

VANCOUVER FENCE BUILDERS

Privacy Fencing

Privacy fence options including solid board, board-on-board, shadowbox, and tall panel designs for maximum screening on Metro Vancouver residential properties

20 Expert Answers from Fence IQ

vancouverfencebuilders.com/construction-brain

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What's the best privacy fence style for a small backyard in East Vancouver?

For a small East Vancouver backyard, a board-on-board (shadowbox) cedar fence at 6 feet is your best choice. This style provides complete privacy while allowing air circulation, which is crucial in Metro Vancouver's wet climate to prevent moisture buildup and extend fence life.

Board-on-board design features alternating boards on both sides of the fence frame, creating a solid visual barrier from any angle while allowing wind to pass through the gaps between boards. This wind permeability is especially important in small yards where solid fences can create uncomfortable wind tunnels or dead air pockets. The design also looks identical from both sides, which maintains good neighbour relations in East Vancouver's close-knit communities where properties are often just a few feet apart.

Western Red Cedar is the premium material choice for East Vancouver's marine climate. Cedar's natural oils resist rot and insects, and it weathers beautifully to a silver-grey patina if left untreated, or maintains its warm honey colour with regular staining every 2-3 years. Given Metro Vancouver's 1,200mm+ annual rainfall, cedar's dimensional stability prevents the warping and splitting common with other wood species. Expect to pay \$50-\$70 per linear foot installed for quality cedar board-on-board construction.

Height considerations are important in small yards. A 6-foot fence provides excellent privacy without making the space feel claustrophobic. The City of Vancouver allows up to 6 feet (1.8 metres) in rear and side yards without a permit. Going higher requires permits and can make small spaces feel enclosed. Consider adding lattice panels on top for extra privacy while maintaining an open feel - this brings total height to 7-8 feet while keeping the solid portion at 6 feet.

Alternative privacy options for small yards include horizontal cedar slat fencing, which creates a modern, clean appearance that can make small spaces feel larger. However, this style costs \$60-\$90 per linear foot due to the precision required. Vinyl privacy fencing (\$45-\$65 per linear foot) offers zero maintenance and performs excellently in Vancouver's wet climate, though some find it less aesthetically pleasing than natural cedar.

Practical installation tips for small East Vancouver yards: ensure posts are set 2.5 feet deep with concrete and gravel drainage to handle the area's soft, wet soil. Leave 2-3 inches between fence bottom and grade for drainage and to prevent rot. Consider the mature size of any existing plants - many East Vancouver properties have established gardens that can be damaged during installation.

Professional installation is strongly recommended for privacy fences. Proper post spacing, alignment, and concrete footings are critical for a fence that will last 15-20+ years in Metro Vancouver's challenging climate. Poor installation leads to leaning, sagging fences within just a few years.

Need help finding a fence contractor? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with experienced local professionals who understand East Vancouver's unique conditions and can provide free estimates for your privacy fence project.

Q2

What's the best privacy fence style for a suburban lot in Delta BC?

For a suburban lot in Delta, a 6-foot board-on-board (shadowbox) Western Red Cedar fence is the best all-around privacy fence choice — it provides excellent visual screening, handles Delta's wind exposure well, looks great from both sides, and suits the neighbourhood aesthetic of most Delta subdivisions. That said, the "best" style depends on your priorities: maximum privacy, wind resistance, maintenance commitment, and budget.

Board-on-board (shadowbox) cedar is the top recommendation for Delta specifically because of the area's exposure to wind coming off Boundary Bay and the flat agricultural land surrounding many subdivisions. Unlike a solid board fence, which acts as a wind sail and puts enormous stress on posts during storms, a board-on-board design has alternating boards on each side of the rails with slight gaps between them. Wind passes through the gaps, reducing the force on the structure, while the overlapping boards block direct line of sight from either side. This means visual privacy without the wind vulnerability. Board-on-board also looks identical from both sides — there's no "good side" and "bad side" — which matters on suburban lots where you share fence lines with neighbours. Expect to pay \$50-\$80 per linear foot installed for a 6-foot board-on-board cedar fence in Delta.

Solid board cedar fencing provides the most complete privacy — no light, no visibility, no gaps. This is the traditional choice and works well on sheltered lots or in areas with minimal wind exposure. However, on lots in Tsawwassen, Ladner, or North Delta that face open fields or water, solid fences take the full brunt of winter storms. If you choose solid board in a wind-exposed location, use 6x6 posts instead of 4x4s, set them 2.5-3 feet deep in concrete, and space them at 6-foot intervals instead of the standard 8 feet. A 6-foot solid cedar privacy fence typically costs \$40-\$70 per linear foot installed.

Vinyl privacy fencing is worth considering if you want zero maintenance. Vinyl won't rot, doesn't need staining, and handles moisture without any degradation — a significant advantage in Metro Vancouver's wet climate. Modern vinyl fences come in white, tan, grey, and woodgrain finishes that look much more realistic than older products. The trade-off is that vinyl can look more "manufactured" than natural cedar and offers less flexibility for custom designs. A 6-foot vinyl privacy fence runs \$35-\$70 per linear foot installed.

Horizontal cedar slat fencing has become extremely popular in newer Delta developments and contemporary homes throughout Metro Vancouver. This modern style uses horizontal boards (typically 1x6 or 1x8 cedar) with small gaps or tight spacing, mounted between steel or heavy timber posts. It looks striking and contemporary but commands premium pricing — \$60-\$100+ per linear foot — because the horizontal orientation requires precise spacing and more posts to prevent boards from sagging between supports.

Delta-specific considerations: Delta's zoning bylaws allow fences up to 1.83 metres (6 feet) in rear and side yards and 1.22 metres (4 feet) in front yards without a permit. Properties in the Agricultural Land Reserve may have additional restrictions — check with Delta's planning department. Many newer subdivisions in East Ladner and North Delta have bare land strata components where the strata council controls fence styles and colours, so verify any restrictions before choosing materials. Also, Delta's flat terrain and proximity to water mean that soil can be saturated during the wet season, making proper post drainage (gravel beds below concrete footings) especially important.

For a typical Delta suburban lot with 120-150 linear feet of fencing (rear and two sides), budget \$5,000-\$12,000 depending on material and style. Getting 2-3 quotes from experienced fence contractors ensures you're getting competitive pricing. Vancouver Fence Builders can help you find local fence professionals through the Vancouver Construction Network.

Q3

How tall can I build a privacy fence in the City of Vancouver without needing a permit?

In the City of Vancouver, you can build a fence up to 1.8 metres (approximately 6 feet) in your rear and side yards without a building permit, and up to 1.2 metres (approximately 4 feet) in your front yard. These height limits are set by the City of Vancouver's zoning and development bylaws, and exceeding them triggers a requirement for a building permit and potentially a development permit.

How fence height is measured is an important detail that catches some homeowners off guard. The height is measured from the finished grade (ground level) on the higher side of the fence to the top of the fence. This matters on sloped properties — if the ground on your side is 6 inches higher than your neighbour's, the fence appears 6 inches taller from their side. On significantly sloped lots, stepped fence panels are typically required to keep each section within the height limit as measured from the higher ground level.

Front yard restrictions are stricter than rear and side yards. The 1.2-metre (4-foot) front yard limit exists primarily for sight-line safety — tall solid fences near driveways and sidewalks create blind spots for pedestrians, cyclists,

and drivers. Most front yard fences in Vancouver are picket style, low cedar, or ornamental aluminum that comply with the 4-foot limit. If you want more privacy in your front yard, consider a combination of a 4-foot fence with landscaping (hedges, shrubs, or climbing plants on a trellis) that provides screening without triggering a permit requirement.

Corner lots have additional restrictions. If your property is on a corner, the City of Vancouver has sight triangle requirements at the intersection — typically no fence, hedge, or structure over 0.9 metres (3 feet) within a defined triangle measured from the corner. This ensures drivers and pedestrians can see each other at the intersection. The exact dimensions of the sight triangle vary by location and street classification.

What happens if you want to go taller than 1.8 metres? You'll need to apply for a building permit and potentially a development permit (if you're requesting a variance from the zoning bylaw height limit). The building permit process involves submitting drawings, paying permit fees (\$100-\$500 depending on scope), and having the fence inspected after construction. A development permit for a height variance involves a more involved review process and may require notifying neighbours. In practice, most residential fence projects stay within the 1.8-metre limit because 6 feet provides adequate privacy for most situations.

Retaining walls and fences are measured separately in some cases and combined in others — this is a common source of confusion. If you have a retaining wall with a fence on top, the combined height may exceed the 1.8-metre limit even if the fence portion alone is under 6 feet. Check with the City of Vancouver's planning department for your specific situation, as the rules on combined wall-fence height can be complex and zone-specific.

Strata properties have an additional layer. Even if the City of Vancouver allows a 6-foot fence without a permit, your strata council may have its own rules about fence height, style, material, and colour. Always check strata bylaws first if you live in a townhouse, bare land strata, or other strata-titled property.

