



# City of Vancouver *Land Use and Development Policies and Guidelines*

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## STILL CREEK CD-1 GUIDELINES (BY-LAW NO. 6654)

*Adopted by City Council April 24, 1990*



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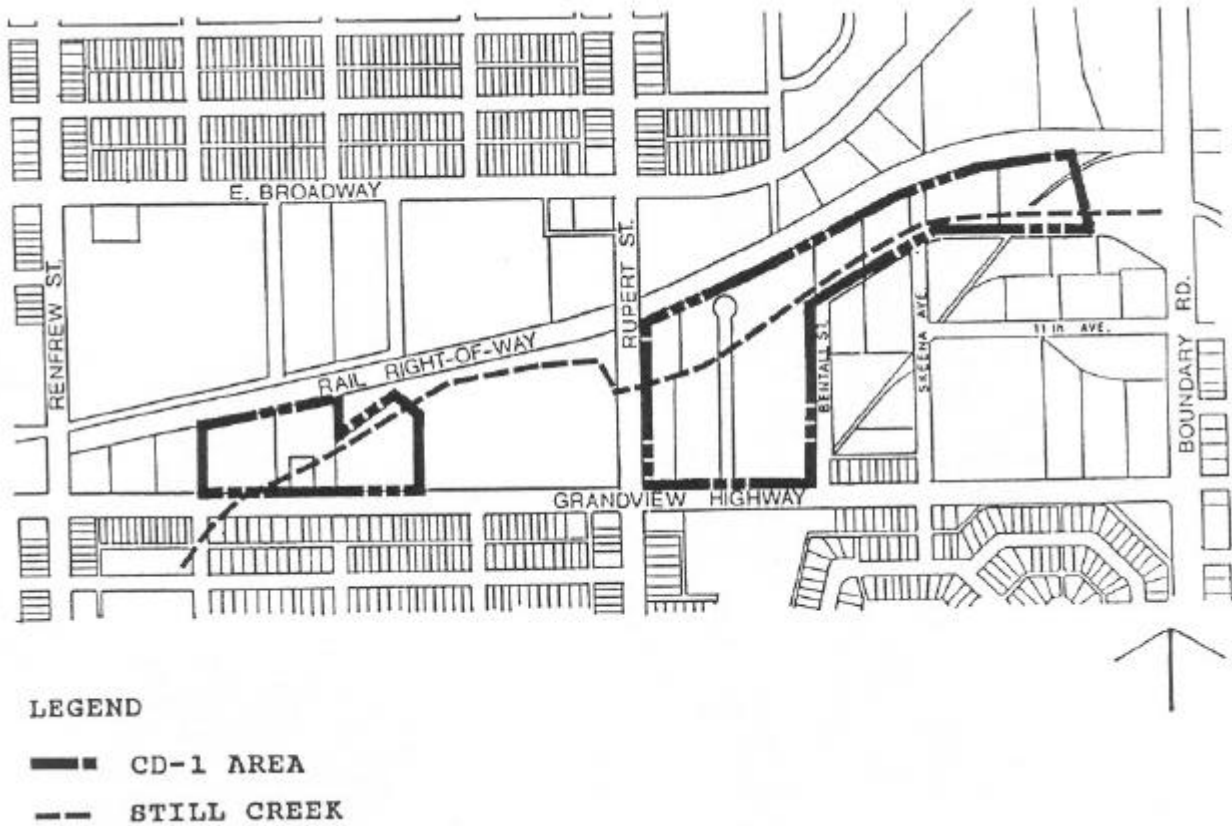
**NOTE:** The guidelines in this report are organized under standardized headings which are being used for all guideline reports. As a consequence, there are gaps in the numbering sequence where no guidelines apply under a standardized heading.

# 1 Application and Intent

These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the CD-1 By-law for developments within the Still Creek areas depicted in Figure 1.

