

# UNITARY PLAN

# 101

Your Easy Guide to understanding  
the Residential Standards



waste



outlook



landscapes



height



context



fencing



parking



street interface



daylight

# The Easy Guide to the Unitary Plan

This booklet is part one of a series of tools that have been created by the Auckland Design Manual team, to help you navigate the Unitary Plan and work out what you can build on your site.

UNDERSTAND THE RULES

APPLY THE RULES

WORKED EXAMPLES

The purpose of the Easy Guide to the Unitary Plan is to help you to understand what the residential standards and terms mean for your own residential project.

This guide covers the core standards you must meet to build a permitted development (i.e. does not require a resource consent).

The Easy Guide to the Unitary Plan is a supplementary resource. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this guide, the Unitary Plan must be referred to in the case of any uncertainty.

If you need additional help understand the planning standards or finding out which standards apply to your site, call Auckland Council's Planning Help Desk on (09) 301 0101.

## ABOUT THE AUCKLAND DESIGN MANUAL:

The Auckland Design Manual is a fantastic free resource that's been created to help you through your design concept and development phase. It's a practical guide that sits alongside the Unitary Plan. If the Unitary Plan is your rule book, think of the Design Manual as your 'how to guide.' You can use it for inspiration and guidance, it will help you to visualise what you can build in Auckland.

The Design Manual can support you through the following stages of your development process:

- Inspiration for what you could build on your site
- Understanding the rules
- Developing a design

## WHAT IS A STANDARD?

A standard is essentially a 'rule' that sets out what you can and can't do on your site. Your development must meet all the standards in order to be a legal build.

This guide covers the core residential standards you must meet to build a permitted development (i.e. does not require a resource consent).

Please note that there are additional standards that are specific to each zone and these should also be referred to in the Unitary Plan.

## WHAT IS A SITE?

Your site is defined by official government survey marks.

A site can refer to one or more lots. A map of property boundaries is kept in public records.

Before you undertake any development on your site, the first thing you will need is a clear and accurate map marking your property boundary.

## WHAT IS THE NET SITE AREA?

Net site area is an important variable for calculating spatial requirements on your site such as your building coverage, and the amount of landscaping you need.

The net site area is the total area of a site excluding:

- any area subject to a road widening designation;
- any part of an entrance strip;
- any legal right of way; and
- any access site.

If you are unsure of any of these, it is recommended that you speak to your local planner.

## WHAT IS THE SITE FRONTAGE?

The site frontage is defined as the entire length of the site boundary that faces the road. Knowing this length is important for when you are considering fencing options and site access.

## WHAT IS RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER?

Residential character refers to the look and feel of a neighbourhood - it's what makes a suburban neighbourhood different from an industrial area, or town centre.

Each area will have a particular character, created by similarities that prevail there. It may be that most buildings have a similar height, or the same set back from the street, or a predominance of red brick.

# BUILDING HEIGHT

Building height has a significant impact on the appearance and character of an area.

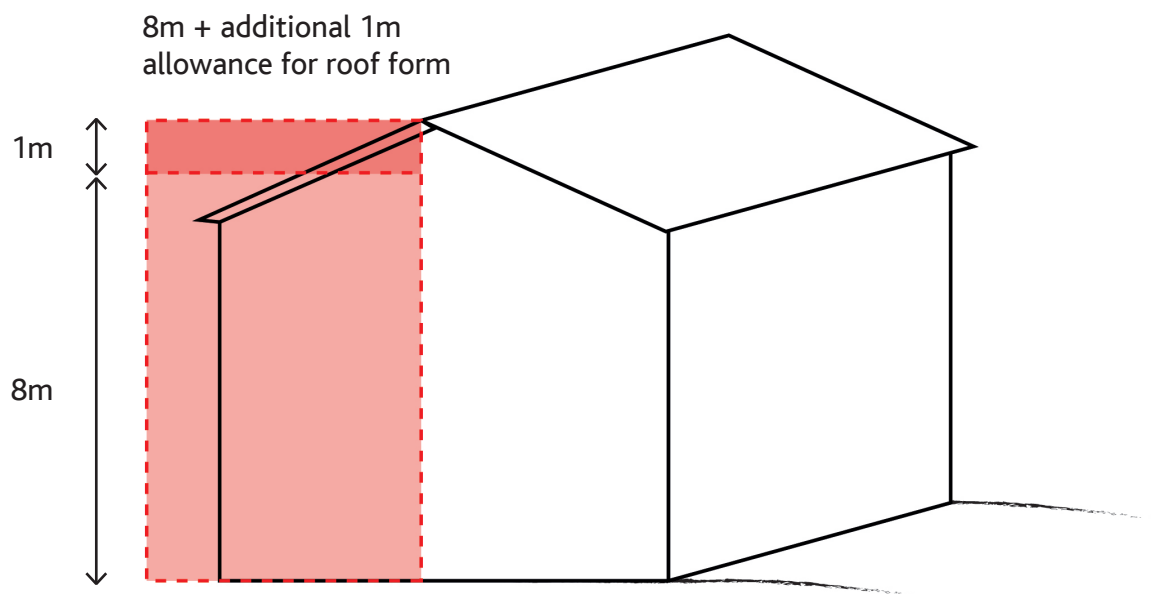
The building height standard is in place to limit the height of buildings.

Each zone has different height restrictions.

'Height' is measured as the vertical distance between the highest part of the building (or structure) and ground level.

'Ground Level' refers to the existing ground height before any earthworks occur.

Height standards for each zone refer to the maximum height allowed. There are small allowances for roof gables and structures like lift towers or chimneys – the standards for each zone will explain this.



\* This diagram shows how the standard is applied in the Mixed Housing Suburban (MHS) zone. See table on p.15 which outlines the criteria for applying the standard in other zones.

# HEIGHT IN RELATION TO BOUNDARY

This standard is to manage the potential impact that a new building or addition might have on the neighbours.

