



REPORT FOR INFORMATION

Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines

Date: March 20, 2018

To: City Council

From: Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The Planning and Growth Management Committee requested the Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to report directly to City Council on the feasibility of deleting in the Guidelines the permission for townhouse buildings to have multiple unit entrances accessed via exterior shared landings along public streets:

- Stacked Townhouse
- Primary Entrances
- Architecture

This Report provides additional background regarding exterior shared landings in terms of their function, appropriateness in certain developments, design challenges, and how the Guidelines address these concerns.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications arising from the adoption of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

On February 22, 2018, Planning and Growth Management Committee recommended amendments to the Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines and report on the permission for townhouse buildings to have multiple unit entrances accessed via shared landings along public streets.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.PG27.5>

COMMENTS

Deleting the permission for townhouse buildings to have multiple unit entrances accessed via exterior shared landings may:

- significantly impact the viability of the construction of 'Back-to-back Townhouse', 'Stacked Townhouse', and 'Stacked and Back-to-Back Townhouse' built types (See section 2.1.2, 2.1.3, and 2.1.4);
- require multi-unit townhouse building types as noted above to meet Ontario Building Code (OBC) regulations which may not have been required for multi-unit townhouse developments, such as interior or exterior public corridors, secondary means of egress or exit, fire alarm systems, and other life safety requirements;
- require additional OBC requirements impacting the cost of construction and the viability of wood frame construction of multi-unit townhouse building types;
- require all multi-unit townhouse buildings to be condominium ownership rather than freehold with common elements;
- require multi-unit townhouse building types to be constructed as 'Low-Rise Hybrid Building' or 'Low-Rise Apartment Building' building types; and
- require amendments to the zoning by-laws to prohibit exterior shared landings.

In order to delete the permission for townhouse buildings to have exterior shared landings, amendments to the City's zoning by-laws will be required. The Townhouse and Low-Rise Guidelines does not have the authority to delete the permission for any specific building type permitted in the Official Plan and/or the zoning by-law.

It is the opinion of City staff that exterior shared landings facing a street can be an acceptable way to access primary unit entrances in townhouses or low-rise apartment buildings, when designed to fit-in appropriately with the area context and meet relevant guidelines in the Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines.

The Official Plan states that building entrances should be visible and directly accessible to public streets. Primary entrances accessed from an exterior shared landing may be the preferred entrance configuration by City staff in some site conditions and area context. The 'Low-Rise Apartment' building type, which use an interior corridor for unit access via a building entrance and lobby, may also be appropriate depending on the area context.

The 'Stacked and Back-to-Back Townhouse' building type, in some cases addresses the concern of 'fit', with multiple primary entrances accessed via an exterior shared landing. Exterior shared landings with primary unit entrances can help new townhouse and low-rise apartment buildings fit-in with existing context with a fine-grain of doors, porches, and stoops.

In the past, exterior shared landings have been constructed in townhouse and low-rise apartment buildings across the City with mixed results. These shared landings, when poorly designed, can be unwelcoming and unattractive from the street. Several challenges are typical of exterior shared landings:

- design and aesthetic considerations;
- access to sky view and sunlight;
- width and depth of landing areas;
- quality of materials, lighting, doors, and hardware;
- placement of utilities and visual clutter; and
- lack of proper garbage and bicycle storage on site.

Most design challenges for exterior shared landing areas can be mitigated by providing direction and guidance on how these spaces should be designed and built to enhance the user experience and its effect on the public realm. The new Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines will help prevent poorly designed exterior shared landings from repeating.

The new Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines give direction in multiple locations to address the issues surrounding the design of exterior shared landings. There are guidelines which speak to minimum unit widths to allow for wider shared landings, shared landings which are open to the sky for more sunlight and openness, and encouraging better materials and finishes to enhance these spaces. Other guidelines speak to better visibility of entrances, reducing utilities around entrances, and providing better lighting. The following chart shows where exterior shared landings are discussed within the Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines:

Section	Guideline
2.1 Building Types	a. Analyze the patterns and characteristics of the surrounding built form, public realm and open space. Select the building type(s) and unit configurations that respond to the various conditions and relationships on the site and the surrounding context.
2.1 Building Types	c. Use the appropriate building type and unit configuration in order to avoid, where possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. fronts of buildings facing rear yards or backs of buildings facing streets or parks iii. entrances not visible or with direct access from a street
2.1.4 Stacked and Back-to-Back Townhouse, paragraph 2, and Diagrams	"...design the building to have entrances on the street side only with a minimum unit width of 5.5m in order to accommodate multiple entry stairs..."
4.3 Primary Entrances	d. Consider a hybrid or apartment building type when individual unit entrances would not be clearly visible from a street or pedestrian mews.

Section	Guideline
4.3 Primary Entrances	e. When this is not possible, design the building to have entrances on the street side only with a minimum unit width of 5.5m in order to accommodate multiple entry doors.
4.3 Primary Entrances	j. Design shared landings to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. have all doors visible from pedestrian routes ii. avoid having more than two doors in a row facing outward iii. provide a generous landing area that is open to the sky, and/or as a two storey space iv. have high-quality doors, railings, floor/wall finishes, lighting, and other hardware.
4.3 Primary Entrances, Rationale, last paragraph	"It is important for shared landing areas to be comfortable, attractive and inviting. Consider the design of these spaces to create a sense of openness with good visibility from pedestrian routes and also outward sky views.
5.2.1 Utilities and Other Equipment	b. Locate HVAC units and other ventilation equipment into the building, on the roof, or at the rear of the property. Avoid locating this equipment in front yards, at building entrances, and/or in amenity areas.
5.3.1 Architecture	e. Design entrances and shared landing areas with care and attention to detail. The use of sidelights, clerestory windows, and doors with glazing in entrances areas is encouraged.

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SIGNATURE

City Clerk's Office Original signed by

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