The intent of these guidelines is to ensure that development occurs in a manner that is consistent with the City policy to retain and enhance the open watercourse. These guidelines should be considered at the outset of the design and planning process.

Figure 1. Still Creek CD-1 Area

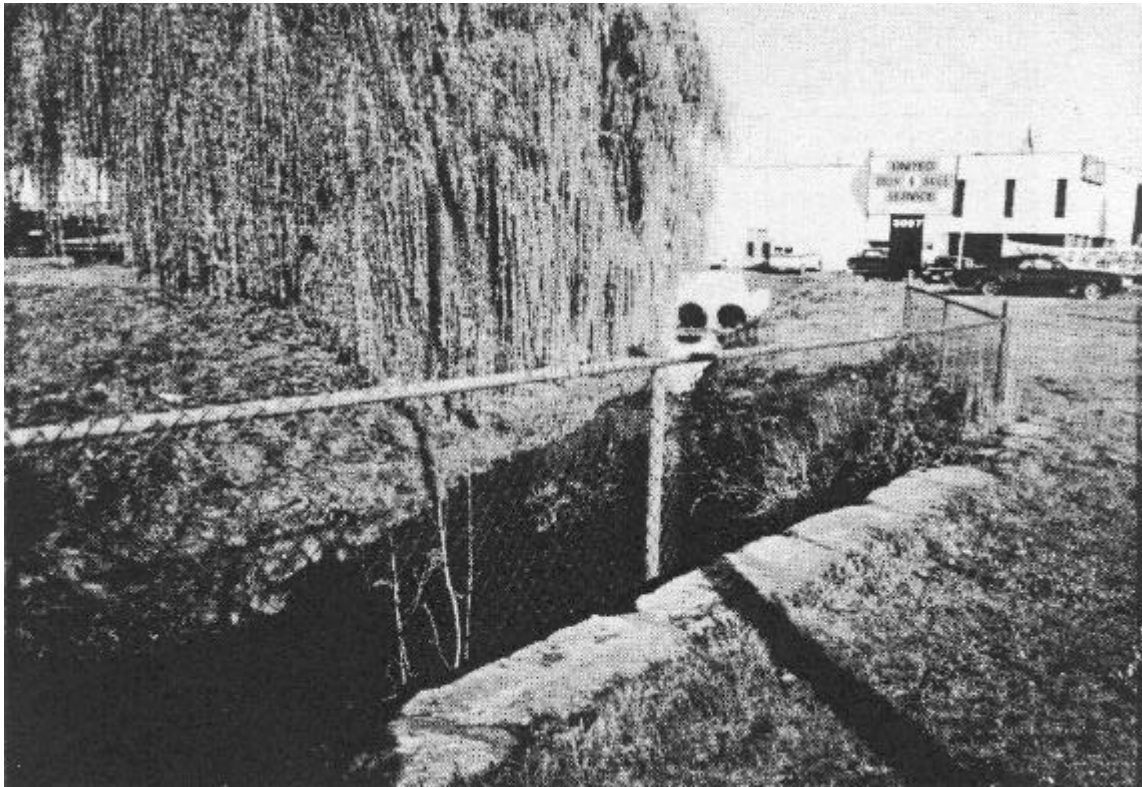


## 2 General Design Considerations

### 2.1 Context

Still Creek is the last visible portion of what was once an extensive system of fish bearing waterways in East Vancouver and Burnaby. Over time, the natural characteristics of the Creek have been eroded through culverting, channel realignment, and the general impact of urbanization. The Creek currently fulfils a range of functions. Of these, the role of stormwater drainage channel has had the greatest influence on shaping the physical form of the Creek. Authority for the stormwater drainage function rests with the Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District (GVSD).

In Vancouver, an open stream is a rare and valuable community amenity, as well as a habitat for wildlife. The open sections of Still Creek serve as visible reminder of the environmental systems upon which urban life depends. Accordingly, new development should respect the Creek's amenity and habitat values.