Before starting any fence project, it's worth calling the City of Vancouver's 311 service or visiting the planning counter at City Hall to confirm the current height limits for your specific zoning district, as bylaws are updated periodically and some areas have zone-specific variations.

What's the difference between board-on-board and solid board privacy fencing?

Board-on-board (also called shadowbox) fencing has alternating boards mounted on opposite sides of the horizontal rails with slight overlap, while **solid board fencing** places all boards on the same side with edges **butting tightly together**. Both provide privacy, but they differ significantly in appearance, wind resistance, cost, and how they look from your neighbour's side — all important considerations for Metro Vancouver homeowners.

Solid board fencing is the simpler and more traditional design. All fence boards are attached to the same side of the horizontal rails, with edges touching or overlapping slightly to create a continuous flat surface with no gaps. From the front (the "finished" side), it looks clean and uniform. From the back (the rail side), you see the exposed posts and horizontal stringers. This creates a clear "good side" and "bad side," which can be an issue with neighbours. The traditional etiquette — and some municipal bylaws — call for the finished side to face your neighbour's property, meaning you look at the rails and posts from your own yard. Solid board provides complete privacy with no light or visibility through the fence. It's also slightly cheaper to install because it uses fewer boards and less labour.

Board-on-board (shadowbox) fencing is a more refined design where boards alternate on each side of the rails with a slight overlap (typically 1-1.5 inches). When you look at the fence straight on from either side, you see a solid wall of overlapping boards — full visual privacy. When you look at an angle, you can see slight gaps between the boards where they overlap. This design has several important advantages for Metro Vancouver properties.

Wind resistance is the biggest practical advantage of board-on-board in Metro Vancouver. Solid fences act as wind sails — they catch the full force of incoming wind, transferring enormous stress to the posts and footings. During the outflow winds and winter storms that hit Metro Vancouver regularly, solid privacy fences are far more likely to lean, crack, or blow over than board-on-board fences. The gaps in a board-on-board design allow wind to pass through, reducing the wind load by 30-50% while still providing visual privacy. For properties in exposed locations — the North Shore, elevated lots, areas near open fields in Delta or Richmond — board-on-board is strongly recommended over solid board.

Appearance from both sides is the other major advantage. Board-on-board looks virtually identical from both sides — there's no "good side" and "bad side." Both you and your neighbour see an attractive fence face. This eliminates the awkward conversation about which direction the finished side faces and makes board-on-board the best choice for shared fence lines.

Cost comparison in Metro Vancouver: A 6-foot solid board cedar privacy fence typically runs \$40-\$70 per linear foot installed, while a 6-foot board-on-board cedar fence runs \$50-\$80 per linear foot. The 15-25% premium for board-on-board comes from using approximately 50% more boards (since boards overlap on alternating sides) and

the additional labour for precise spacing. For a 100-foot fence run, that works out to roughly \$1,000-\$1,500 more for board-on-board — a worthwhile investment for the wind resistance and dual-sided appearance.

Maintenance is similar for both styles. Both need staining or sealing every 2-3 years in Metro Vancouver's wet climate. Board-on-board can be slightly more work to stain because you need to get product on the overlapping edges, but the difference is minor. Both styles use the same post and rail construction underneath.

For most Metro Vancouver residential properties, board-on-board is the better choice — the wind resistance alone justifies the modest cost premium, and the dual-sided appearance makes it ideal for shared property lines. Solid board is the right choice when you need absolute privacy with zero visibility (hot tub enclosures, for example) or when budget is the primary concern on a sheltered lot.

Q5

Can I build a privacy fence between my property and my neighbour's in BC without their permission?

Yes, you can build a fence on your own property in BC without your neighbour's permission, as long as the fence is entirely on your side of the property line and complies with your municipality's height and setback bylaws. However, if the fence sits directly on the shared property line (boundary), the situation becomes more complex under BC's Property Law Act, and you should have a conversation with your neighbour before building.

Building on your own property is straightforward. If you set your fence even a few inches inside your property line, it is entirely your fence — you pay for it, you maintain it, you can build it in any style and material allowed by local bylaws, and you don't need your neighbour's consent. The practical downside is that you lose a few inches of usable yard space, and your neighbour could theoretically build their own fence right next to yours on their side. But legally, a fence on your own property is your decision alone.

Building on the property line is where BC law gets involved. Under BC's Property Law Act (Part 4 — Division Fences), when a fence is built on the boundary between two properties, both property owners share responsibility for its maintenance and upkeep. The Act provides a framework for cost-sharing of boundary fences, but it does not require your neighbour to pay for a new fence they didn't ask for. If you want to build a fence directly on the property line and share the cost, you need your neighbour's agreement. If they refuse to contribute, you can still build the fence — but you'll bear the full cost, and the legal cost-sharing provisions become complicated if disputes arise later.

Get a property line survey before building near the boundary. This is the single most important step regardless of whether you need your neighbour's permission. A survey by a licensed BC Land Surveyor establishes exactly where the legal property line is, preventing disputes about whether your fence encroaches on your neighbour's land. A boundary survey in Metro Vancouver costs \$1,000-\$3,000 depending on lot complexity, but it provides legal certainty and prevents disputes that can cost far more. If you build a fence even a few inches onto your neighbour's property, they can require you to remove it at your expense.

Practical tips for keeping the peace. Even though you legally can build a fence on your own property without asking, talking to your neighbour first is strongly recommended. Explain what you're planning, show them the style and materials, and discuss the property line. Many fence disputes in BC escalate to costly legal proceedings that could have been avoided with a 15-minute conversation. If you're building a board fence, the traditional good-neighbour practice is to face the finished (flat) side toward your neighbour's property. Better yet, choose a board-on-board (shadowbox) design that looks identical from both sides — it eliminates the "good side / bad side" issue entirely.

Strata properties have additional rules. If you live in a strata development (townhouse, bare land strata), the Strata Property Act may override your right to build a fence without approval. Many stratas require written council approval for any fence installation or modification, even on property within your lot boundaries. Check your strata bylaws before planning any fence work.

Municipal bylaws still apply regardless of neighbour consent. Whether you build on your property or on the boundary line, you must comply with local height limits (typically 1.8 metres rear/side, 1.2 metres front), setback requirements, and any zone-specific restrictions. Some municipalities require the fence to be set back a certain distance from the sidewalk or roadway.

For boundary fence disputes that can't be resolved through conversation, consulting a BC property lawyer is recommended — boundary disputes are a specialized area of law and the cost of legal advice (\$300-\$500 for an initial consultation) is far less than the cost of a civil court proceeding.

Q6

How much does a 6-foot solid cedar privacy fence cost per linear foot installed in Vancouver?

A 6-foot solid Western Red Cedar privacy fence in Metro Vancouver typically costs \$40-\$80 per linear foot fully installed, with most projects landing in the \$50-\$65 range for standard construction. This includes the cedar fence boards, 4x4 cedar posts set in concrete with gravel drainage, horizontal rails (typically three per section

for a 6-foot fence), all hardware, labour, and cleanup.

What drives the per-foot cost within that range: The lower end (\$40-\$55) applies to straightforward installations on flat ground with easy access, standard dog-ear or flat-top board profiles, 4x4 posts at 8-foot spacing, and basic construction. The upper end (\$65-\$80) reflects premium tight-knot or clear cedar boards, board-on-board (shadowbox) construction (which uses 50% more boards), 6x6 posts, closer post spacing for wind resistance, difficult terrain (slopes, rocky soil), or restricted access that requires hand-carrying materials through the property.

What's Included in the Per-Foot Price

A complete installed price from a reputable Metro Vancouver fence contractor should cover all materials (posts, rails, boards, concrete, gravel, fasteners), digging post holes to proper depth (minimum 2 feet, deeper in soft or exposed areas), setting posts plumb and in concrete with gravel drainage beds, attaching rails and boards with galvanized or stainless steel fasteners, applying end-cut preservative to all cut surfaces, final cleanup and disposal of packaging and debris. If old fence removal is needed, that's typically an additional \$3-\$8 per linear foot.

Full Project Cost Examples

To put the per-foot pricing in context for common Metro Vancouver residential projects: a **small yard enclosure of 40-60 linear feet** with one pedestrian gate runs \$2,000-\$5,000 total. A **typical side and rear yard fence of 100-120 linear feet** with one gate costs \$5,000-\$9,000 total. A **full perimeter fence on a standard 33 x 120 foot Vancouver lot** (approximately 250 linear feet of fencing with multiple gates) runs \$12,000-\$20,000 total.

Gates add cost on top of per-foot pricing. A single pedestrian gate (3-4 feet wide) adds \$200-\$600, while a double gate (5-6 feet wide) for wheelbarrow or equipment access adds \$400-\$900. Gate posts should be 6x6 (not 4x4) with extra concrete to handle the repeated stress of opening and closing.

Why Cedar Costs More — and Why It's Worth It

Western Red Cedar costs 30-50% more than pressure-treated lumber for fencing, but it's the preferred material in Metro Vancouver for good reasons. Cedar contains natural oils that resist rot, insects, and moisture absorption — critical in a climate that receives over 1,200mm of rain annually. It's locally sourced in BC, which keeps transport costs reasonable compared to imported materials. It's dimensionally stable, meaning it resists warping and cupping in wet/dry cycles. And it weathers beautifully to a silver-grey if left unstained, or maintains its warm honey-brown colour with regular staining every 2-3 years.

