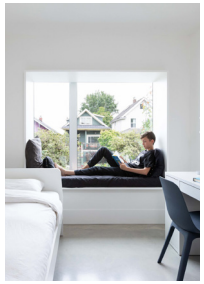
2024

CITY OF VICTORIA | Planning and Development

Advisory Design Guidelines for Family-Friendly Buildings and Spaces






CITY OF VICTORIA

Publishing Information

Title:	Advisory Design Guidelines for Family-Friendly Buildings and Spaces
Prepared by:	City of Victoria Planning and Development Department
Status:	September 1, 2024
Printing Date:	2024
Contact details:	The City of Victoria Planning and Development Department Victoria City Hall, 2nd Floor 250.261.0382 Electronic versions available on the City of Victoria website: victoria.ca

Cover photo credits: D'Arcy Jones Architects – House with Two Bay Windows, Vancouver (Image credit: Ema Peter); motorlab - Evergreen, Mannheim (Image credit: motorlab); Schemata Architects – Capitol Hill Cohousing, Seattle (Image credit: Schemata Architects); D'Arcy Jones Architects – Pearl Block, Victoria (Image credit: Ema Peter); NSDA Architects – Heather Place Affordable Housing, Vancouver (Image credit: Andrew Latreille); Saia Barbarese Topouzanov architectes and Vlan Paysages – Habitations Saint-Michel Nord, Montreal (Image credit: James Brittain)

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Overview, Purpose and Use

Audience: Designers, Project Teams and the Public

The Advisory Design Guidelines for Family-Friendly Buildings and Spaces accompany the Family Housing Policy to outline best practice recommendations to the general public and to the designers, consultants, owners, developers and operators involved in the planning, design and construction of multi-unit residential developments.

Approach: Educational and Descriptive

These educational and descriptive Guidelines were created to inform and encourage the planning and design of family-friendly homes with the right amount and types of space for families of all kinds with members in different life stages. They aim to enable livable indoor and outdoor spaces, places for social and intergenerational interaction and homes that support family formation and aging in place.

Application: As Advice, Not as A Set of Requirements

Designers, property owners, developers and operators of residential developments and the public are reminded that the **Guideline are only advisory. They provide a comprehensive set of best practices and should not be thought of as requirements on a regulatory checklist.** These best practices should be assessed by designers and project teams according to multiple criteria, including but not limited to: financial viability, feasibility under site-specific conditions, as well as sustainability and resilience impacts.

A family-friendly kitchen and dining area connected to private outdoor space in a Victoria home. [D'Arcy Jones Architects – Pearl Block; Image credit: Ema Peter]

The built form and shared-traffic laneway of this affordable Montreal development encourage social interaction among residents. [*Saia Barbarese Topouzanov architectes and Vlan Paysages – Habitations Saint-Michel-Nord; Image credit: James Brittain*]

Policy Context: City of Victoria's Urban Design Policy Framework The Advisory Design Guidelines complement the City's robust urban design framework, as outlined in the *General Urban Design* (*GUD*) *Guidelines and Downtown Core Area Plan* (*DCAP*) *Design Guidelines*. They should be read together with these key design guidance documents, as well as with other supporting policies and guidelines, as applicable. Documents and defined terms originating from the City's policies and zoning bylaws are *italicized* in these Guidelines, where applicable.

Guideline Structure The Guidelines are structured around a series of design intent statements, each supported by a set of recommended design strategies, precedent images and conceptual illustrations.

In this way, the Guidelines form **a performance-based design framework** for achieving the overarching principles shown on the next page.

Image credits for the next page, from top of the page to the bottom:

[*Schemata Architects - Capitol Hill Cohousing; Image credit: Grace Kim*]

[*Cornerstone Architecture - Little Mountain Cohousing; Image credit: Happy Cities*]

[*Helen & Hard Arkitekter - Vindmøllebakken Cohousing; Image credit: Jiri Havran*]

[*DIALOG - YWCA Cause We Care House; Image credit: DIALOG*]

[*Image credit: Kübra Arslaner - https://www.pexels.com/photo/corridor-with-window-and-bookcase-in-public-library-7768941/*]

Overarching Principles

Five overarching principles inform the Advisory Design Guidelines For Family-Friendly Homes and Spaces:

1

Living, growing, family-forming and aging in place

Provide a variety of homes in new residential developments to enable growth and change in households over time. Design family-friendly homes for flexible daily use and for various life stages of individuals and households.

2

Places for intergenerational social interaction

Design all common and public spaces, including circulation areas, as places for social interaction with community-building potential.

3

Inclusive design

Design all common spaces to accommodate people of all ages, physical abilities, sexualities and gender identities, household or family structures and backgrounds.

4

Different common spaces for a broad range of activities and play, everywhere

Design family-friendly common spaces, including areas for recreation and play, to provide opportunities for different play styles and different levels of social interaction. Approach the planning and design of all common spaces with the assumption that they can become places for play for children and adults – and in some cases, for pets too.

5

Design for livability, everywhere

Provide a variety of homes designed for flexible daily use and for change over time. Ensure access to daylight and air throughout the day and the year. Build with durable, safe and easy-to-clean building materials and components. Provide safe and easy-to-maintain planting. Enable storage everywhere for daily and seasonal needs.

1. Homes

Introduction

The Advisory Design Guidelines at the scale of the home will focus on private indoor and outdoor spaces to outline best practices for the sizing and configuration of individual homes in family-friendly, multi-unit developments. Also included in this section are recommended spatial qualities, materiality and clearances.

The design guidance in this section draws from extensive research and numerous guidelines noted at the end of this section, with a particular emphasis on BC Housing Design Guidelines and Construction Standards. It is recommended that the Advisory Design Guidelines are used in tandem with current and future editions of the BC Housing Design Guidelines.

For detailed and expanded design guidelines on accessibility, please consult:

- The British Columbia Building Code (BCBC, including supporting resources, such as the Building Accessibility Handbook)
- Accessibility Standards Canada publications, especially CSA/ASC B651 (Accessible Design for the Built Environment) and CSA/ASC B652 (Accessible Dwellings)

Private outdoor space overlooking the city in Vancouver. [DIALOG – YWCA Cause We Care House; Image credit: DIALOG]

How to Ensure a Family-Friendly Home in Victoria

Design Guidance Topics and Intent Statements

Design guidelines for family-friendly homes are structured in terms of these topics and performance-based design intent statements:

1.1 Home Size and Layout

To ensure a baseline standard for the sizes of family-friendly homes.

1.2 Entrance

To facilitate ease of entering and exiting for multiple family members, mobility aids and for storage.

1.3 In-Suite Laundry

To facilitate well-being, self-care and care-giver responsibilities by design.

1.4 In-Suite Storage

To facilitate conveniently accessible storage of mobility aids, supplies and items for daily activities, such as children's toys, hobbies and sports accessories.

1.5 Kitchen and Dining

To provide adequate space for gathering and learning around food.

1.6 Living Room

To provide high-quality space for family/household activities and social connection.

1.7 Bedrooms

To provide livable spaces for rest, homework and privacy.

1.8 Bathrooms

To encourage adequate and family-friendly bathroom facilities.

1.9 Balconies and Patios

To encourage conveniently accessible, usable and safe private outdoor amenity areas in family-friendly residential developments. To expand options for outdoor recreation, play and learning for children and families.

Design Guideline Topics: Built Form

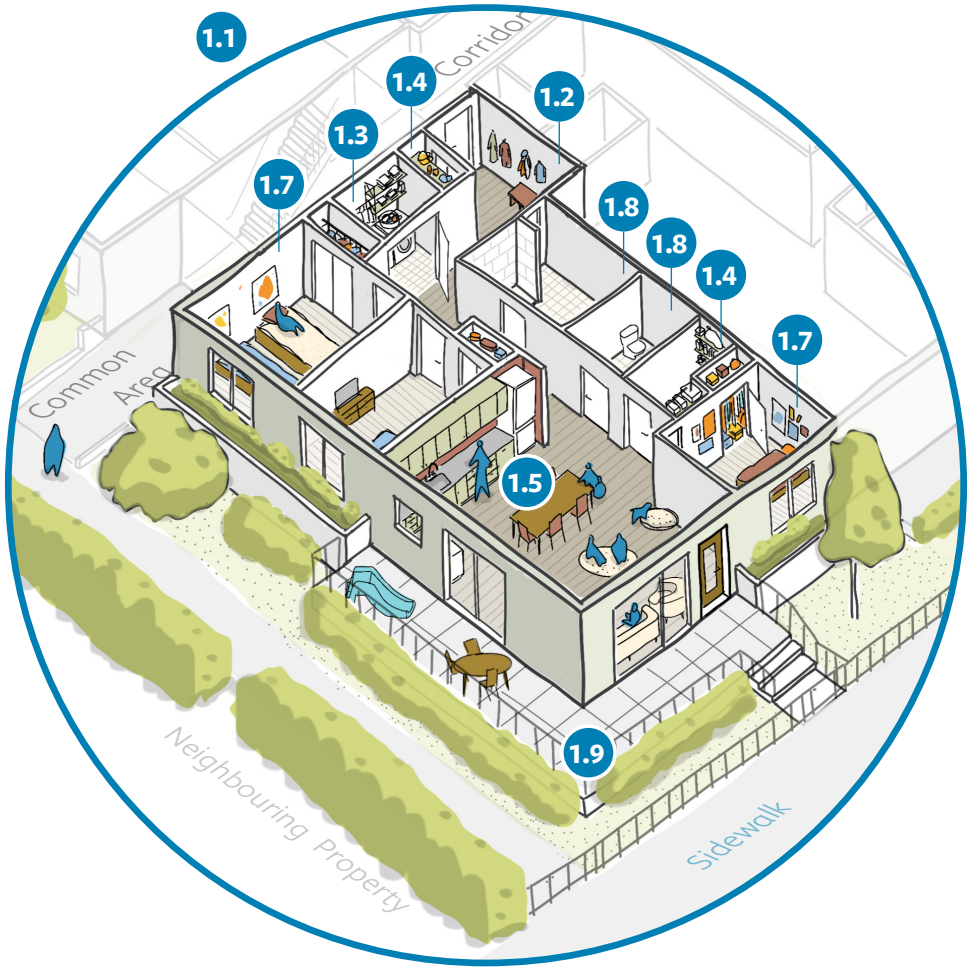
1.1 Home Size and Layout

1.2 Entrance

1.3 In-Suite Laundry

1.4 In-Suite Storage

1.5 Kitchen and Dining



Illustrated impression of a ground-oriented, family-friendly apartment in a wood frame residential building