## 2.2 Still Creek Landscape Character

The unculverted portions of Still Creek exhibit a rough, untended landscape character, capable of attracting and supporting wildlife. The existing landscape character may further be defined as follows:

- Plant materials are varied and not necessarily native; they are not ornamental.
- Deciduous plant materials are common.
- A thicket of brambles, including blackberries, is common on the banks.
- Self-seeded, herbaceous, flowering plants and grasses are common.
- There is a mix of open and semi-enclosed areas, as well as a mix of sunny and shaded areas.
- The sound of flowing water and water falling over low weirs is typical.
- Mature trees are located at various points along the Creek's course.



Objective:

Preserve and enhance the Still Creek landscape character.

Response:

- (a) The existing Still Creek landscape character should be preserved and incorporated into new developments.
- (b) Traditional forms of ornamental landscaping are inappropriate, in that they contrast with the visual quality of the natural Still Creek environment.

## 2.10 Safety and Security

Due to health and security concerns, efforts should be made to prevent direct contact with the Creek, while at the same time preserving its amenity values.

Development should provide some orientation to the Creek through the location of windows and employee meeting areas. A continuous barrier or indicator should be established along the Creek's upper bank in order to discourage direct contact with the water. The barrier or indicator should not be obtrusive or incompatible with the landscape character. Rather, it could be planting, signage, low fencing, or a combination.

Figure 2A. Building Orientation

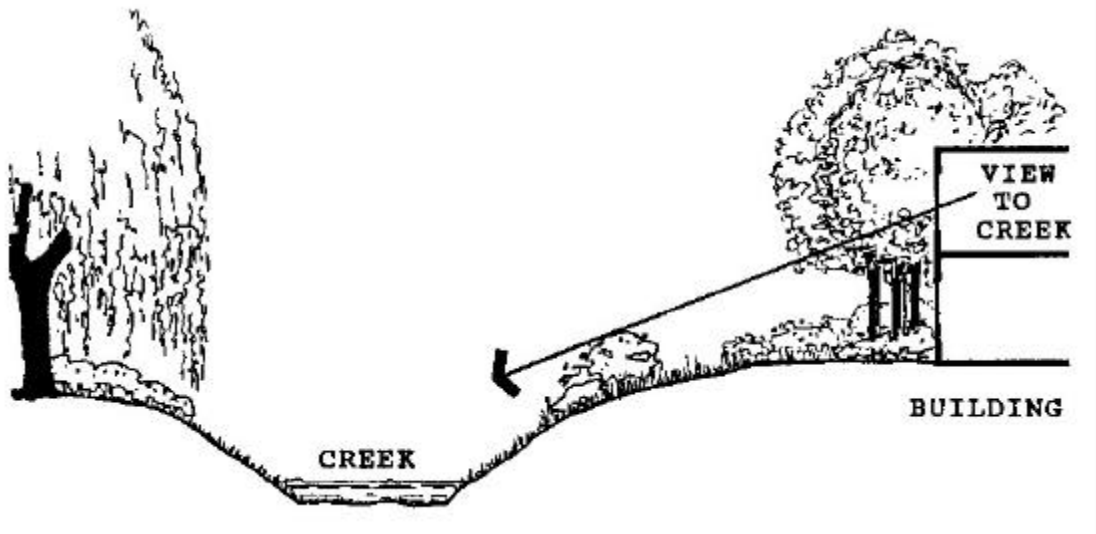
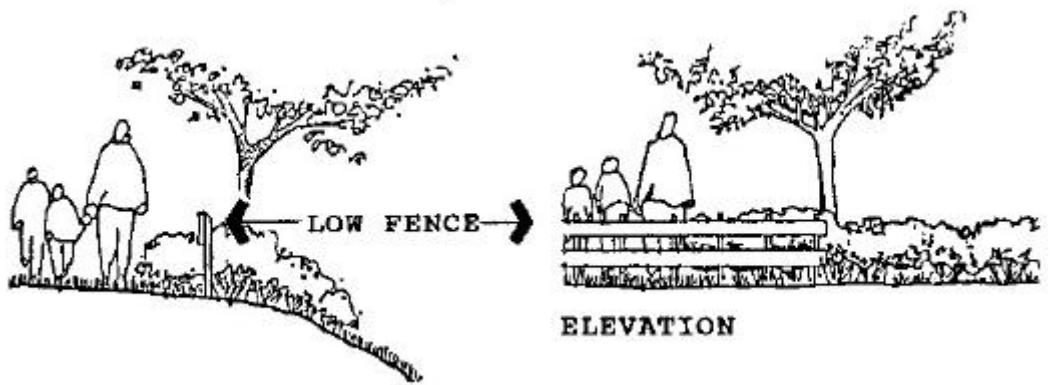


