2.2.14 Entrances should provide weather protection and can include features such as recessed or covered entries. Front porches may be considered in accordance with Section 5.8 of the Zoning Bylaw, and Section 6 (b) of Schedule H.
- 2.2.15 When designing an entrance, consideration should be given to noise and/or privacy impacts for adjacent neighbours.
- 2.2.16 Garden suites shall have individual unit identity numbers that are illuminated at night. Unit numbers shall be located on the garden suite and in a clearly visible location along the nearest street frontage.
- 2.2.17 The primary entrance of the garden suite should be oriented to a street whenever possible. Landscaping is encouraged to reinforce the location of entry.

**Accessibility and Adaptability**

- 2.2.18 Based on the needs of the tenant, the design the garden suite should consider standards of adaptability and accessibility. See the District of Saanich *Guide to Adaptable and Accessible Designs*.

**General**

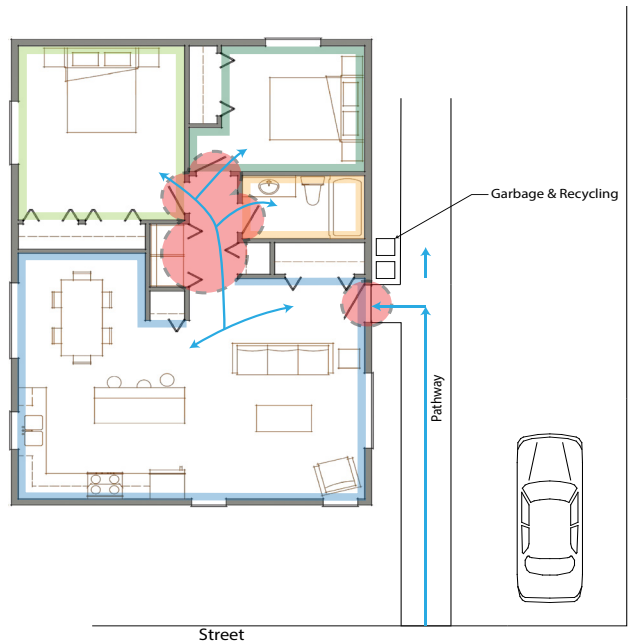
- 2.2.19 Where possible, external mechanical equipment including HVAC systems such as heat pumps and utility metres should not be located in interior side yards. Screening to limit visibility from the street is encouraged.



Figure 11: Unit identity number are clearly visible and illuminated at night



Figure 12: A covered entry to a garden suite provides weather protection.



- ➔ Path of travel
- Areas requiring special design consideration

Figure 13: Consider access and circulation to meet tenants' needs



## 2.3 Roof Form

### Intent:

Buildings with simple and integrated roof forms are preferred to reduce visual impact and limit shading and overlook onto adjacent properties.

### Guidelines:

#### General

- 2.3.1 One simple roof form is desired.
- 2.3.2 Secondary roof forms, such as dormers shall be integrated into the main roof form.
- 2.3.3 Dormers should be set back a minimum of 0.6 m from gable end elevations.
- 2.3.4 Total dormer width for each elevation shall not exceed 40% of the width of the upper storey.
- 2.3.5 On a Garden Suite with a shed roof (slope of 3:12 or greater), the tallest portion of the building should be located to minimize impact on adjacent neighbours.

#### Two Storey Garden Suites

- 2.3.6 On the second storey of a garden suite with a sloping roof, the upper floor area shall be integrated into the roof form.
- 2.3.7 The main roof on a garden suite should spring from somewhere between the upper floor level and 1.67 m above it.
- 2.3.8 Flat- or shallow-pitched roofs (slope less than 3:12) are discouraged.
- 2.3.9 If a flat or shallow roof form is proposed, the massing should be located to minimize impacts on adjacent neighbours.