1.6 Living Room

1.7 Bedrooms

1.8 Bathrooms

1.9 Balconies and Patios

Spatial Relationships

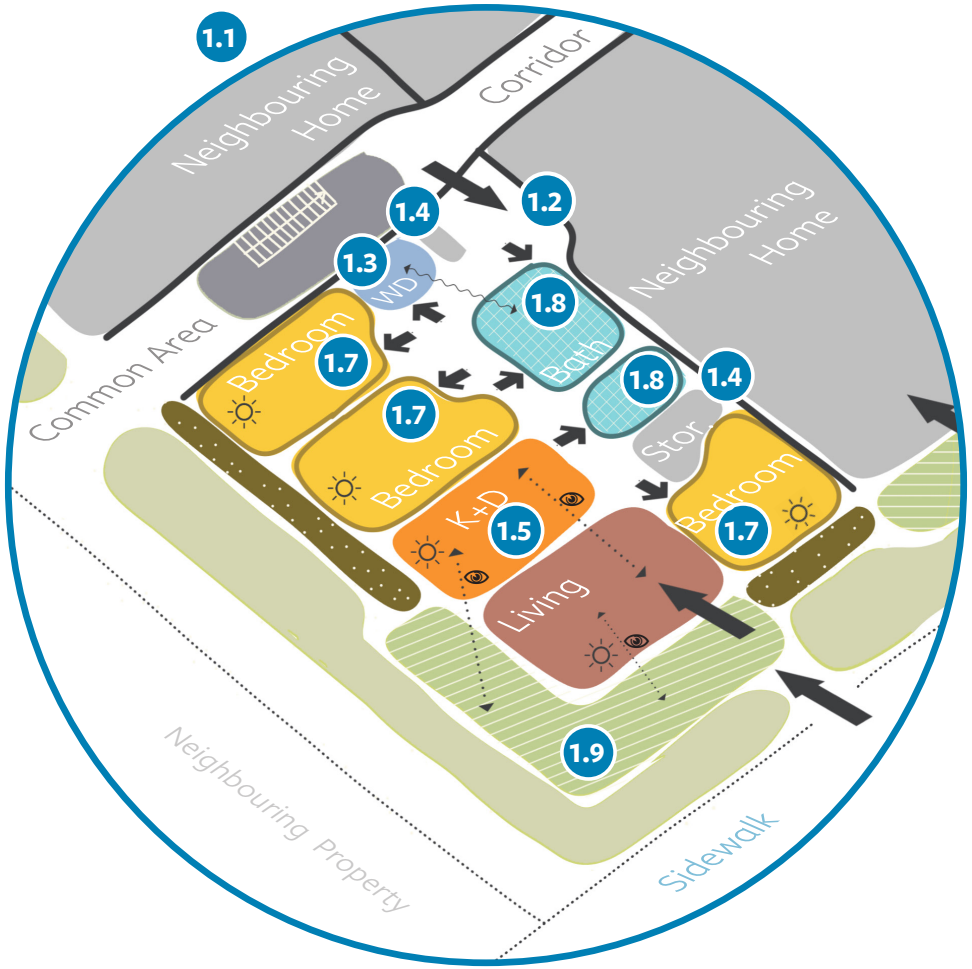
1.1 Home Size and Layout

1.2 Entrance

1.3 In-Suite Laundry

1.4 In-Suite Storage

1.5 Kitchen and Dining



1.6 Living Room

1.7 Bedrooms

1.8 Bathrooms

1.9 Balconies and Patios

Doors to Homes

Doors to Rooms

Ease of access

Visual Connection

Daylight Access

1.1 Home Size and Layout

Intent: To ensure a baseline standard for the sizes of family-friendly homes.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Home size and layout set up for usability

- Allocate family-friendly homes the minimum residential *floor areas** recommended below (with an additional area increase by approximately 12 per cent for wheelchair-accessible homes and five per cent for adaptable homes):

	Home Type		
Building Type	2-Bedroom	3-Bedroom	4-Bedroom
Townhouse	90 sq. m. (968 sq. ft.)	111 sq. m. (1,194 sq. ft.)	125 sq. m. (1,345 sq. ft.)
Apartment	67 sq. m. (721 sq. ft.)	86 sq. m. (925 sq. ft.)	112 sq. m. (1,205 sq. ft.)

* As defined in City of Victoria zoning regulations

Three-bedroom homes of 98 sq. m. (1,054 sq. ft.) floor areas can be found at Chown Place, a family-friendly and affordable apartment building in Victoria. [Image credit: City Staff]

1.2 Entrance and Accessibility

Intent: To facilitate ease of entering and exiting for multiple family members, mobility aids and for storage.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Design for future accessibility needs

- In homes where stairs are the main means of access and circulation, provide reinforcement and backing to stair walls to allow for the future installation of stair lifts.

b. Coat closet

- Design the entrance area coat closet to meet these minimum dimensions: At least 0.91 m (three feet) wide and 0.6 m (two feet) deep with a coat rod and 0.3 m (one foot) deep shelf. Walls to have blocking to accommodate wall-mounted hangers.

c. Washable flooring at entrance

- Provide durable and washable floor finishes that perform well under foot traffic.

d. Spacious entrance areas near storage

- Provide additional clearances for circulation and storage at the entrance area, including:
  - » A minimum clear floor area, adequate to serve as a wheelchair-turning space, to facilitate entering and exiting with a stroller or a mobility aid.
  - » Additional area for seating.
  - » Increased coat closet width, adding up to a minimum 0.3 m (one foot) wide per person (assuming two people per bedroom), e.g. 1.2 m (four feet) for a two-bedroom home, 1.8 m (six feet) for a three-bedroom home and 2.4 m (eight feet) for a four-bedroom home.

Seating and wall hooks near the entrance of this apartment facilitate entering and exiting for residents. [Image credit: Max Vakhtbovycn from Pexels: https://www.pexels.com/photo/interior-of-hallway-with-hangers-near-door-6487941/]

» A larger storage area for equipment and mobility devices (as described in Guideline 1.3(b)).

e. Entrance-adjacent laundry rooms or bathrooms as mudrooms

- For homes where a bathroom is adjacent to the entrance area, consider providing direct access to this space for use as a mudroom to facilitate washing up and the temporary storage of wet garments or umbrellas.

f. Entrance vestibule/foyer with a second door

- Where feasible, consider separating the entrance area with a partition wall and door, as a vestibule or foyer, to improve acoustic separation and enhance privacy between the home and adjoining public space.

The entrance area of a family-friendly apartment in Vancouver. [*Image credit: Elissa Crowe Photography*]

This Vancouver bathroom has an additional door to the entrance area, enabling it to be used as a mud room as well. [*Haeccity Studio Architecture – Comox Infill Missing Middle Housing; Image credit: Sama Jim Canzian*]

1.3 In-Suite Laundry

Intent: To facilitate well-being, self-care and care-giver responsibilities by design.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Adequate, accessible in-suite laundry areas

- Provide in-suite laundry areas in homes with physical and acoustic separation from adjoining spaces.
- Size the enclosure for standard-sized appliances and design the door to accommodate servicing and future replacement.
- Provide washer and dryer in a side-by-side configuration where possible. If a stacked washer-dryer is used, provide rough-ins for future modification to a side-by-side configuration where possible.

A laundry enclosure with integrated storage offers flexibility of use and future modifications.
[Image credit: Photo by Lisa Anna: https://www.pexels.com/photo/interior-of-a-modern-laundry-room-19846397/]

b. Well-equipped, accessible, low-energy and entrance-adjacent laundry rooms

- Consider the following improvements of in-suite laundry area design:
  - » Space for hanging garments.
  - » A utility sink.
  - » A floor drain with a trap primer (which could be connected to drainage plumbing of a bathroom if nearby).
  - » A condensing dryer rather than a vented one.
  - » Unless the laundry room equipment is located in a bathroom, include an operable window and/or a fan to help remove moisture from hang-dry garments or drying items (e.g. umbrellas).
  - » A recommended footprint width is 1.8 m (6 feet) or, if a sink is provided, 2.0 m (6 feet 6 inches).
  - » A recommended footprint depth is 1.2 m (four feet) if accessed via folding doors in closet configuration or, if a separate room accessed through a door, 1.9 m (6 feet and 3 inches).

