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Nelson
Residential Street Frontage Guideline

TOWARDS BETTER urban design

Nelson City Council
te kaunihera ō whakatū

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Contents and purpose

Residential streets are important
Residential streets are much more than corridors which move traffic. Streets allow local movement and access for a number of different users - walkers, cyclists or drivers. In neighbourhoods they can be a space for socialising and play and provide people with access to property.

Some functions of residential streets include:
- → being a public space for people's outlook, assembly, meeting, moving, parking, and exchange;
- → creating a safe, low speed high amenity environment for pedestrians;
- → defining the image and perceived value of a neighbourhood; and
- → contributing to wider linkages and connections in respect of transport, views, and ecology.

Nelson's vision for the residential streetscape
Streetscape is defined as *the space or area that stretches from building to building and is the land that incorporates the road as well as the land between buildings and the road boundary each side of the road.* Policy RE3.5 Streetscape identifies the outcomes sought for Residential Streets: *sites, buildings and fences fronting onto roads should present an appearance which enhances the overall streetscape, and maintains the open, landscaped character of front yards that is typical of Nelson. Hard landscaping, including car parking, should be minimised. The design of buildings, structures (including fences), roads and parking spaces (in front yards and on the street) should assist in making streets safer environments by enhancing informal surveillance, enabling community interaction, and being people-orientated.*

Purpose of this guide
Streets represent a significant capital and operational expense for the community. This guide introduces outcomes that Council is looking for in residential areas in Nelson. The guide provides information on what makes a successful street and the advantages of living on one, and explains and illustrates rules and matters of good practice. It focuses on Unclassified streets (quieter local routes) first, as most new residential development will be on this type of street, but provides information on Classified streets (busier through routes) as well.

On each page tips are given on how to deal with common challenges. Some of the challenges associated with street design in the subdivision stage are also outlined.

Users
This guide is intended for three groups of people:
- → **the general public** - to explain why it is important to contribute to creating the best streetscape when building a new house or a new fence (or changing an existing one).
- → **resource management practitioners** - to explain the basic techniques and requirements of successful streetscapes, providing some direct references to proposed plan provisions.
- → **designers and builders** - to explain the basic techniques and requirements of successful streetscapes and why it is important to contribute to creating good streetscapes when undertaking developments.

This guideline assists the development of Nelson's residential areas. The examples and typologies explain the policies, rules, and assessment criteria associated with the Nelson Resource Management Plan. It should be viewed as information only and is not intended to be prescriptive.

Council design advice
It is recommended that applicants for resource consent for front yard or fence rules discuss their plans with the Council Duty Planner before locking in any design. Agreement on key issues will ensure an efficient consent process, and make sure that a reasonable outcome based on the unique needs of the activity is pursued. The Council Duty Planner can advise whether the projects would benefit from review by the Major Projects Team and an Urban Design Panel which are available to provide advice to applicants on draft proposals.

What makes a great street?

A successful residential street generates:

→ **health and environmental benefits** through greater pedestrian and cycle movements.
→ **social benefits** through greater contact between people and enhancement of cultural awareness.
→ **security benefits** through activities overlooking the public realm and vice versa.
→ **property value benefits** through the 'reflection' of adjacent qualities onto the desirability of a particular property.

The Council is approaching road design in new ways. The emphasis for residential streets is on a multiple function approach, creating low-speed, inviting and high amenity environments where people feel comfortable to live on and move around in. This new approach now needs to be reflected in site design through front yards, manoeuvring and fencing design. Key principles are:

a. Make people feel safe in a street that is addressed by activities
People feel safer in a street that is overlooked by the residents living in that street. Passive surveillance of the street can be achieved by locating kitchens, living, or dining rooms with windows at the front of the house and avoiding high fences on the street edge.

b. Provide attractive frontage
People feel more comfortable walking or cycling in a street when attractive buildings front onto it, which also encourages community interaction. This is best achieved through high-quality design of building fronts including the placement of windows and doors. Front doors should be obvious, which allow people to recognise and access easily. The design of buildings should avoid creating expanses of blank walls and dominant garage doors along streets. Landscaped front yards add to the visual interest of a streetscape.

c. Increase traffic safety
This is about creating a balance between the needs of people as well as vehicles. Garages and areas for vehicle manoeuvring on or off-site should be carefully located. Reverse manoeuvring onto Unclassified streets is encouraged as it assists with calming vehicle speeds and frees up space for landscaping on lots. Unclassified streets do not necessarily mean streets with two traffic lanes. An acceptable means of reducing speed is to permit on street parking to reduce lane widths where adequate sight lines are available.