Figure 2B. Fence and Planting Combination



## 2.11 Access and Circulation

Access to the Creek is constrained by private property ownership, and by congested local streets during business hours.

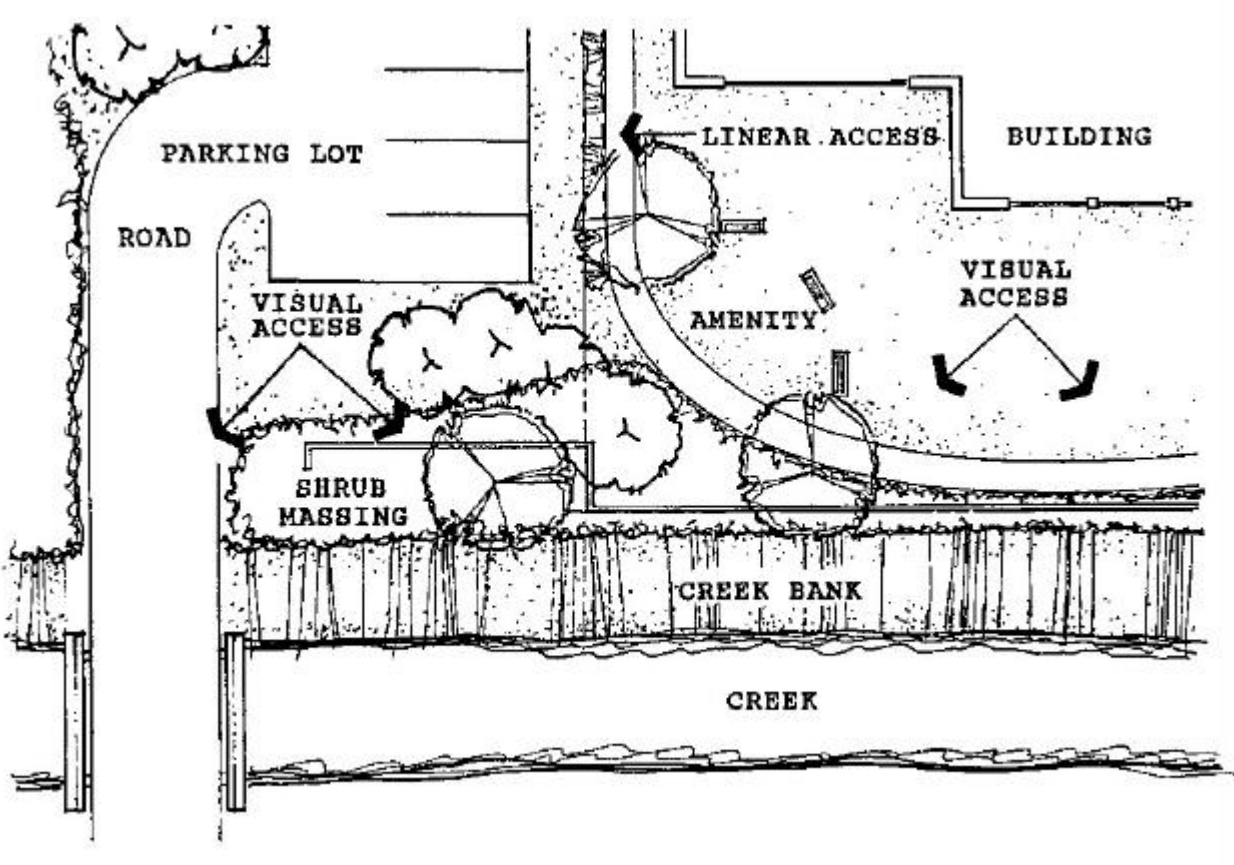
### **Objective:**

Development should anticipate the desire for visual access to the Creek. Where acceptable to property owners, development should provide physical access to the Creek area, for employees, visitors, or others.

Response:

- (a) Visual access (i.e. sight lines) to the Creek should be preserved and enhanced. Similarly, sight lines to Creek area mature trees should be preserved. Such trees have high amenity values in themselves, and also serve as landmarks.
- (b) Physical access to the Creek must be provided on at least one side of the channel for GVSDD maintenance. Such access should also be considered as a means to develop the amenity potential of the Creek.
- (c) The design of physical access should respond to neighbouring access treatments.
- (d) Where physical access to the Creek is provided, seating areas should be established near sites of high amenity value.

Figure 3. Examples of Access and Circulation



#### 4 Guidelines Pertaining to the Regulations of the Zoning and Development By-law

##### 4.4 Building Setbacks

The amenity potential of Still Creek is influenced by adjacent uses, forms and materials. Building setbacks may be used to mitigate the potentially negative impacts of adjacent development on the Creek landscape character.

**Objective:**

Establish a zone of transition, in the form of a building setback, between the landscape character of the Creek and new development.