A laundry room in a household of two adults and two dogs in Portland. [*Image credit: Aaron Lee*]

1.4 In-Suite Storage

Intent: To facilitate conveniently accessible storage of mobility aids, supplies and items for daily activities, such as children's toys, hobbies and sports accessories.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Adequate, efficient and accessible in-suite storage areas

- In addition to bedroom closet space per Guideline 1.7(a), provide a minimum of 3.7 sq. m. (40 sq. ft.) *floor area* for in-suite storage, excluding the circulation area that serves a typical minimum storage depth of 0.4 m (1 foot 4 inches).
- Plan in-suite storage areas to be full-height.
- Utilize the home's circulation areas to provide access to in-suite storage, rather than using part of the storage space for access.

b. Expand storage space and its usability

- Consider the following improvements for in-suite storage:
  - » Adjustable shelves (0.4 m or 1 foot 4 inches deep) and/or coat rods, with a built-in option to install at barrier-free heights.
  - » Storage space for mobility aids, seasonal clothing and miscellaneous equipment for recreation, leisure and sports, preferably near the entrance: at least 1.4 m deep with 0.45 m deep shelving and accessed efficiently from the entrance area or vestibule (i.e. minimal to no circulation space inside the storage area).

Full-height storage including washer and dryer are conveniently accessible through the unit's circulation spaces at 1025 Johnson Street, Victoria. [*HCMA Architecture + Design - The Dalmatian; Image credit: Realfoto Media, photo courtesy of Pacifica Housing*]

1.5 Kitchen and Dining

Intent: To provide adequate space for gathering and learning around food.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Spacious and well-organized kitchen and dining areas for family gathering and learning

- Design kitchens considering the following best practices:
  - » A minimum kitchen area of 9 sq. m. (96 sq. ft.) for food preparation, cooking and storage.
  - » Visual access to the living room and to private outdoor space to allow for supervision.
  - » Design for full-size appliances and a large format sink.
- Design dining areas considering the following best practices:
  - » A minimum dining area of 9 sq. m. (96 sq. ft.) as a multi-use space, beyond food preparation and eating, to allow for additional activities such as learning, homework or crafts.
  - » A minimum dining area capacity of two dining spaces per bedroom (e.g. six spaces for a three-bedroom home).
  - » Power outlets for task lighting, appliances and devices in the dining area.

A kitchen in this dual-aspect Victoria apartment comes with visual access and direct circulation to private outdoor space. [D'Arcy Jones Architects – Rotunda; Image credit: Ema Peter]

A linear kitchen configuration is adjacent to the living, dining and patio area in this Colwood apartment. [Cascadia Architects – 330 Goldstream Affordable Housing; Image credit: Greater Victoria Housing Society]

b. Functional kitchen counter length and configuration for families

- Design kitchen counter and casework with the following best practices:
  - » An L-configuration (since galley configurations for kitchens are generally discouraged due to accessible design best practices).
  - » Counter frontages, measured at the front edge of counter, of at least 2.44m (eight feet) for two-bedroom homes, 2.89 m (9 feet 6 inches) for three-bedroom homes and 3.34 m (11') for four-bedroom homes.

c. Expand usability of kitchen and dining areas

- Consider the following improvements of kitchen and dining area design in family-friendly homes:
  - » A full-size (0.6 m or 24-inch-wide) under-counter dishwasher built into the kitchen, or at least electrical and plumbing rough-ins near the sink for a future installation.
  - » At least a 0.76 m (30-inch-wide) refrigerator for 2-bedroom homes and at least a 36-inch-wide one for 3+ bedroom homes.
  - » Built-in furniture (e.g. additional counter or dining space) that can expand on demand, especially where the kitchen and dining area is limited.
  - » Space for sideboard, hutch or other storage furniture in the dining area.

An L-configuration kitchen with full-size appliances and a dining area in Victoria. [HCMA Architecture + Design – The Dalmatian Affordable Housing; Image credit: Realfoto Media, photo courtesy of PacificaHousing]

A linear kitchen configuration is adjacent to the living, dining and patio area in this ground-oriented Vancouver apartment. [NSDA Architects – Heather Place Affordable Housing; Image credit: Metro Vancouver Housing]

1.6 Living Room

Intent: To provide high-quality space for family/household activities and social connection.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Spacious and well-organized living room

- Design living rooms that enable family members to relax, study, play and connect, considering the following best practices:
  - » A minimum floor area of 16.5 sq. m. (177 sq. ft.) including a recommended 2 m by 3 m (6 feet 6 inches by 9 feet 8 inches) play area including storage furniture.
  - » A minimum seating capacity of five seats for two-bedroom homes, six for three-bedroom and seven for four-bedroom homes (to be tested in design stage plans with baseboard heater and forced air vent locations and with code-required circulation clearances in mind).
  - » Access to operable windows that let air and natural light in from at least one direction.
  - » Visual connection and easy access to private outdoor areas and to the kitchen to facilitate supervision of play.
  - » Acoustic and visual separation from bedrooms.
  - » Access to private outdoor space.

The living room in this Vancouver apartment has adequate seating capacity in proximity to the kitchen. [MA+HG Architects – Our Urban Village Cohousing, Developer: Tomo Spaces; Image credit: Janis Nicolay]

The living room in this narrow-lot, ground-oriented Vancouver home includes a play area connected to a private outdoor space. [D'Arcy Jones Architects – John Street Redo; Image credit: Ema Peter]

1.7 Bedrooms

Intent: To provide livable spaces for rest, homework and privacy.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Bedroom sizing for adequate sleeping capacity

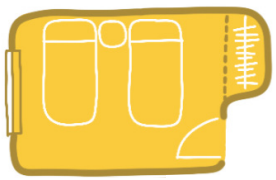
- Design bedrooms to meet the following guidelines:

Minimum Areas and Dimensions for Each Bedroom Type

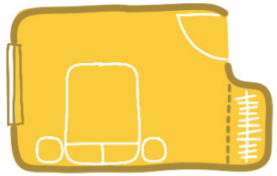
Bedroom Type	Minimum *Floor Area**	Minimum Dimension	Minimum Closet Width
A	11.15 sq. m. (120 sq. ft.)	2.8 m (9 feet 2 inches)	1.5 m (five feet)
B	9.3 sq. m. (100 sq. ft.)	2.8 m (9 feet 2 inches)	1.5 m (five feet)
C	8.5 sq. m. (92 sq. ft.)	2.6 m (8 feet 6 inches)	1.5 m (five feet)

- Test bedroom sizes and configurations with a furniture plan layout that includes heater and/or vent locations.
- Ensure that minimum dimensions are measured between finished wall surfaces.

*does not include closet area



Bedroom Type A



Bedroom Type B

Bedroom Type C

A bedroom similar to Type B, with operable fenestration in a family-friendly apartment building in Victoria. [HCMA Architecture + Design – The Dalmatian Affordable Housing; Image credit: Realfoto Media, photo courtesy of Pacifica Housing]

A bedroom similar to Type C with a closet in a family-friendly apartment in Victoria. [NSDA Architects – Heather Place Affordable Housing; Image credit: Metro Vancouver Housing]

Bedroom Types and Capacities to Accommodate Standard Bed Sizes

Bedroom Type	Bed Type(s)
A	2 Single beds
B	1 Double bed
C	1 Single bed

b. Right types of bedrooms for different homes

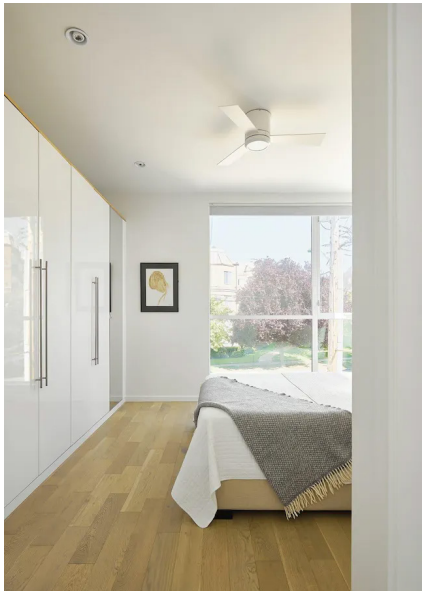
- Provide a combination of bedroom types as noted below. The bedroom types (i.e. A, B and C) are defined by the minimum dimensions, areas and furniture capacity needs shown in the table above.

Residential Units and Bedroom Types

Unit Type	Bedroom Type
Two Bedroom Units	A, B
Three Bedroom Units	A, B, C
Four Bedroom Units	A, B, C, C

c. Avoid cross-circulation

- Locate bedroom doors to avoid opening directly onto living and dining areas, as the clearance required for bedroom access reduces their effective usable floor area and seating capacity.