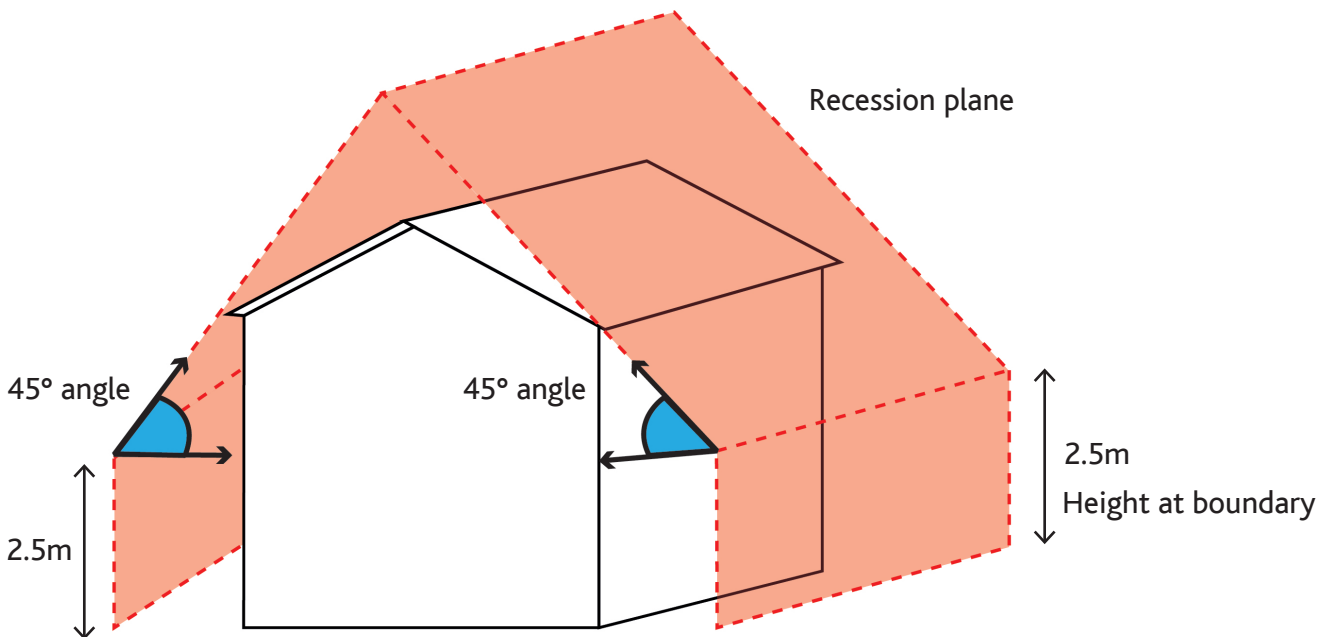
It is important that your new development doesn't block out your neighbour's daylight.

Height in relation to boundary is measured vertically from ground level at the boundary (height varies between zones). From that point measure inwards at an incline of 45 degrees (this is termed the recession plane).

This creates an invisible envelope that the building must be contained in.

This standard applies to the side and rear boundaries of the site, but not at the street front.

Height at boundary differs between zones. In the Mixed Housing Suburban (MHS) and Single House zones the height at boundary is 2.5m. In Mixed Housing Urban (MHU) and Terraced Housing and Apartment Buildings (THAB) zones, the height at boundary is increased to 3m, with a 45° angle recession plane.



\* This diagram shows how the standard is applied in the Mixed Housing Suburban (MHS) zone. See table on p.15 which outlines the criteria for applying the standard in other zones.

# BUILDING COVERAGE

Building coverage is essentially the building footprint and is measured as a percentage of the site. This standard ensures the site has a generally spacious feeling. Building coverage is different for each zone.

Along with height limits, it manages the bulk or size of buildings and therefore influences the character and appearance of an area.

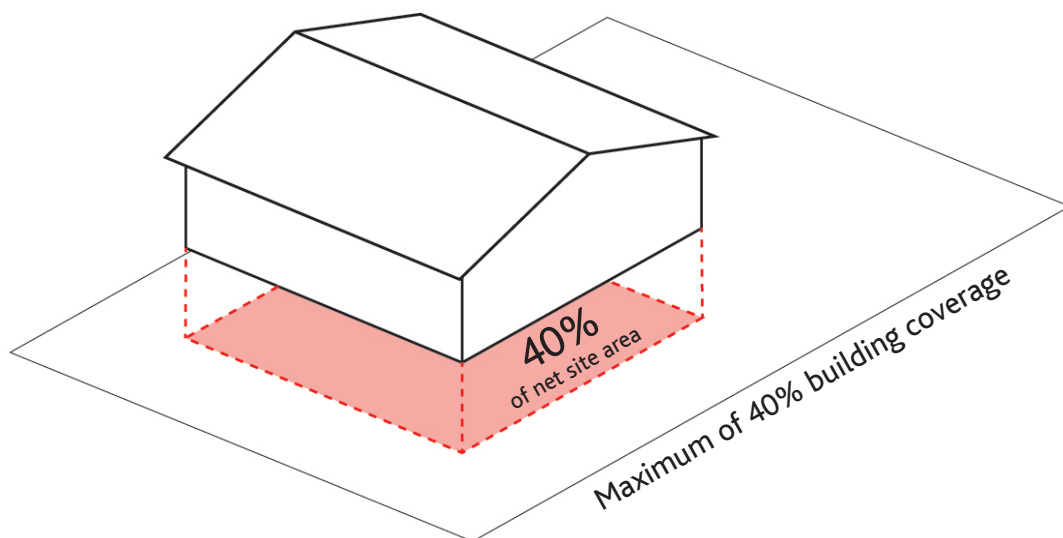
The building coverage standard applies only to the 'net site area' (see page 3 for definition).

Building coverage includes:

- overhanging or cantilevered parts of buildings
- any part of the eaves or spouting that extends more than 750mm horizontally from the exterior wall of the building
- accessory buildings, such as sheds and sleep-outs.

It does not include:

- uncovered swimming pools
- pergolas
- uncovered decks
- open structures that are not buildings, such as a garden archway.



\* This diagram shows how the standard is applied in the Mixed Housing Suburban (MHS) zone. See table on p.16 which outlines the criteria for applying the standard in other zones.

