



R5 | Residential Design Element Visual Privacy

Overview

New development in existing suburbs can create issues around privacy, especially where there is an increase in density or a change in building type - for example from single storey houses to multi-storey houses or apartments. It is important to maintain the privacy of neighbours and residents as far as practical by avoiding or limiting direct views into living areas, bedrooms, balconies or outdoor spaces. This can be achieved through spatial separation and design features.

Purpose

This Residential Design Element is a non-statutory design guide created to assist developers, designers and planners achieve policy outcomes under the Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP). This guide provides assistance in achieving the following AUP policies:

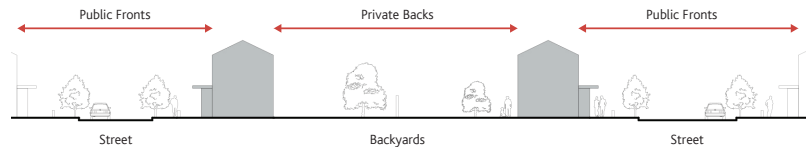
Single House Zone Policies	Mixed Housing Suburban Zone Policies	Mixed Housing Urban Zone Policies	Terrace Housing & Apartment Buildings Zone Policies
H3.3(2) H3.3(4)	H4.3(2) H4.3(4) H4.3(5)(a)	H5.3(2) H5.3(4) H5.3(5)(a)	H6.3(2) H6.3(5) H6.3(6)(a)

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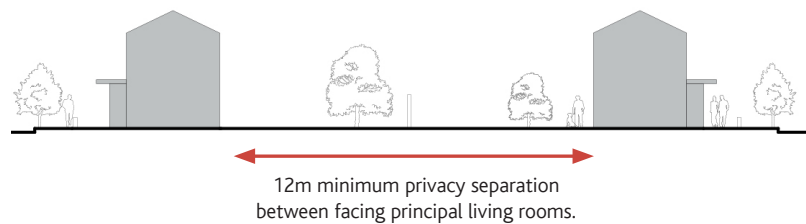
Design Principles

1.0 Site Design

- A. Privacy needs to be considered at the earliest site planning stage. A good design principle to remember is “public fronts and private backs” – placing buildings to the front of a site increases separation distances from neighbours at the rear. This creates private building backs that are well suited to privacy sensitive rooms, such as bedrooms. Kitchen, dining and living rooms can be located at the more public front of the house.



- B. The main glazing of principal living rooms should have a minimum separation distance of 6m from adjacent dwellings. Where the main glazing of the principal living rooms of two dwellings face one another there should be a minimum separation distance of 12m between them.

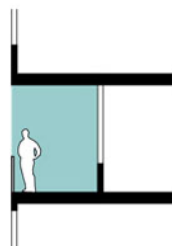


2.0 Building Design

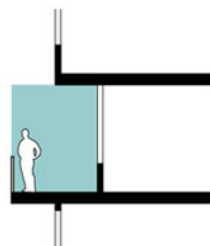
- A. To create privacy for residents, carefully locate and offset windows and balconies to avoid direct views into adjacent dwellings and private outdoor spaces. This applies to multiple dwellings on a single site, as well as views into buildings and private outdoor spaces on neighbouring sites.
- B. Where a small front yard is proposed (e.g. less than 3 metres), it is important to think about privacy for occupants, particularly at ground floor level. A good way to achieve privacy while still ensuring passive surveillance to the street is to elevate the ground floor of the building. Approximately 0.5m of elevation will help to raise the occupants above the eye level of passers-by, improving privacy.

- C. Additional architectural measures can be used to further improve privacy. Suggestions for these include:
 - i. recessing balconies or using vertical fins between adjacent balconies
 - ii. using visually impermeable or semi-permeable railing on balconies
 - iii. adding louvres or screen panels to windows and/or balconies
 - iv. using translucent and frosted windows and screens
 - v. incorporating planter boxes into walls or balustrades to provide visual screening
 - vi. using pergolas or other shading devices to limit overlooking into private outdoor spaces.

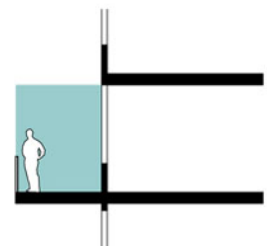
✓ Recessed Balcony



✓ Semi-Recessed Balcony



✗ Cantilevered Balcony



Recessed and semi-recessed balconies deliver improved privacy for users, while still providing for passive surveillance.

