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AMENITY AREAS

This guideline provides general direction, at the concept or schematic design stage, on the planning and design of outdoor common amenity areas (e.g. courtyards and rooftops), indoor common amenity areas (e.g. party rooms and fitness rooms) and private amenity areas (e.g. balconies, patios and terraces) for residential and mixed-use developments.

This guideline identifies design considerations in addition to *Zoning Bylaw* regulations related to amenity area size and configuration.

For plazas and similar public amenity areas (as defined in the *Zoning Bylaw*) in commercial, industrial and other types of development, refer to *PR1 Civic Spaces*.

The creation of high quality indoor and outdoor amenity areas in residential and mixed-use developments can contribute to a higher quality of life for residents. Well designed amenity areas provide a focal point within the development and can support increased density of development.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- It is critical to provide a range of common and private amenity areas, and indoor and outdoor amenity areas, to offer a variety of opportunities and benefits for residents of all ages and abilities. Providing only a single form of amenity area (e.g. indoor party room or rooftop amenity area) can dramatically limit the quality of these opportunities.
- The choice of specific amenity area types should consider and address the proposed building functions and anticipated resident mix, as well as the neighbourhood and street context (e.g. balconies or grade-level common amenity spaces can contribute to a vibrant and safe public realm).
- All amenity areas regardless of type must be universally accessible to users of all ages and abilities.

ENVIRONMENTAL + ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Amenity areas (both at-grade and on rooftops) should introduce planting areas (including trees and shrubs), community gardens, etc., that reduce urban heat island effect and reduce stormwater impacts.
 - At-grade courtyards and plazas should include additional Low Impact Development (LID) measures, such as permeable paving and bioswales.

AMENITY AREA TYPOLOGIES

There are a number of amenity area typologies of varying scales and functions. The following outlines design considerations for each type of amenity area.

Courtyards + Plazas

- Courtyards and plazas are outdoor amenity areas which serve residents (and in some cases, the general public).
- Plazas are typically designed as an extension of the streetscape, whereas

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courtyards are typically integrated with, and partially or fully enclosed by, built form.

- Courtyards and plazas generally have considerations (e.g. size, programme) similar to those of civic spaces (*Refer to PR1 Civic Spaces*). Other key considerations in the planning and design of courtyards and plazas include:
 - Ensuring spaces that are publicly accessible respond to functional needs of the broader community and be more flexible in nature.
 - Maximizing active edges through the incorporation of multi-unit residential interfaces (*Refer to PR3 Multi-Unit Residential Interfaces*), indoor amenity spaces and similar uses.
 - Special design consideration needs to be given to the transition between the public and semi-private natures of these spaces.
 - When courtyards and plazas are located over parking structures, the design should accommodate trees and shrubs in a manner that supports their long term sustainability (*See also BF3 Parking Structures*).
 - As courtyards are partially or fully enclosed by built form, their dimensions should consider the scale of the surrounding built form as well as the intended program. Other considerations include:
 - Furnishings, circulation, lighting, landscaping, views (Figures 1 and 2); and
 - Micro climatic aspects including sunlight, heat island effect, wind impacts, rain and snow.
- For courtyards that are directly accessible from the street:
 - Design cues need to be integrated which invite public use while communicating the semi-public nature of the space (Figure 3).
 - Spaces should not be dead ended. To ensure the safety of users, courtyards should provide shortcuts or other access routes which are potentially usable 24 hours a day.
 - Shortcuts should incorporate design cues to ensure these routes and uses are legible for all users (Figure 4).

Patios + Terraces

- Patios are mainly associated with multi-unit residential interfaces that directly address streets, civic spaces or courtyards.
- Terraces are commonly provided on the rooftop of podiums where building setbacks allow.
- For both typologies, consideration should be given to providing high quality amenity areas of a sufficient size, which contribute to street activation while providing natural surveillance; i.e. 'eyes on the street'.
 - As terraces are typically located above grade, special consideration may need to be given to mitigating wind impacts, providing shade and privacy (e.g. through screens, pergolas, etc).
 - For more information on patios see *UDM 3.2. Residential Interfaces*.

Indoor Common Amenity Areas

- Indoor common amenity areas should be located and oriented to take advantage of views and daylight, and integrated with outdoor common amenity areas wherever possible (Figure 5).
 - Indoor common amenity areas provided below grade (e.g. in basements) are discouraged as these conditions can pose particular challenges related to safety, access, daylight and views to the outdoors.
 - In these instances, sunken terraces, stairs, etc., should be utilized to ensure daylight, views and access to grade.
- Programming for indoor common amenity areas should reflect the unit count and anticipated resident mix, as well as opportunities for adjacent outdoor use.
- Consideration should be given to providing indoor common amenity areas at grade to activate streets, alleys and civic spaces and provide natural surveillance and security for both residents and passers-by.

Rooftops

- Rooftops should not be the sole form of common amenity area provided as they are typically used for limited months of the year due to seasonal weather conditions.