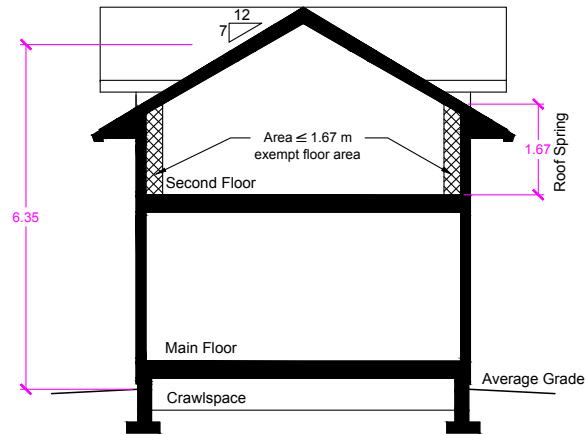


Figure 14: A roof should spring between the upper floor level and 1.67 m above it



Figure 15: The second storey of a garden suite with a flat or shallow roof steps back and away from adjacent neighbours

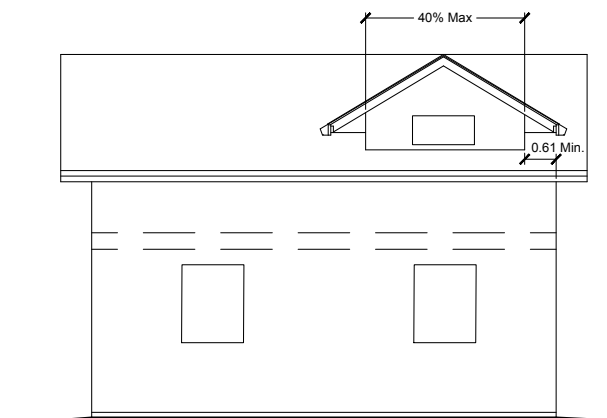


Figure 16: Gable end setback of 0.6 m and total dormer width of 40% of the width of the upper storey



## 2.4 Sustainability

### Intent:

Design that improves the natural environment by promoting conservation and careful management of stormwater are encouraged.

Sustainability considerations are outlined here, and in other sections of these guidelines, including building design, landscaping, and parking and access.

### Guidelines:

- 2.4.1 Innovative building and landscape design is strongly encouraged.
- 2.4.2 Consider low carbon building design and landscaping. This may include energy efficiency such as passive solar design for heating and cooling, and internal infrastructure to support solar panels.
- 2.4.3 Integrate water conservation into building and landscape design. This may include capturing rainwater from a roof and maximizing permeable surfaces on a site.
- 2.4.4 Consider stormwater management practices that mimic natural systems. The use of rain gardens, green roofs, bioswales, and landscaping can help to slow and clean rainwater, allowing it to slowly diffuse back to the natural water table.

## 2.5 Outdoor amenity space for residents

### Intent:

Improved livability can be accomplished through a variety of means, including the provision of useable and private outdoor space for garden suite tenants.

### Guidelines:

- 2.5.1 Define and screen at-grade outdoor spaces through the use of landscaping, plantings, fences or trellises, and/or changes in grade.

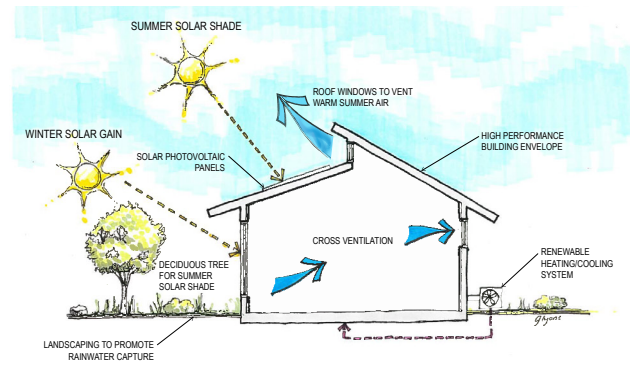


Figure 17: A garden suite with a passive solar heating and cooling system



Figure 18: Potential to support solar panels



Figure 19: Outdoor amenity space with screening for privacy



## 2.6 Landscaping

### Intent:

Thoughtful landscape design can preserve neighbourhood character, maximize privacy, enhance remaining green space, protect biodiversity and provide permeability. Protection of mature trees is a key element in quality landscape design.