Response:

- (a) Buildings should be set back at least 3.05 metres (10 feet) from the edge of the GVSDD easement (see section 9.5).
- (b) The form of development in the building setback area may include planting, site finishings such as seating, signage and lighting, and access treatments.

##### 4.9 Off-Street Parking and Loading

Parking is an important issue in terms of environmental quality, stormwater management and impact upon the amenity potential of the Creek. Parking lots are a source of potentially harmful runoff. Traces of oil and other materials left by cars in parking lots will, if unchecked, be deposited into the Creek as it drains the area. Also, the area of hard surface paving materials added by new lot construction compounds the volume of stormwater runoff that is to be collected by Still Creek.

**Objective:**

Applicants should seek to limit the potentially negative impacts of parking lot development.

Response:



- (a) Oil traps should be used in all catch basins and other drainage structures. Alternatively, oil interceptors in parking lots may be used to provide even greater control on inputs to the Creek.
- (b) Surface runoff into the Creek area should be minimized.
- (c) Parking lots should not extend into the building setback area described in these guidelines.

**4.16 Building Massing**

Building massing influences the extent to which the Creek is cast in shadow. The extent of shadowing will affect the habitat and amenity potential of the Creek. As such, a mixtue of sun and shade should be maintained on the Creek Channel. This may be achieved through roof treatment, breaking-up building massing, or increased building setbacks.