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- Rooftop amenity areas should be combined with associated indoor common amenity space to provide for multi-seasonal use (Figure 6).
- The design of rooftop amenity areas should consider the unit count and anticipated resident mix through a range of spaces, amenities, furnishings, etc., which accommodate a range of group size, activities, and seasonal constraints / opportunities.
- Other key design considerations for rooftop amenity areas include:
 - Incorporating green roofs, community gardens, planting, etc.;
 - Addressing the unique environmental conditions within rooftop settings (e.g. wind, rain, noise, light spill, solar exposure) (Figure 6);
 - Accommodating appropriate setbacks from the roof edge to enable privacy, limited overlook to adjacent sites, and user safety; and
 - Ensuring universal accessibility for all residents and users.

Balconies

- Balconies should be designed as extensions of indoor living space. To maximize their functionality and accommodate furnishings and other amenities, balconies should be dimensioned to accommodate all furnishings, circulation, planters, etc.
- Other design considerations for balconies (Figure 7) include:
 - Ensuring weather protection;
 - Affording privacy between adjacent units / balconies;
 - Limiting direct views from adjacent residences; and
 - Providing views of streets, alleys and other civic spaces where possible.
- Consideration should be given to the use of inset balconies (Figure 8) to address the above considerations. Inset balconies can also be useful where setback requirements limit the use of traditional balconies extending from the building face.
- Balconies (inset and otherwise) are an important element of a building's composition that can add visual interest while reducing building massing – particularly for large building facades (Figure 9).

Common amenity area typologies and design considerations

Courtyard (A) incorporating both active edges (patios) and appropriate transitions with the streetscape.

Indoor common amenity Area at grade (B) opening onto courtyard.

Patios (C) activate the streetscape and provide natural surveillance.

Indoor common amenity area (D) well integrated with the adjacent rooftop space (E).

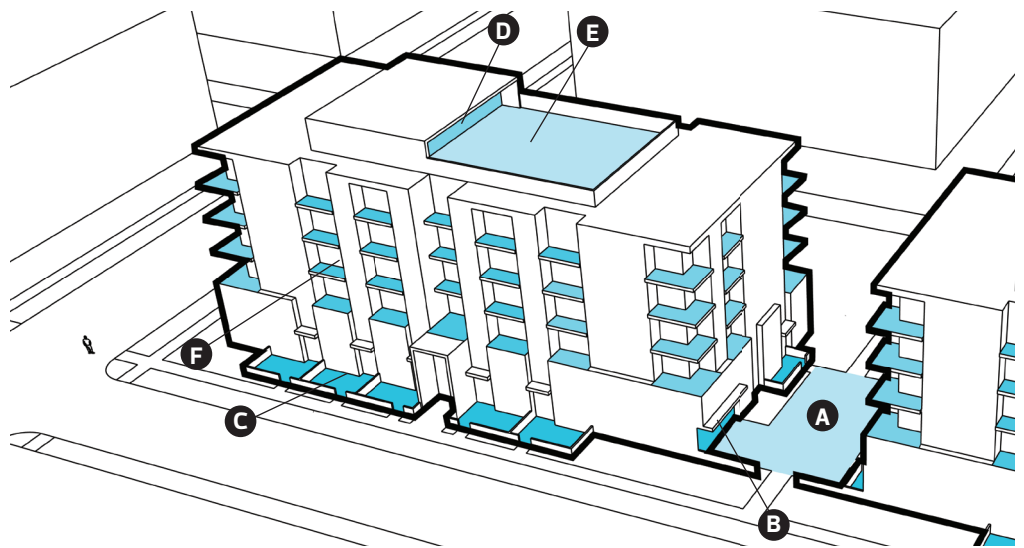
Inset balconies (F) provide weather protection and appropriate separation between adjacent units.

Other Amenity Area Typologies

- In multi-building residential developments amenities are commonly provided in the form of a club house or recreation facility (with swimming pools, courts, indoor fitness rooms, etc) (Figure 10).
- While the considerations for these amenity area types are similar to those of civic spaces, the siting and design of these amenity areas should consider:
 - Selecting a centralized location with direct and safe pedestrian access for all residents/users;
 - Ensuring protection from wind, sun and other climatic concerns;
 - Integration with adjacent buildings, parking and circulation areas, streetscapes; and
 - Integration of indoor and outdoor amenity areas wherever possible.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants may be required to provide a concept design of a proposed outdoor common amenity space, accompanied by a design narrative.
- Applicants may be required to undertake a Wind Impact Assessment and/or a Sun/Shadow Impact Assessment to demonstrate the impact on proposed amenity areas.
- A CPTED study may be required for some outdoor common amenity areas.



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1,2 Two different courtyards within a large, multi-building residential development, Vancouver.

3 Careful demarcation of the public / semi-private courtyard interface.

4 Well defined public access through courtyard, Vancouver.

5 Indoor common amenity area with access to daylight and views. (*Autograph*)

6 Rooftop with furnishings, weather protection and integration with indoor amenities. (*Autograph*)

7 Balcony configuration offering wind and weather protection.

8 Inset balconies can offer additional privacy and weather protection.

9 Balconies as an element of a building's architectural composition, Calgary.

10 Common amenity area well integrated with fitness centre.

