

# Coach House

# HOW-TO GUIDE



*This brochure is intended for general guidance only and is not to be regarded as a right to development approval if the steps indicated are followed. Consult the Zoning Bylaw and other municipal bylaws for full requirements and procedures.*

*Please contact the District of North Vancouver's Development Planning Department at [planning@dnv.org](mailto:planning@dnv.org) or 604-990-2380 for assistance.*

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The District of North Vancouver's Coach House How-To Guide provides homeowners, designers, and builders with step-by-step assistance to:

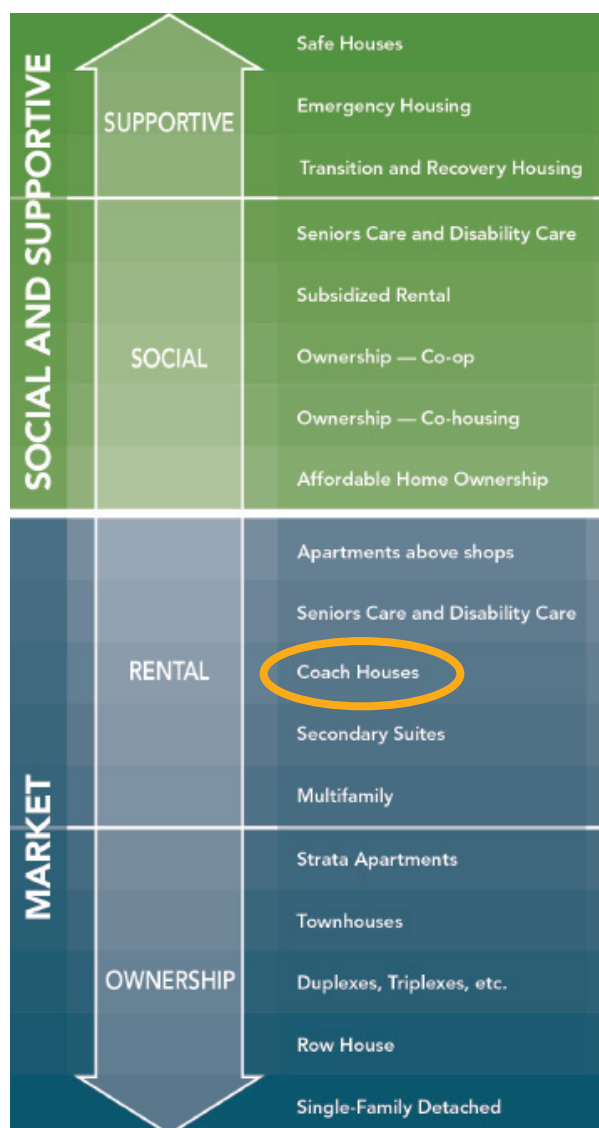
- assess site eligibility,
- identify the applicable permit process,
- identify potential costs for coach house development,
- prepare permit applications, and
- understand best practices in coach house building design.

## 1.1 WHAT ARE COACH HOUSES?

Coach houses are detached, compact homes, typically built in the rear yard of single-family residential lots, and smaller than the main house. Coach houses are not permitted to be sold separately from the main house or strata-titled in the District.

Coach houses help increase the diversity of housing choices in single-family neighbourhoods, and are one type of housing in a range of possible types (Figure 1).

Coach houses may suit various ages, incomes, and housing preferences. This may include seniors looking to downsize, inter-generational and extended families, or young couples looking for detached homes in established neighbourhoods.



**Figure 1:** The Housing Continuum shows the range of housing options in the District.

## 2.0 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Where can I build a coach house?**

Coach houses are eligible on certain single-family residential lots. Tables 1 and 2 on pages 8-9 will help you determine if your lot meets the eligibility criteria.

### **What is the application process for a coach house?**

Coach house proposals that comply with the Zoning Bylaw require a Building Permit. For coach house proposals that do not comply with the Zoning Bylaw, a Development Variance Permit is required before applying for a Building Permit. Section 3 will help you determine which application process applies to your lot and coach house proposal.

### **Can you tell me how much floor space (density) is available on my lot for a coach house?**

You may need a qualified professional (e.g. architect or designer) to assist with the calculations.

Floor space of both the main house and coach house counts toward the maximum density permitted by zoning for your lot (refer to the Zoning Bylaw). The maximum permitted size of a coach house is 90m<sup>2</sup> (968 sq. ft.).

