

Mid-Rise Buildings: Monitoring Update

Date:	April 28, 2014
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:\2014\Cluster B\PLN\PGMC\PG14043

SUMMARY

In July 2010, Council directed staff to use the Mid-Rise Buildings Performance Standards in the evaluation of mid-rise building development proposals. In November 2013, Council adopted an extended monitoring period in order to measure the effectiveness of the Standards. City Planning is well underway in this monitoring of the Performance Standards. This report provides an update on the monitoring period and provides information about the ongoing work program, including the consultation process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. The Planning and Growth Management Committee receive this report for information.

Financial Impact

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of July 6, 2010, City Council approved a Staff Report which included a portion of the Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Study, including the Mid-Rise Buildings Performance Standards. Council directed staff to monitor the Performance Standards over a 2 year period.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2010.PG39.9>

On November 18, 2013, City Council extended the monitoring period to the end of 2014, and directed City Planning to include resident and ratepayer groups in consultations. (<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.PG27.4>). Further decisions history is contained in the November 18, 2013 report.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Avenues

The Official Plan identifies the Avenues, Centres, Employment Districts and the Downtown and Central Waterfront, as important areas for accommodating population and employment growth. Combined, they form part of the Official Plan's growth management strategy. Identified in Map 2 Urban Structure of the Plan, Avenues represent segments of streets that can accommodate new housing and jobs while improving the public realm. Many are commercial main streets. There are approximately 162 kilometres of Avenues identified on Map 2.

Section 2.2.3 of the Plan provides the framework for studying the Avenues which, in consultation with the local community, sets out a blueprint for future growth through amendments to zoning and the creation of urban design guidelines. Council has adopted recommendations for specific segments of Avenues to be studied in detail. To date, 21 Avenue Studies covering approximately 51.1 of the 162 kilometres of Avenues have commenced, and 19 are complete. Phase 1 of Eglinton Connects – the largest Avenue Study to date – is anticipated to be substantially complete in the first half of 2014.

The Avenues & Mid-Rise Buildings Study

In October 2008, City Planning lead a team of consultants to study the Avenues and make recommendations to encourage mid-rise development. The objective of the Study was to build on and implement the Official Plan policies by making recommendations, such as performance standards, to catalyze the reurbanization of the Avenues and address the issues raised at the 2005 Mid-Rise Buildings Symposium.

The consultant's recommendations were based on creating certainty through Performance Standards, which set expectations for how mid-rise buildings fit in their context and transition to lower-scale neighbourhoods. The Study encourages the development of as-of-right zoning for mid-rise buildings, to shorten the development approval process.

The Performance Standards included in the Study apply mainly to properties that front Avenues which have not yet had a completed Avenue Study, and are not within a Secondary Plan area. An Avenue Study results in new zoning and design guidelines, among other recommendations. Although the intention of the Study is to provide Performance Standards and recommendations for mid-rise buildings on the Avenues, they may also be appropriate and useful to guide the review of proposals for mid-rise buildings in Mixed Uses Areas not on Avenues.

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/pg/bgrd/backgroundfile-30538.pdf>)

COMMENTS

The development of any new building from concept to occupancy takes time. As such, the first applications for mid-rise buildings since the 2010 Performance Standards came into effect are now under construction. These first few buildings are among the 147 applications for 4-11 storey buildings that City Planning received between July 1, 2010 and December 31, 2013. A total of 68 of these were along Avenues, and a further 25 were in the Downtown and Central Waterfront or Centres. The opportunity to effectively evaluate new mid-rise buildings, especially those completed under the guise of the Performance Standards, is becoming available. Hence, 2014-2015 is the right time to monitor the effectiveness of the Performance Standards, and related policies.

A Complex Issue

The monitoring period is an opportunity to evaluate existing policy and Performance Standards as City Planning implements the Official Plan, and works toward achieving the vision of the Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Study. The issues around mid-rise buildings and related policy are complex, with inputs provided by many related projects, and feedback from communities across the city. Concurrent with this monitoring period, City Planning also has the following initiatives underway:

1. Official Plan Review

As directed by Council in July 2010, components of the monitoring period relate directly to policies of the Official Plan, such as those that deal with where development and change should occur, what form that development takes, and how development is accessed or serviced. Refer to item 8, here:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2010.PG39.9>

Progress has been made on these items, including item 8g regarding rental replacement policies and mid-rise development, which was reported on September 13, 2012. Rental replacement policies were deemed to not be an impediment to mid-rise development.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.PG17.8>

A strategy for the Urban Design components of the non-statutory Official Plan Review will be reported on in June 2014, of which mid-rise buildings will be a component.

2. Condominium Consultation

There may be recommendations resulting from the recent condominium consultations undertaken by City Planning that should be incorporated into monitoring.