FIG 1: Streetscapes that balance the needs of pedestrians and vehicles and that are fronted by houses that provide outlook over them, are inviting to be in and live on.

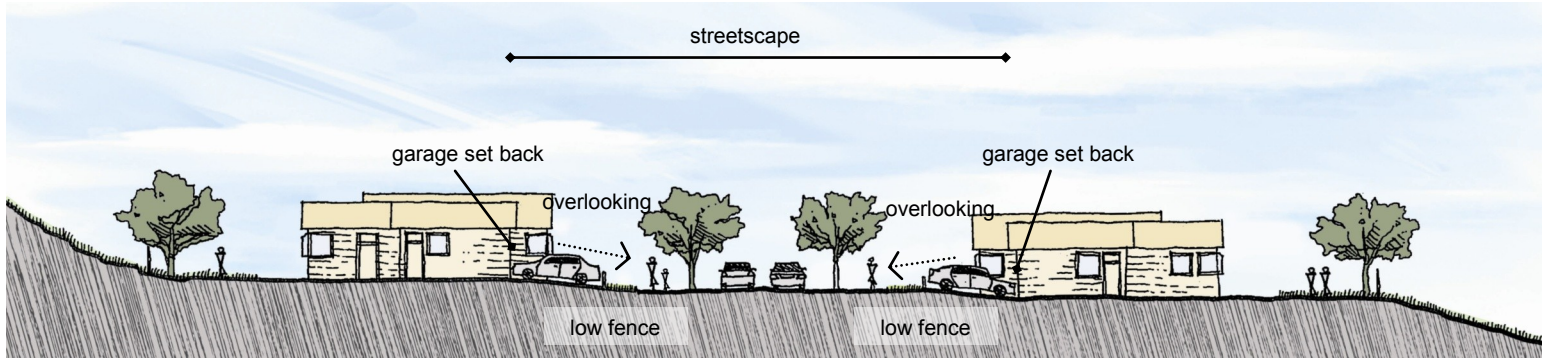


FIG 2: streetscape qualities (the cross section depicts an Unclassified street)

Unclassified residential streets

Unclassified Streets are Nelson's quieter local streets, and include Sub-Collector Streets, Local Streets and Residential Lanes as identified on Planning Map A2.1 in Volume 4 of the Nelson Resource Management Plan.

What do the rules say?

House design (REr.25.1)
- → Any length of wall longer than 5m and sited more or less parallel to the street boundary contains a window or a door.

Building setback (REr.25.1)
- → Buildings are set back from the street boundary by at least 1.5m.

Garages and cars (REr.25.1)
- → Any garage, carport or accessory building located in a front yard is setback at least 1m further from the street boundary than the wall of the associated residential unit which is nearest to the same road boundary.
- → The space in front of the entrance to the garage is large enough to park a car without overhanging onto the footpath.
- → On-site vehicle manoeuvring is discouraged as backing directly onto the street will help with calming the traffic on Unclassified streets and increase the useable front yard space.

Front yard (the area of site within the Residential zone which is located within 4m of a road boundary) (REr.25.1)
- → At least 50% of the front yard is landscaped (which may include planting, lawn, rocks and paved areas with no ability for vehicle access).

Front fence (REr.31.1)
- → The maximum height of a front fence does not exceed 1.2m.
- → The maximum height of a fence adjoining a reserve, walkway or other public space does not exceed 1.2m.
- → Where board and paling fences are used, structural railings do not face a road, walkway or other public space.
- → Hedges are defined as fences.

Access (REr.40)
- → Vehicle access must be provided with visibility splays of 1.5m by 2.0m as shown on the diagram **Figure 11** on **page 6**, and avoiding objects and vegetation over 1.2m in height in those areas.

Corner sites (REr.29)
- → On corner sites, vegetation greater than 1m in height and structures must be set back from the corner at least to a diagonal line joining points on each road boundary 1.5m from the corner of the site (or the point where the road boundaries would meet if extended). A diagram is shown in **Figure 12** on **page 6**.