A properly installed and maintained cedar fence in Metro Vancouver lasts 15-25 years, compared to 10-15 years for pressure-treated. Over that lifespan, the higher upfront cost of cedar often works out to less per year than a cheaper alternative that needs replacing sooner.

Getting accurate quotes: Request written estimates from 2-3 fence contractors that specify the cedar grade, post size, post depth, concrete per post, fastener type, and whether end-cut preservative is included. The lowest quote often reflects shortcuts — shallow posts, minimal concrete, standard steel fasteners — that cost more in the long run when the fence fails prematurely. Vancouver Fence Builders can help you find experienced local fence contractors through the Vancouver Construction Network for free estimates on your project.

Can I install a taller fence for noise reduction along a busy road in Burnaby?

You can install a fence up to 1.83 metres (6 feet) in your rear or side yard in Burnaby without a permit, but if you want to exceed that height specifically for noise reduction along a busy road, you will need to apply for a variance or development permit from the City of Burnaby. Taller noise-reduction fences are sometimes approved on a case-by-case basis, particularly for properties backing onto major arterial roads like Kingsway, Canada Way, Hastings Street, or the Trans-Canada Highway corridor.

The reality of fence-based noise reduction is that standard 6-foot fences provide only modest sound attenuation. A solid wood or vinyl fence at 6 feet can reduce perceived noise by roughly 5-10 decibels for areas immediately behind the fence at ground level. For meaningful noise reduction, an acoustic barrier needs to be taller than the line of sight between the noise source and the receiver — meaning the fence must block the direct path between traffic and your outdoor living areas. For most residential properties where the road is at or near the same grade, an 8-foot fence provides noticeably better noise reduction than a 6-foot fence, and some acoustic engineering guidelines recommend 10-12 feet for significant reduction along highways.

If you want to pursue a taller fence in Burnaby, the process involves contacting the City's Planning Department to discuss your options. Depending on the zone and location, you may need a minor development permit or a Board of Variance application. Your application will be stronger if you can demonstrate that traffic noise exceeds acceptable residential levels (the City of Burnaby uses 55-65 dB daytime thresholds in residential areas), that the proposed fence height is the minimum necessary for meaningful reduction, and that the design minimizes visual impact on neighbouring properties. Having a noise assessment from an acoustical consultant can strengthen your case, though this adds \$1,000-\$3,000 to your project cost.

For maximum noise reduction within standard height limits, the fence design matters as much as the height. The fence must be completely solid with no gaps — even small openings between boards, under the fence, or at gate openings dramatically reduce acoustic performance. Board-on-board (shadowbox) fences look like they provide full coverage but the overlapping gaps allow significant sound transmission. A solid tongue-and-groove cedar fence, solid vinyl privacy fence, or a fence with mass-loaded vinyl (MLV) barrier sandwiched between the boards provides the best acoustic performance at 6 feet.

Additional noise reduction strategies that complement fencing include building a berm (raised earth mound) along the road edge and placing the fence on top, which effectively adds 2-3 feet of height without exceeding fence height limits. Some Burnaby properties along busy corridors already have developer-installed berms. Dense evergreen hedging on the road side of the fence adds marginal sound absorption and significant psychological noise masking. Interior courtyard-style landscaping with water features can mask remaining traffic noise effectively.

Cost for a noise-reduction fence along a busy road in Burnaby typically runs \$60-\$120 per linear foot installed for a solid 6-foot cedar or vinyl fence with acoustic considerations (no gaps, heavy-gauge materials, sealed base). If you secure approval for an 8-foot fence, expect \$80-\$150 per linear foot due to the deeper post holes (3 feet minimum), heavier 6x6 posts required for wind load, and additional materials. Adding mass-loaded vinyl acoustic barrier (\$2-\$4 per square foot) between double-sided fence boards can add \$15-\$30 per linear foot but provides measurably better sound attenuation.

Need help finding a fence contractor experienced with noise-reduction fencing in Burnaby? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with professionals who understand acoustic fence design and the variance application process.

Q8

What's the best fence type for blocking road noise in a Vancouver suburb?

A solid tongue-and-groove Western Red Cedar fence at the maximum allowed height of 1.83 metres (6 feet) is the best standard fence option for blocking road noise in Metro Vancouver suburbs, but for meaningful sound reduction you need to understand what makes a fence effective as an acoustic barrier. The key principle is mass and continuity — the heavier and more gap-free the fence, the better it blocks sound transmission.

Sound travels in waves, and a fence only blocks noise effectively when it interrupts the direct line of sight between the noise source and your ears. This means a 6-foot fence works best when you are standing or sitting close behind it at ground level — on a patio, deck, or in a garden bed. For second-storey windows or elevated outdoor areas, a standard fence provides little noise reduction because sound travels over the top. For ground-level outdoor living spaces, a well-built solid fence can reduce perceived traffic noise by 5-10 decibels, which is roughly a 50% reduction in perceived loudness.

What Makes a Fence Good at Blocking Noise

Mass is the most important factor. Heavier materials block more sound. A thick cedar fence (1-inch boards minimum) outperforms thin vinyl panels for noise reduction. For the best acoustic performance, some homeowners install double-sided fences with a layer of mass-loaded vinyl (MLV) sandwiched between the inner and outer boards. MLV is a flexible, dense material specifically designed for sound blocking, and adding it to a cedar fence can improve noise reduction by an additional 5-8 decibels. At \$2-\$4 per square foot for the MLV material, this adds roughly \$15-\$25 per linear foot to a 6-foot fence but provides measurably better results.

Gaps destroy acoustic performance. Even a small gap under the fence, between boards, or at a gate opening allows sound to pass through disproportionately. A fence with just 1% open area loses roughly 10 decibels of potential noise reduction. This is why tongue-and-groove or overlapping board construction is essential for noise-blocking fences. Standard picket fences, split-rail fences, and lattice-top fences provide negligible noise reduction. Board-on-board (shadowbox) fences look solid but have overlapping gaps that transmit significant sound.

For Metro Vancouver suburbs along busy corridors — properties backing onto roads like King George Boulevard in Surrey, Lougheed Highway in Burnaby or Coquitlam, Marine Drive in North and West Vancouver, or 200th Street in Langley — the most effective approach combines a solid fence with complementary strategies. Build an earth berm 2-3 feet high along the road side and place the fence on top, effectively raising the barrier to 8-9 feet without exceeding height bylaws. Plant dense evergreen hedging (Western Red Cedar hedging, laurel, or yew) on the road side of the berm for additional sound absorption. The combination of berm, fence, and hedge provides substantially better noise reduction than a fence alone.

Vinyl privacy fences can also work well for noise reduction if they are thick-walled commercial-grade panels rather than lightweight residential panels. Quality vinyl panels with internal ribbing and heavy wall thickness approach the mass of cedar boards and have the advantage of being completely sealed with no gaps. However, lightweight vinyl panels flex in wind and transmit sound vibrations, reducing their effectiveness.

Cost comparison for noise-reduction fencing in Metro Vancouver: a solid tongue-and-groove cedar fence runs \$50-\$80 per linear foot installed. Adding MLV acoustic barrier brings the total to \$65-\$105 per linear foot. A double-sided cedar fence with MLV core runs \$90-\$130 per linear foot. Commercial-grade vinyl privacy fence runs \$45-\$75 per linear foot. An earth berm (if space allows) adds \$15-\$30 per linear foot for grading and topsoil but provides the most cost-effective noise reduction per dollar spent.

Want to explore noise-reduction fencing options for your property? Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with fence contractors experienced in acoustic barrier design across Metro Vancouver suburbs.

Q9

What's the most wind-resistant privacy fence design for exposed properties in Richmond?

A board-on-board (shadowbox) privacy fence is the most wind-resistant design for exposed properties in Richmond, and it's the style that experienced Metro Vancouver fence contractors recommend most often for that area. Richmond sits on flat, low-lying terrain along the Fraser River delta with virtually no natural wind barriers, which means fences there take a beating from Pacific storm winds that can gust to 70-90 km/h during fall and

winter weather systems.

The reason board-on-board works so well is physics. A solid board privacy fence acts as a wind sail — every square foot of solid surface catches the full force of the wind, transferring enormous pressure to the posts and footings. A 6-foot solid privacy fence in a 70 km/h wind generates roughly 10-15 pounds of force per square foot, and across a typical 8-foot span between posts that adds up to hundreds of pounds of lateral force on each post. Board-on-board construction alternates boards on opposite sides of the horizontal rails with a 1-inch overlap, creating a fence that looks solid from a straight-on angle but has gaps that allow wind to pass through. This reduces wind load by approximately 30-40% compared to a fully solid fence while still providing excellent visual privacy.

Post depth and concrete footings are even more critical in Richmond than elsewhere in Metro Vancouver.