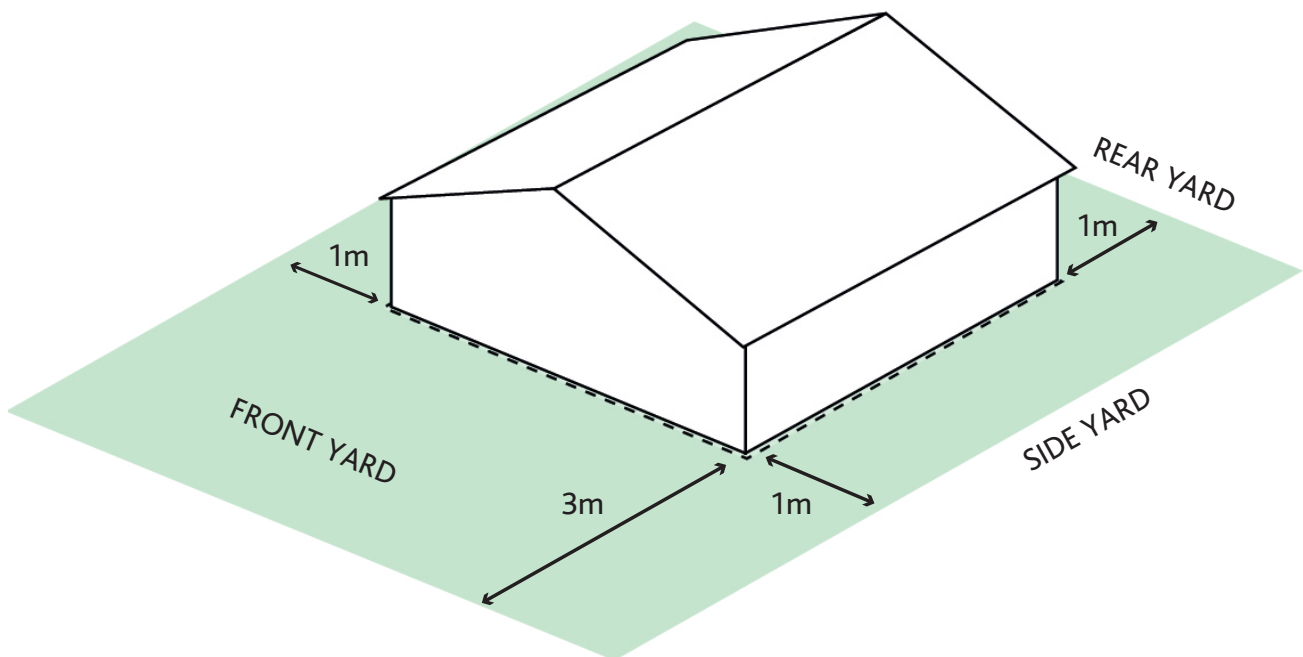
# YARD CONTROLS

Yards are important because they provide space for buildings and services to be maintained, and improve the residential character and the general appeal of a street.

The yard area must be kept clear of buildings and structures from the ground upward. Rear & side yards can include planting, as long as there is still access.

Yards are always measured at right angles (90°) to the site boundary.

These yard controls are the minimum amount of space required between the relevant site boundary and the building.



\* This diagram shows how the standard is applied in the Mixed Housing Suburban (MHS) zone. See table on p.16 which outlines the criteria for applying the standard in other zones.

# OUTLOOK SPACE

This standard is to make sure living spaces and bedrooms have windows that provide access to daylight, adequate privacy and enough of an outlook to create a sense of space.

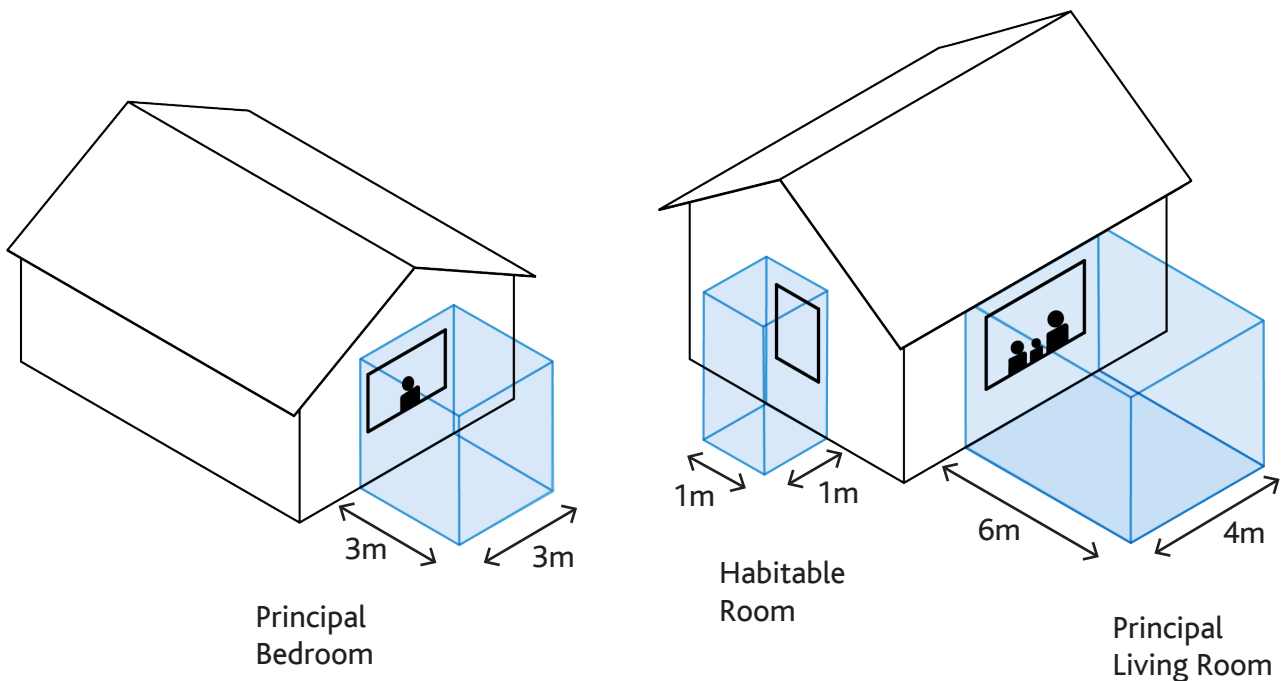
Outlook spaces can be within a site or can overlook a public street or public open space. The outlook space must be clear of other buildings and must not overlap the outlook space from another dwelling.