A landscape plan is required at the time of application.

### Guidelines:

Refer to the *Tree Protection Bylaw* for details on requirements for tree protection and replacement.

- 2.6.1 Mature trees and significant vegetation should be retained where possible.
- 2.6.2 Native and/or drought tolerant trees and plants suitable for the local climate are encouraged and should include a mix of coniferous and deciduous species. Invasive plants are prohibited.
- 2.6.3 Applicants are encouraged to use naturescape principles.
- 2.6.4 Drought tolerant plants and deciduous trees on the south and west elevations are encouraged.
- 2.6.5 Side yards should be landscaped and integrated into useable outdoor spaces, where possible. Landscaping should include permeable surfaces, as well as native and/or drought tolerant plants suitable for the local climate.
- 2.6.6 Landscaping and/or fencing is encouraged along interior side and rear lot lines. Chainlink fencing is not permitted.
- 2.6.7 Exterior side yards on corner lots should be designed and treated as the main entrance to the garden suite. Screening and landscaping between the street and outdoor space should be used to define the transition from public to private space.



Figure 20: A clear and permeable pathway to a garden suite



Figure 21: A usable and permeable outdoor amenity space



Figure 22: Interlocking pavers promote permeability



## 2.7 Parking and Access

### Intent:

Sufficient and useable on-site parking is a requirement for garden suites. Driveway and parking space design should consider rainwater management, protection of trees and impacts on adjacent properties.

### Guidelines:

- 2.7.1 Driveway and parking space design should maximize rainwater infiltration through the use of permeable surfaces such as unit paving blocks, permeable concrete or asphalt, or driveway planting strips.
- 2.7.2 A minimum of 35% of the area of the front yard should be permeable.
- 2.7.3 Parking for the garden suite can be provided on a shared driveway with the principal building. A tandem parking configuration is possible, but discouraged for the garden suite.
- 2.7.4 For corner lots parking should be accessed via a driveway from the closest adjacent street.
- 2.7.5 For lots flanking a busier road such as a collector road, access may be created from the adjacent residential street
- 2.7.6 Screening through the use of landscaping, plantings and/or fences should be used where driveway accesses and parking spaces are located along an interior side lot line.
- 2.7.7 At a minimum, one on-site parking space, for the garden suite or the principal building, should feature an energized outlet<sup>1</sup> capable of providing “Level 2” electric vehicle charging<sup>2</sup> to the parking space.
- 2.7.8 A minimum of one secure and weather protected bicycle parking space should be provided for a garden suite.