Richmond's soil is predominantly silty clay and peat — it's reclaimed delta land that was originally marshland. This soil is softer and has lower bearing capacity than the glacial till found in Burnaby, Coquitlam, or the North Shore. For a wind-resistant privacy fence in Richmond, posts should be set a minimum of 30 inches deep (2.5 feet), with 36 inches preferred for fully exposed locations. Each post should sit on a 4-6 inch gravel drainage bed with a minimum 2-bag concrete footing (roughly 120 pounds of pre-mix per post). In particularly soft or wet areas of Richmond — common near the dykes and in south Richmond — some contractors use Sonotubes to create a larger concrete footing that resists lateral movement in the soft soil.

Post spacing should be reduced from the standard 8 feet to 6 feet in wind-exposed Richmond locations.

Closer post spacing dramatically increases a fence's ability to resist wind forces because each panel is smaller and the load is distributed across more posts. Going from 8-foot to 6-foot spacing adds roughly 25% more posts to your project (and 25% more concrete), which increases material costs by \$8-\$15 per linear foot. But it's far cheaper than rebuilding a blown-over fence.

6x6 posts are strongly recommended over 4x4 posts for wind-exposed privacy fences in Richmond. A 6x6 Western Red Cedar or pressure-treated post has roughly three times the bending strength of a 4x4. For severe wind exposure, steel posts with wood sleeves offer the highest wind resistance — they won't snap or rot and provide a permanent structural backbone. Steel posts add \$25-\$40 per post compared to wood, but many Richmond homeowners consider it worthwhile insurance.

The cost for a wind-resistant board-on-board privacy fence in Richmond runs approximately **\$55-\$95 per linear foot installed**, which is \$10-\$20 more per foot than a standard solid board fence due to the closer post spacing, deeper footings, heavier posts, and the double-boarded construction. For a typical 100-linear-foot rear fence, that's \$5,500-\$9,500 — but the fence will stand through Richmond's windstorms for 15-20 years with proper maintenance instead of leaning or blowing down within the first few seasons.

Alternative wind-resistant options include **spaced horizontal slat fences** (with 15-25mm gaps between boards) and **lattice-top fences** where the top 12-18 inches is open lattice that allows wind to pass through while the lower 4.5 feet is solid for ground-level privacy. Both reduce wind load significantly while maintaining strong visual screening.

If you're on an exposed Richmond property, make sure your contractor understands the wind exposure and adjusts their installation approach accordingly. Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with fence professionals who have experience building for Richmond's specific conditions — our matching service is free.

How do I build a privacy fence that still allows airflow in Vancouver's humid climate?

The best privacy fence designs that maintain airflow in Vancouver's humid marine climate are board-on-board (shadowbox), spaced horizontal slat, and louvred fence styles, all of which create visual screening while allowing air to circulate through and around the fence. This airflow serves two critical purposes in Metro Vancouver: it reduces wind load on the fence structure, and it prevents the trapped moisture and stagnant air conditions that accelerate wood rot, moss growth, and mildew on both the fence itself and everything behind it.

Vancouver's climate is uniquely harsh on solid fences. With over 1,200mm of annual rainfall and persistent humidity from October through April, solid board fences create a microclimate on their sheltered side where moisture lingers, air stagnates, and wood stays wet far longer than it should. The boards themselves suffer too — when both faces of a solid fence can't dry evenly, differential moisture causes cupping, warping, and premature rot. A fence design that allows airflow significantly extends the lifespan of every component.

Board-on-board (shadowbox) fences are the most popular airflow-friendly privacy option in Metro Vancouver. Boards are mounted on alternating sides of the horizontal rails, overlapping by roughly 1 inch. From a direct angle, the fence appears solid — you can't see through it when looking straight on. But the offset boards create channels that allow air to move through the fence from any angle. This design provides roughly 80-90% visual privacy while reducing wind load by 30-40% compared to a solid fence. Cost in Metro Vancouver runs \$50-\$85 per linear foot installed using Western Red Cedar, which is \$5-\$15 more per foot than a standard solid board fence due to the additional lumber (you're effectively using 1.5 times the number of boards).

Spaced horizontal slat fences use evenly spaced horizontal boards with deliberate gaps of 10-25mm between them. The wider the gap, the more airflow and less privacy. At 10-15mm spacing, you get strong privacy screening — it's very difficult to see detail through narrow horizontal gaps, especially from more than a few metres away. At 20-25mm, airflow is excellent but privacy is reduced, particularly at close range. This style is extremely popular for modern homes in Mount Pleasant, East Vancouver, and the Cambie Corridor. Expect to pay \$60-\$120 per linear foot installed, depending on board quality and post material.

Louvred fence panels work like horizontal window blinds turned on their side. Angled slats are set at roughly 45 degrees, directing the line of sight downward or upward while allowing air to pass freely between the slats. From most viewing angles, a louvred fence provides complete privacy. This is a premium option — \$80-\$140 per linear foot installed — but it maximises airflow while maintaining excellent screening. Louvred fences are particularly effective in areas where moss and mildew growth are persistent problems, such as shaded north-facing fence lines or fences under tree canopy.

Lattice-top fences combine a solid lower section (typically 4-5 feet) with an open lattice panel on top (12-18 inches). The solid section provides ground-level privacy where it matters most, while the lattice allows air circulation and light through the upper portion. This design works particularly well for 6-foot fences where the full height doesn't need to be solid. Lattice-top fences cost roughly the same as solid board fences — \$40-\$75 per linear foot — because the lattice panel replaces boards rather than adding to them.

Regardless of which airflow design you choose, material selection matters enormously in Vancouver's humid climate. Western Red Cedar is the clear winner — its natural oils resist rot and repel insects, and it performs exceptionally well when exposed to moisture from both sides (as it will be with an open-air fence design). Pressure-treated lumber is a budget alternative but needs sealing every 2-3 years to prevent surface weathering. Use stainless steel or hot-dipped galvanized fasteners exclusively — standard steel screws will rust and streak the wood within a single Vancouver winter.

Staining or sealing every 2-3 years remains essential even with an airflow-friendly design. The improved air circulation will slow rot and moss growth, but it won't prevent UV degradation or surface weathering. Apply stain during a dry period in May through September for best results. Need help finding a contractor experienced with airflow-friendly fence designs? Vancouver Fence Builders offers free contractor matching across Metro Vancouver.

Q11

What's the best height for a privacy fence between neighbours in Metro Vancouver?

Six feet (1.83 metres) is the standard and generally the best height for a privacy fence between neighbours in Metro Vancouver, and it's the maximum allowed without a permit in the rear and side yards of virtually every municipality in the region. This height provides effective visual screening for most situations — it blocks sight lines from ground level and from standard deck or patio height, which is what most homeowners are looking for when they invest in a privacy fence.

The specific height limits across Metro Vancouver municipalities are consistent but worth confirming before you build. The **City of Vancouver** allows a maximum of 1.8 metres (approximately 5 feet 11 inches) in rear and side yards without a permit. **Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, New Westminister, Delta, Langley, Maple Ridge, White Rock, and the North Shore municipalities** all have similar maximums in the 1.8-1.83 metre range for rear and side yard fences. Front yard fences are limited to 1.2 metres (4 feet) across most Metro Vancouver municipalities. These bylaws do change, so always confirm the current limit with your local building or planning department before construction — a quick phone call or website check can save you

from a costly teardown order.

Measurement matters. Most municipalities measure fence height from the **higher of the two grades** on either side of the fence. If your yard is 12 inches higher than your neighbour's, and you build a 6-foot fence on your side, it's 6 feet from your grade but 7 feet from their grade — and that 7-foot measurement is what the municipality will use. On sloped or terraced lots common throughout Metro Vancouver, this can create complications. Stepped fence panels that follow the grade change are the standard solution, keeping each section within the height limit from both sides.

Is 6 feet enough for actual privacy? In most situations, yes. A 6-foot solid or board-on-board fence blocks sight lines from ground level completely for anyone under about 6 feet 2 inches tall. It provides effective screening from standard patio or deck level (typically 6-18 inches above grade). Where 6 feet falls short is screening from elevated second-storey windows and balconies, or from significantly higher neighbouring grades — no standard fence height solves those issues. For those situations, privacy trees or tall hedges (which are subject to their own height regulations) may be a better complementary approach.

Eight-foot fences are sometimes requested for maximum privacy, particularly on busy streets, near commercial properties, or between homes with significant grade differences. However, 8-foot fences exceed the permitted maximum in all Metro Vancouver municipalities and require a building permit and potentially a development permit variance. Approval is not guaranteed and typically involves notification of adjacent property owners, who may object. An 8-foot fence also requires significantly stronger construction — 6x6 posts set 30-36 inches deep minimum, closer post spacing (6 feet rather than 8), and heavier rails — which increases cost by 30-50% compared to a 6-foot fence.