A well-lit bedroom similar to Type A in a family-friendly townhome in Victoria. [Low Hammond Rowe Architects – Frank Townhomes; Image credit: Jody Beck and Joshua Lawrence]

The location of the bedroom door in this purpose-built Victoria rental home minimizes cross-circulation impact on the dining and living room. [Cascadia Architects – The Clive; Image credit: Cascadia Architects]

d. Design for privacy

- Ensure that bedrooms have spatial, visual and acoustic separation from living, kitchen and dining areas.

e. Improve usability and privacy of bedrooms

- Consider the following improvements for bedroom design in family-friendly homes:
  - » A direct access door to an adjacent bathroom or en-suite bathrooms where feasible.
  - » A variety of window coverings, including see-through and/or light-filtering window coverings and blackout drapes/blinds provided for all fenestration, including transom windows and skylights, where applicable.
  - » Depending on the location of bedrooms, top-down, bottom-up or dual-operation window coverings.

In a Victoria apartment, strategically located bedroom door does not reduce the living room seating capacity due to cross circulation. [*HCMA Architecture + Design – The Dalmatian Affordable Housing; Image credit: Realfoto Media, photo courtesy of Pacifica Housing*]

A bay window seat enriches the usability of a bedroom in a family-friendly home in Vancouver. [*D'Arcy Jones Architects – House with Two Bay Windows; Image credit: Ema Peter*]

1.8 Bathrooms

Intent: To encourage adequate and family-friendly bathroom facilities.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Appropriately sized bathrooms in the right quantity

- Plan bathrooms in family-friendly homes according to the following considerations:
  - » In two-bedroom homes, at least one three-piece bathroom with a tub/shower combination.
  - » In homes with three or more bedrooms, at least one three-piece bathroom with a tub/shower combination and a half bath (also known as a 'powder room'), consisting of a toilet and sink with vanity.

This three-piece bathroom in a family-friendly Vancouver townhome includes daylight access and durable, easy-to-clean materials and finishes. [*Haeccity Studio Architecture - Comox Infill Missing Middle Housing; Image credit: Sama Jim Canzian*]

b. Improve usability of bathrooms

- Consider the following improvements for bathroom design in family-friendly homes:
  - » In two-bedroom homes, an additional three-piece bathroom with tub/shower combination, i.e. a minimum total of two.
  - » In homes of three or more bedrooms, at least one additional three-piece bathroom with tub/shower combination, i.e. a minimum total of two bathrooms and a half bath (also known as a 'powder room').
  - » Additional doors to circulation areas from en-suite bathrooms, where applicable.
  - » Additional bathroom floorspace beyond the minimum to facilitate caregiver use.
  - » Floor drain with a trap primer, especially in bathrooms near entrances, doubling as mudrooms and in bathrooms with washing machines.

An oversized bathroom in a family-friendly affordable rental development in Colwood. [Cascadia Architects – 330 Goldstream; Image credit: Greater Victoria Housing Society]

An accessible bathroom in an intergenerational, family-friendly affordable housing development in Saanich. [HCMA Architecture + Design – Townley Place Affordable Housing; Image credit: Greater Victoria Housing Society]

1.9 Balconies and Patios

Intent: To encourage conveniently accessible, usable and safe private outdoor amenity areas in family-friendly residential developments. To expand options for outdoor recreation, play and learning for children and families.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Patios and balconies as extensions of the living space

Patios and balconies are places where children may have their first experiences of independence and other family members may find easy access to nature, especially if their mobility is reduced.

- Plan and design patios and balconies in family-friendly homes to extend the private indoor area of the home accessibly and safely outward through the following considerations:
  - » Priority locations adjacent to living, kitchen and dining areas.
  - » Design elements, such as planting or screens, that mitigate impacts of overlook to bedrooms or to neighbouring homes.
  - » Sized per City of Victoria's general urban design guidance in *General Urban Design (GUD) Guidelines and Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP) Design Guidelines*.
  - » Strategic design and location of guardrail openings to prevent the fall of smaller objects while permitting flow of air and/or water.

Family-friendly Saanich townhomes include private patios, privacy fences and strategically located deciduous trees for seasonal shading. [HCMA Architecture + Design - Townley Place Affordable Housing; Image credit: H&R Exterior Finish]

Raised private patios with privacy screens and solar shading improve the family-friendly livability of these Saanich townhomes. [DAU Studio - Richmond Gate Housing; Image credit: DAU Studio]

- Guardrail openings that are sized smaller than code-required minimums, where feasible and applicable.
- Child- and pet-safe gate between common or public outdoor space, completed with a continuous enclosure of built and/or planted components.
- Privacy screens (built or vegetated) and where applicable, doubling as environmental control devices.
- Duct vent and exhaust terminations located out of reach of children and pets.
- Safe-to-ingest planting for children and pets, where planting is integrated into the design.
- Where possible and feasible, deciduous tree canopy cover or a site-specific shelter/cover designed to protect members of the household from intense heat and sun.
- Convenient access to water (with spout located and covered to restrict child or pet access) and power.

b. Enrich the experience of private outdoor space

- Consider the following improvements for private outdoor space in family-friendly homes:
  - Expanded depth and width beyond City of Victoria's urban design guidelines.
  - Integrated lighting and storage.
  - Integrated planting and growth areas.
  - A variety of surfaces, built elements and plant material for interest and diversity.
  - Structural design for balconies that can support heavier equipment, within the dimensional constraints of a recommended typical patio or balcony.

A combination of screening hedges, cedar fences and deciduous trees provide privacy and outdoor comfort for private patios in this multi-family Colwood development. [*Low Hammond Rowe Architects - Helios Affordable Housing; Developer: TL Housing Solutions; Image credit: TL Housing Solutions*]

Resources

Below are resources that informed the design guidelines and may offer further reading on the family-friendly planning and design of residential environments:

- BC Housing (2019) Design Guidelines & Construction Standards and the supporting technical bulletins
- City of Vancouver (2022, 3rd edition) High-Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines
- City of Toronto (2020) Planning for Children in New Vertical Communities
- Day, C & Midbjer, A (2007) Environment and children, Routledge
- Easthope, H & Tice, A (2011) Children in apartments: implications for the compact city. Urban Policy and Research, 29:4
- Kerr, SM, Klocker, N & Gibson, C (2020) From backyards to balconies: cultural norms and parents' experiences of home in higher-density housing, Housing Studies
- Marcus, CC & Sarkissian, W (1986) Housing as if people mattered: Site design guidelines for the planning of medium-density family housing, Vol. 4, University of California Press
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A Vancouver living room with visual and spatial connection to the eating and private outdoor areas. [D'Arcy Jones Architects - Waddell Kuningk House; Image credit: Martin Tessler]

əŋaʔstəl Little Free Library in Victoria's Dockside Green neighbourhood. [*Image credit: City Staff*]

2. Sites and Buildings

Introduction

The Advisory Design Guidelines at the site and building scale focus on public and community aspects of multi-unit residential buildings.

This section addresses the following family-friendly design considerations:

- What are best practices for building massing for livable and family-friendly developments?
- What are best practices for family-friendly common spaces, indoors and outdoors? What activities should they enable? Where should they be located? How large should they be? How should they interface with the building and public realm?
- What are site-scale strategies that enable family-friendly homes that accommodate household change over time?

The guidelines in this section draw from extensive research and numerous guidelines noted at the end of the section.

The Guidelines should be read together with the key policy documents that form the City of Victoria's urban design policy framework: *General Urban Design (GUD) Guidelines* and *Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP) Design Guidelines*.

The design guidelines in this section are structured accordingly to facilitate this.

The Advisory Design Guidelines should also be read together with the applicable Development Permit Area (DPA) guidelines.

How to Ensure Family-Friendly Buildings and Open Spaces in Victoria

Design Guideline Topics and Intent Statements

The Advisory Design Guidelines for family-friendly sites and buildings are structured in terms of the following topics and performance-based design intent statements:

2.1 Building Form, Scale and Orientation

To ensure livability of family-friendly environments on a development site through appropriate massing. To expand options for outdoor recreation and play by site design and massing.

2.2 Building-to-Street Interface

To use a building's public realm interface to enable family-friendly outdoor activities.

2.3 Indoor Amenity Spaces

To provide common indoor amenity spaces that support a variety of age groups and activities in residential developments, regardless of the size and amenities in individual homes. To enable opportunities for social and intergenerational interaction in residential developments.

2.4 Parking, Circulation and Access

To enable easy access and circulation for families throughout new residential developments.

2.5 Open Space and Landscaping

To provide conveniently accessible outdoor amenity areas in residential developments. To enable opportunities for social and intergenerational interaction in residential developments. To expand options for outdoor recreation and play for children and families.

2.6 Livability

To ensure baseline access to air and daylight in family-friendly developments. To promote acoustic quality in family-friendly developments.

2.7 Special Considerations: Lock-Off Units

To support the flexibility of residential uses in accommodating changes to households/families over time.

2.8 Special Considerations: Alternative Housing Tenures

To leverage the potential of alternative residential tenures or community-led housing models in providing family-friendly homes and communities.