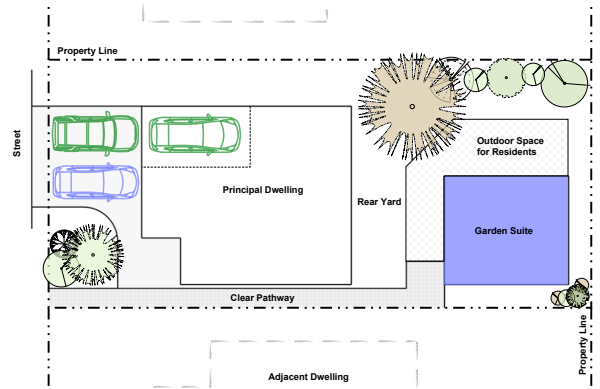


Figure 23: A parking layout on a shared driveway

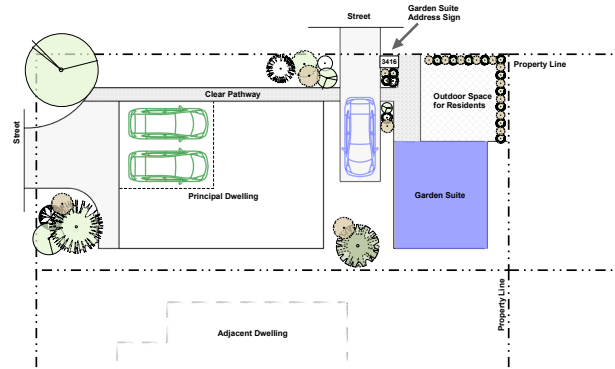


Figure 24: A parking layout on a corner lot



Figure 25: Parking for an electric vehicle

<sup>1</sup> An "energized outlet" means a connected point in an electrical wiring installation at which current is taken to supply utilization equipment. The energized outlet may be an electrical receptacle ("plug") or a junction box for permanent connection.

<sup>2</sup> Level 2 charging is defined by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE International) J1772 Standard:

Charge Method	Nominal Supply Voltage (V)	Max Current Range (Amps-continuous)
AC Level 2	208 or 240 V AC, single phase	From 16A to 80A



## 2.8 Waste and Compost

### Intent:

Storage of municipal waste and compost containers should consider visual impacts, as well as issues for adjacent neighbours.

### Guidelines:

- 2.8.1 A space should be provided for garbage and compost containers for the garden suite and it should be screened from view.
- 2.8.2 Where possible containers should not be stored in rear or interior side yard setbacks.

## 2.9 Heritage

### Intent:

Garden suites may be encouraged on properties with existing Heritage Buildings.

### Guidelines:

- 2.9.1 Where the principal building on a lot is a Heritage Registered building, the owner is encouraged to seek *Heritage Designation* prior to construction of a garden suite.
- 2.9.2 If a garden suite is proposed on a property where the principal building is a *Designated or Heritage Registered building*, a Heritage Alteration Permit is not required, but the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* should be considered.
- 2.9.3 If an existing accessory building is a Designated Heritage building and the owner wishes to convert it to a garden suite, a Heritage Alteration Permit is required and the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* apply.



Figure 26: Secure and weather protected bicycle parking

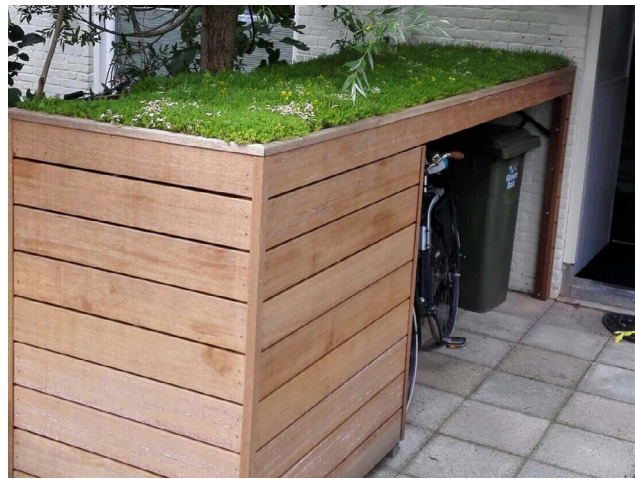


Figure 27: Screened waste and compost containers







Figure 28: A heritage building in Saanich

## DEFINITIONS

**Dormer** – means a roofed structure, often containing a window that projects vertically beyond the plane of a sloping roof.

**Heritage Designation** – a site or building with identified heritage value that is significant to the community is protected by a Heritage Designation Bylaw. With this level of protection, Council must approve alterations to the heritage site or building that may affect its heritage character and/or value.

**Heritage Registered** – a site or building with identified heritage value that is significant to the community is listed on the Community Heritage Register. Being registered does not impose restrictions on the use of the building or the rights of the owner to make changes.

**Sloping sites** – means a property with a slope angle of 20% or greater across the area required for the building footprint.







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