What are the rules aiming to achieve?
- → Creating an interesting and lively streetscape that is overlooked from the dwellings fronting the street.
- → Encouraging building facades that provide visual interest through off-setting or articulating the building form, with large building facades modulated to give the appearance of several buildings, in line with the residential character of the area.
- → Creating a residential street that gives priority to the pedestrian experience as it is safe and pleasant to walk in.
- → Creating a streetscape that is dominated by landscaped front yards, rather than hard vehicle surface.
- → Creating a pleasant transition between the public street and the private dwelling in the form of a front yard that can be seen from the street.
- → Creating a streetscape with sightlines that are unobstructed by fences or vegetation to ensure safe reverse manoeuvring onto the street.

FIG 3: This triple garage set forward from the rest of the house, combined with a large paved area for parked cars does not contribute to the kind of streetscape that the Council is after.

FIG 4: This arrangement, with a large window to the street and has a garage that is set back, at least gives the impression that the street is well-overlooked and leads to a safe-feeling and attractive streetscape.

Unclassified residential streets

What are the common challenges with building design?

Locating the dwelling on the lot in such a way that:

- → in- and outdoor privacy protection are achieved as well as a good streetscape;
- → garages are set back and garage doors do not dominate the streetscape;
- → reverse manoeuvring onto the street can occur safely and sightlines are unobstructed;
- → it makes the most of the street amenity, tree plantings, and existing vehicle crossings; and
- → it responds appropriately to the layout of the neighbouring dwellings.

Are there any additional matters of good practice?

- → Dwellings should be placed on a lot to allow a sunny outdoor living space and provide a useable private back yard with good flows between the main living areas and the backyard.
- → Locate at least a living room, dining room or kitchen on the ground floor at the front of the house. Just a front door and a garage leads to a dwelling that does not overlook the street.
- → A double garage door could be designed in such a way that its visual impact is reduced. This could be done by for example using two single garage doors and design elements that emphasise other aspects of the house.
- → Each dwelling should have a sense of address with a visible front door or a well defined entranceway.
- → Consider locating the garage to the side or rear of a dwelling.
- → Orientating lots east-west, rather than north-south at the subdivision stage and locating private open spaces to the rear or the side of dwellings will avoid the challenge of residents trying to protect their privacy by high fences or walls on the street edge.
- → On a lot with the rear of the house facing south, the dwelling can be positioned in such a way that a sunny side-yard to the west or east will be created.
- → Front fence materials and colours should provide a pleasant human-scaled streetscape. Consider durable materials and colours that fit with the materialisation of the dwelling and the surrounding environment.

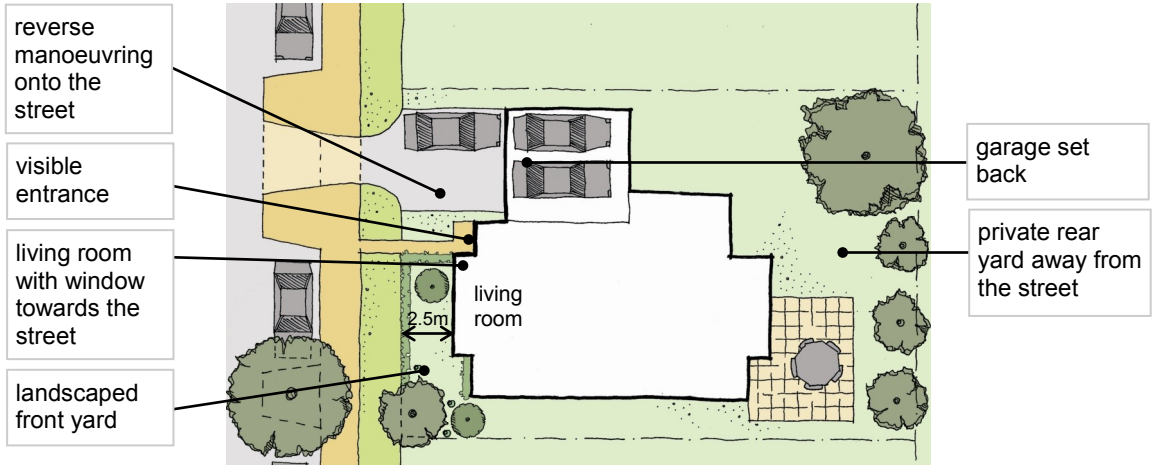


FIG 5: Hand drawn examples of how the rules work out

Classified residential streets

Classified Streets are Nelson's busier through routes and include Arterial, Principal and Collector Streets as identified on Planning Map A2.1 in Volume 4 of the Nelson Resource Management Plan.

