



Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines – Final Report

ATTACHMENT 3: CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

The following provides a more detailed overview of Table 2: Summary of Consultation and Outreach To-date contained within the Comments section of this report. The collective comments are contained in the Comment Matrix (Attachment 2) along with a detailed response from staff. The Guidelines (Attachment 1) have been modified, where appropriate.

Public Outreach Online

The website www.toronto.ca/lowriseguidelines was created to enable interested parties to obtain information and learn about the study. It provides information about the context of the Guidelines, the status of the Guidelines, as well as links to related standards, Guidelines and studies.

Online Survey

Approximately 50 people participated in the online survey that was available on the Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines webpage from September 11 to October 5, 2015. The survey comprised a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions intended to find out what the public's experience has been living in townhouses, particularly stacked and back-to-back apartments, and how it can be improved. As a way of bringing the survey to the attention of the residents, over 600 postcards were mailed to residents living in stacked and back to back townhouse projects with information on how they can gain access to the survey online. Results of the survey indicate that 58% of respondents reported not having an adequate amount of shared amenity space, while 60% of respondents preferred to have more private outdoor amenity space. Additionally, 56% of respondents expressed that they did not have an adequate amount of storage space. Despite these results, the survey suggested that the denser and more complex townhouse forms remain popular as 66% of respondents indicated they would consider moving into a stacked or back-to-back apartment building again if they were to move.

Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD)

City Planning staff presented the Draft Guidelines to the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) on June 24, 2015. BILD provided feedback at the meeting and in a letter dated July 31, 2015.

BILD queried, recommended changes and sought clarification to wording throughout the document and advised that the Guidelines should:

- Avoid being too prescriptive, more objective based and allow for flexibility;
- Be consistent with other guidelines (e.g. Tall Building Guidelines);
- Be applied consistently across City Districts;
- Not exceed their purpose and leave some requirements to be regulated through the Building Code, Plan of Subdivision or the Zoning By-law;
- Not be a barrier to affordability by restricting the location of building elements requiring certain configuration (e.g. basement units and internalized parking ramps, access stairs and garbage storage and loading); and
- Require fewer parking spaces.

BILD's letter also expressed a desire to continue to consult further as the Guidelines progress. As a result, follow-up consultations with BILD took place on September 29, 2015, April 1 and 12, 2016 (with a sub-group of BILD), September 26, 2016 with BILD comments received by letter October 28, 2016.

Federation of North Toronto Residents Associations (FoNTRA)

The Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to ensuring better development in Toronto. The Draft Guidelines were sent to representatives of FoNTRA and their comments were provided in a letter on August 5, 2015.

FoNTRA believes the development of the Guidelines is an important undertaking due to the volume of badly designed townhouse developments, and that they have the potential to become an education tool for all stakeholders including resident groups, Councillors, Committee of Adjustment and OMB members. In addition, they recommended that references to Official Plan policy should be cited throughout the Guidelines as to make them more defensible at Committee of Adjustment and Ontario Municipal Board hearings. They also believe that performance measures pertaining to minimum hours of sunlight on the public realm is an important element of the Guidelines, and should be fleshed out in more detail.

FoNTRA queried, recommended changes and sought clarification to wording throughout the document and further advised that the Guidelines should:

- In Section 5 - Bringing it All Together, address realistic field applications;
- Produce a series of guideline documents or links for the different types of townhouses and low-rise apartment types;

- Provide a direct connection to policies and zoning to address why some variances are acceptable while others are not;
- Lead to related guidelines for tall single and semi-detached housing with front integral garages; and
- Provide heritage section as a separate guideline.

FoNTRA provided feedback on the August 2016 draft, indicating that a lot of progress had been made and the following specific points:

- The Introduction needs clearer headings;
- It is important to give a clear and strong message that the Guidelines are legal if approved by Council and implement Official Plan policies. Guidelines should not be thrown out at the Ontario Municipal Board as having no status;
- Create links to the wording of the Official Plan policies being implemented. As it is difficult to check references when reading a hard copy;
- How do the Zoning regulations and guidelines relate to each other? What can be included in setbacks in zoning? How do facing and setback distances relate to the Zoning Bylaw? and
- The Glossary contains different definitions for terms that are also used in the Zoning Bylaw and other City regulations. Clarify that the terms and definitions are intended to describe aspects that assist in achieving the design objectives for low-rise housing forms and are not necessarily the same as those in the City Zoning By-laws or the Ontario Building Code.