The outlook space is measured from the centre of a window of a living space or bedroom.

If there is more than one window in a room, it is measured from the largest one. The amount of outlook space from a room differs according to its use.

**Minimum dimensions for outlook space from windows are:**

- A main living room must have an outlook space with a minimum dimension of 6m in depth and 4m in width
- A principal bedroom must have an outlook space with a minimum dimension of 3m in depth and 3m in width
- All other habitable rooms must have an outlook space with a minimum dimension of 1m in depth and 1m in width.



\* Please note that Outlook controls only apply in Mixed Housing Suburban, Mixed Housing Urban, and Terraced Housing and Apartment Buildings zones. See table on p.18.

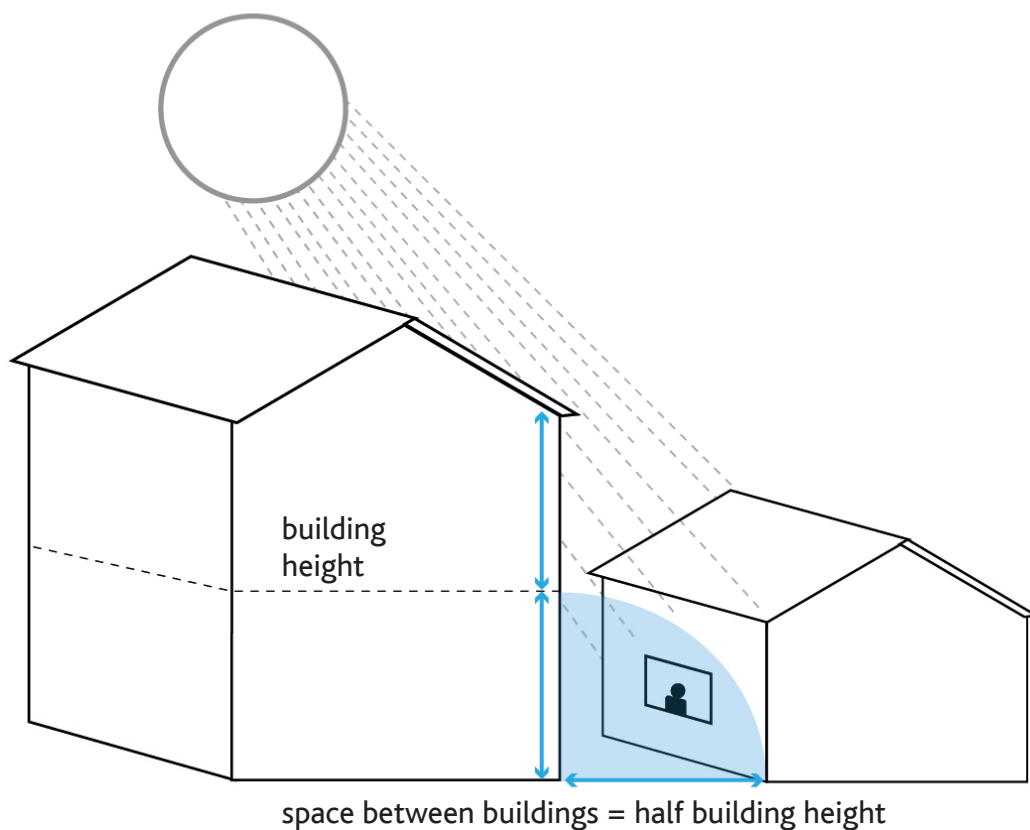


# DAYLIGHT

This standard is to ensure rooms are healthy and pleasant to live in by providing access to daylight for buildings on the same site.

Buildings must be spaced far enough apart to let enough daylight into the main windows.

In practice, this standard means that the space between buildings will be calculated at half the height of the adjacent building's wall.



# IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

Impervious surfaces are anything which stop or significantly slow water soaking into the ground.

The main purpose of this standard is to manage the amount of stormwater runoff from a site, which in turn reduces the risk of flooding and strain on the stormwater network during heavy rainfall.

It is also there to improve the overall appearance of individual sites and the surrounding neighbourhood.

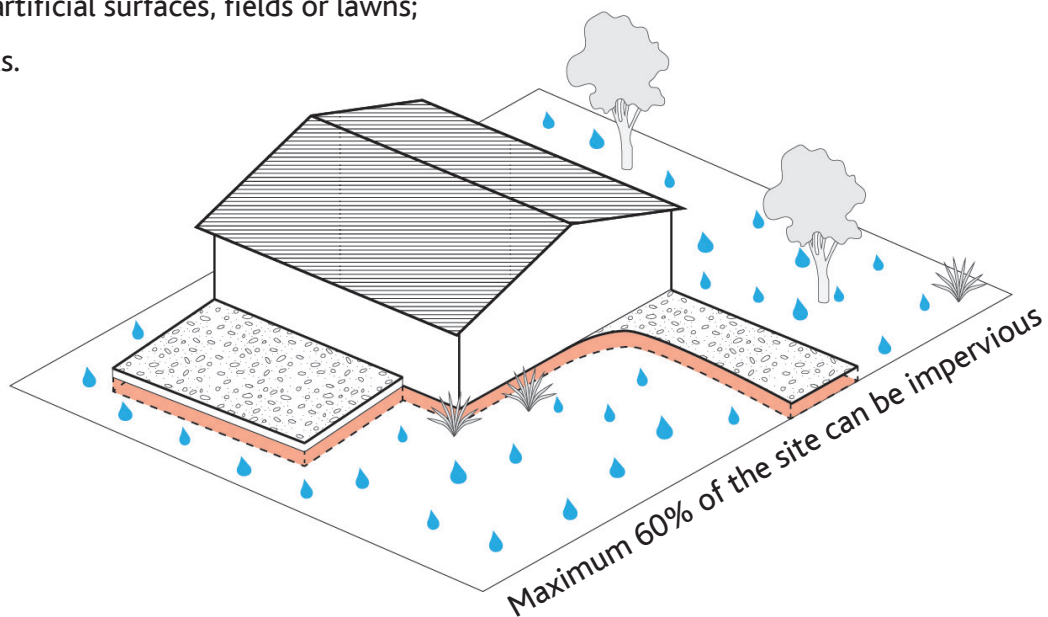
Each zone has different site allowances for impermeable surfaces and is measured as a proportion of the overall site size.