Figure 4A. Roof Treatment

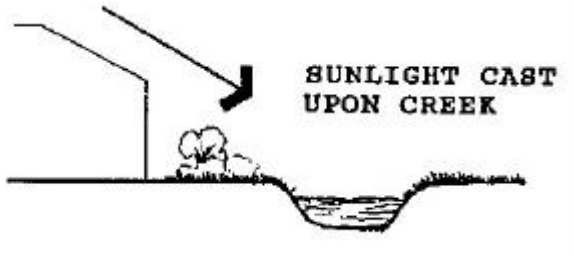


Figure 4B. Building Massing

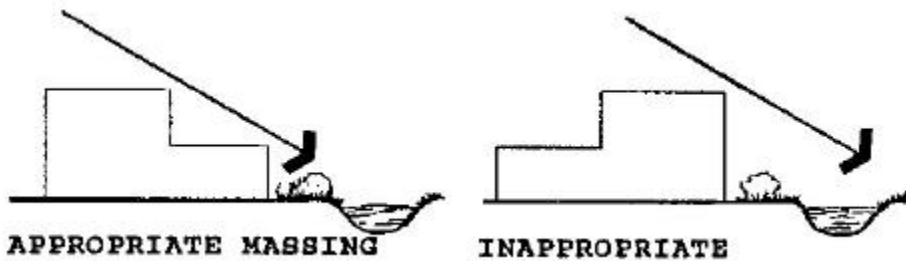
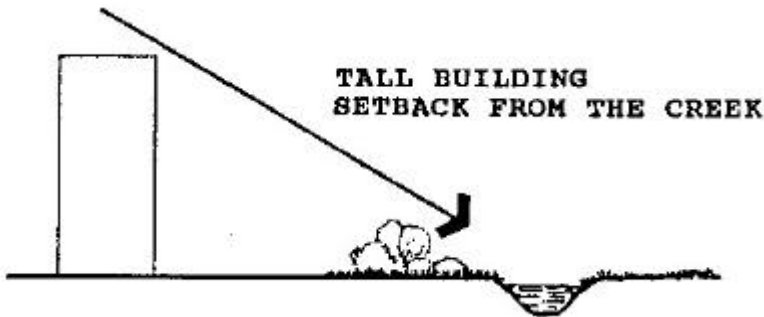


Figure 4C. Increased Building Setback



## 5 Architectural Components

### 5.8 Signage

Aside from business identification and advertising, signs may be used to identify the Creek and provide interpretive information. Signs should not interfere with the amenity values of the Creek and should not impair access, where access is provided. An alternative or supplement to such signs would be the use of environmental exhibits such as painted fish images on catch basins and headwalls. These images would remind us that stormwater runoff will ultimately reach fish habitats.

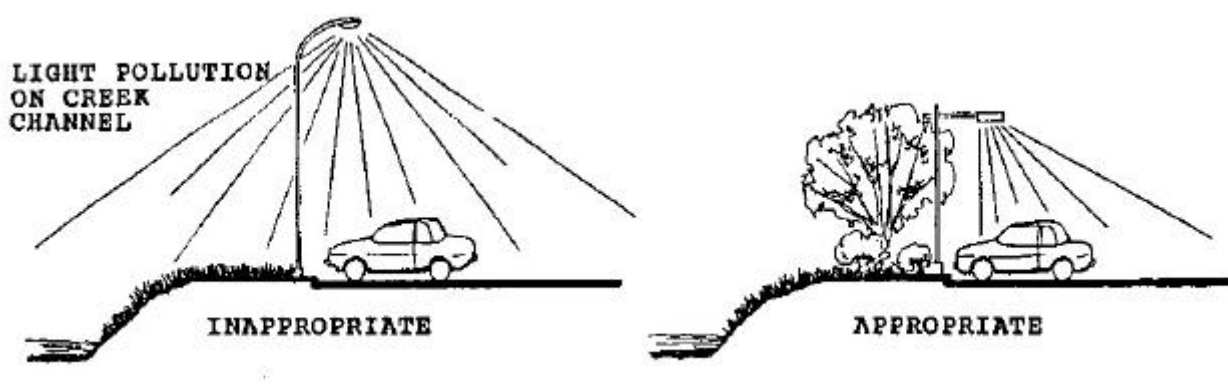
All signage must conform with the provisions of the City of Vancouver **Sign By-Law**.

## 7 Open Space

### 7.5 Site Lighting

Site lighting may be used to address security issues and enhance the amenity values of the Creek. Consideration should be given to local lighting precedents so that, if appropriate, a consistent style of lighting can be established. Similarly, light pollution and glare on the Creek channel should be minimized.