Copies of recent floorplans of the main house, if available, may be obtained from the Building Department (see Section 7: Contacts). If floorplans of the existing main house are not available, you will need a qualified professional to produce floorplans in order to determine available density.

### **Are two-storey coach houses permitted?**

Yes. As of December 2023, the maximum permitted height of a coach house was increased to enable two-storey coach houses without applying for a Development Variance Permit.

### **I have a secondary suite in my house. Does this affect my coach house application?**

No. As of December 2023, a secondary suite is permitted on the same lot that a coach house is permitted.

### **Where can I put a coach house on my lot?**

A coach house should be located in the rear yard. A coach house proposed in the front yard would require an approved Development Variance Permit.

### **Does a coach house need to be on the same lot as the main house?**

Yes. A coach house is an accessory dwelling unit, like a secondary suite. A coach house cannot be stratified or sold separately.

### **What will be the address of the coach house?**

A coach house must have the same address as the main house with the unit number 3, e.g. 3-355 West Queens Road. (This aids emergency response to houses by differentiating a coach house from a secondary suite, which would be unit 2.)

### **Will a coach house affect my property taxes?**

Property taxes are based on the value of land and value of improvements (i.e. buildings). A coach house may increase the value of improvements on a property, which may result in tax increases if all else remains equal. An annual utilities charge is also applied to a property with a coach house.



## 3.0 ELIGIBILITY & PROCESS

Follow the steps in Tables 1 and 2 to determine if your lot is eligible for a coach house, and which application process applies to your proposal. If your lot qualifies, you may begin your application. Sections 4-6 will assist you as you develop your application.

### 3.1 DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREAS

Is your lot within one or more Development Permit Areas (DPAs) (e.g. natural hazards, natural environment)? If it is, then:

- Your proposal must comply with the guidelines and requirements for the applicable DPAs, and
- You must first apply and receive your Development Permit before applying for your Building Permit.

Learn if your lot is within any DPAs – and get the requirements – online at **[DNV.org/DPA](https://dnv.org/DPA)**.

Please note that coach house siting is expected to avoid impacts to protected trees and public land.

For assistance, contact the Environment Department (see Section 7: Contacts).

### 3.2 BUILDING PERMIT-ONLY PROCESS

Before starting construction, applicants must obtain a Building Permit. If your coach house proposal meets all of the requirements in the Zoning Bylaw (see Section 5: Building Requirements), then you are ready to prepare and submit a Building Permit application. Building Permit application forms are available at **[DNV.org/buildingpermit](https://dnv.org/buildingpermit)**.

Note that if your lot is within a Development Permit Area(s), you will first need an approved Development Permit (see Section 3.1).



# 1

## Does your lot meet all of the following criteria?

**A**

Must be zoned Single-Family Residential (RS).

**B**

Must be within the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) in the Official Community Plan.

**C**

The combined density of main house and coach house does not exceed the maximum allowable density of existing zoning.

**D**

The proposal meets the applicable Development Permit Area Guidelines in Schedule B in the Official Community Plan.

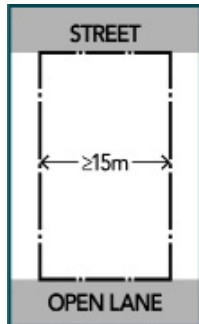
See **[geoweb.DNV.org](http://geoweb.DNV.org)** for maps of Zoning, Urban Containment Boundary and Development Permit Areas.

**If your lot meets all four criteria, proceed to Table 2.**

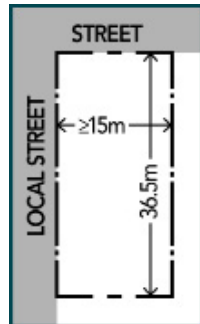
**Table 1:** Lot eligibility criteria; see Section 5 for a requirements checklist with more information.

# 2

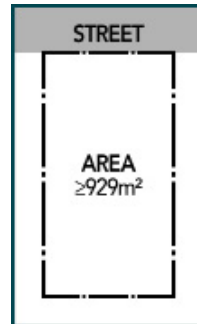
## Which type of lot do you have?



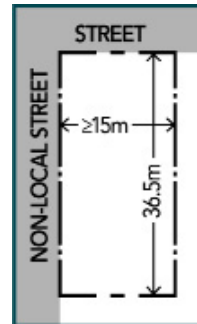
Open lane access at least 15m (49.2 ft.) wide.