Good neighbour considerations play a major role in fence height decisions. Under BC's Property Law Act, fences on a shared property line create shared maintenance responsibilities. Building a fence that casts significant shadow on your neighbour's garden or blocks their established views can create friction even if it's technically within bylaw limits. A conversation with your neighbour before building — covering height, style, which side faces which direction, and potential cost-sharing — goes a long way. The "good neighbour" convention is to face the finished side (flat boards) toward your neighbour's property, or use a board-on-board design that looks identical from both sides.

For a standard 6-foot Western Red Cedar privacy fence between neighbours, budget **\$40-\$80 per linear foot installed** in Metro Vancouver. Board-on-board construction adds \$5-\$15 per foot but eliminates the "good side/bad side" issue and improves wind resistance. If you need help finding a contractor who handles shared-boundary fence projects, Vancouver Fence Builders can match you for free through the Vancouver Construction Network.

Can I install a privacy fence on top of a retaining wall in Vancouver?

Yes, you can install a privacy fence on top of a retaining wall in Vancouver, but it requires careful engineering, proper mounting methods, and an understanding of how the City of Vancouver measures combined height for bylaw compliance. This is one of the most common and most complex fencing scenarios in Metro Vancouver, where hilly terrain in neighbourhoods like the North Shore, East Vancouver, Burnaby, and Coquitlam means retaining walls and grade changes are everywhere.

The first thing to understand is **how Vancouver measures fence height on retaining walls.** The City of Vancouver generally measures fence height from the higher grade — the side where the retaining wall is holding back earth. So if your retaining wall is 3 feet tall and you add a 6-foot fence on top, the fence is measured as 6 feet from the high side (within the 1.8-metre limit for rear and side yards). However, from the low side, the total structure is 9 feet tall, which can create issues with your neighbour's enjoyment of their property and may trigger additional scrutiny. Other Metro Vancouver municipalities may measure differently — some measure the combined height of the wall and fence from the lower grade, which would make your 3-foot wall plus 6-foot fence a 9-foot structure potentially requiring a variance. **Always confirm the measurement methodology with your specific municipality before proceeding.**

Structural assessment of the retaining wall is essential before mounting any fence on it. A retaining wall is engineered (or should be) to resist lateral soil pressure from the retained earth behind it. Adding a fence on top introduces a completely new force — wind load — that the wall may not have been designed to handle. A solid 6-foot privacy fence catches enormous wind force, and that load transfers directly into the wall through the post anchors. A retaining wall that has been stable for decades holding back soil can crack, shift, or fail when you add a wind-loaded fence on top. This is especially critical in Metro Vancouver where winter storm winds can gust to 80-100 km/h.

Mounting methods for fence posts on retaining walls depend on the wall construction. For **poured concrete or concrete block walls**, the most secure method is core-drilling into the wall cap and installing steel post brackets with epoxy anchors. The core holes are typically 4 inches in diameter, drilled 6-8 inches deep into solid concrete, with heavy-duty post bases bolted in using structural epoxy. This costs \$50-\$100 per post beyond standard installation. For **timber or landscape block retaining walls**, direct mounting is generally not recommended — these walls lack the structural rigidity for fence post anchoring. Instead, set fence posts in the ground immediately behind the wall, with concrete footings that are independent of the wall structure.

If the retaining wall is on a shared property line, you'll need to establish ownership before any work. A BC Land Surveyor can determine the precise property boundary — expect \$500-\$2,000 for a boundary survey in Metro

Vancouver. If the wall belongs to your neighbour or straddles the property line, you cannot modify it or mount attachments to it without their written consent. Under BC's Property Law Act, boundary structures create shared legal considerations that can become contentious if not addressed upfront.

To reduce wind load on a retaining wall fence, consider a board-on-board (shadowbox) design instead of a solid board privacy fence. Board-on-board allows wind to pass through the offset boards while maintaining visual privacy, reducing the lateral force on the wall by 30-40%. Spaced horizontal slats with 15-20mm gaps are another effective option. If the wall is particularly tall or in a wind-exposed location, reducing the fence height to 4 feet instead of 6 feet cuts wind load dramatically while still providing meaningful screening from the high side.

Building permits may be required depending on the combined height and your municipality. The City of Vancouver generally requires permits for fences exceeding the 1.8-metre rear/side or 1.2-metre front limits, and some municipalities consider the combined retaining wall and fence height for permit thresholds. A permit application may require engineered drawings showing how the fence attaches to the wall and how wind loads are managed.

This is a project where professional expertise pays for itself. A poorly mounted fence can damage the retaining wall, and a compromised retaining wall can cost \$10,000-\$50,000+ to rebuild. Budget **\$65-\$120 per linear foot installed** for a quality privacy fence on a retaining wall, including core-drilling, proper anchoring, and wind-resistant design. Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with contractors experienced in retaining wall fence installations across Metro Vancouver — our service is free.

How much does a board-on-board privacy fence cost compared to solid board in Metro Vancouver?

A board-on-board (shadowbox) privacy fence typically costs **\$50-\$85 per linear foot installed in Metro Vancouver, compared to \$40-\$70 per linear foot for a standard solid board privacy fence** — a premium of roughly \$10-\$15 per linear foot, or about 20-30% more overall. The price difference comes down to one simple factor: a board-on-board fence uses approximately 50% more boards than a solid fence to cover the same linear footage.

Here's why. A **solid board privacy fence** attaches boards side by side on one face of the horizontal rails, with each board butted tightly against its neighbour. For a typical 8-foot section of 6-foot-tall fence using 1x6 boards, you need roughly 16 boards. A **board-on-board fence** attaches boards on alternating sides of the rails, with each board overlapping the adjacent board by about 1 inch. To cover the same 8-foot span, you need roughly 24 boards — 12 on the front face and 12 on the back. That extra material adds up quickly on a larger project.

Let's compare real project costs for a **100-linear-foot fence** using Western Red Cedar in Metro Vancouver:

Solid board privacy fence (6 ft, cedar): Materials run \$18-\$30 per linear foot (boards, posts, rails, concrete, fasteners) and labour adds \$20-\$40 per linear foot. Total installed: **\$4,000-\$7,000** for 100 feet. This includes 4x4 cedar posts set in concrete every 8 feet, three horizontal 2x4 rails per section, and 1x6 cedar boards nailed or screwed to one side.

Board-on-board privacy fence (6 ft, cedar): Materials run \$25-\$40 per linear foot (roughly 50% more boards) and labour adds \$25-\$45 per linear foot (more boards to cut, align, and attach). Total installed: **\$5,000-\$8,500** for 100 feet. Same post and rail structure as a solid fence, but with boards mounted on both sides of the rails in an alternating pattern.

The **\$1,000-\$1,500 difference on a 100-foot project** is meaningful, but board-on-board offers several advantages that many Metro Vancouver homeowners consider worth the premium.

No "bad side." A solid board fence has a finished side (flat boards facing out) and a structural side (posts and rails visible) facing the builder's property. Traditionally, the finished side faces the neighbour — the "good neighbour" convention. Board-on-board eliminates this issue entirely because both sides look identical, with no exposed rails or posts. This matters for shared property line fences where both homeowners want a good-looking fence, and it can actually make cost-sharing conversations easier since both parties benefit equally from the appearance.

Superior wind resistance. The alternating board pattern creates channels that allow wind to pass through the fence rather than hitting a solid wall. In Metro Vancouver, where winter storms regularly bring 60-80 km/h winds,

this is a meaningful structural advantage. A board-on-board fence experiences 30-40% less wind load than a solid fence, which means less stress on posts and footings, less leaning over time, and lower risk of wind damage. For exposed locations in Richmond, Delta, or the North Shore, this benefit alone can justify the extra cost.

Better moisture management. In Vancouver's wet marine climate with 1,200+ mm of annual rainfall, air circulation through a fence is genuinely important. Solid board fences trap moisture between boards and against the rails, creating conditions where rot develops faster — particularly on the sheltered side of the fence where trapped humidity lingers. Board-on-board construction allows airflow through the fence, helping both faces of every board dry more evenly after rain. This can add 2-5 years to the effective lifespan of a cedar fence in Metro Vancouver, which partially offsets the higher initial cost.

Slightly reduced privacy at sharp angles. The one trade-off is that board-on-board fences provide about 80-90% visual privacy rather than 100%. Looking straight on, the overlapping boards appear solid. But at a sharp angle, there are narrow sight lines through the gaps. In practice, this is rarely an issue for rear and side yard fences because neighbours and passersby are typically viewing from straight on or at moderate angles. For absolute zero-visibility privacy, a solid board fence is the way to go.

For most Metro Vancouver homeowners building a privacy fence on a shared property line, the board-on-board premium is well worth it. The combination of identical appearance from both sides, wind resistance, and improved moisture performance makes it the better long-term investment in our climate. Need quotes from contractors who build both styles? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with experienced fence professionals for free.

Q14

What's the best privacy fence solution for a townhouse patio in Burnaby?

The best privacy fence solution for a townhouse patio in Burnaby depends heavily on whether your townhouse is a strata property — which most Burnaby townhouses are — because strata bylaws typically dictate what you can and cannot install on patio boundaries. Before spending a dollar on materials or hiring a contractor, your first step must be reviewing your strata's bylaws and getting written approval from strata council for any fence modification.