Impervious surfaces include:

- roofs;
- paved areas including patios, driveways and sealed or compacted metal parking areas, sealed and compacted metal roads;
- layers engineered to be impervious such as compacted clay .

Consider the following to improve water soakage and prevent excessive rain runoff:

- grass and bush areas;
- gardens and other vegetated areas, including living roofs (with soil and plants on top of the roof);
- porous or permeable paving;
- permeable artificial surfaces, fields or lawns;
- slatted decks.



\* This diagram shows how the standard is applied in the Mixed Housing Suburban (MHS) zone. See table on p.17 which outlines the criteria for applying the standard in other zones.

# OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE

This standard is to make sure that people have access to usable, flat outdoor space.

Outdoor living space must be a minimum of 20m<sup>2</sup>.

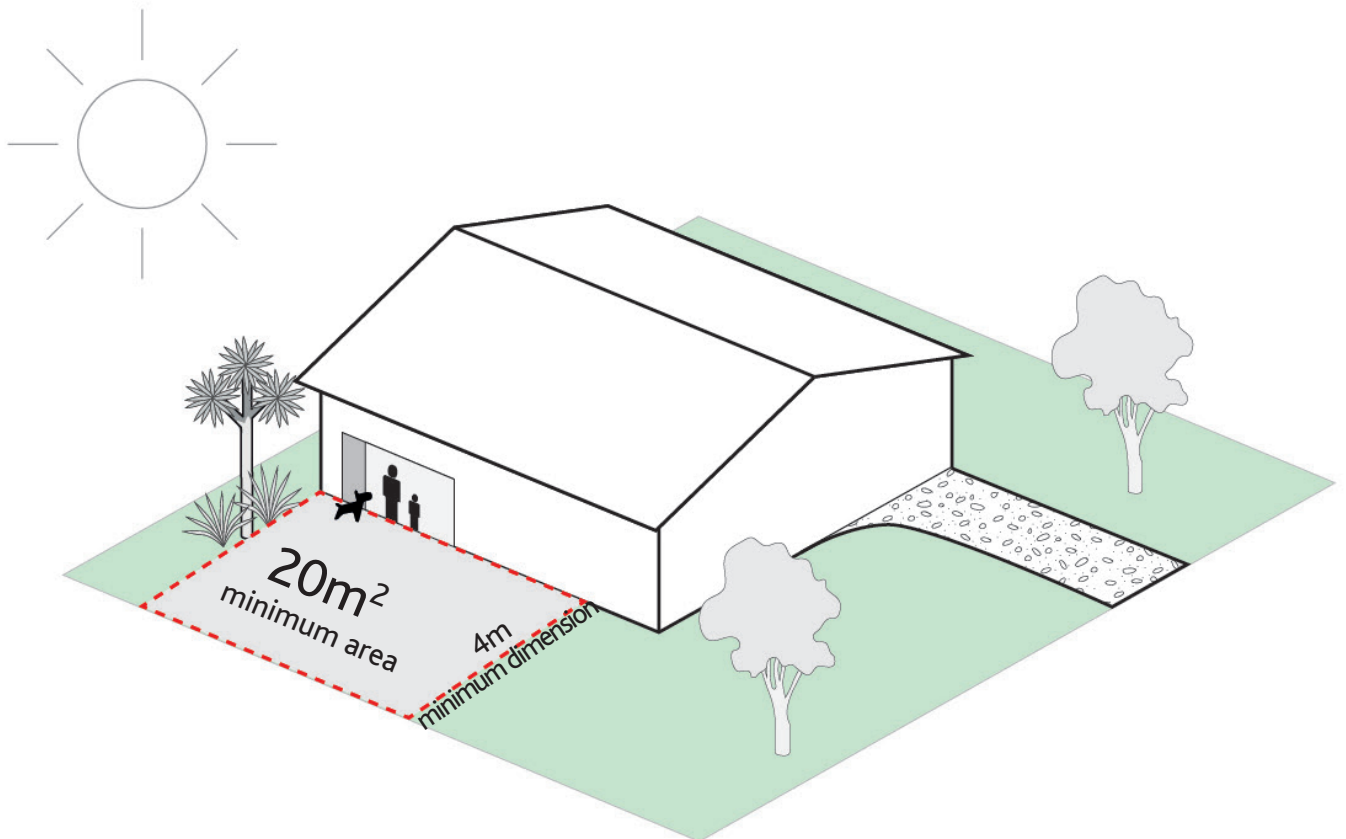
Every edge of the outdoor living space must be at least 4m.

It is important that outdoor living space gets sunlight, therefore it must not be south-facing. Outdoor living space must be directly accessible from a main living area, dining room, or kitchen.

For safety reasons, outdoor living spaces must be separate from driveways or turning bays.

Outdoor living spaces must be clear of any buildings, except for the following:

- pools
- building eaves
- pergolas, lattice fences or similar open structures
- decks and terraces.



\* This diagram shows how the standard is applied in the Mixed Housing Suburban (MHS) zone. See table on p.18 which outlines the criteria for applying the standard in other zones.