3. Retail Study: Evaluating Large Retail Development Near Pedestrian Shopping Areas in Toronto

Results of the "Evaluating Large Retail Development Near Pedestrian Shopping Areas in Toronto" study could inform policy recommendations, or to the Performance Standards, such as ground floor height.

4. Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Travel Survey

A survey of the travel behaviours of mid-rise building residents was undertaken. Results will be incorporated into the monitoring period, and will inform both Official Plan policy, as well as zoning.

In addition to the above, City Planning Staff have collaborated with other Divisions (including Toronto Building, and Toronto Fire Services) and the Province regarding potential amendments to the Ontario Building Code to permit wood frame construction for 6-storey mid-rise buildings. Evidence of similar Building Code amendments from other jurisdictions, such as British Columbia, indicate that wood-frame construction is both safe, and reduces construction costs. This reduction in construction costs may help to more quickly achieve the vision for reurbanization of the Avenues, particularly in areas where a reduction in construction costs will make new mid-rise buildings more economically viable. Staff will seek input on what, if any, policy or design changes may be needed if 6-storey wood frame construction is legally permitted.

Consultation Undertaken to Date

Many consultations regarding mid-rise buildings have taken place since the adoption of the Performance Standards. These include:

- Avenue Studies, including the current Dufferin Street Avenue Study (between Highway 401 and Lawrence Avenue West);
- Eglinton Connects, which includes the Metrolinx Crosstown LRT corridor, spanning Jane Street to Kennedy Road;
- Area-specific studies, such as those completed as part of the Ossington Planning Study, and for the Queen Street East Urban Design Guidelines;
- The Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Travel Survey, which evaluates travel behaviours of mid-rise building residents;
- Site-specific applications for which community consultations took place; and

In addition, Staff regularly interact with the public and interest groups by providing presentations at universities, and attending outside meetings (such as with BILD Toronto, the Ontario Architecture Association, and the Toronto Society of Architects).

Applications Since Performance Standard Adoption

The intention of the monitoring period is to evaluate the effectiveness of both the Performance Standards (the design of mid-rise buildings) and related policy, including where mid-rise buildings are appropriate. As such, it is important to track many different aspects of mid-rise buildings. Some of this data has already been collected, whereas more complex issues and data will be collected and analyzed through 2014.

In the period beginning July 1, 2010 and ending December 30, 2013, the City received approximately 68 site-specific development proposals for mid-rise buildings along the Avenues (proposals for buildings that are between 4 and 11 storeys, excluding townhouses). An approximate additional 79 site-specific applications for mid-rise buildings were received for areas of the city outside of the Avenues (a significant number

of which were in the Downtown and Central Waterfront, and in the Centres). These proposals were received in all Planning Districts of the City. Refer to Table 1 for details or the map in Appendix 1.

Excluding the Downtown and Central Waterfront, and Centres, the Avenues represent 15.1% of all major streets identified on Map 3 of the Official Plan. However, Avenues were the location of 55.7% of the applications for all 4-11 storey buildings. Including all streets, the Avenues represent just 2.9% of all streets, but have received 46.3% of applications for 4-11 storey buildings. Either way this is calculated, it is clear that the Avenues are attracting a high proportion of mid-rise sized buildings. See Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Approximate number of applications for 4 to 11 storey buildings between July 1 2010 and December 31 2013. Excludes townhouses and stacked townhouses

	Avenues	Downtown or Centres	Other Locations	Total
North York	23	1	12	36
Scarborough	8	0	9	17
Toronto - East York	29	21	26	76
Etobicoke - York	8	3	7	18
Total	68	25	54	147

Generally, the number of applications for 4-11 storey buildings has increased since the Performance Standards were adopted, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - Approximate number of applications for 4 to 11 storey buildings July 1 2010 and December 31, 2013 over time. Excludes townhouses and stacked townhouses

	Jul 10 - Dec 10	Jan 11 - Jun 11	Jul 11 - Dec 11	Jan 12 - Jun 12	Jul 12 - Dec 12	Jan 13 - Jun 13	Jul 13 - Dec 13
North York	2	1	7	6	9	8	3
Scarborough	0	1	0	4	1	8	3
Toronto – East York	6	15	13	13	9	9	11
Etobicoke - York	2	3	3	3	0	3	4
Total	10	20	23	26	19	28	21

As adopted, mid-rise building development is predominantly targeted to Mixed Use designated areas, especially along Avenues, though new mid-rise buildings may also be appropriate on other 'change' or 'growth' designations on or off the Avenues, such as Employment Areas (provided the mid-rise building contains only employment uses), Regeneration Areas, or Institutional Areas. Table 3 highlights the land use designations City Planning received applications for 4-11 storey buildings on. Consistent with their intention, these applications are mainly on Mixed-Use sites, with some in other growth designations. Of the 10 applications on Neighbourhoods, 7 were for 4 storey buildings.