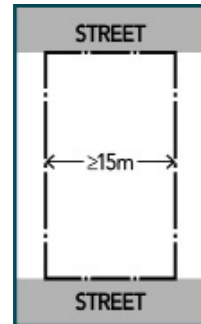
Corner lot on a local street at least 15m (49.2 ft.) wide and at least 36.5m (120 ft.) deep.



At least 929m<sup>2</sup> (10,000 sq. ft.) with no lane access.



Corner lot on a non-local street at least 15m wide (49.2 ft.) and at least 36.5m (120 ft.) deep.



Double-fronting lot (street at both ends).

If your lot matches any of these lot types, continue below.

You will need a Building Permit

If your lot matches any of these lot types, continue below.

You will need a Development Variance Permit (for access), followed by Building Permit

**Table 2:** Application process for coach houses; see Section 5 for a requirements checklist with more information.

### 3.3 DEVELOPMENT VARIANCE PERMIT PROCESS

If your proposal requires any variances to the Zoning Bylaw (e.g. for lot access or parking), you must apply for a Development Variance Permit (DVP) before you can apply for a Building Permit. Some coach house related variances are decided by Council and some variance decisions are delegated to staff (see Table 3).

Note that staff and Council evaluate DVP applications based on this guide and conformance to the Zoning Bylaw. The DVP process gives the District the ability to assess any impacts the coach house may have on the neighbourhood. More information about the process can be found in Table 4.

#### TIMELINE

Currently, the DVP process for coach houses takes approximately 4-6 months from the date that a complete application is submitted to when Council considers the application. If delegated to staff, this timeline may be reduced by approximately six weeks because the application does not need to go to a Council meeting. The length of time depends on the complexity and completeness of the application, and conformity to the Zoning Bylaw and other applicable bylaws. If your DVP is approved, you may then apply for a Building Permit. You must have an approved Building Permit before construction. Note that if your lot is within a Development Permit Area(s), you will need an approved Development Permit (see Section 3.1).

COUNCIL DECISIONS	STAFF DECISIONS*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Siting (e.g. request for coach house in the front yard),</li> <li>• Vehicle access,</li> <li>• Lot depth,</li> <li>• Lot width,</li> <li>• Size of a coach house, and</li> <li>• Lot coverage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setbacks,</li> <li>• Coach house bedroom and living room size,</li> <li>• Parking, and</li> <li>• Pedestrian access.</li> </ul>

**\*Note:** Staff would exercise professional judgement and retain the ability to refer the application to Council.

**Table 3:** Council and Delegated Variance Decisions



## DEVELOPMENT VARIANCE PERMIT PROCESS



### 1. Inquiry:

Complete the **Development Variance Permit Application (Coach House) checklist** (available at [DNV.org/coachhouse](https://dnv.org/coachhouse)), then contact the Development Planning Department to discuss your proposal (see Section 7: Contacts). Staff will arrange for a zoning compliance form to be completed in order to determine the variance(s).

Please note that Council (or staff, if the DVP application is delegated) will consider neighbour input when making a decision on a Development Variance Permit. **It is best to discuss your proposal early with your neighbours.**



### 2. Application:

Submit a complete Development Variance Permit application package to the Development Planning Department.



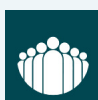
### 3. Neighbour notification:

Development Planning will formally notify adjacent residents, and the community association in the area (if applicable), to advise them of the application, and provide them with an opportunity to send comments to the District.



### 4. Staff review and revisions:

Staff may request that you provide more information or revisions in response to staff or community comments or concerns.



### 5. Decision:

Development Planning will prepare a report to Council (or senior management, if the DVP application is delegated to staff) about the proposal, a summary of the comments received, and a staff recommendation based on how the proposal complies with this guide. The proposal may be approved, rejected, or referred back to the applicant for revisions (e.g. to address neighbourhood feedback).

**Table 4:** *Development Variance Permit Process*



## 4.0 COST CONSIDERATIONS

As you plan your coach house, there are a number of costs to consider. Costs can vary depending on site characteristics, which may impact the viability of a proposal.

### 4.1 DISTRICT SERVICING UPGRADE COSTS

District servicing costs for coach houses vary depending on upgrading requirements, location of existing services and connection points, soil conditions, and topography. New water connections, sanitary, storm, and hydro and gas networks may be required.