# FRONT FENCES

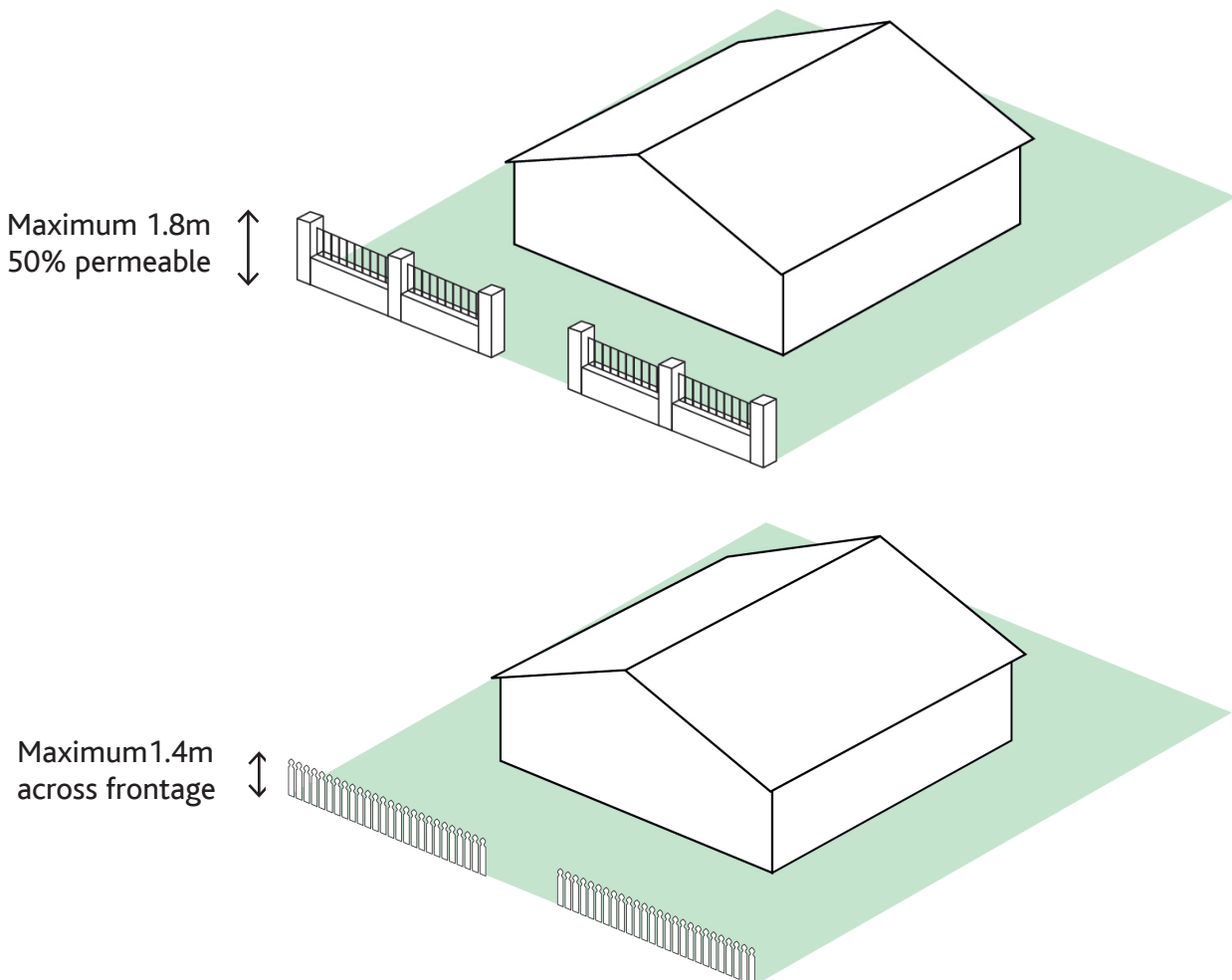
Front fences are an option for providing privacy for houses.

It is important that they don't block the view to the street. This is to increase safety, especially child safety around driveways. It also means you can watch out for your neighbours, and the people walking on your street.

There are three different compliant options for front fences, to suit various needs:

- Maximum height of 1.4m across the whole length of the frontage;
- Maximum height of 1.8m for half of the frontage with 1.4m elsewhere;
- Maximum height of 1.8m if the fence is 50% open (e.g. permeable fencing or landscaping).

Maximum height of fencing is measured from the ground height at the boundary, and always includes any retaining walls.



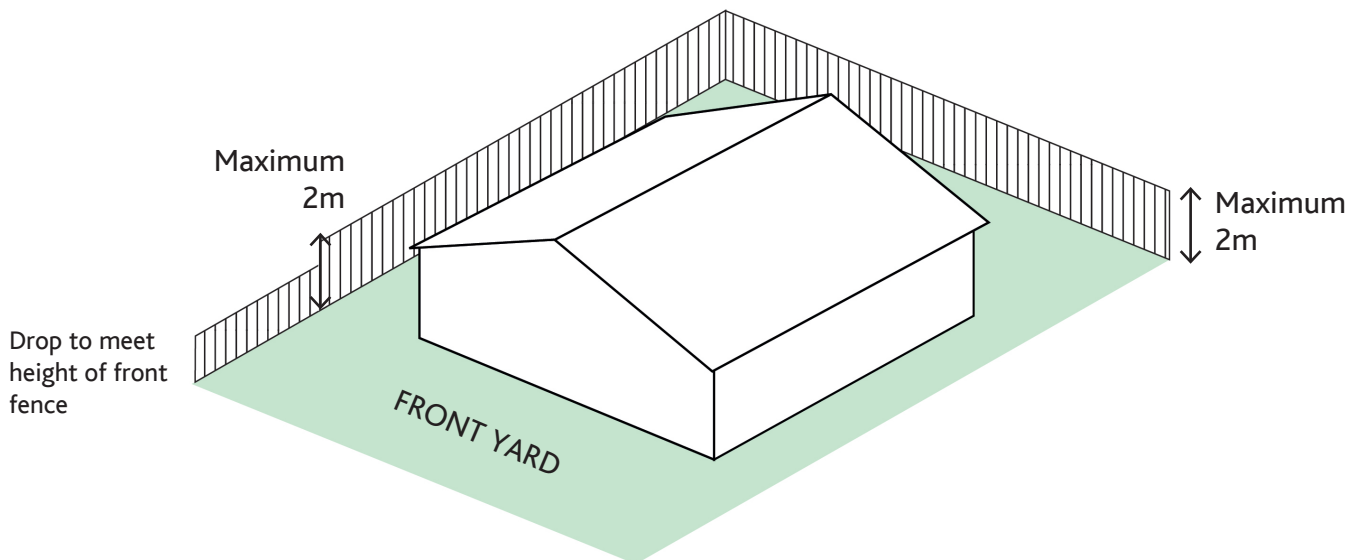
## REAR & SIDE FENCES

Rear and side fences provide privacy for houses and separation between neighbours.

The maximum height for rear and side fences is 2m, and can include fences, walls and landscaping.

Maximum height of fencing is measured from the ground height at the boundary, and includes any retaining walls.

Where a side yard meets the front yard, the height must drop to the height of front yard fence (see diagram below). At this point consider permeable fencing so that you can see pedestrians when you are pulling out of your driveway.