Cantilevered balconies often lack visual and acoustic privacy, placing users in full view of surrounding areas.

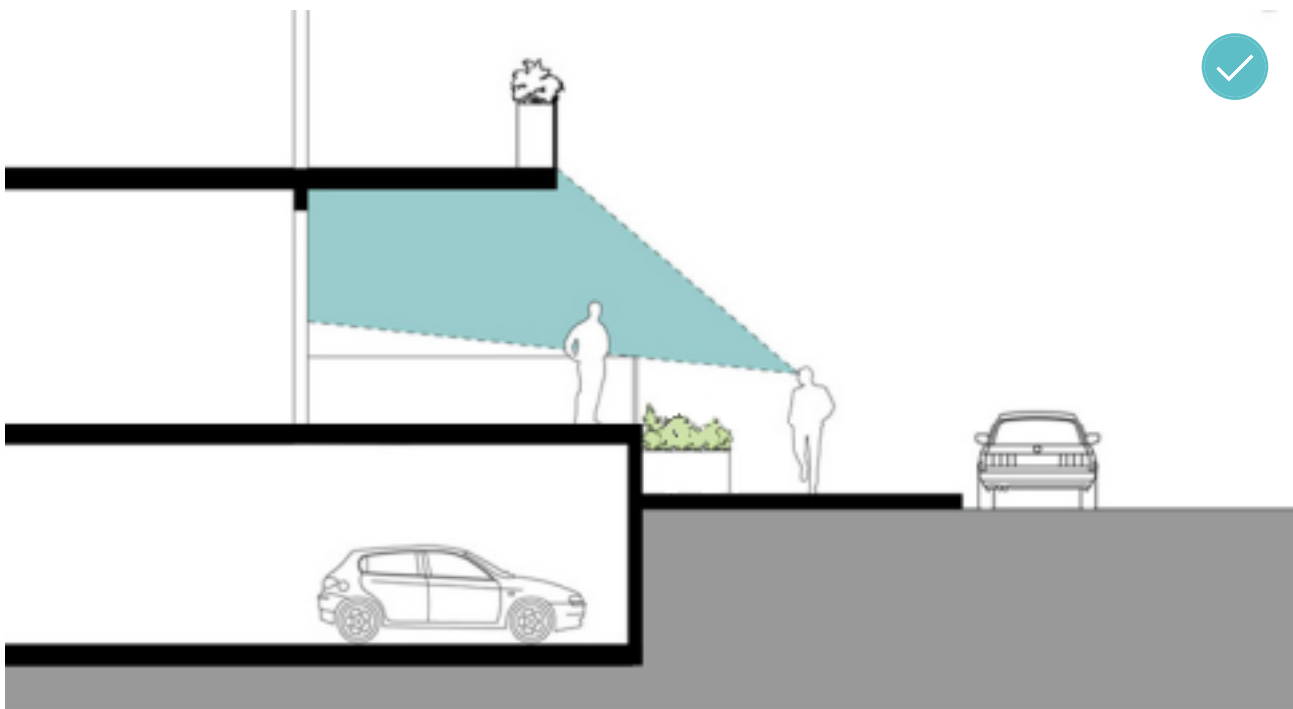
3.0 Acoustic Privacy

- A. As well as visual privacy, acoustic privacy is also important, particularly in apartments and terraced houses. Separation distances, solid walls that act as acoustic barriers, and recessing balconies into the façade of a building (rather than cantilevering them) create both acoustic and visual privacy, greatly increasing the usability of outdoor spaces.

4.0 Neighbouring Sites

- A. It is important to consider how adjacent sites might be developed in the future. Consult the Auckland Unitary Plan to understand the development potential of neighbouring sites.

Getting it Right



A 0.5-0.6m raised ground floor, planter boxes and balustrade help to provide privacy to the apartment while providing an attractive street edge.



Visually permeable fencing divides private backyard spaces from one another. A solid fence can provide greater visual and acoustic privacy, creating a more usable space for occupants.



Balconies feature solid walls and frosted railing, these provide privacy between dwellings and from the street, while still allowing access to light and views.



Semi-permeable sliding screens give residents control over their privacy while still providing access to natural light.

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