The servicing costs for coach houses are the single-family residential rates. To check your property's existing service connections, check online at [geoweb.DNV.org](https://geoweb.dnv.org) or contact the Engineering Service Request line (see Section 7: Contacts). Servicing and off-site improvements will be in accordance with the following bylaws:

- **Development Servicing Bylaw 8145,**
- **Waterworks Regulation Bylaw 2279, and**
- **Sewer Bylaw 6656.**

In addition to on-site private improvements, potential off-site improvements may be required to satisfy applicable codes and standards.

- Additional works may be required to conform to the **Development Servicing Bylaw 8145.**
- A new sanitary and storm inspection chamber is required on the property if one does not already exist.
- Off-site improvements may be required.
- Only one connection for sanitary, storm and water services will be permitted per lot. There are few circumstances where multiple connections may be considered by the Utilities Department, at its discretion.
- A water meter may be required.
- Note that privately-owned permanent structures may not be installed within the District's right-of-ways (e.g. boulevards).

## 4.2 OTHER SERVICING COSTS

Additional costs are typically required for electricity (BC Hydro) and gas servicing (FortisBC). Please contact your service providers for more information.

## 4.3 CONSTRUCTION COSTS

Construction costs for building a coach house typically include materials, labour, permits, building plans, landscaping, and professional fees, and can vary depending on the types of materials used and site conditions. These costs are highly variable due to factors such as inflation, supply chain issues, labour costs, and supply and demand.

## 4.4 DISTRICT FEES AND CHARGES

District fee and charges to build a coach house will include some or all of the following:

- Building Permit fees
- Development Variance Permit fees (if applicable)
- Development Permit Area fees (if applicable)
- Other development or environmental fees may be identified during review of your application



## 5.0 BUILDING REQUIREMENTS

This section covers the building requirements in the Zoning Bylaw and Development Permit Areas. When designing your coach house, please ensure that your proposal complies with the coach house building requirements in **Zoning Bylaw 3210**, online at **DNV.org/zoning**.

### REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST

To assist you with developing your proposal, this checklist summarizes the aspects of your proposal that must comply with the Zoning Bylaw and other regulations. It is provided for general information only. Please consult the Zoning Bylaw and other municipal bylaws for full requirements and procedures. This checklist does not replace bylaws, and may not list all requirements for application or approval. The District disclaims any liability from use of the checklist.

Visit **DNV.org/zoning** to learn about the specific requirements for your lot. **Appendix A: Illustrative siting scenarios** provides some conceptual examples of potential coach house development layouts.

REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST FOR COACH HOUSES		
Bylaw	Topic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Requirement Category
Zoning Bylaw, Section 502	Zoning	<input type="checkbox"/> Lot in single-family residential zone (RS)
	Urban Containment Boundary	<input type="checkbox"/> Within Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) ❖ <b>Tip:</b> Most residential areas in the District are within the UCB. The UCB can be found on the Official Community Plan (OCP) map, available online at <b>geoweb.DNV.org</b>
Zoning Bylaw, refer to specific RS zone	Density	<input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient density (floor space) available on your lot for coach house ❖ <b>Tip:</b> Total floor space of both the main house and coach house counts toward the maximum (excluding listed exemptions)
	Coverage	<input type="checkbox"/> Not exceeding maximum building coverage
Zoning Bylaw, Table 502.5	Lot access	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets vehicle access requirements (open lane access, or local street access for a corner lot without open lane access) ❖ <b>Tip:</b> Street classification map is available online at <b>geoweb.DNV.org</b> ❖ <b>Note:</b> Application for lots that do not meet access requirements (see Table 2 for criteria) must be made through the Development Variance Permit process. See Section 3.3.

## REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST FOR COACH HOUSES

Bylaw	Topic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Requirement Category
Zoning Bylaw, Table 502.5 (continued)	Lot width	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets lot width 15m (49.2 ft.) minimum <input type="checkbox"/> Meets lot depth 36.5m (120 ft.) minimum (only applies to corner lots without open lane access)
	Siting	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets coach house siting location (to the rear of main house)
	Setbacks	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets setbacks for rear, side, separation distance between main house and coach house, flanking street (if applicable), and ocean boundary (if applicable)
	Size	<input type="checkbox"/> Not exceeding maximum size of 90m <sup>2</sup> (968 sq. ft.). Note if any permitted exemptions that apply: _____
	Height	<input type="checkbox"/> Not exceeding maximum height (bonus height if meet Step 4 or 5 of the Energy Step Code)
	Room Size	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets living room size minimums, and bedroom size minimums
	Pedestrian Access	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets pedestrian walkway dimension and requirements
	Outdoor Space	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets private outdoor space dimensions and area
Zoning Bylaw, Table 502.5 & Part 10	Parking	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides three parking spaces <u>located on your lot</u> ; <input type="checkbox"/> Up to one parking space may be fully enclosed within the coach house (excluding carports <sup>1</sup> ); <input type="checkbox"/> Meets parking space dimensions
Official Community Plan, Schedule B	Development Permit Area	<input type="checkbox"/> If your lot is within one or more Development Permit Areas (DPAs): proposal complies with the guidelines for applicable Development Permit Areas. See Section 3.1. ❖ <b>Tip:</b> Learn if your lot is within any DPAs, and get the requirements, online at <b>DNV.org/DPA</b>

<sup>1</sup> At the time of publication of this Guide, the BC Building Code generally defines a carport as a parking structure where no more than 60% is enclosed. Refer to the current BC Building Code for current regulations.

**Table 5:** Requirements Checklist for Coach Houses



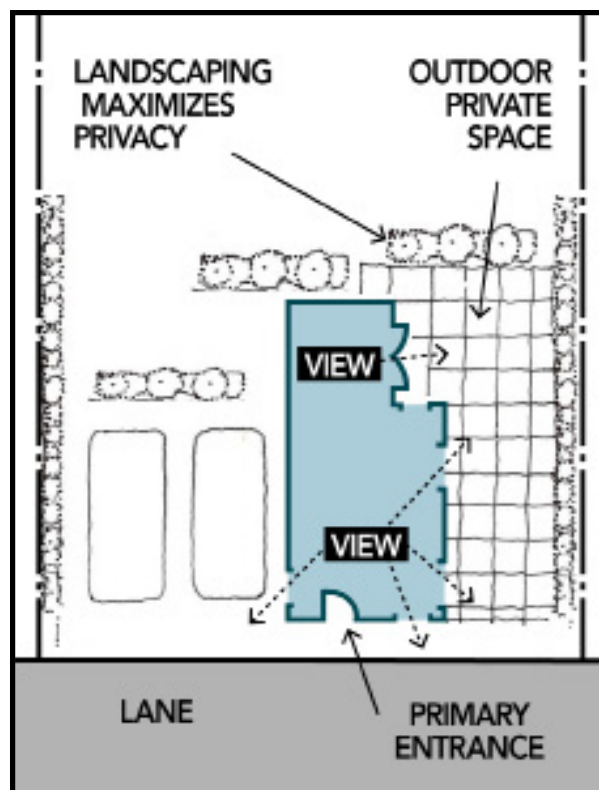
## 6.0 BEST DESIGN PRACTICES

These best practices should be considered when designing a coach house. They promote well-designed buildings, integration with the existing neighbourhood context, and a balance between providing sensitive infill housing with privacy, views, and access to natural light.

### 6.1 BUILDING ACCESS

To create a relationship with the neighbourhood street, the main entry of a coach house should be visible and easily accessible from the street or lane.

- A.** The coach house's primary entrance should be oriented to a street or lane whenever possible and provide a generous amount of window openings to encourage a visual connection with the street (See Figure 2).
- B.** All entrances should be designed to provide weather protection with features such as recessed entries, front porches and verandas.
- C.** Secondary entrances should be visually secondary to the main entrance. They should be easily accessible and convenient to access from on-site parking



**Figure 2:** Views oriented to private spaces or street.

## 6.2 VIEWS

The size and placement of windows should minimize over-viewing of neighbouring residences, and promote the privacy of the coach house tenants.

- A. The coach house orientation, and sizing and placement of windows, should be sensitive to adjacent properties and topography (See Figure 2). Windows facing away from the side-yards (e.g. towards the lane) can be maximized to provide views.
- B. Upper level windows facing side-yards should be limited or designed to increase privacy and reduce overlooking neighbouring properties. The primary function of windows facing side-yards is to provide light exposure. The use of skylights, clerestory windows, raised windows, corner windows, or obscured glazing should be considered (See Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 for examples of these window types).



**Figure 5:** Example of corner windows to minimize overlook into neighbouring properties.



**Figure 3:** An example of a clerestory window, which is a window that sits at the top of a wall, to increase privacy.



**Figure 4:** Examples of obscured glazing (e.g. frosted glass) and skylights to increase privacy.



**Figure 6:** Example of smaller raised windows, typically raised above eye level to minimize overlook into neighbouring properties.