Design Guideline Topics: Buildings and Open Spaces in Context

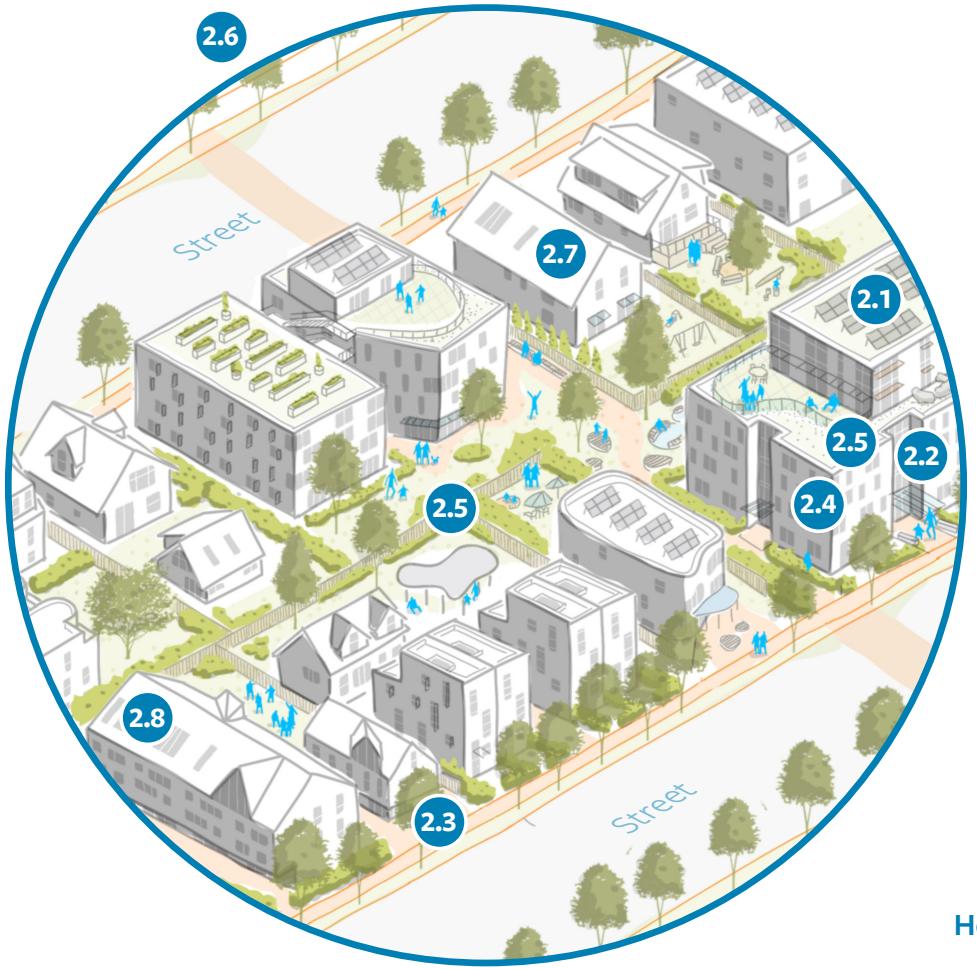
2.1 Building Form, Scale and Orientation

2.2 Building-to-Street Interface

2.3 Indoor Amenity Spaces

2.4 Parking, Circulation and Access

2.5 Open Space and Landscaping



Illustrated impression of a typical city block outside of Victoria's downtown, including a variety of housing options and family-friendly design strategies

2.6 Livability

2.7 Special Considerations: Lock-Off Units

2.8 Special Considerations: Alternative Housing Tenures

2.1 Building Form, Scale and Orientation

Intent: To ensure livability of family-friendly environments on a development site through appropriate massing. To expand options for outdoor recreation and play by site design and massing.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Building massing to ensure access to daylight and air

Design building massing and floorplates to provide access to light and air for all living rooms and bedrooms:

- Approach project planning and building massing with both quality and quantity of homes in mind.
- Prioritize access to light and air on the building frontage over unit depth for family-friendly homes.
- Prioritize outside corners or ends of floorplates for family-friendly homes where operable windows and/or doors can provide access to air and light from multiple directions.
- Consider front-and-back unit configurations to allow light on two sides where possible, e.g. buildings with exterior corridors, zero lot line conditions, or when a point access block (single-stair building) is possible.
- Consider opportunities for access to light and air from above, by means of skylights or offset stacking of homes.

Family-friendly homes are located at the ends and corners of residential floors in a Vancouver mixed-use residential development [DIALOG – 3333 Main Street; Image credit: DIALOG]

A single-loaded corridor form improves the livability of the inside corners on the L-shaped residential floors of this North Vancouver building. [Courtyard Architects – Quayside Village Cohousing; Image credit: Quayside Village]

- Provide breaks in building form where possible to provide daylight to shared circulation areas, especially in double-loaded corridor or point tower typologies, in balance with building energy performance considerations.
- Prioritize inside corners of floorplates strategically for uses other than residential or amenity spaces, especially in double-loaded corridor buildings:
  - » Circulation (e.g. elevator, or stair core).
  - » Intermittently occupied areas where natural light is not essential (e.g. laundry room or storage lockers).
  - » Building service spaces (e.g. energy recovery ventilator rooms).
- Provide floorplate depths of 21 m or less to provide the best opportunity for access to natural lighting.

b. Site design to enable outdoor amenity

Site buildings to enable adequate, safe and welcoming outdoor amenity areas (including play areas) per Guideline 2.5.

c. Massing to enable outdoor amenity

In residential developments with contiguous low- or mid-rise and high-rise components (e.g. podium-and-tower forms), consider outdoor amenity areas on low- or mid-rise roofs.

Skylights and roof monitors enable these dual-aspect family-friendly townhomes that are otherwise flanking a central community atrium. [*Vandkunsten - Savvaerket Cohousing,; Image credit: Vandkunsten*]

Patios and shared outdoor amenity areas are located on the upper level of this purpose-built rental development in Victoria. [*Chris Dikeakos Architects - 1008 Pandora; Image credit: Apartments.com*]

2.2 Building-to-Street Interface

Intent: To use a building's public realm interface to enable family-friendly outdoor activities.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Building-street interface as a place of social encounter, activity and safety

Design outdoor entrance areas/courts as activated places to interact and linger, where possible:

- Incorporate artistic, expressive, or interpretive elements where appropriate for the site and the community.
- Encourage accessible seating, play and passive supervision and pets at residential entrance areas or forecourts.
- Where feasible, provide deciduous tree canopy cover and/or weather protection designed for shading and misting on privately owned public spaces (POPS) or semi-public spaces to provide thermal comfort and refuge for residents and their community.
- Provide waste bins near entrances for the disposal of pet waste.
- Design lighting to create a safe, warm and welcoming entrance area that encourages lingering and social interaction.

Entrance court is designed an extension of the public realm at a mixed-use affordable housing project in Victoria. [HCMA Architecture + Design – The Dalmatian; Image credit: Andrew Latreille]

The entrance court of this family-friendly, mixed-use Vancouver development acts as a public thoroughfare and plaza. [DIALOG – 3333 Main Street; Image credit: DIALOG]

2.3 Indoor Amenity Spaces

Intent: To provide common indoor amenity spaces that support a variety of age groups and activities in residential developments, regardless of the size and amenities in individual homes. To enable opportunities for social and intergenerational interaction in residential developments.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Activity-rich common amenity spaces for all

Provide a dedicated and equipped common indoor amenity area in family-friendly residential environments:

- Provide an indoor amenity area of minimum 37 sq. m. (398 sq. ft.) with a clear ceiling height of minimum 2.43 m (eight feet), preferably 2.74 m (nine feet) in residential developments of 20 or more homes.
- Allocate at least 1.4 sq. m. (15 sq. ft.) of amenity space per home.
- Plan the indoor amenity area to have access to daylight and to an outdoor amenity area.
- Locate the indoor amenity area for easy access from the building lobby, where applicable.
- Consider orienting the amenity area(s) to the public realm where possible.
- Consider distinguishing the amenity area(s) in building massing through form, materiality and openings, to emphasize their shared and social nature.

Shared indoor amenity area expressed in building massing and street interface at an affordable housing development in Vancouver [NSDA Architects – Heather Place; Image credit: Andrew Latreille]

A West Shore housing development includes visual connection between shared indoor and outdoor amenity areas. [Cascadia Architects – 330 Goldstream Affordable Housing; Image credit: Greater Victoria Housing Society]

- Provide an accessible and child-safe kitchenette for community-building activities.
- Provide a storage room or closet in proximity to the indoor amenity space, preferably with direct access to facilitate the storage of tables, chairs and other supplies.
- Include a barrier-free and gender-neutral accessible washroom in proximity to the indoor amenity space.
- Enable a range of indoor activities that are not supported by conventional mechanical systems (e.g. smudging) by design measures such as localized ventilation and smoke detector bypass switches.
- Design amenity areas to support building and community resilience, e.g. as climate-controlled refuge areas and staging areas for first responders when needed.

b. Expanded common amenity spaces for all

Consider the following improvements for common indoor amenity spaces in family-friendly buildings:

- Provide at least 2 sq. m. (21 sq. ft.) of common indoor amenity area per each home in the building.
- In buildings with more than 90 homes, consider providing a second common amenity space (with a minimum 37 sq. m. or 398 sq. ft. area) away from the other one.
- In project planning and early design stages, test an amenity space for its capability to accommodate at least 40 per cent of the estimated adult population in the residential development in various community event configurations (e.g. Strata, building operator or tenant meetings, or social events such as film screening or communal eating).