What do the rules say?

House design (REr.25.1)
- → Any length of wall longer than 5m and sited more or less parallel to the street boundary contains a window or a door.
- → Where a lot is located on the corner of a Classified and an Unclassified street, the access of the house shall come off the Unclassified street, and both frontages are subject to the Front Fence rule (see below).

Building setback (REr.25.1)
- → Buildings are set back from the street boundary by at least 1.5m.

Garages and cars (REr.25.1)
- → Any garage, carport or accessory building located in a front yard is set back at least 1m further from the street boundary than the wall of the associated residential unit which is nearest to the same road boundary.
- → The space in front of the entrance to the garage is large enough to park a car without overhanging on the footpath.
- → Reversing onto the road is not permitted.

Front yard (the area of site within the Residential zone which is located within 4m of a road boundary) (REr.25.1)
- → At least 30% of the front yard is landscaped (which may include planting, lawn, rocks and paved areas with no ability for vehicle access).

Continued overleaf

What are the rules aiming to achieve?
- → Creating an interesting and lively streetscape that is overlooked from the houses fronting the street.
- → Encouraging building facades that provide visual interest through off-setting or articulating the building form, with large building facades modulated to read as several buildings, in line with the residential character of the area.
- → Protecting the traffic safety for pedestrians, residents driving in and out of their property, as well as the general flow of traffic on classified roads by banning reverse manoeuvring onto the street.
- → Protecting the traffic safety by ensuring adequate line of sight for vehicles.
- → The rules understand that residents on busier roads need to protect their privacy and block traffic effects such as noise by installing fences across a portion of the property boundary.

FIG 6: Example of how a high, non-permeable fence, combined with blinded windows results in a poor interface between the street and the dwelling. (Image source: www.venald.com.au)

FIG 7: Example of a low fence and a landscape garden contributing to a pleasant and well-overlooked streetscape

Classified residential streets

Front fence (REr.31.1)

- → For a fence in a front yard or on a road boundary the maximum height does not exceed 1.2m or for any fence over 1.2m in height the total height does not exceed 2.0m, and at least 50% across the entire front boundary is visually permeable (as measured by the total length of the front boundary and the height of the fence).
- → Visually permeable for front fences means the ability to clearly see through from the street to the front yard of the site, and is determined by a comparison of the solid portion of the fence structure against any gaps provided within the structure, or between fence structures.
- → The maximum height of a fence adjoining a reserve, walkway or other public space does not exceed 1.2m.
- → Where board and paling fences are used, structural railings do not face a road, walkway or other public space.
- → Hedges are also defined as fences.

Access (REr.40)

- → Vehicle access must be provided with visibility splays of 1.5m by 2.0m as shown on the diagram **Figure 11**, and avoiding objects and vegetation over 1.2m in height in those areas.

Corner sites (REr.29)

- → On corner sites, vegetation greater than 1m in height and structures must be set back from the corner at least to a diagonal line joining points on each road boundary 1.5m from the corner of the site (or the point where the road boundaries would meet if extended). A diagram is shown in **Figure 12**.

FIG 8: Example of a desired outcome for front fences on Classified Streets. The front boundary is left partially open and is partially fenced off.

FIG 10: Example of a hedge as a front fence. Among many other benefits, hedges provide a softer appearance than solid fences.

FIG 9: Example of an acceptable outcome for front fences on Classified Streets, consisting of a combination of lower (approximately 1.2m) and higher (up to 2m) elements.