Figure 5. Site Lighting



## 8 Landscaping

### 8.1 Tree Retention

Mature trees line the upper edge of Still Creek's banks. These trees are of a scale and form distinct in the district. They serve as landmarks and provide habitat for local wildlife. Accordingly, the retention of mature trees should be a primary design objective.

### 8.2 Plant Materials

Plant materials in the vicinity of Still Creek are typical of the natural Creek environment. While not strictly native, they are not ornamental. The existing landscape materials are appropriate, they define a landscape character, and they attract and support wildlife.

Objective:

New development should make use of plant materials that reinforce the Still Creek landscape character and its habitat qualities.

Response:

- (a) Where possible, existing plant materials should be retained within the building setback and easement areas. The following list should be considered when new materials are introduced:

- plants typical of the natural Creek environment, such as Willows, Cottonwoods, Alders, Dogwoods, ferns and grasses;
  - plants that attract insects and birds, such as blackberry, salmonberry and thimbleberry;
  - plants that flower and fruit over the seasons, such as Pussy Willow;
  - plants that stabilize slopes and restrict direct access to the Creek channel, such as blackberries;
  - plants that fix nutrients and rehabilitate soil, such as legumes.
- (b) Efforts should be made to ensure that waste materials are not deposited in the Creek. The use of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides should be avoided.
- (c) Tree plantings should be set back at least 1.52 metres (5 feet) from the top of the Creek banks, with large trees set back even further.
- (d) The GVSDD requires property owners to maintain all landscape elements in the easement area. The GVSDD regularly undertake brushcutting within the hydraulic channel as part of its maintenance program.

### **8.3 Surface Materials**

New development may compound the denigrated state of Still Creek. Material inappropriate to the Creek environment could potentially contribute harmful substances to the soil, water or wildlife.

Objective:

New development should not add to existing water and soil quality problems.

Response:

- (a) Non-toxic materials should be used for Creek area development. For example, hogfuel, a commonly used path surface material, could leach toxic chemicals into Still Creek. Alternatives include crushed stone or hard paving materials such as concrete.
- (b) Where appropriate, porous paving materials should be used to reduce the amount of surface runoff.

### **8.4 Landscape Plan Requirements**

A landscape plan for the building setback and easement area is required for all developments. The plan should show existing and proposed plant materials, and all other landscape elements. The plan should be prepared by a landscape architect or professional landscape designer for submission with the Development Permit Application.

## **9 Additional Guidelines**

### **9.3 Bridges**

Several bridges span Still Creek. The form and colour of these bridges adds another layer of distinction to the Still Creek landscape character.

Bridges and other crossings should span Still Creek without support columns being located in the hydraulic channel. The design of Creek crossings must be approved by the GVSDD prior to the submission of a Development Permit Application. Furthermore, the location and design of vehicular and pedestrian crossings are also subject to the approval of the Director of Planning.

### **9.4 Creek Realignment**

The visual and habitat qualities of Still Creek are affected by Creek realignment. As such, efforts should be made to retain as much of the existing Still Creek landscape character as possible. Where necessary, removed materials should be replaced along the new Creek alignment.

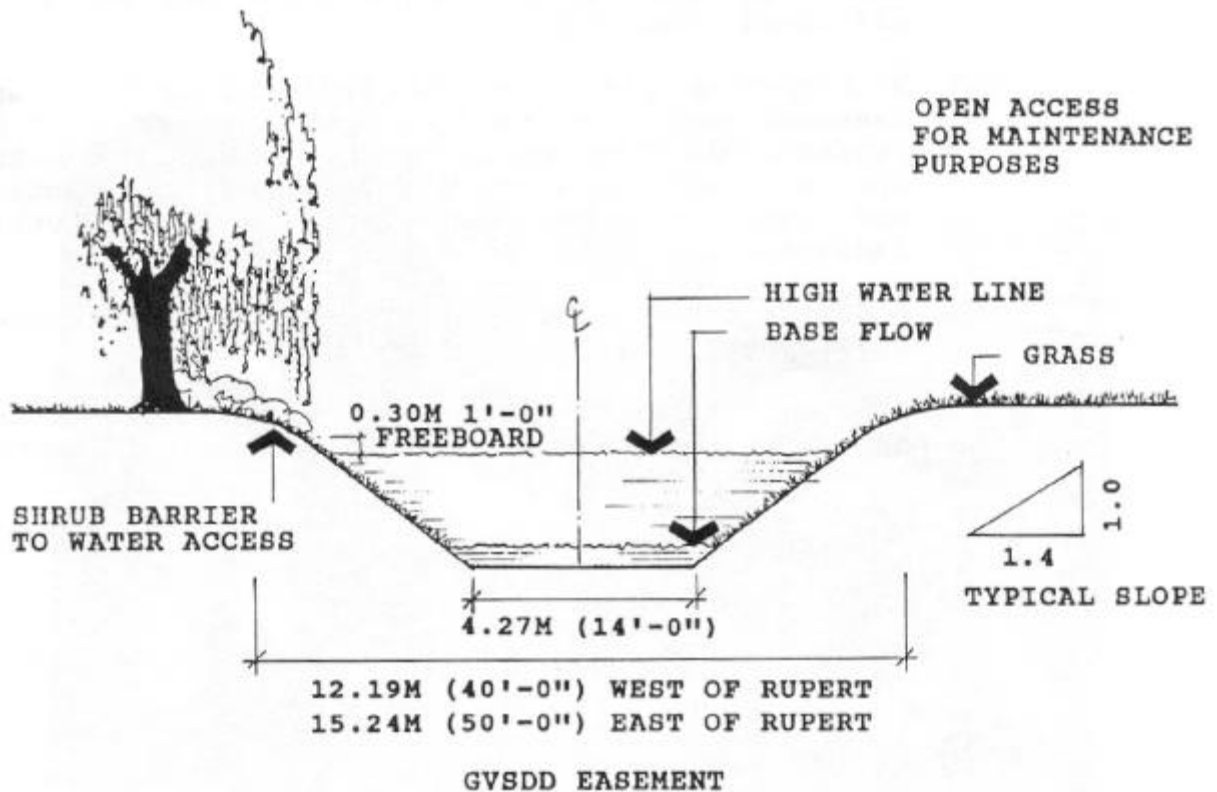
Creek channel realignment should avoid sharp angles or bends. A more natural, curvilinear form is preferred.

Development proposals affecting Creek alignment must be approved by the GVSDD prior to submitting a Development Permit Application.

## 9.5 Drainage Requirements and Easement

The Creek occupies an easement maintained by the GVSDD. The easement is 12.19 metres (40 feet) wide west of Rupert Street and 15.24 (50 feet) wide east of Rupert Street. The Creek channel itself is narrower than the easement, and the location of the center line of the Creek varies within the easement area. Development proposals having a potential impact on the hydraulic requirements of the GVSDD must receive approval from the GVSDD prior to the submission of a Development Permit Application. The GVSDD also requires continuous access from at least one side of the channel to allow for routine maintenance.

Figure 6. Examples of GVSDD Minimum Standards



## Appendix

### Submission Requirements

Development permit applications should include, in addition to the items in Section 4 of the **Zoning and Development By-Law**:

- Notice of approval by the Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District for all developments potentially impacting the Creek's hydraulic flow, alignment, or access by GVSDD maintenance personnel;
- Notice of approval by the GVSDD for the design of all Creek crossings;
- A landscape plan for the building setback and easement area, prepared by a landscape architect or professional landscape designer, which indicates the species, numbers, sizes and locations of existing and proposed plant materials, and all other landscape elements;
- A design rationale that describes how the proposed development meets these guidelines.

Depending on the nature of the proposed development, the landscape plan requirement may be waived by the Director of Planning.