A family-friendly housing development in Norway includes connected indoor and outdoor amenity areas. [Helen & Hard Arkitekter – Vindmøllebakken Cohousing; Image credit:Jiri Havran]

The indoor amenity and designated play areas are visually connected in the Vancouver YWCA Cause We Care House. [DIALOG – YWCA Cause We Care House; Image credit: BC Society of Transition Houses]

- Provide designated activity and play areas with connection to outdoor amenity area:
  - » A minimum clear floor area of 2 m by 3 m (6 feet 6 inches by 9 feet 8 inches), in addition to storage furniture for toys and supplies for activities such as toddler play, craft activities, homework groups.
  - » Opportunities for separation from the main indoor amenity space by movable or glazed partitions that allow supervision from the indoor amenity space.
  - » Acoustically separated but visually connected spaces to enable activities about food or music.
- Consider a longer kitchenette counter and more storage space to support larger gatherings and social events.
- Designate an indoor pet wash area, ideally near the main entrance/lobby, equipped with a pet wash station sufficient to serve large-breed dogs.
- In developments where a shared laundry area is provided, plan such areas to be near indoor amenity spaces, with windows and/or doors to outdoor play areas and sized to include seating.
- Consider providing additional amenity spaces in the form of a hobby room, a workshop, an indoor play space for small children, or a teenage lounge especially if the development includes smaller homes.
- Consider including purpose-designed, designated areas or furnishings that offer shared uses to the community, such as toys, tools, publications and equipment that can be borrowed by residents.

Covered courtyards and interior streets enable circulation areas to double as shared community spaces. [top: Jan Gudmand Hoyer – Kilen Cohousing; Image credit: Grace Kim] and [bottom: Vandkunsten – Savvaerket Cohousing,; Image credit: Rasmus Hjortshøj]

2.4 Parking, Circulation and Access

Intent: To enable easy access and circulation for families throughout new residential developments.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Direct access to the outside where possible

Provide homes with a direct means of access to the outside in addition or in lieu of access via lobbies and corridors

b. Welcoming lobbies for interaction and ease of circulation

Plan and design lobbies as a part of the common spaces of new family-friendly residential developments:

- Provide adequate weather protection at the entrances (e.g. overhangs or awnings) of minimum 1.5 m (5 feet) depth and width to facilitate entering and exiting while using strollers or mobility aids, or in groups with children and pets.
- Design doors and windows to provide transparency between the public realm (including the vehicular pick-up/drop-off areas) and the lobby and between the lobby space and any indoor or outdoor shared amenity spaces, where possible.
- Provide at least 3 m (10 feet) of clear circulation space in front of the elevators at the main lobby.
- Consider incorporating artistic, cultural, or interpretive design elements into the lobby space where appropriate for the site and community.

A Montreal affordable housing development offers direct means of access for each residence. [Saia Barbarese Topouzanov Architectes and Vlan Paysages – Habitations Saint-Michel-Nord; Image credit: James Brittain]

Daylight, seating and visual connections to other shared areas enliven a residential entrance/lobby area in Norway. [Helen & Hard Arkitekter – Vindmøllebakken Cohousing; Image credit: Sindre Ellingsen]

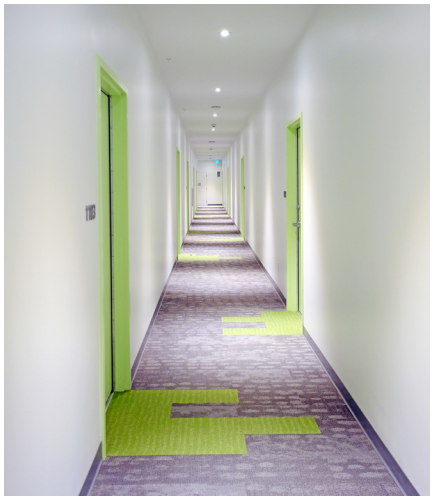
- Provide noticeboards (e.g. corkboard with trim) or pin-up surfaces for the residents.
- Where possible, provide seating in the lobby spaces for the spontaneous or programmed use of residents and visitors.

c. Spacious circulation areas for accessibility and inclusivity

Plan circulation areas of the building to allow for comfortable movement of individuals, families and strollers or mobility aids:

- Consider providing a barrier-free path of circulation with manoeuvring zones per the latest edition of CSA/ASC B651 (Accessible Design for the Built Environment).
- Consider sizing the barrier-free path width to accommodate the passage of two mobility device users simultaneously, especially in larger developments.
- Provide a clear circulation area in front of elevators:
  - » Adequate to serve as a wheelchair-turning space at a minimum for one elevator.
  - » 1.8 m (six feet) for multiple elevators discharging in the same direction.
  - » 2.7 m (nine feet) for multiple elevators discharging into the same area from different directions.
- Limit travel distances from doors of homes to any elevator core to a maximum of 45 m (~147 feet) to facilitate circulation.
- Design for durable and quiet use: Specify sound-absorbing and echo-minimizing floor and wall finishes, with high-traffic details such as corner guards.

High-quality materials and built-in seating at a residential mixed-use building lobby in Victoria [Cascadia Architects – The Clive; Image credit: Cascadia Architects]



Visual access to daylight and shared indoor amenity areas in a residential building corridor [left – Helen & Hard Arkitekter – Vindmøllebakken Cohousing; Image credit: Sindre Ellingsen] and improved wayfinding by way of colour and materiality in the corridor of a downtown Victoria affordable housing development. [right – HCMA Architecture + Design - The Dalmatian; Image credit: Pacifica Housing]

- Provide access to daylight in corridors where possible, to encourage regular use and to enhance the sense of place, direction and safety:
  - » Windows and/or doors to the outside; and/or,
  - » Glazed partitions between corridors and amenity areas for indirect, 'borrowed' daylighting where possible.

d. Enhanced circulation areas for physical activity, livability and convenience

- Consider enriching the family-friendly use and experience of corridors:
  - » Strategically located and framed views to the outside to enhance the sense of place, time and orientation.
  - » Articulation or differentiation of access points or intersections by accent lighting or changes in materiality (e.g. colour and texture).
  - » Localized recesses of unit doors from the corridor, recommended at 0.6 m (two feet) typical.
  - » Staggered unit doors where possible.
  - » Limited travel distances from doors of homes to the elevator to a maximum of 30 m (98 feet 5 inches) to improve the ease of use for community members whose mobility is limited.
- Design stairs as places of encounter and physical activity:
  - » Visually prominent locations in the building, where possible.
  - » High-quality materials and finishes.
  - » Lighting levels akin to other common spaces of the building.

The corridor of this family-friendly residential building in Langley, B.C. was transformed into a community-serving interior street through daylight access and additional width. [McCamant & Durrett Architects - Windsong Cohousing; Image credit: Alan Carpenter (top) and The Cohousing Company "Cohousing Communities: Designing for High-Functioning Neighborhoods" (bottom)]

- Windows, doors and skylights to allow natural lighting, where possible.
- Glazed windows and doors to enable visual connection and indirect daylight to corridors or to other common areas.

e. Additional storage for daily and seasonal needs

Plan and design additional storage areas outside of individual homes to improve the quality of life in family-friendly housing environments:

- Provide adequately sized and equipped storage lockers:
  - Full height and at least 1.2 m (four feet) deep.
  - Accessed through a minimum 1 m (3 feet 4 inches) wide door, which can be equipped with an automatic door opener if needed.
  - Connected to the homes, building lobby and parkade areas via an accessible path of travel.
  - Consider locating at least some of the storage lockers in proximity to elevators and lobbies for families and households where strollers and mobility aids are used habitually.
  - Provide electrical rough-ins for charging outlets, if used for electrically powered mobility aids such as scooters.
- Consider storage solutions in the unusable or leftover areas or volumes or parkades, such as storage loft boxes, where codes and regulations permit.

f. Expand inclusivity and accessibility

Consider the following improvements for circulation areas in family-friendly homes:

- Design family-friendly residential environments to a more comprehensive accessibility standard, e.g. Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC).
- Provide more spacious elevator lobbies on upper floors with 2.4 m (eight feet) clear circulation space at elevator landings where possible.
- Ensure a minimum clear width of 1.06 m (3 feet 6 inches) at all stairs to facilitate the moving of larger furniture.
- In residential developments where stairs are the main means of access to family-friendly homes, provide reinforcement and backing to stair walls sufficient for the future installation of stair lifts.

Daylight access to elevator lobbies and corridors can be seen from the outside of this family-friendly, mixed-use development in Vancouver. [Hotson Bakker Architects – 1978 Vine Street (Capers Building); Image credit: City Staff]

2.5 Open Space and Landscaping

Intent: To provide conveniently accessible outdoor amenity areas in residential developments. To enable opportunities for social and intergenerational interaction in residential developments. To expand options for outdoor recreation and play for children and families.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

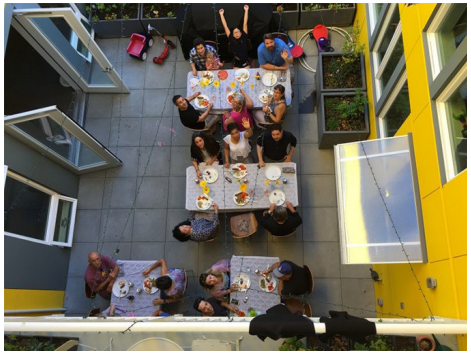
a. Activity-rich outdoor amenity for all

Plan and design outdoor amenity areas as extensions of the indoor common areas for intergenerational social interaction and a variety of activities for adults, children and pets:

- Allocate a minimum 40 sq. m. (430 sq. ft.) for outdoor amenity space on sites with frontages greater than 30 m.
- Allocate a minimum of 2 sq. m. (21.5 sq. ft.) per dwelling unit for outdoor amenity space in residential developments of 20 or more homes.
- Site outdoor amenity area(s) to retain existing site features (e.g. rocky outcrops) and vegetation, including mature trees and consider additional mature trees, in order to incorporate the urban forest and unique landscape elements into the experience of outdoor amenity area(s).
- Where opportunities for outdoor amenity and open site area are limited, provide at least 75 per cent of the outdoor amenity area for spontaneous or program activities (as opposed to solely vegetation or green roof).