# LANDSCAPED AREA

Landscaped areas are important because they improve the overall quality of individual sites and the surrounding neighbourhood.

Landscaped areas can include grass, trees and any pathways under 1.5m in width. Up to 25% of landscaped areas may include additional landscape features, including:

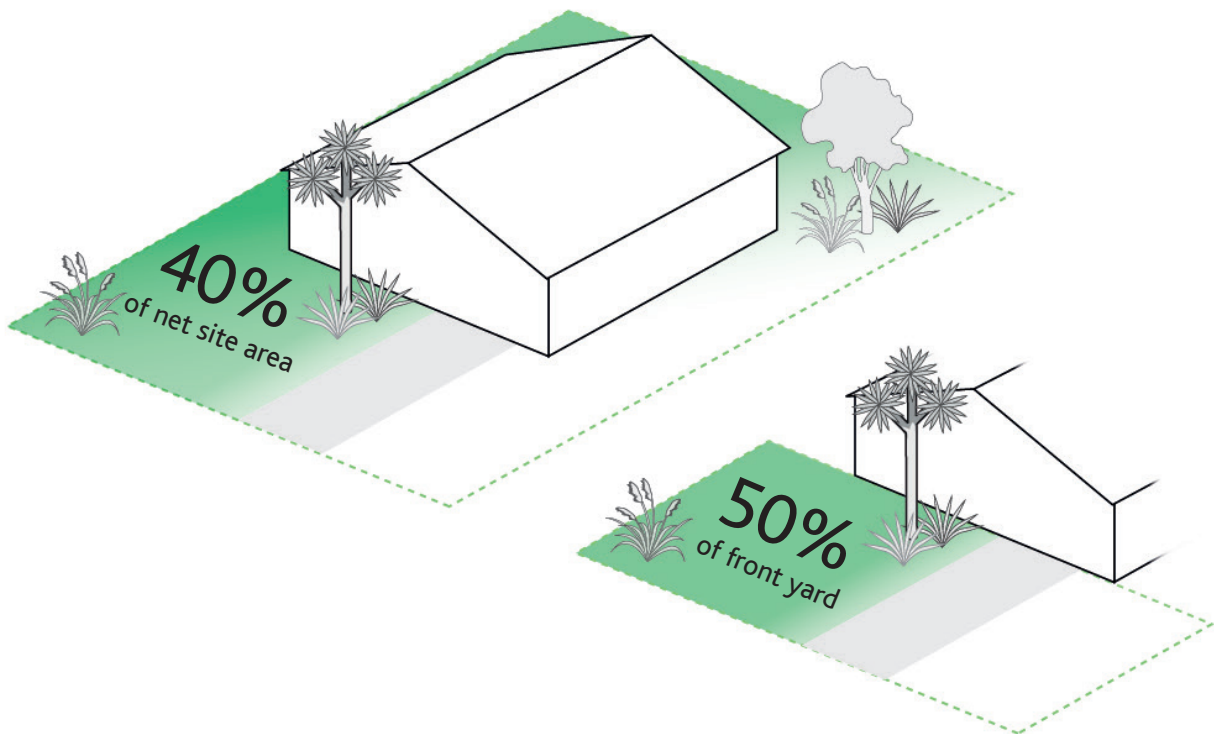
- paved areas, where pavers are a maximum of 650mm
- uncovered decks that are less than 1m in height above the ground.

Landscaped areas do not include any spaces that:

- are considered part of the building coverage area;
- are part of an impervious pathway (such as a concrete path) more than 1.5m in width;
- are used for the parking, manoeuvring or loading of motor vehicles.

Landscaped areas can be over an underground structure (such as underground parking) as long as there is enough soil depth and drainage.

The use of permeable artificial lawn is permitted – see Unitary Plan definition, or speak to your planner for further information.



\* This diagram shows how the standard is applied in the Mixed Housing Suburban (MHS) zone. See table on p.17 which outlines the criteria for applying the standard in other zones.

## VEHICLE ACCESS AND PARKING

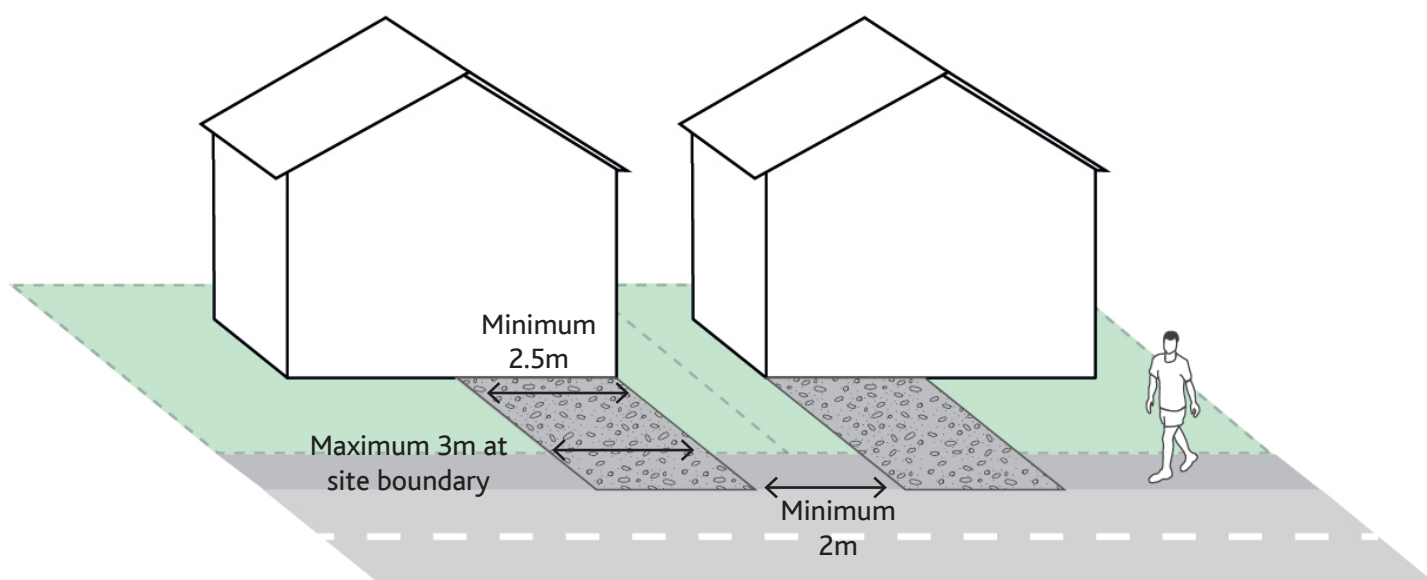
Vehicle access from the road into the site requires a vehicle crossing. One vehicle crossing is allowed for every 25m of a site's road frontage.