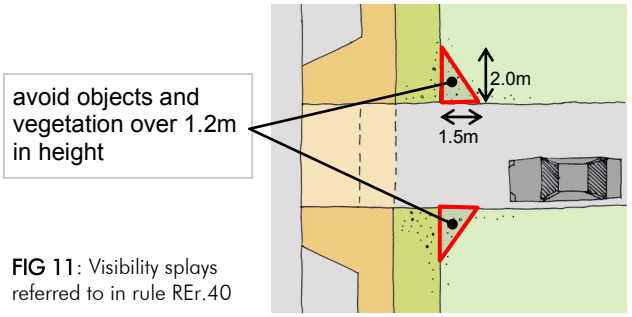


FIG 11: Visibility splays referred to in rule REr.40

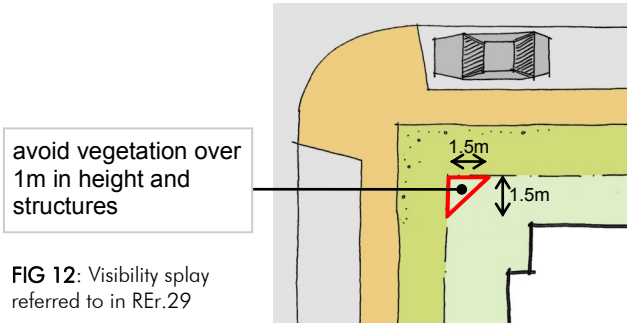


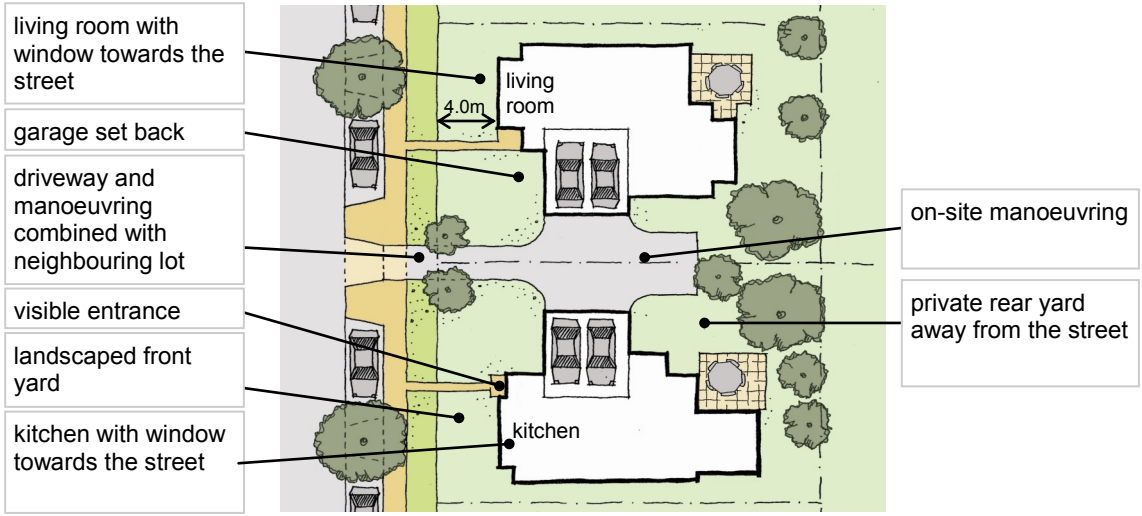
FIG 12: Visibility splay referred to in REr.29

Classified residential streets

What are the common challenges with building design?

Locating the dwelling on the lot in such a way that:

- → privacy and noise protection are achieved as well as a good streetscape;
- → access to the rear of the section works, if more than two car parking spaces are required;
- → the on-site manoeuvring area is minimised;
- → it makes the most of the street amenity, tree plantings, and existing vehicle crossings; and
- → it responds appropriately to the layout of the neighbouring dwellings.



Are there any additional matters of good practice?

- → Consider combining driveways and / or manoeuvring spaces between two neighbouring lots, to reduce the space it takes up and reduce the number of vehicles crossings over the footpath.
- → Dwellings should be placed on a lot to allow a sunny outdoor living space and provide a useable private back yard with good flows between the main living areas and the backyard.
- → Locate at least a living room, dining room or kitchen on the ground floor at the front of the house. Just a front door and a garage leads to a dwelling that does not overlook the street.
- → Each dwelling should have a sense of address with a visible front door or a well defined entranceway.
- → Consider locating the garage to the side or rear of a dwelling. This also applies to boat or trailer parking.
- → Front fence materials and colours should provide a pleasant human-scaled streetscape. Consider durable materials and colours that fit with the materialisation of the dwelling and the surrounding environment.

FIG 13: Hand drawn examples of how the rules work out

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Published by: **Nelson City Council**
For further information contact the duty planner
T: (03) 546 0200
E: dutyplanner@ncc.govt.nz

Prepared by: **Urbanismplus Ltd.**
Level 1, 2 Durham Street East, Central City, Auckland,
T: (09) 302 2488
F: (09) 302 2489,
E: contact@urbanismplus.com

DRAFT: 22 June 2012