Design Review Panel (DRP)

The Draft Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines were presented to the DRP at their July 7, 2015 meeting.

The DRP was unanimously in favour of further development of the Guidelines and called them a highly valuable and a much needed addition to the City's suite of urban design guidelines. The Panel provided several comments, including:

- Making the document more concise;
- More graphics and diagrams; clearly outlining requirements vs. guidelines and ensuring consistency of message throughout the document;
- Turning some performance standards in to By-laws;
- Revising DIPS to be consistent with Toronto Green Standards and the draft guidelines;
- Supporting greater facing distances between buildings and recognizing Toronto's cultural overlay when it comes to providing light, view and privacy;
- Clarifying the differences between low-rise building types;
- Stacked and back to back townhouses should take another form when entrances do not face a street (e.g. low-rise apartment or townhouse);
- Stacked and back to back townhouses are a creation of the Building Code in that it encourages grade manipulation to achieve maximum number of storeys;

- Consistency of interpretation is required between Planners and Examiners with respect to multiple entrances and stairs;
- Creating quality that is affordable can be a challenge;
- Addressing sound transmission between units, by raising STC rating up to 70 in Building Code;
- Improving amount of storage space for units;
- Designing townhouses to include second suites;
- Reconsidering the use of "one size fits all" large garbage trucks as the requirements for site circulation and truck accommodation puts unrealistic demands on smaller sites;
- Supporting a revision to DIPS to locate sidewalks next to curbs; and
- Mid-rise development should be encouraged in some areas rather than low-rise development.

Staff presented revised Draft Guidelines to the Panel on October 1, 2015. The Panel expressed their continued support of the Guidelines that the document can still be made more concise and recognizes that the document is still a work in progress. They indicated that the graphics should be clear in their intent, particularly as it relates to where we want to encourage this form of development. They also expressed that the guidelines should set a strong strategic vision.

Staff presented revised Draft Guidelines to the Panel for a third time on October 14, 2016. The Panel concluded that the document addresses essential building blocks of the City's urban fabric with clarity and a strong sense of purpose. The Panel encouraged City staff to address a number of specific comments, which are contained in the Comment Matrix (Attachment 2).

Meeting minutes can be found on the Design Review Panel website:

<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=4da652cc66061410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>.

The Toronto Planning Review Panel

Staff presented and "work-shopped" the Draft Guidelines with the Panel on January 23, 2016. Panel members generally agreed that townhouse and low-rise apartments play an important role in Toronto's housing mix and that the challenging issues outlined by City staff were worth addressing. They were particularly supportive of aspects of the Guidelines that aimed to address:

- environmental sustainability in design including longevity of construction materials, the provision of or future proofing for solar panels, geo-thermal energy, grey water separation etc. and adaptability to various future uses, future circumstances, and new technologies;
- a mandatory greening-to-built form ratio;
- accommodating the various needs of families with children;

- accommodating aging and physically challenged individuals including a percentage of fully accessible units;
- visual appeal in new developments, including complementing the character of the surrounding area;
- sufficient and easily accessible storage that ultimately reduces clutter in public view;
- sufficient outdoor lighting in order to maintain and improve safety;
- appropriately designed and located shared indoor and outdoor amenity spaces;
- considering the demands of pets in both indoor and outdoor spaces;
- designing safe spaces at entryways and around the whole building;
- improved soundproofing between units;
- easy access to public transit;
- sufficient and easily accessible parking for residents and guests; and
- materials accessible to those that are not technical or design experts by including more pictures, hyperlinks to related policy, a “cheat sheet” of acronyms and terminology and a checklist conveying Guideline elements for residents and prospective buyers.

Toronto Society of Architects (TSA)

The Toronto Society of Architects (TSA) organized a forum on the Draft Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines on April 14, 2015. A panel of design professionals discussed the design of townhouses and low-rise apartment buildings.

Feedback that was received from the TSA forum recognized the stacked and back-to-back townhouse type as the most challenging to design. The panel supported looking at adequate facing distances between buildings, consistency of application across Districts and the Guidelines not being too prescriptive. It was also pointed out that although the Draft Guidelines had the potential to reduce the yield somewhat on some properties, the market would adjust to the new condition.

A member of the audience who had lived in a stacked and back to back building recommended that there be more spaces for children to play and shared outdoor amenity space, as well as reducing sound transmission between units, especially in stacked and back-to-back buildings.