Table 3 - Approximate number of applications for 4 to 11 storey buildings between July 1 2010 and December 1 2013 by Official Plan Land Use Designation. Excludes townhouses and stacked townhouses

Land Use Designation	Count	Proportion
Mixed Use Areas	103	70.07%
Employment Areas	17	11.56%
Apartment Neighbourhoods	10	6.80%
Neighbourhoods	10	6.80%
Institutional Areas	5	3.40%
Regeneration Areas	2	1.36%
Total	147	100%

Of the 147 applications received, 112 proposed a residential use component, and 31 contained only commercial, employment, or institutional uses. The remaining 4 applications proposed assistive living centres or require further investigation to determine their categorization.

Questions and Challenges

The majority of applications are on Mixed Use Area sites, with a high number of applications along the Avenues. The number of applications has trended upward over time. These results suggest that policy is working. However, referring to Table 1, 54 applications were received in "other locations", which indicates that greater clarity about where mid-rise buildings are appropriate is needed, with coincident guidance on how mid-rise buildings should be designed in those other locations (for example, what should a mid-rise office building look like in an Employment District?). Similarly, 25 applications were in the Downtown and Central Waterfront or Centres. Should Performance Standards be modified for these areas targeted for more intensive growth? Similarly, is stricter guidance needed to keep mid-rise buildings to the maximum 1:1 ratio? Providing clarity and guidance regarding mid-rise design and location criteria outside of Avenues is a major component of the monitoring work program going forward.

Supporting Development

To support policy, City Planning is working to provide surety to property owners, developers, and local communities regarding mid-rise buildings through Avenue Studies, as-of-right permissions, area-specific studies, and area-specific design guidelines for mid-rise buildings. Through these efforts, it is becoming easier to develop mid-rise buildings in appropriate locations.

ONGOING WORK PROGRAM

City Planning Staff continue to track data, and evaluate issues as part of the on-going work program. Where possible, this work program will be tied back directly to the existing Performance Standards to evaluate their effectiveness. Dialogue with stakeholders and the public is important and necessary in this process, especially for those policies and Performance Standards that are not so easily measured using quantitative methods. The work program is categorized as follows:

- *Research*, including data monitoring, identification of best practices, and the evaluation of compliance alternatives;
- *Review*, including the review of OMB decisions, and results of surveys;
- *Refine*, including refinements to the Performance Standards themselves and where they apply. A response to Council direction to strengthen the transition provisions from tall buildings to neighbourhoods partially falls here (<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.PG23.5>);
- *Evaluate*, including the evaluation of resulting data, feedback from the use and results of the Performance Standards, and of possible alternative standards; and
- *Consider*, including the consideration of all feedback and of any new issues identified through research and consultation.

Consultation and Outreach

The Urban Design component of the non-statutory Official Plan Review will be set out in a June report, including directions for consultation. The mid-rise team will coordinate consultation with the Urban Design component of the Official Plan Review. Mid-rise building specific outreach will also be undertaken. Directions being contemplated over the next 12 months include targeted meetings with stakeholders (resident and ratepayer groups, developers, Business Improvement Areas, architect associations, etc), consultation meetings, pop-up consultations, the creation of a best-practices list of Toronto mid-rise buildings, marketing or branding, and a major mid-rise related consultation event (perhaps a forum or symposium). Any consultation program will be designed to offer many opportunities and methods to participate to encourage broad participation. These methods may include both online and in-person options, with accessibility (transit access, barrier-free meeting space, central location, etc) a critical consideration for all in-person events.

CONCLUSION

City Planning received 147 applications for 4-11 storey buildings from July 1, 2010 to December 31, 2013, with a significant amount of those applications along Avenues. This suggests that policies for mid-rise buildings and the reurbanization of the Avenues are working. However, through research and consultation with stakeholders and the general public, Staff are aware of a number of issues to be tracked, and policy changes that may be necessary, including a desire for greater clarity regarding the locational applicability of the Performance Standards. In addition, the Performance Standards themselves will be evaluated and monitored, and may need to be amended. This work is in its early stages, and Staff will seek further input on both the Standards and related Official Plan policy through further research, stakeholder and Inter-Divisional engagement, and coordinated

public consultation efforts with the Official Plan team. Staff will report back on the results of these efforts, with expected amendments to the Performance Standards in 2015.

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SIGNATURE

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Appendix 1: Map

Appendix 1: Map



Applications for 4-11 Storey Buildings Between July 1, 2010 and December 31, 2013

Excludes townhouses and stacked townhouses

Not to Scale
05/29/2014