Outdoor gathering spaces and amenity areas organized around a multi-purpose open space, located on an upper floor of a purpose-built rental housing building in Victoria [Chris Dikeakos Architects – 1008 Pandora; Image credit: Apartments.com]

- Locate outdoor amenity at or above *finished grade*.
- Design for year-round outdoor environmental comfort and provide adequate protection from sun and wind.
- Where possible, site outdoor amenity areas to allow direct sunlight access, especially in winter and fall, ideally to receive two hours of sunlight between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. on the winter solstice (Dec. 21).
- Consider providing community gardening plots (2.2 sq. m. or 24 sq. ft. per four dwelling units) in order to enable urban agriculture, land- and food-based learning opportunities, in alignment with the City's guidance: *Growing Food and Gardening in Mixed-Use, Multi-Unit Residential Developments*.
- Plan outdoor amenity areas to have directly accessible connections to indoor amenity or other common areas of the building, such as indoor seating, shared washroom facilities and laundry room.
- Provide weather protection to parts of the outdoor amenity areas, especially at their interfaces with indoor amenity or common areas, to enable for year-round use
- Provide direct access to outdoor amenity areas from ground-oriented homes where possible.
- Enable passive surveillance from overlooking homes and common spaces (e.g. windows from corridors or upper levels) onto outdoor amenity areas where possible.
- Separate outdoor amenity and play areas from vehicular access and parking via site design or fencing.
- Provide child- and pet-safe enclosures and gates around swimming facilities, where applicable.
- Design fences and gates to address both safety and visibility/ sense of place.



A co-housing building in Seattle boasts connected outdoor amenity areas for a variety of activities. [*Schemata Architects – Capitol Hill Cohousing; Image credit: Grace Kim*]

- Consider taller fences and barriers for outdoor amenities with significant exposure to elements (e.g. on terraces and rooftops) and/or where required for safety.
- Provide integrated lighting to enhance evening and night time usability and surveillance.

b. Adequate and well-equipped outdoor play areas

Plan and design outdoor play areas to cater to a variety of play preferences and needs, by gender and age:

- Provide outdoor play areas in large residential development projects at a recommended minimum of 130 sq. m. (1,399 sq. ft.), up to 280 sq. m. (3,013 sq. ft.), ideally consisting of the following:
  - » A pre-school area of minimum 50 sq. m. (538 sq. ft.) or 1 sq. m. (10.7 sq. ft.) per each bedroom across all dwelling unit types with two or more bedrooms, excluding principal bedrooms used by parent(s) or guardian(s); and,
  - » An elementary and teen area of minimum 80 sq. m. (861 sq. ft.) or 1.5 sq. m. (16.1 sq. ft.) per each bedroom across all dwelling unit types with two or more bedrooms, excluding principal bedrooms used by parent(s) or guardian(s). This recommended minimum may be reduced if there are easily and safely accessible community infrastructure facilities that cater to school-aged children and youth, such as schools, community centres, neighbourhood houses, branch libraries.
- Plan all outdoor play areas to be at or above *finished grade*.
- Plan outdoor play areas with the assumption that play activities may 'spill over' to surrounding common spaces.

Lighting in this outdoor amenity area helps provide a sense of safety and wayfinding in this purpose-built Victoria rental building. [*Rafii Architects – Hudson Walk; Image credit: City Staff*]

- Consider incorporating informal play opportunities into the design of site elements outside of the outdoor play area, such as seating and retaining walls.
- Site outdoor play areas to have at least the same level of solar access as outdoor amenity areas per Guideline 2.6(a).
- Provide both hard and soft surfaces at outdoor play areas. Consider sand or pea gravel as soft surfaces (especially if pets have designated pet relief area (per Guideline 2.6(c)) or outdoor resilient surfaces (e.g. rubber mats, tiles, pour-in-place) with high recycled content. Rubber mulch or engineered wood fibre as loose-fill soft surfaces are recommended for well-drained at-grade outdoor play areas where regular maintenance is possible.
- At all outdoor play areas, enable opportunities for active and quiet play, group and individual play, structured and creative play by defining appropriate sub-areas where possible.
- Install play equipment per manufacturer's directions, CCPI (Canadian Certified Playground Inspector) review and for CSA compliance.
- Plan for water and sand play areas where possible.
- Consider water play areas (e.g. splash pad or overhead misting jet elements) to be multi-purpose by design, allowing for other outdoor amenity uses during the day and the year, especially where open areas on site are limited.
- Provide seating in outdoor play area(s) for adult supervision and socialization.
- Equip outdoor play areas with lighting to facilitate evening use and safety and non-freeze hose bib for ease of maintenance.
    - » Locate pre-school outdoor play area(s), in close physical and visual access to indoor and outdoor amenity areas,

Integration of play into a retaining wall at the outdoor play area of a purpose-built rental development in Victoria [Rafii Architects – Hudson Walk; Image credit: City Staff]

or other common areas of the development. Consider additional seating for adult supervision and socialization.

» In elementary and teen outdoor play area(s), approach programming based on the availability of nearby community infrastructure facilities for various spontaneous and programmed activities such as informal gathering, sitting and overlooking other activities, informal ball games and practice (e.g. small-court basketball, half-court tennis stroke practice).

c. Opportunities for free and nature-based play

Enable outdoor play areas to encourage physical activity, exploration and social interaction and promote the development of emotional intelligence, problem solving skills, sense of place and time, memories and autonomy:

- Approach the planning and design of each outdoor play area to create a coherent character to invoke a sense of place and scale and encourage exploration.
- Consider designing outdoor play areas to be 'as safe as necessary' rather than 'as safe as possible' to offer unstructured opportunities for play at heights, speed, with tools, manipulable materials, near water.
- Design or specify outdoor play equipment to have a distinct character, inviting gross motor play, free play and spontaneous exploration via climbing, balancing and jumping on elements of varying heights.
- Consider incorporating a designated 'messy play' area with manipulable materials (e.g. sand, earth, gravel, fallen plant material like leaves or pine cones) for imaginative play, object play (carrying, collecting, damming, digging, floating, filling,

Nature-based play equipment made of wood at a Lower Mainland townhouse development [Edgemont Townhomes; Image credit: Boffo Properties]

The outdoor play area of this family-friendly affordable housing site in Vancouver is both physically and visually connected to shared indoor amenity areas. [NSDA Architects - Heather Place; Image credit: Andrew Latreille]

scooping, sifting, spilling, sprinkling and throwing) alone or in groups.

- Designate sub-spaces for solo or small group play.
- Explore opportunities for play area mystery and exploration with low-height planting or pony walls and balance adventure and fun play experience with surveillability.

d. Pet areas

Plan and design outdoor pet areas to cater to the needs of companion animals in family-friendly developments:

- Provide a designated pet relief area in all residential developments:
  - » At least 5 sq. m. (54 sq. ft.), at or above *finished grade*.
  - » Featuring a low-height vertical element (akin to a fire hydrant).
  - » Equipped with lighting and non-freeze hose bib.
  - » Enclosed with a pet-safe landscape buffer and/or fence (1.2 m or four feet tall if at grade, 1.6 m or 5 feet 3 inches tall if above-grade) and a double-gate, sized sufficiently to contain large-breed dogs.
  - » Designed with a pea gravel surface for the drainage to sanitary system and with a curb to prevent interference with on-site rainwater management, away from existing trees and naturally sensitive areas.
  - » Informational and etiquette signage for the community.
  - » Completed with a rodent-resistant waste receptacle nearby and where possible, a pet waste bag dispenser.

A planned residential development in Central Saanich includes a play area designed for free play. [Marigold Lands; Image credit: KinsolPlay]

A large residential development in Victoria includes nature-based play rooted in the area's working harbour context. [Dockside Green; Image credit: City Staff]

- Provide a designated off-leash pet run area in larger residential developments:
  - » At least 20 sq. m. (215 sq. ft.) in residential developments of 90 or more homes.
  - » In residential developments of 200 or more homes, 40 sq. m. (430 sq. ft.) or 5 per cent of the total outdoor amenity space – whichever is higher.
  - » Separate but with direct or nearby access to the pet relief area.
  - » Equipped with lighting, seating, a drinking fountain and non-freeze hose bib.
  - » Designed with a pea gravel surface for ground infiltration and/or drainage to sanitary system.
  - » Enclosed with a pet-safe landscape buffer and/or fence (1.2 m or four feet tall if at grade, 1.6 m or 5 feet 3 inches tall if above-grade) and a double-gate, sized sufficiently to contain large-breed dogs.
  - » With separate areas for small dogs and large dogs.
  - » Enriched by play structures and obstacles, such as platforms, tunnels or logs and/or water play features.
  - » Informational and etiquette signage for the community.
  - » Completed with a rodent-resistant waste receptacle nearby and where possible, a pet waste bag dispenser.