There must be a 2m separation from vehicle crossings to adjacent sites.

Generally, the width of a vehicle crossing at the site boundary for a single dwelling is 2.75m - 3m and the minimum width of the driveway within the site is 2.5m.

There are different car parking requirements for dwellings according to zones and various measurements for the design of parking within the site.

Some zones do not require any on-site car parking and others have a minimum requirement of one car park per dwelling. Refer to the Unitary Plan's Transport chapter for more specific information on vehicle access and parking requirements.



## STANDARD TABLES

The following tables are a guide to measurements and criteria for standards in each zone.\*

### BUILDING HEIGHT

Zone	Height Limit
Large Lot	8 metres, plus additional 1 metre to allow for roof forms
Rural & Coastal Settlement	8 metres, plus additional 1 metre to allow for roof forms
Single House	8 metres, plus additional 1 metre to allow for roof forms
Mixed Housing Suburban	8 metres, plus additional 1 metre to allow for roof forms
Mixed Housing Urban	11 metres, plus additional 1 metre to allow for roof forms
Terraced Housing & Apartment Buildings	16 metres (or otherwise shown on variation control)

### HEIGHT IN RELATION TO BOUNDARY

Zone	Maximum Vertical Height
Large Lot	Rule does not apply to this zone
Rural & Coastal Settlement	45° recession plane from a point 2.5m vertically above ground level along side and rear boundaries
Single House	45° recession plane from a point 2.5m vertically above ground level along side and rear boundaries
Mixed Housing Suburban	45° recession plane from a point 2.5m vertically above ground level along side and rear boundaries
Mixed Housing Urban	45° recession plane from a point 3m vertically above ground level along side and rear boundaries
Terraced Housing & Apartment Buildings	45° recession plane from a point 3m vertically above ground level along side and rear boundaries

\* Additional standards may apply to your site. Refer to the Auckland Unitary Plan or call Auckland Council's Planning Help Desk on (09) 301 0101 to confirm the planning standards for your site.



## BUILDING COVERAGE

Zone	Maximum Building Coverage
Large Lot	20% of site or 400 square metres – whichever is the smaller
Rural & Coastal Settlement	20% of site or 200 square metres – whichever is the smaller
Single House	35% of net site area
Mixed Housing Suburban	40% of net site area
Mixed Housing Urban	45% of net site area
Terraced Housing & Apartment Buildings	50% of net site area

## YARD CONTROLS

Zone	Minimum Front Yard	Minimum Side Yard	Minimum Rear Yard	Riparian (Streams)	Lakeside	Coastal Protection*
Large Lot	10m	6m	6m	10m	30m	25m
Rural & Coastal Settlement	5m	1m	1m	10m	30m	20m
Single House	3m	1m	1m	10m	30m	10m
Mixed Housing Suburban	3m	1m	1m	10m	30m	10m
Mixed Housing Urban	2.5m	1m	1m	10m	30m	10m
Terraced Housing & Apartment Buildings	1.5m	1m	1m	10m	30m	10m

\* Special yard standards apply to some sites with a coastal protection yard control. Refer to the Auckland Unitary Plan or call Auckland Council's Planning Help Desk on (09) 301 0101 to confirm the coastal protection yard standards for your specific site.

## IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

Zone	Maximum Impervious Area
Large Lot	35% of site or 1400 square metres – whichever is the smaller
Rural & Coastal Settlement	35% of site or 1400 square metres – whichever is the smaller
Single House	60% of site
Mixed Housing Suburban	60% of site
Mixed Housing Urban	60% of site
Terraced Housing & Apartment Buildings	70% of site

## LANDSCAPED AREA

Zone	Minimum Landscaping
Large Lot	Rule does not apply to these zones
Rural & Coastal Settlement	
Single House	40% of net site area (this must include half the front yard as a landscaped area)
Mixed Housing Suburban	40% of net site area (this must include half the front yard as a landscaped area)
Mixed Housing Urban	35% of net site area (this must include half the front yard as a landscaped area)
Terraced Housing & Apartment Buildings	30% of net site area

## OUTLOOK SPACE

Zone	Minimum Outlook Area
Large Lot	Rule does not apply to these zones
Rural & Coastal Settlement	
Single House	
Mixed Housing Suburban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main living room: minimum of 6m in depth and 4m in width</li> <li>• Principal bedroom: minimum of 3m in depth and 3m in width</li> <li>• Other habitable rooms: minimum of 1m in depth and 1m in width</li> </ul>
Mixed Housing Urban	
Terraced Housing & Apartment Buildings	

## OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE

Zone	Minimum Outdoor Living Space located at ground level	Minimum Outdoor Living Space for principal living rooms located above ground level
Large Lot	Rule does not apply to these zones	
Rural & Coastal Settlement		
Single House		
Mixed Housing Suburban	20m <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5m<sup>2</sup> for 1 bedroom or studio</li> <li>• 8m<sup>2</sup> for 2 bedroom or more</li> </ul>
Mixed Housing Urban		
Terraced Housing & Apartment Buildings		

## YOU MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED IN...

### APPLY THE RULES

Use the Residential Standards Checklists to apply the rules to your own project. The Design Manual provides illustrated checklists for each zone and covers a range of housing types.

### WORKED EXAMPLES

The Worked Examples showcase designs that align with the Unitary Plan, to give you clarity around what a great design could look like under the new rules.

### DESIGN GUIDES

Delve into the residential design guides to expand your knowledge of how to deliver great value for your project.

These non-statutory guides are based on international best practice standards. Currently the Design Manual has guides for:

- Detached Housing
- Terraces
- Apartments
- Mixed Use developments

Find these great resources at [www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz](http://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz)



**AUCKLAND  
DESIGN MANUAL**

TE PUKA WHAKATAIRANGA I A TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU