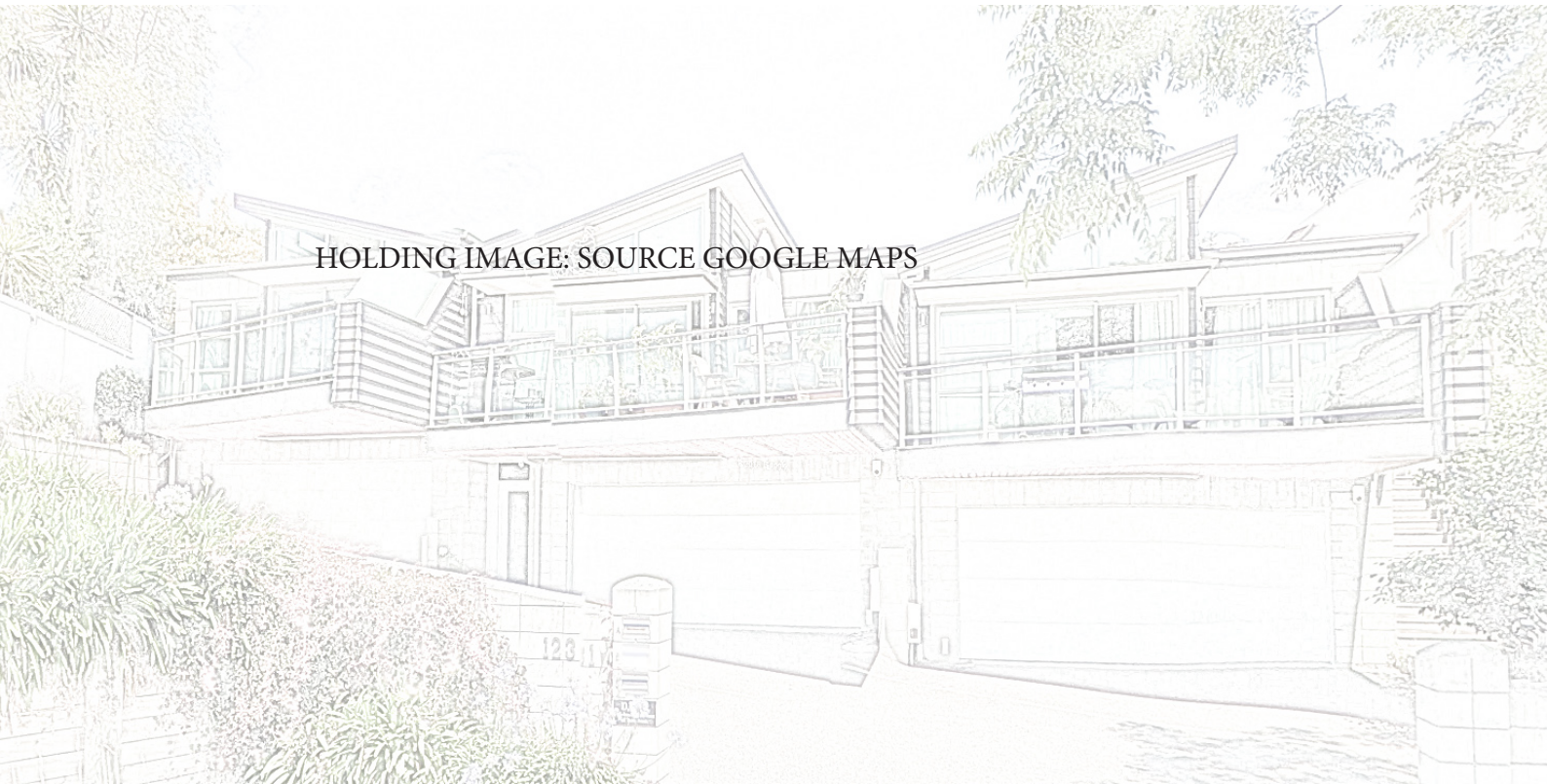


apartment design guide



introduction

The Waikato Regional Policy Statement (RPS), informed by Future Proof identifies that land in Hamilton needs to be more efficiently developed to accommodate more people. This will be achieved through a mix of greenfield and infill development. As house hold composition changes it is important that a range of good quality housing options are available to the residents and families of Hamilton.

Apartments provide an opportunity for a more compact living environment and are encouraged in the Central City, some business centres and in specifically identified residential areas. The creation of high density nodes provide an opportunity to live close to amenities, places of work and entertainment.

The concept of high density living arrangements have often been met with resistance from the community due to concerns regarding out of context, low quality development that provides low levels of onsite amenity and impacts on the character of the neighbourhood it is situated in.

The Hamilton Plan aims to create a more attractive city and in developing apartments, it is important that these are designed in a manner that addresses the context of their location and provide a high quality living environment for residents. Well-designed apartments are important for providing a genuine housing choice for those with a range of incomes and lifestyle preferences.

The intention of this document is to provide a best practice guide for the development of apartments in Hamilton. It sits alongside and complements the District Plan, providing more detailed advice on how to achieve the outcomes sought by the District Plan.

The guide is non-statutory based on international best practice and uses local and international examples to convey the ideas set out in the document.

IMAGE

What is an apartment?

An apartment is generally understood to be a collection of individual residential units that are joined together in one building structure. These can be arranged in a number of ways with any number of units, and can include a range of shared facilities such as communal open space and parking. Units may share common access or each have their own private access.

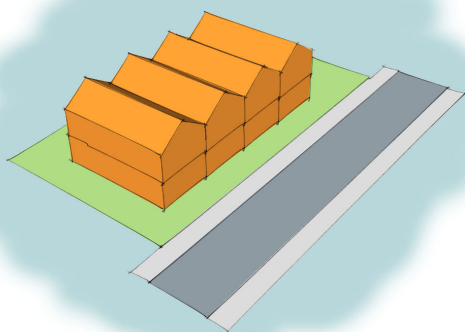
The District Plan defines an apartment building as:

Means a residential building comprising three or more attached residential units. For the avoidance of doubt, residential units physically connected by one or more accessory buildings, such as garages, will also be deemed to be attached.

How an apartment is arranged will be determined by a number of attributes such as its location, the size of the parcel and the typography of the area.



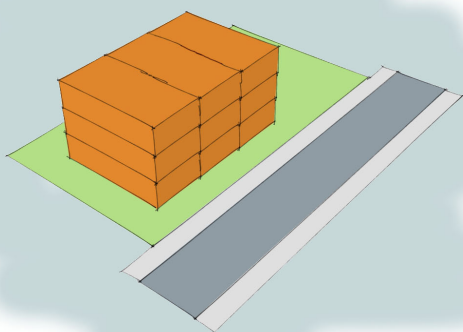
IMAGE



Row or Terraced Apartments

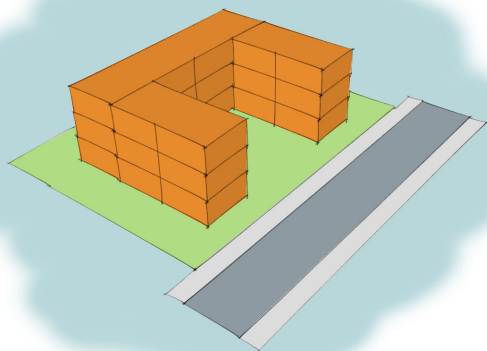
This style of apartment development consists of three or more units arranged in a continuous row with shared walls, with each unit having their own access. These work well on wide sites, however if well designed, they can be developed as a successful response as infill housing on deeper narrow sites.

This medium density response is the most common apartment style in Hamilton.



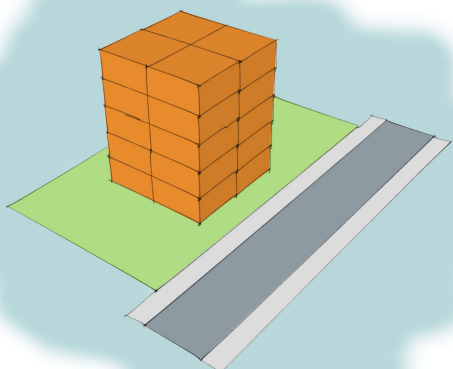
Walk Up Apartment

Creating a higher level of density than terraced apartments, a walk up apartment contains a number of units typically over three or four storeys with a common access.



Courtyard Apartments

This style of apartments consists of residential units arranged around a central courtyard or communal area and is typically low rise.



Mid-Rise Apartments

These larger style apartment buildings range from five to ten storeys and are more likely to be found in the Central City due to their size. These type of buildings typically include shared parking.

Identifying and responding to the context

Good design responds to the character and context of the area the development is proposed to be located. It considers both the built form, existing and expected and the natural characteristics of the area.

A contextual analysis ensures that there is a thorough understanding of a sites surroundings and will inform the design of a development as it responds to opportunities and constraints identified on and around the site. The scale of the contextual analysis should equate to the scale of the development proposal and at a minimum it should seek to understand the impact the development will have on the streetscape and the sites immediately adjacent to the proposal.

Context Analysis should address:

- Street layout and connections for vehicle, cyclists and pedestrians
- Public Transport availability
- Infrastructure capacity
- Facilities and amenities (shops, schools and community facilities)
- Uses and activities
- The Streetscape (size, bulk and scale of buildings, character of the surrounding environment)
- Adjacent Buildings (character, location, heights, setbacks)
- Open Space (location and use)
- View-shafts and vistas
- Established vegetation and trees
- Acoustic or visual intrusions (railways/expressways/industrial sites etc.)

Responding to the context involves identifying the positive elements of a neighbourhoods existing or future character. Buildings should respond to and enhance these qualities.

If an area is undergoing change or is earmarked for a change in character, careful consideration must be given to the desired future character of an area and how the development can help shape that desired character.

Aspects to consider when determining local character:

- The bulk, location and size of existing buildings.
- The relationship and spacing between existing buildings.
- The architectural style of the area.
- The topography, landscape character and existing vegetation in the area.

CONTEXT IMAGES AND EXPLANATION



Site layout

A good site layout is vital in achieving a quality apartment development. Siting the building correctly will ensure that the development responds to its context, reflecting the character of the streetscene. It will also ensure that the units are able to maximise onsite amenity, providing a high quality of living for future residents.

Orientation

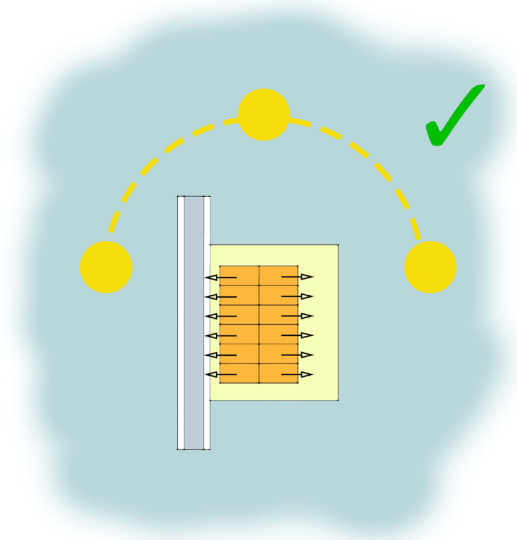
The way a building is orientated on its site plays an important role in determining the overall amenity and quality of an apartment development. This is easier to control in greenfield sites where the subdivision pattern can be arranged to accommodate the intended land use.

Achieving the optimum orientation of buildings in brownfield redevelopment projects can be a challenge as design is constrained by the existing urban environment. This requires the design to work harder to achieve a high quality outcome.

Due to the higher density that is inherent with apartment development, they do not have a section like stand alone or duplex developments to provide onsite amenity. This requires adequate consideration of sunlight and daylight access and orientating the building to ensure that every apartment in the development receives direct sunlight at some point during the day.

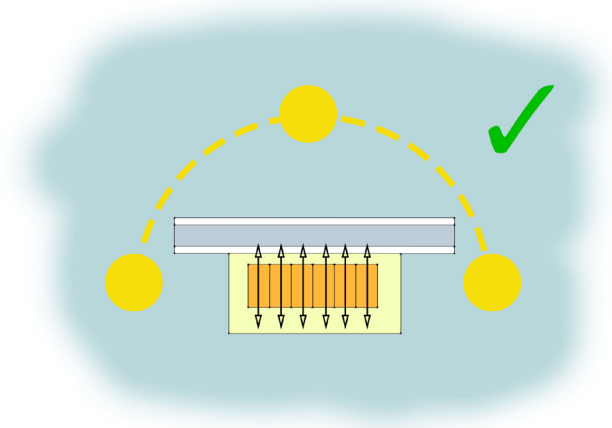


IMAGES



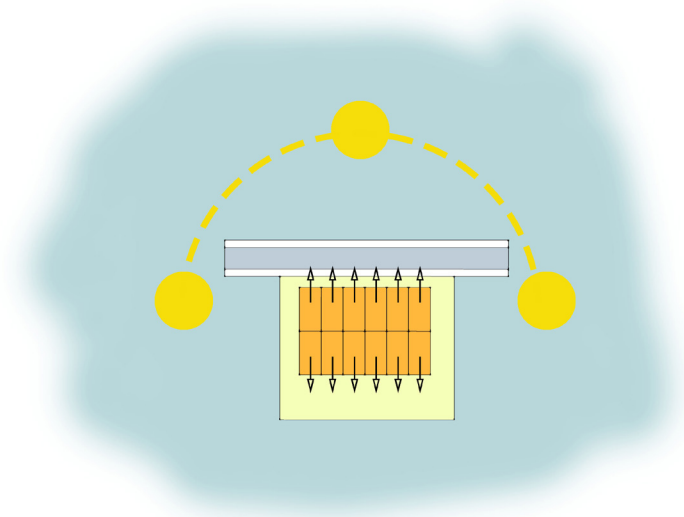
North South Orientation

A north south orientation allows for direct sunlight access to all residential units whether the development is single or double loaded.



Single loaded East-West Orientation

An east-west orientation can work for single loaded apartments that face north.



Dual loaded East-West Orientation

If an apartment is dual loaded in an east west orientation, the majority of the southern apartments are not provided with direct access to sunlight.

Setback

Setback standards vary from zone to zone, depending on the desired character of the area. If the development is in an area with a distinctive street character, this should be maintained by using the setbacks of adjacent buildings as a guide. If the character of the area is likely to change, i.e. it has been identified for high density development, it is appropriate to use the setbacks identified for the zone.

Apartments in the residential areas should ensure that there is adequate setback from the street to create a definitive threshold between the public street and the private front yard.

Apartments in the central city and business areas tend to be above the ground floor leaving the street front to be activated by another activity.

Where ground floor apartments are proposed in the central city, a zero setback can still be utilised, but this needs to be incorporated with other design responses to ensure that ground floor residents have adequate levels of privacy such as changes in levels, landscaping and planting.

Public Front/Private back

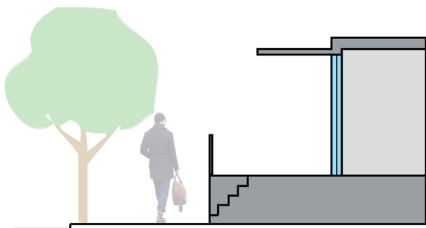
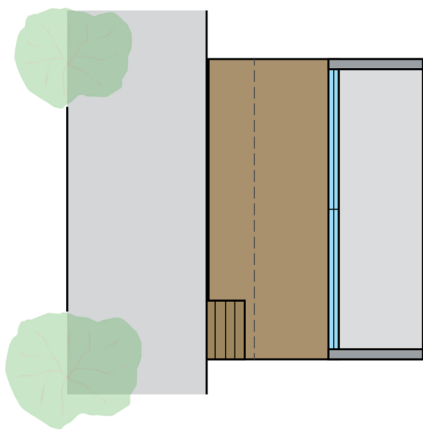
Providing a public frontage is an important part of siting a development as it helps to define a street's quality and character and provides an opportunity for passive surveillance.

Where row or terrace apartments are considered and each residence has their own ground floor outdoor living area, these should be private and to the back of the property. This needs to be balanced with the provision of sunlight to outdoor living areas.

Privacy and Separation

Living in higher density areas means living in closer proximity to other people. In order to provide a high standard of living, it is important to ensure adequate levels of privacy are provided regardless of the density of a development. This needs to be balanced with providing views and outlooks for residents which also contributes to onsite amenity and passive surveillance of any adjacent public spaces.

This also applies where multiple buildings are planned on one site; the placement of buildings should take into account the privacy of residents and be located to ensure these are adequately provided for.



Addressing the street

The interface between the front of the building and the street is important; it is where the transition from private space to the public domain occurs. The character of a street is highly influenced by how well everything from the front of the building forward is designed.

Where apartment development occurs at the front of the site, the way it addresses the street will determine how well the building sits within the context of the surrounding area and how well it is perceived in relation to the other buildings around it. A well designed approach will enhance the character of the street, can improve safety and create an attractive street environment.

Parking should not dominate the street-scene. There are a number of alternative arrangements when providing car parking for apartments and depending on the size of the development it may not be necessary for each apartment to have its own attached garage. Parking could be located to the rear of the site or could be shared between units.

Where located on a front site, apartments should:

- Respond to the character of the wider street taking into account the bulk and location of surrounding buildings or the desired change signalled in the District Plan.
- Ensure the building addresses and connects with the street.
- Ensure that the area between the apartments and the street is designed to maximise the visual connection between the two, whilst maintaining privacy for building occupants.
- Clearly define the edge of what is public and what is private space.

Streetscape:

- Apartment dwellings on a front site should have direct entry from the street and this entrance should be well lit. For row or terraced apartments arranged perpendicular to the road, the unit closest to the street should provide a directly accessible entrance from that street.
- Avoid having garaging dominating the street-scene.
- Limit lengths of blank solid walls that face the street.
- Planting can be used to soften edges, changes in level and fencing.
- Changes in level can be used to provide surveillance of the street and increase visual privacy for residents.

Building Design:

- Use upper level balconies and windows to overlook the street and or areas of open space.
- Front doors should provide shelter from the wind and rain.
- At least one habitable room of each unit (unless the site restricts this), with glazing should face the street. It is preferable that this is a kitchen/dining/living area - a bedroom may be used, but care has to be taken to ensure privacy is available to residents.
- Ensure legibility of buildings and break up facades by using:
 - o architectural detail
 - o changes in materials
 - o changes in the front building line
 - o changes in colours

Fences and walls

- Where fencing is provided, use visually permeable materials and treatments such as timber or aluminium slats. These can be arranged to allow a visual connection with the street while maintaining privacy for residents.
- Walls and fences can be combined with planting to soften harsh edges.
- Minimise the height of fences to ensure they do not dominate the street scene.
- Carefully choose materials to ensure maintenance of views, outlook, air and light

Outlook

- There should be a visual connection between the development and public areas such as roads and parks.
- Communal public spaces such as lanes and walkways through sites should also be overlooked.
- The more windows overlooking public and communal spaces, the better.

Entrances and Porches

- Entrances for apartments that face the street should address the public environment and be easy to identify.
- They should provide shelter from weather and have adequate lighting.

Building design

The standards found in the district plan are not design controls. They prescribe the general building envelope that a building should be designed within on the site. They do not however dictate the form of the building, the materials used or the style of the building. It is important that care is taken when designing the appearance of the building to ensure it responds to its context, provides visual interest and is constructed out of quality materials.

To ensure that apartment development fits well into the context of its location, (whether that is the existing or the intended future context), it is important to consider the building design. Where development is occurring in parts of the city that have less amenity or lower quality housing stock, apartment design should take into account the desired future context of the neighbourhood rather than recreating the status quo.

Bulk and Massing

- Consider how an apartment could be arranged on the site, options include:
 - o Terrace or row apartments
 - o Walk up apartment
 - o Mid rise apartment
 - o Courtyard apartment

Height

- Consider two/three storey development where appropriate on small sections ensuring useable outdoor space.
- Step buildings back further from each other the higher they are, to ensure adequate sunlight/daylight penetration.

Elevations

- The side elevations of a building are important and have the greatest impact on immediately adjoining sites and those that live on them.
- Building setbacks and height in relation to boundary controls ensure that adjacent dwellings are not overshadowed.
- With two or three storied development it is particularly important to ensure that side elevations are not visually imposing or dominating. To avoid this, they should be broken up with changes in height, and depth complimented by different material treatments and glazing. The design should respond to the sites context and pay particular attention to any effects on the immediately adjacent properties.

Roof design

- In multi-unit developments vary the style of roof to provide visual interest on the site. Minimise expanses of flat roofs.
- If a mono- pitched roof is to be used, ensure the building includes a considerable amount of articulation in order to break up the mass of the building and make it more interesting visually.
- Consider the use of dormers for upstairs rooms.

Exterior cladding

- Exterior cladding should be of a high quality and durable material.
- The cladding should complement the design of the facades and be used to break up the bulk and mass of a building by articulating the facades, providing visual interest through a variety of textures, colours and/or materials.

Windows

- Ensure windows are positioned to enhance adequate lighting and ventilation.
- Use glazing to activate the street frontage, offering passive surveillance.
- Protect visual privacy by offsetting windows on adjacent facades.

Designing for the Vehicle

The design of vehicle access and parking can have a significant impact on the streetscape, site layout and building facade. Depending on the type of apartment that is being developed, there are number of ways to accommodate the vehicle that will have the least impact on a streets character, provide ease of access and ensure safety for pedestrians.

The style of vehicle access and parking chosen should relate to the characteristics of the chosen site and the size and scale of the building proposed.

Vehicle Access

- Minimise the impact of vehicle access points by locating them on secondary frontages.
- The number and width of driveways should be kept to the minimum required.
- Ensure that sightlines to vehicle access areas are clear, helping to keep pedestrians safe.
- Clearly separate vehicle access from pedestrian access points and distinguish between them using different materials or textures where appropriate.
- Reduce their impact on the street front by incorporating them into the façade of the building by using materials and screening.
- Wide driveways increase the amount of paved surfacing, reducing the area of front yard available for landscaping; therefore the width of the driveway should be reduced as much as practical.
- Driveways should be located to retain as much on street parking as possible.
- New driveways should also retain as many street trees as possible and/or provide the opportunity for the planting of additional trees to retain amenity.
- Use landscaping and planting to soften vehicle access points.
- Avoid situations where headlight glare is likely to impact habitable rooms.

Manoeuvring

- Spaces for vehicles need to be designed to ensure that vehicle movement and manoeuvring can occur easily and safely.
- Provide enough manoeuvring space to allow vehicles to exit the site in a forwards manner.
- Ensure consideration is given to servicing vehicles, particularly if there is a central service point for all apartments.

Car parking/Garaging

Where parking is provided, it is important that it does not adversely impact on the character of the area the development is located. Parking is influenced by development feasibility, site constraints, apartment typology and the proximity to public transport and amenities.

- The residential part of the building should be the most visible part of the building from the street, not the garage/parking.
- Any parking should be directly and safely accessible from building entry points.

Terrace/Row apartments

This lower density apartment style allows for parking/garaging to be provided for each unit or in a communal area. In both cases, care needs to be taken to ensure that parking is accessible, safe and doesn't adversely impact on the internal amenity of the site.

This can be achieved by utilising the following techniques:

- Break up the bulk and massing of garage doors using different design techniques such as
 - o Garage doors should not dominate the street, and best practice is that these should be recessed behind the front building line.
 - o Garaging can be located at a 90o angle to the street if necessary.
 - o Softer materials or treatments should be considered for the garage door. Materials and patterning of garage doors can be designed to reduce blandness and bulk.
 - o Integrate parking into the design of the apartment building.
 - o Where terraced houses are perpendicular to the street, design the façade to reduce the impact of garaging on the access lane to avoid long narrow access ways that are dominated by garage doors.

Midrise apartments

If a midrise apartment development is proposed, there are a number of options to accommodate parking depending on site constraints and development feasibility.

These include:

- At grade parking (covered or uncovered)
- Podium parking
- Basement or half basement parking

Depending on the solution chosen, they should be designed to minimise visual impact on the streetscape.

- Locate parking on the side or rear of a site rather than the primary street frontage.
- Screen parked cars from view of the street through sleeving or building design while ensuring that the primary building frontage activates the street.
- Use the contours of the site to hide parking or provide split level parking.
- On grade parking on the primary street frontage should be avoided.

Landscaping

Landscaping

Landscaping and planting plays an important role in integrating development into its surrounding context. It is particularly important in areas of higher density and where narrower transport corridors are proposed. It can serve to soften hard materials, provide a transition from public to private space and provide visual interest.

Landscaping and planting can also be used to soften building facades; however it is not a substitute for poorly designed buildings.

- Use planting to define the transition from public to private space.
- Provide a balance of privacy whilst allowing passive surveillance over a public space.
- Choose plants appropriate to their setting ensuring they do not become too big for their location, making sure to consider orientation and possible shading effects.