## 6.3 LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Coach house landscape design should retain mature vegetation when possible and include new landscaping to maximize privacy, enhance ecosystems, and reduce storm water run-off.

- A. Existing trees, vegetation and natural features should be protected and incorporated into the coach house development through innovative design and siting in accordance with District's Development Permit Areas and other environmental regulations.
- B. Landscaping is encouraged along the rear lot line facing the lane for areas not occupied by buildings, parking, or space for garbage and recycling.
- C. Outdoor living areas should be defined and screened for privacy with hard and soft landscaping, architectural elements such as trellises and, where appropriate, changes in grade.
- D. External mechanical equipment and utility meters should be located on a side or back wall of the coach house, and visual or noise impacts on adjacent properties should be avoided where possible.
- E. Designs for driveways, patios and parking stalls should minimize storm water run-off through the use of permeable paving materials. Rainwater run-off from roofs and hard surface areas should be retained in rain gardens, bioswales, or rock pits to facilitate natural rainwater filtration.

## 6.4 ACCESSIBILITY

Are you considering a coach house for an aging family member? Are you planning to live in it when you are older? Consider adding accessible design features in your coach house, such as a level access path, lever-style door and facet handles, and turning space.

See the District's accessible design guidelines, available at **[DNV.org/accessibility](http://DNV.org/accessibility)**, to build an age-friendly home.

## 6.5 ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Consider designing the coach house to be complementary in quality and character of detail to the main house and neighbourhood context.

For a two-storey coach house, a combination of building materials should be considered to avoid blank unarticulated building walls facing the side-yards of neighbouring properties.

## 6.6 WASTE AND RECYCLING

- A. All garbage and recycling cans should be screened and secured within an enclosed and wildlife resistant structure.
- B. A single location per lot for the pickup of garbage and recycling cans for the main house and coach house should be designated.



## 7.0 CONTACTS

### *Development Planning Department*

For assistance with coach house enquiries and Development Variance Permits:

**planning@dnv.org**  
604-990-2480

### *Building Department*

For assistance with Building Permits:

**building@dnv.org**  
604-990-2480

### *Engineering Department*

For assistance with engineering, servicing and connections:

**eng@dnv.org**  
604-990-2450

### *Environment Department*

For assistance with Development Permit Areas and Tree Permits:

**environment@dnv.org**  
604-990-2480

### *BC Hydro*

For electricity service, please contact BC Hydro:

1-800-224-9376

### *FortisBC*

For electrical or natural gas service, please contact FortisBC:

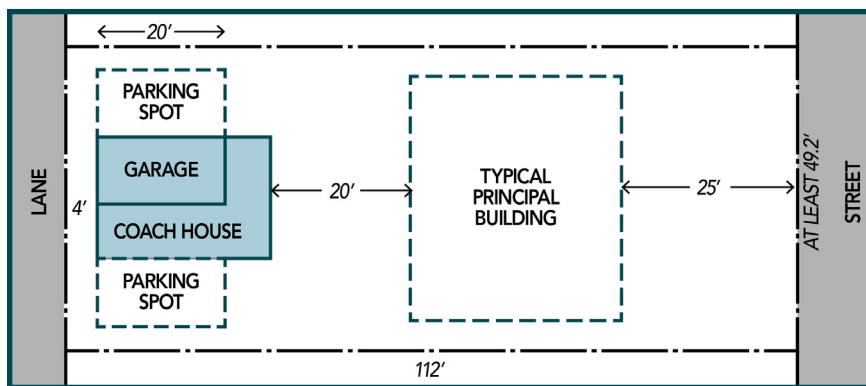
1-999-224-2710 (natural gas)  
1-866-436-7847 (electricity)