Most Burnaby townhouse complexes built in the last 30 years are bare land strata or strata lots with designated limited common property (LCP) patios. The patio area is typically yours to use exclusively, but the fencing or screening around it is often classified as common property or is governed by strata appearance standards. Many stratas require uniform fencing throughout the complex — meaning you may need to match the existing style, colour, and height rather than choosing freely. Some stratas allow modifications within guidelines (for example,

adding a lattice extension or privacy screen to an existing fence), while others prohibit any changes without full council approval and a 3/4 vote.

Assuming your strata approves the project, here are the best privacy solutions for townhouse patios in Burnaby:

Vinyl privacy panels are often the ideal choice for townhouse patios because they're clean, uniform, maintenance-free, and available in neutral colours (white, tan, grey) that satisfy most strata appearance requirements. A 6-foot vinyl privacy fence for a typical townhouse patio enclosure of 30 to 50 linear feet costs \$1,500 to \$3,500 installed. Vinyl won't rot, warp, or need staining in Burnaby's wet climate, and it cleans easily with a garden hose — important for small patio spaces where dirt and algae are immediately visible.

Western Red Cedar privacy fencing provides a warmer, more natural look that many homeowners prefer. A board-on-board (shadowbox) cedar fence is an excellent choice for patio enclosures because it looks attractive from both sides — important when the other side faces a neighbour's patio or a common walkway. Cedar patio fencing runs \$2,000 to \$4,000 for 30 to 50 linear feet at 6 feet tall. The trade-off is maintenance: cedar needs staining or sealing every 2 to 3 years in Burnaby's wet climate, and in a small patio space, the annual moss and mildew cleaning becomes part of your routine.

Privacy screens and planters are a less permanent option that may not require strata approval in some complexes (check your bylaws). Freestanding privacy screens made of wood, metal, or composite materials can be positioned around a patio without modifying existing fences or structures. Large planter boxes with tall grasses, bamboo, or columnar cedars create living privacy screens. This approach is more flexible and can be removed if you sell or if strata requirements change, but it provides less complete privacy than a solid fence.

Lattice extensions added to existing lower fences are a common and often strata-friendly solution. If your townhouse patio currently has a 4-foot fence and you want more privacy, adding a 2-foot lattice section on top brings the total to 6 feet while maintaining airflow and light. Lattice extensions cost \$8 to \$15 per linear foot for materials and installation. The City of Burnaby generally allows fences up to 1.83 metres (6 feet) in rear and side yards without a permit, so a lattice extension that keeps the total height at or below 6 feet is typically compliant.

For Burnaby townhouse patios specifically, also consider your orientation. North-facing patios already get limited sunlight, so a solid 6-foot privacy fence can make the space feel dark and enclosed. In this situation, a semi-privacy style (shadowbox or spaced boards) or a lattice-top design provides screening while allowing more light through. South-facing patios can handle full privacy panels without the darkness issue.

Want to explore your options? Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with fence contractors experienced with townhouse and strata projects across Burnaby — our matching service is free, and contractors familiar with strata requirements can help navigate the approval process.

How do I make an existing fence more private without replacing it entirely?

You can significantly increase the privacy of an existing fence without full replacement by adding **screening, extensions, or plantings** — and most of these solutions cost a fraction of a new fence while **being achievable as DIY projects**. This is one of the most common requests from Metro Vancouver homeowners who have a structurally sound fence that just doesn't provide enough screening.

Privacy slats for chain-link fences are the simplest upgrade if your existing fence is chain-link. Vertical plastic or aluminum slats weave through the chain-link mesh and block 70 to 90% of visibility depending on the slat width and spacing. Slats cost \$3 to \$8 per linear foot for materials and can be installed by a handy homeowner in an afternoon. They're available in green, black, brown, white, and tan to match your preference. For even better coverage, **privacy mesh or windscreen fabric** attaches to the chain-link with zip ties and provides 85 to 95% visibility blocking at \$1 to \$4 per linear foot. The fabric also reduces wind on patios and decks. Both options work well in Metro Vancouver's climate — the fabric can trap moisture and develop mildew if not cleaned occasionally, but the plastic slats are virtually maintenance-free.

Lattice panels or extensions can be added to the top of an existing wood or vinyl fence to increase both height and privacy. If your current fence is 4 feet tall, adding a 2-foot lattice section brings it to 6 feet — the maximum allowed in most Metro Vancouver rear and side yards without a permit. Pre-built 4x8-foot lattice panels cost \$20 to \$50 each at building supply stores. Mounting them requires attaching extension posts (2x4 or 4x4 lumber) to your existing fence posts using lag bolts or carriage bolts, then securing the lattice to the extensions. This is a moderately skilled DIY project. For the lattice to hold up in Vancouver's wet climate, use pressure-treated or cedar lattice and galvanized or stainless steel fasteners.

Reed, bamboo, or willow screening attached to an existing fence creates instant natural-looking privacy. Roll-out screens in 6-foot heights are available for \$15 to \$40 per 16-foot roll and attach with wire ties or zip ties. The aesthetic is warm and garden-friendly, blending well with landscaping. The downside in Metro Vancouver's wet marine climate is durability — natural reed and bamboo screening lasts 2 to 4 years before deteriorating from moisture, while synthetic versions last 5 to 8 years but cost more.

Filling gaps in wood fences is straightforward if your existing fence has spaces between boards. You can add extra boards to the back side of the fence, creating a board-on-board (shadowbox) effect that eliminates sightlines while allowing some airflow. This approach uses the existing posts and rails as the structure and simply adds boards between the existing ones on the opposite side. For a 100-linear-foot fence, purchasing 1x6 cedar or pressure-treated boards to fill the gaps costs roughly \$200 to \$500 in materials. Use ring-shank galvanized nails or stainless steel screws to fasten the new boards to the existing rails.

Climbing plants and vines provide living privacy that improves over time. English ivy, Virginia creeper, clematis, and climbing hydrangea all thrive in Metro Vancouver's climate and will cover a fence within 1 to 3 growing seasons. Plant them 12 to 18 inches apart along the fence base. The important caveat is that climbing plants add weight and moisture to wood fences, which can accelerate rot in Vancouver's wet climate. Metal, vinyl, or chain-link fences handle climbing plants much better than wood. If using plants on a wood fence, ensure good airflow behind the vegetation and inspect the fence annually for rot.

Freestanding privacy panels positioned in front of your existing fence add screening without modifying the fence itself — useful if the fence belongs to your neighbour or is on a shared property line. Wooden or composite privacy screens on weighted bases cost \$100 to \$400 each and can be repositioned as needed.

Before adding height to any existing fence, confirm the total height stays within your municipality's bylaws — typically 1.83 metres (6 feet) for rear and side yards in Metro Vancouver. If your fence is already at the maximum, adding lattice or screens on top could trigger a bylaw complaint. Need help with a more comprehensive privacy solution? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with contractors for free.

What privacy fence options work best for narrow side yards in Vancouver?

For Vancouver's narrow side yards — where homes are often just 3 to 5 feet apart on the city's standard 33-foot lots — a slim-profile fence that maximizes privacy without consuming precious ground space is **essential**. The best options combine full screening with minimal footprint, good airflow for the confined space, and materials that handle constant shade and moisture without rapid deterioration.

Vancouver's standard residential lot width of 33 feet means that after the house, setbacks, and both neighbours' setbacks are accounted for, side yards are frequently just 1 to 2.5 metres (3 to 8 feet) wide. In some Kitsilano, East Vancouver, and Mount Pleasant neighbourhoods, the gap between houses can be less than a metre. This tight space creates unique fencing challenges: standard 4x4 posts and thick panels eat into already limited width, shade and poor airflow promote moss and moisture retention, access for installation is restricted (no room for equipment, everything carried by hand), and the fence is visible at close range so imperfections stand out.

Vertical board-on-board (shadowbox) cedar fencing is arguably the best all-around choice for narrow Vancouver side yards. The alternating board pattern provides excellent privacy from direct sightlines while allowing airflow between the overlapping boards — critical in a narrow, shaded passage where moisture lingers. The fence looks finished from both sides, which matters because your neighbour sees the other side at very close range. At 6 feet tall with standard 4x4 posts, a board-on-board cedar fence runs \$45 to \$75 per linear foot installed. The posts consume about 3.5 inches of width, and the boards add another 1 to 1.5 inches per side — a total footprint of roughly 5 to 6 inches.

Vinyl privacy fencing is another excellent narrow side-yard option because the manufactured panels are slim (typically 1 to 1.5 inches thick) and the posts (4x4 or 5x5 vinyl) have a clean, consistent profile that doesn't expand with moisture. Vinyl won't rot in the perpetually shaded, damp conditions that characterize Vancouver side yards, and it never needs staining — a significant advantage in a space that's difficult to access with brushes, rollers, and stain cans. A vinyl privacy fence for a narrow side yard costs \$35 to \$65 per linear foot installed.