A designated play and relief area for pets at a purpose-built rental development in Victoria [Rafii Architects – Hudson Walk; Image credit: City Staff]

A designated play and relief area for pets at a purpose-built rental development in Victoria [Chris Dikeakos Architects – 1008 Pandora; Image credit: Apartments.com]

2.6 Livability

Intent: To ensure baseline access to air and daylight in family-friendly developments. To promote acoustic quality in family-friendly developments.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. All living rooms and bedrooms with operable windows

Provide access to daylight and air via operable windows, doors and/or skylights where possible.

b. Acoustic separation for living in community and privacy

Consider acoustic implications of site design, massing, building systems and assemblies:

- Consider fences and barriers to create acoustic shadows on homes and common areas where possible, especially in proximity to sources of noise: Place the acoustic barrier either near the source of noise or near the most likely location of the residents.
- Consider the design of building systems and assemblies for acoustic performance and provide sound attenuating elements such as silencers in ductwork and/or locate building elements strategically such as staggered outlets where applicable.
- Ensure acoustic separation with other residential buildings, between the common and private areas of a building and between the rooms of each home. Provide STC (Sound Transmission Class), ASTC (Apparent Sound Transmission Class) and Impact Isolation Class (IIC) rated assemblies to ensure acoustic quality in all family-friendly residential projects, including multi-unit wood-frame buildings:
  - » Provide wall and floor assemblies with the code-required minimum STC or ASTC ratings.
  - » Consider providing STC ratings of 55 or higher for common areas, such as indoor amenity and laundry areas.
  - » Provide minimum IIC 55 in building floor and wall assemblies.
- Consider enhanced acoustic separation beyond code-required minimums for all family-friendly residential projects, including multi-unit wood-frame buildings:
  - » Minimum STC 55 for all wall and ceiling assemblies;
  - » Minimum STC 65 for party walls between buildings;
  - » Minimum IIC 60 to 65 in building floor and wall assemblies;
  - » Preference of sound-attenuating or -deadening assemblies and materials, such as resilient channels or sound control clips for drywall attachment, or floating flooring with underlayment preferred over glued-on flooring.

2.7 Special Considerations: Lock-Off Units

Intent: To support the flexibility of residential uses in accommodating changes to households/families over time.

Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. Flexible homes by design for changing households

Consider incorporating lock-off units (i.e. smaller, self-contained and separately accessible homes) as optionally stand-alone parts of larger principal dwelling units in family-friendly developments:

- Incorporate the consideration and planning for lock-off units in the design of new developments to avoid challenges with building code compliance for later conversions of existing homes into principal dwellings and lock-off units.
- Consider lock-off units especially where homes may face two different directions (e.g. townhomes or apartment buildings with exterior circulation or for homes on corners).
- Provide a separate entrance, kitchen and bathroom facilities in alignment with the City's definition of a *Self-contained Dwelling Unit* (where the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* applies) or as a *Residential Lock-Off Unit* (where the *Zoning Bylaw* applies).
- Ensure livability and usability by appropriate lock-off units:
  - » Minimum clear width of 3.6 m (12 feet) at the living space, measured from finished interior wall to the opposite one (i.e. 'paint to paint').
  - » Maximum depth of 9 m (30 feet) measured from windows to the farthest interior wall in the unit.

A lock-off unit as a component of a family-friendly Vancouver apartment. [MA+HG Architects – Our Urban Village Cohousing, Developer: Tomo Spaces; Image credit: Janis Nicolay (top) and Tomo Spaces (bottom)]

- » A minimum floor area no less than 33 sq. m. (355 sq. ft.), or per City of Victoria regulations for minimum dwelling unit size, if applicable and a maximum area lesser than that of the principal dwelling unit associated with the lock-off unit.

- Ensure livability by access to daylight and air:
  - » Provide operable windows and/or doors to the outside, providing clear sightlines to the exterior and at a window-to-wall ratio similar to that for other living rooms and bedrooms in the building.
  - » While windowless sleeping or living rooms are generally discouraged, provide indirect access to daylight (e.g. through glazed partitions or transom windows) into such spaces, if included within the lock-off unit.
- Ensure life safety and acoustic quality:
  - » Approach the design of wall and floor assemblies (and their openings) between the lock-off unit and the principal dwelling as partitions separating different suites, per BCBC.
  - » Provide building assemblies for these walls and floors with acoustic performance noted under guideline 2.6 (b).
- Ensure livability by attention to privacy:
  - » Locate entrances of the principal dwelling and the lock-off unit away from their sleeping areas, where possible.
  - » Provide a direct entrance to the lock-off unit from the outside and/or from the building's common circulation area.
  - » The entrance door to the lock-off unit should be designed to have a unit identity similar to that of the principal dwelling and other units in the building.

A lock-off unit as a component of a family-friendly Vancouver apartment. [*MA+HG Architects - Our Urban Village Cohousing, Developer: Tomo Spaces; Image credit: MA+HG Architects*]

2.8 Special Considerations: Alternative Housing Tenures

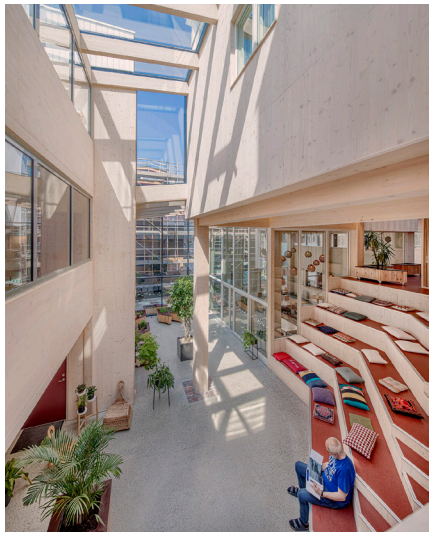
Intent: To leverage the potential of alternative residential tenures or community-led housing models in providing family-friendly homes and communities.

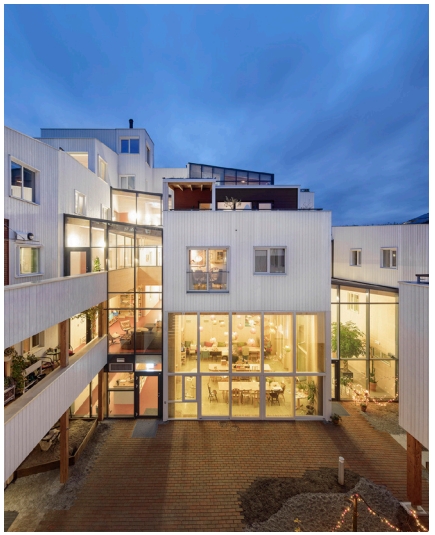
Strategies to achieve this include, but are not limited to the following:

a. A variety of homes for all life stages

Embrace the opportunities to provide an expanded offering of family-friendly homes and amenities in community-led housing:

- Consider a larger offering of family homes and lock-off units in community-led housing models, such as community land trusts (CLT) and co-operative housing to enable youth, family formation and aging in place.
- Consider site design and building configurations where common spaces such as courtyards, interior streets and through-block passages are the key informants of massing.
- Consider concentrating amenity areas to a central and accessible location to expand the range of activities possible at these areas.





Shared indoor and outdoor spaces for community-building at a family-friendly cohousing development in Norway [Helen & Hard Arkitekter – Vindmøllebakken Cohousing; Image credit: Helen & Hard Arkitekter (top) Sindre Ellingsen (bottom)]

Resources

Below are resources that informed the design guidelines and may offer further reading on the family-friendly planning and design of sites, buildings and spaces:

- BC Housing (2019) Design Guidelines & Construction Standards and supporting technical bulletins
- BC Society of Transition Houses (2023) Women-Centred Housing Design Toolkit
- Beaulieu, Beno (Canadian Paediatric Society) (2024) Healthy childhood development through outdoor risky play: Navigating the balance with injury prevention
- Borough of Hackney (2021) Growing up in Hackney: Child-Friendly Places Supplementary Planning Document
- City of New Westminster (2016) Family-Friendly Housing Policy
- City of North Vancouver (2015) Active Design Guidelines
- City of Vancouver (2017) HEY NEIGHBOUR! Exploring sociability in multi-unit buildings across Vancouver
- City of Vancouver (2022, 3rd edition) High-Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines
- City of Vancouver (2022, 10th edition) Housing Design and Technical Guidelines
- City of Vancouver (2022, 3rd edition) Lock-Off Unit Guidelines
- City of Toronto (2019) Pet Friendly Design Guidelines and Best Practices For New Multi-Unit Buildings
- City of Toronto (2020) Planning for Children in New Vertical Communities
- Consortium for Health, Intervention, Learning and Development (CHILD) (2013) 7Cs: An Informal Guide to Young Children's Outdoor Play Spaces
- Durrett C, Yang J et al (2022) Cohousing Communities: Designing for High-Functioning Neighborhoods
- Krysiak N, Cities for Play (2019) Designing Child-Friendly High-Density Neighbourhoods
- McLennan J (2013) Child Centered Planning: A New Specialized Pattern Language Tool
- Vancouver School Board (2015) Outdoor PLAYbook

The elevator lobby of this family-friendly cohousing development in Vancouver includes space for reading and social connection. [Cornerstone Architecture – Little Mountain Cohousing; Image credit: Happy Cities]