# APPENDIX A:

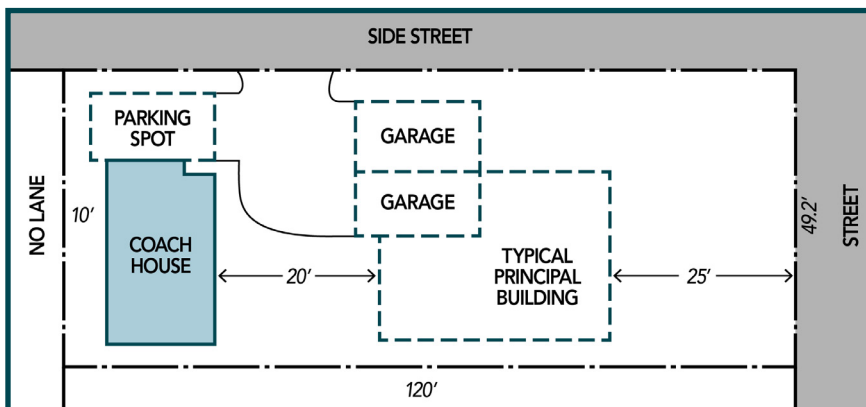
## ILLUSTRATIVE COACH HOUSE SITING SCENARIOS

These scenarios are illustrative examples of how coach houses may be sited, and are provided for information only (not to scale). Please note that if they are applied to real property, the proposal would need to be confirmed that it complies with the Zoning Bylaw and other applicable bylaws.

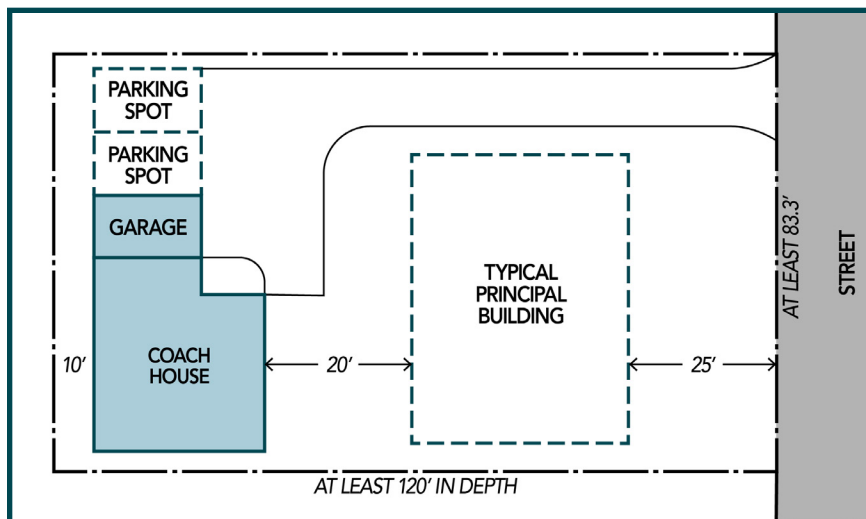
### Lot with lane access



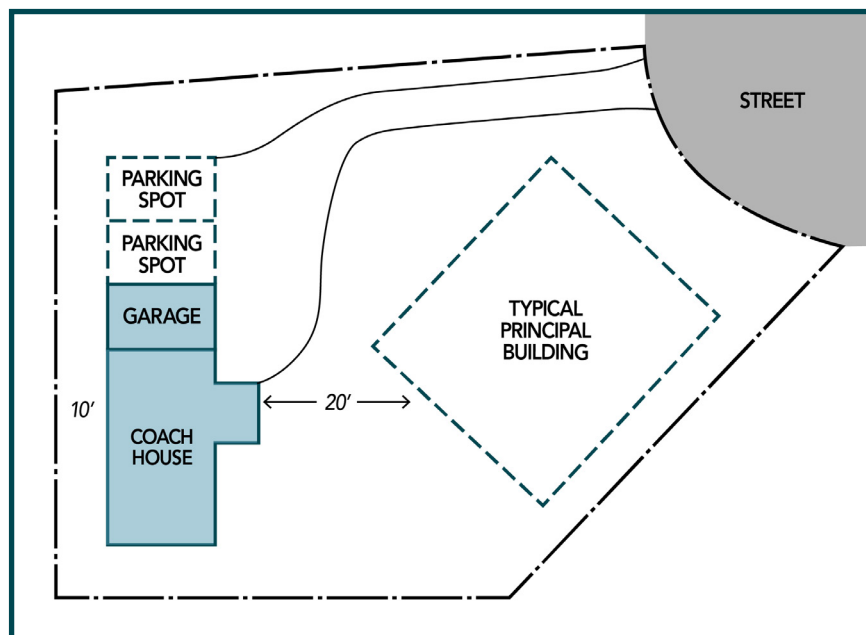
### Corner lot with access from side street



Large lot ( >10,000 sq. ft.) with no lane access



Irregular shaped large lot (>10,000 sq. ft.) with no lane access





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