Thin-profile steel post systems with cedar infill offer the narrowest possible footprint. Steel posts (2x2 inch or 2x4 inch powder-coated steel) set in concrete take up far less width than wooden 4x4 posts, and cedar boards are mounted between them using U-channel brackets. The total fence thickness can be as little as 2.5 to 3 inches — saving 2 to 3 inches compared to a traditional wood fence. This matters when your side yard is only 36 inches wide. Steel-post cedar fencing costs \$55 to \$90 per linear foot due to the specialty hardware and fabrication.

For extremely narrow spaces (under 3 feet between buildings), consider a **privacy screen panel system** rather than a traditional fence. Narrow composite or aluminum privacy screens with slim posts can be as thin as 2 inches total and mount directly to existing concrete, pavers, or small point footings rather than requiring full post holes.

These systems run \$60 to \$100 per linear foot but preserve maximum ground width in the tightest passages.

Installation access is the hidden cost factor for narrow side-yard fences in Vancouver. If the only access is through the house or through a narrow gate, everything must be carried in by hand — no wheelbarrows, no skid steers, no material delivery to the work area. This manual material handling adds 15 to 30% to labour costs compared to a fence installation with open vehicle access. When getting quotes, make sure your contractor visits the site and understands the access constraints before quoting — a price given over the phone without seeing a narrow Vancouver side yard is almost guaranteed to change once the crew arrives.

Moisture management is the final consideration. Narrow side yards between Vancouver homes get very little direct sunlight, and in the wet months (October through March), they stay damp almost continuously. Choose materials that handle perpetual moisture — cedar or vinyl over pressure-treated wood, stainless steel or galvanized fasteners exclusively, and gravel drainage at the base of every post. Skip the gravel drainage step in a narrow shaded side yard and your wood posts will rot from the bottom up within 5 to 8 years. Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with contractors who regularly handle tight-access side-yard installations — get matched for free.

Q17

Can I build a higher privacy fence if my property backs onto a commercial zone in BC?

In many Metro Vancouver municipalities, yes — properties that border a commercial or industrial zone may be eligible for a taller fence than the standard residential limit, but this is not automatic and depends entirely on your specific municipality's bylaws and zoning regulations. There is no blanket BC-wide rule that grants extra height, so you need to check with your local building or planning department before assuming you can go higher.

The standard residential fence height limit across most Metro Vancouver municipalities is 1.83 metres (6 feet) for rear and side yards, and 1.2 metres (4 feet) for front yards. These limits apply to the vast majority of residential properties. However, several municipalities have provisions that allow taller fences — typically up to 2.4 metres (8 feet) — on residential properties that share a boundary with commercial, industrial, or institutional zones. The rationale is straightforward: homeowners adjacent to commercial activity (parking lots, loading docks, retail rear entrances, workshops) have a greater need for visual and noise screening than those bordered by other residential properties.

City of Vancouver allows residential properties to apply for a variance or development permit to exceed the standard fence height when there is a demonstrated need for additional screening from adjacent non-residential

uses. This is a discretionary process — the city considers the specific circumstances, including the nature of the commercial use, the impact on neighbours, and whether the taller fence is the appropriate solution. A development permit application costs several hundred dollars and can take weeks to months to process.

Surrey has zoning bylaw provisions that may allow taller screening fences on residential lots abutting commercial or industrial zones, particularly in areas where residential and commercial uses are transitioning. The specific allowance depends on the zone designation — check Surrey's zoning map and the applicable zone regulations for your property.

Burnaby, Richmond, Coquitlam, and other Metro Vancouver municipalities each have their own approach. Some have explicit bylaw provisions for taller boundary fences between residential and commercial zones, while others require a variance application. The only way to know for certain what applies to your property is to contact your municipal building or planning department with your property address and ask specifically about fence height allowances on the boundary with the adjacent commercial zone.

Even if a taller fence is permitted, there are practical and structural considerations for 8-foot fences in Metro Vancouver. An 8-foot privacy fence creates significantly more wind load than a 6-foot fence — roughly 33% more sail area per panel. Posts must be set deeper (minimum 30 to 36 inches, compared to 24 inches for a 6-foot fence) and should be 6x6 rather than 4x4 to handle the lateral stress. In wind-exposed locations, post spacing should be reduced from 8 feet to 6 feet. These structural upgrades add 20 to 35% to the total project cost compared to a standard 6-foot fence.

An 8-foot cedar privacy fence in Metro Vancouver costs approximately \$55 to \$100 per linear foot installed — the premium over a standard 6-foot fence (\$40 to \$80 per linear foot) reflects the taller panels, heavier posts, deeper footings, and additional labour. For vinyl, 8-foot panels are available but are specialty items that cost \$50 to \$90 per linear foot installed.

Alternative approaches if a taller fence isn't permitted or is too expensive include adding a lattice extension to a standard 6-foot fence (some municipalities allow lattice to extend above the standard limit because it's not a solid barrier), planting a tall hedge behind the fence for additional screening (evergreen cedars or laurels can reach 10 to 15 feet and provide excellent noise reduction), or installing a fence at the maximum permitted height and adding a berm (raised earth mound) along the inside of the fence line to effectively increase the screening height without exceeding the fence height limit.

The permit process matters. Building a fence taller than the bylaw permits without approval is a risk — a neighbour complaint or a random bylaw enforcement check could result in a requirement to reduce the fence to the permitted height at your expense. Even if your property backs onto a commercial zone, get written confirmation from your municipality that the proposed height is permitted before investing in construction. Need help planning a taller screening fence? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with fence contractors experienced with

Q18

What's the best fence option for separating my yard from a busy alley in East Vancouver?

The best fence for separating a yard from a busy East Vancouver alley is a 6-foot solid cedar privacy fence with board-on-board construction, 6x6 posts, and a secure gate — designed to maximize privacy, block noise, and withstand the unique wear that alley-facing fences endure. Lane-facing fences in East Vancouver take more abuse than any other fence on your property, so building for durability upfront saves significant repair costs over time.

East Vancouver's residential lanes are among the busiest in Metro Vancouver. They serve as access routes for garbage and recycling trucks, delivery vehicles, secondary parking, and increasingly as pedestrian shortcuts. The neighbourhoods east of Main Street — Grandview-Woodland, Hastings-Sunrise, Renfrew-Collingwood, Killarney, and Kensington-Cedar Cottage — all have active lane networks where your rear fence is essentially your property's public face. This creates specific challenges: your fence is exposed to vehicle exhaust, road salt spray in winter, physical contact from vehicles and bins, and constant visibility to passersby.

Board-on-board (shadowbox) construction is ideal for lane-facing fences because it looks attractive from the lane side — which matters when your fence is the first thing people see when walking or driving down the alley. Unlike a standard flat-board fence where the lane side shows unattractive posts and rails, a board-on-board design presents a finished appearance from both sides. This also eliminates the gaps that allow people to see into your yard as they pass by, providing true visual privacy from multiple angles.

Post specifications should be upgraded for alley fences. Use **6x6 Western Red Cedar or pressure-treated posts** rather than standard 4x4 posts. Lane-facing fences are more likely to be struck by vehicle mirrors, garbage truck arms, delivery vans backing up, and rolling garbage bins. The larger posts absorb minor impacts without bending or cracking. Set posts at least 2.5 feet deep in concrete with gravel drainage beneath — the additional depth provides stability against both wind load and the vibration from heavy vehicles passing nearby. Spacing posts at 6 feet rather than 8 feet shortens the unsupported span and makes the fence more resistant to impact damage.

Material choice matters for the lane environment. Western Red Cedar is the superior choice at \$55 to \$85 per linear foot installed, offering natural rot resistance and a warm appearance even as it weathers to silver-grey. Pressure-treated wood (\$35 to \$60 per linear foot) is a reasonable budget alternative but requires diligent sealing every 2 to 3 years to prevent the surface cracking and greying that look particularly unattractive on a lane-facing

fence. Vinyl fencing (\$40 to \$75 per linear foot) is worth considering for alley fences because it's virtually maintenance-free, doesn't absorb moisture or stains, and can be cleaned with a hose when it gets dirty from lane dust and vehicle exhaust.

A solid, lockable gate is essential for lane-facing fences. Your alley gate provides access for garbage and recycling bins, yard maintenance equipment, and occasionally vehicle access if you have rear parking. For bin access alone, a 36 to 42-inch single gate is sufficient. For vehicle or wider access, a double gate (5 to 8 feet wide) is necessary. In either case, the gate should have a **keyed lock or combination lock** rather than just a latch — open or unlatched alley gates in East Vancouver invite unwanted entry, illegal dumping, and theft of items stored in your yard. Self-closing hinges ensure the gate latches automatically every time it's used.

Noise reduction is a bonus benefit of a solid alley fence. While no residential fence will eliminate lane noise entirely, a solid 6-foot fence reduces perceived noise from alley traffic, pedestrians, and late-night activity by approximately 5 to 10 decibels — a noticeable difference. Board-on-board fences provide slightly less noise reduction than flat-board fences because of the small gaps between boards, but the difference is minimal. For maximum noise reduction, consider adding a dense hedge (laurel, Portuguese laurel, or cedar) on the inside of the fence — the combination of solid fence plus dense vegetation is the most effective residential noise barrier.

Budget approximately \$5,500 to \$10,000 for a 50 to 80-linear-foot alley-facing fence in East Vancouver with a gate, using cedar board-on-board construction with 6x6 posts. This is the typical rear lot width for East Vancouver's standard 33-foot lots, plus a gate section. The investment protects your privacy, security, and property value for 15 to 20+ years with regular maintenance. Get matched with fence contractors experienced with lane-facing fences through Vancouver Fence Builders — our free service covers all of Metro Vancouver.

How do I build a fence that won't block natural light in my Vancouver side yard?

Building a fence that preserves natural light requires choosing semi-open designs, strategic height placement, and materials that allow light transmission while still providing privacy and boundary definition.

In Vancouver's already limited daylight during winter months, maximizing natural light in side yards is crucial for both indoor comfort and garden health.

Board-on-board (shadowbox) fencing is the most popular light-friendly privacy solution in Metro Vancouver. This design alternates boards on both sides of the fence frame with 2-3 inch gaps between boards, allowing approximately 30-40% light transmission while maintaining visual privacy from most angles. The overlapping pattern blocks direct sight lines but permits light and air circulation. Expect to pay \$50-\$75 per linear foot installed for cedar board-on-board construction.

Horizontal slat fencing with spacing creates a modern aesthetic while controlling light transmission. Horizontal cedar boards spaced 1-4 inches apart allow significant light penetration — wider gaps for maximum light, narrower for more privacy. This contemporary style costs \$60-\$90 per linear foot installed and works particularly well with Vancouver's modern architecture. The horizontal lines complement the city's mountain backdrop and create visual width in narrow side yards.

Lattice-top combinations provide an excellent compromise for Vancouver's typical narrow lots. Install a solid privacy fence to 4-5 feet, then add 1-2 feet of decorative lattice on top. This maintains ground-level privacy while allowing overhead light to reach windows and gardens. Cedar lattice costs \$15-\$25 per linear foot to add to existing fencing, or \$45-\$65 per linear foot for complete lattice-top fence installation.

Picket fencing offers maximum light transmission but minimal privacy. Traditional pointed or flat-top pickets spaced 2-4 inches apart allow 40-60% light penetration. While not suitable for complete privacy, picket fences work well for front yards or side boundaries where neighbourly visibility is acceptable. Cedar picket fencing costs \$35-\$55 per linear foot installed.

Mixed-height design addresses Vancouver's specific lot characteristics. Many Vancouver side yards have windows at different levels — basement, main floor, and upper floors. Consider a stepped fence design: 4 feet high under windows to preserve light, transitioning to 6 feet in areas where privacy is more important than light. This custom approach costs \$55-\$80 per linear foot but maximizes both light and privacy.

Material considerations for light transmission matter significantly in Vancouver's marine climate. **Western Red Cedar** weathers to a silver-grey that reflects more light than darker stains, helping brighten adjacent spaces. Clear or semi-transparent stains preserve the wood's natural colour while providing protection from Vancouver's heavy

rainfall. Avoid solid dark stains that absorb light and create visual heaviness.

Vinyl fencing in white or light colours reflects maximum light while requiring zero maintenance in Vancouver's wet climate. White vinyl can increase perceived brightness in side yards by 20-30% compared to dark wood fencing. Quality vinyl costs \$45-\$70 per linear foot installed and carries 20-30 year warranties.

Strategic placement maximizes light preservation. Position fences 6-12 inches inside your property line rather than directly on the boundary — this small setback allows light to reach the fence base and prevents the enclosed feeling of boundary-line installation. Consider the sun's path: south-facing fences block more valuable light than north-facing boundaries.

Climbing plant integration softens fence appearance while maintaining light transmission. Install horizontal wires or thin vertical slats for vine support. Deciduous vines like grape or Virginia creeper provide summer privacy and winter light transmission — perfect for Vancouver's seasonal light variations.

Professional installation ensures proper spacing and alignment for optimal light transmission. Uneven board spacing or leaning posts can reduce light penetration significantly. Fence contractors experienced with Vancouver's narrow lots understand how to balance privacy, light, and neighbourhood aesthetics.

Maintenance considerations include regular cleaning to prevent moss and algae buildup that reduces light reflection. In Vancouver's humid climate, annual pressure washing keeps light-coloured fences bright and welcoming.

Need help finding a fence contractor experienced with light-preserving designs? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with local professionals who understand how to maximize natural light in Metro Vancouver's unique lot configurations.

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What are the best fence options for a multi-family property in Burnaby?

The best fence options for a multi-family property in Burnaby depend on whether you're fencing a townhouse complex, a duplex, or a purpose-built rental — but in most cases, you need a combination of durability, low maintenance, privacy, and compliance with strata bylaws or rental property regulations.

Vinyl, aluminum, and commercial-grade chain-link are the most practical choices for multi-family applications, while cedar remains popular for townhouse developments that prioritize aesthetics.

Burnaby has a rapidly growing inventory of multi-family housing, including townhouse complexes, duplexes, row houses, and multi-unit rental properties. Fencing on these properties serves multiple purposes — unit separation, shared outdoor space definition, perimeter security, and privacy between neighbouring units. The City of Burnaby applies the same general fence height bylaws as residential properties (maximum 1.83 metres in rear and side yards, 1.22 metres in front), but specific zoning districts and development permits may impose additional requirements on multi-family developments.

Vinyl fencing is the top choice for most multi-family properties because it eliminates maintenance costs entirely. In a multi-family setting, fence maintenance responsibility is often unclear or neglected — strata councils defer it, tenants ignore it, and property managers prioritize other repairs. Vinyl never needs staining, sealing, or painting, won't rot in Metro Vancouver's wet climate, and maintains its appearance for 20 to 30 years with nothing more than occasional washing. A 6-foot vinyl privacy fence costs \$35 to \$70 per linear foot installed and is available in white, tan, grey, and woodgrain finishes. For townhouse complexes with dozens of individual units, the lifetime maintenance savings over cedar are substantial — potentially \$5,000 to \$15,000+ over 20 years across the entire property.

Aluminum ornamental fencing works well for front boundaries, common areas, and decorative separation between units where full privacy isn't needed. Aluminum is rust-proof, maintenance-free, and available in styles that complement modern multi-family architecture. At \$45 to \$90 per linear foot installed, it's a premium choice, but the zero-maintenance longevity makes it cost-effective for strata properties. Many Burnaby townhouse developments use aluminum fencing along streetscapes and common pathways combined with vinyl or cedar privacy fencing between individual patios.

Cedar privacy fencing remains popular for higher-end townhouse developments in Burnaby where aesthetics are a priority. A 6-foot board-on-board cedar fence costs \$50 to \$80 per linear foot installed and provides both visual privacy and a warm, natural appearance. The trade-off is maintenance — cedar needs re-staining every 2 to 3 years in Metro Vancouver's climate, and on a multi-family property, coordinating that maintenance across multiple units and ensuring consistent appearance is a persistent management challenge. If the strata or property manager commits to a regular maintenance schedule, cedar is a beautiful choice. If maintenance is likely to be inconsistent, vinyl is the safer long-term investment.

Commercial-grade chain-link with vinyl coating is the most economical option for perimeter fencing on larger multi-family properties. Black or green vinyl-coated chain-link at \$25 to \$45 per linear foot installed provides security and boundary definition at the lowest cost per foot. It's commonly used on the perimeters of rental apartment properties, along parking areas, and around utility enclosures. For privacy, vinyl slats can be woven through the chain-link mesh, though the result is functional rather than attractive.

For **strata properties** (which include most Burnaby townhouse complexes), fencing decisions typically require strata council approval regardless of whether the fence is within an individual unit's lot boundaries. Most strata bylaws specify approved fence materials, colours, and heights to maintain uniformity across the development. Before planning any fence work on a strata property, obtain a copy of the strata bylaws and any architectural guidelines, then submit your proposal to the strata council for approval. Proceeding without approval can result in a requirement to remove the fence at your expense.

For **rental properties**, landlords should consider durability and tenant-proof design. Gates with heavy-duty, self-closing hinges prevent sagging from heavy use. Fence boards should be screw-fastened (not nailed) for longevity. Post caps should be secured rather than friction-fit to prevent theft or loss. These small details reduce ongoing maintenance calls and replacement costs.

One important consideration for multi-family properties in Burnaby is **noise attenuation**. Privacy fences between units provide some sound reduction, and solid board or vinyl fences perform better than slatted or open designs. For maximum noise reduction between closely spaced units, a mass-loaded vinyl (MLV) barrier installed between two layers of fence boards can reduce sound transmission significantly — though this is a premium upgrade at \$80 to \$150 per linear foot.

Get matched with fence contractors experienced in multi-family projects through Vancouver Fence Builders — we connect property managers and strata councils with professionals who understand the unique requirements of Burnaby's multi-family housing.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Vancouver Fence Builders. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any fencing project. Information is current as of March 15, 2026 and may change. Visit vancouverfencebuilders.com for the latest answers.