

Townhouse and Low-rise Apartment Guidelines Monitoring Report

Date: May 27, 2021

To: Planning and Housing Committee

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

Wards: All

SUMMARY

At its meeting of March 26, 2018, Council directed City Planning to use the Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines ("the Guidelines") in the evaluation and advancement of development applications for townhouses and low-rise apartments. At that meeting, Council also directed staff to monitor development applications for these building types for at least two years to measure the effectiveness of the Guidelines.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the monitoring of the Guidelines, with a focus on how their use through the development application review process has influenced the design outcomes of new townhouses and low-rise apartments, as well as information on how many, what type and where these applications have been made.

Since March 26, 2018, when the Guidelines were adopted by Council, until December 31, 2020, there have been 107 planning applications for which the Guidelines were used as part of the application review process (i.e. Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and/or Site Plan Approval applications). Monitoring indicates that the Guidelines are working well, and have been effective in positively influencing the design of townhouse and low-rise apartment building applications to achieve the Public Realm and Built Form policies of the Official Plan. The application of the guidelines has proven informative, but not determinative, promoting a consistent approach to design issues, while also allowing for flexibility in their application across the city, by land use designation, building type, lot size and surrounding context. The monitoring has reinforced their importance and usefulness and no revisions to the Guidelines are recommended by staff at this time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning recommends that:

1. Planning and Housing Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in the report in the current budget year or in future years.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines encourage well-designed housing in a low-rise form and through a range of typologies (townhouses, stacked, low-rise apartments, etc.) across the city. The adequate provision of a full range of housing is a Provincial interest and a key tenet of the City's Official Plan. Access to safe, high-quality and affordable housing is also an important determinant of physical and mental health and well-being. To this end, the Guidelines have been effective in positively influencing the design of townhouse and low-rise apartment building applications to achieve the Public Realm and Built Form policies of the Official Plan. As a result, the Guidelines complement a number of the City of Toronto's equity strategies and commitments including Housing TO 2020-2030 Action Plan, Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, and the Toronto Seniors Strategy, by informing the design of new townhouses and low-rise apartments to achieve quality housing across Toronto.

DECISION HISTORY

On March 26, 2018, Council adopted the "Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines" report with amendments. City Council directed City staff to monitor the effectiveness of the Guidelines, including the Development Infrastructure Policy and Standards and other related policies for a period of at least two (2) years to determine if any further revisions are warranted for Council consideration. This report is the result of City Planning's monitoring of the Guidelines.

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

COMMENTS

The Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines apply to the design, review, and planning recommendations for approval of new low-rise, multi-unit building developments that are four storeys or less. The Guidelines assist in achieving a high standard in townhouse and low-rise apartment developments, city-wide, by helping staff

to evaluate and positively influence the design of townhouse and low-rise building applications of this type.

The Guidelines are to be read together with, and help implement the relevant Official Plan policies, including Secondary Plans and Site and Area Specific Policies, as well as applicable Zoning By-laws, Heritage listings and designations, Heritage Conservation District Plans, the Toronto Green Standard, the Toronto Development Guide, as well as other applicable regulations, policies and guidelines. The Guidelines are intended to help implement the policies in the Official Plan by achieving good design outcomes for new townhouse and low-rise apartment development applications in a variety of contexts across the city. It is important to note that certain types of low-rise development can be built in certain areas of the city without requiring Planning applications for Zoning By-law Amendments, Official Plan Amendments or Site Plan Approval applications. In these circumstances, the Guidelines would not be used as there would be no Planning Application to review. This Report includes an overview of applications only where the Guidelines were used as part of a Planning Application. This report provides an update on the monitoring of the Guidelines, with a focus on how their application through the development application review process has influenced the design of new townhouses and low-rise apartments. The report also provides an update on related City initiatives, including ongoing reviews of development standards, including parking and the Zoning by-Law.

Background

In 2014, City Planning initiated updates to the design guidelines for townhouse and low-rise apartment buildings. Feedback received by City Planning through its Five-Year Official Plan review consultation process indicated the need to re-examine and clarify development criteria for low-rise residential buildings, as well as the need to establish urban design policies for other types of low-rise developments. The objectives of the study were rooted in the review of urban design policies in the Official Plan to create an attractive, safe and healthy city with a range of built form and housing types. As part of the Official Plan review, the Public Realm and Built Form policies were updated (Official Plan Amendments 479 and 480, as approved by the Minister on September 11, 2020) and include policies that specifically address low-rise buildings (3.1.3. Built Form – Building Types, Townhouse & Low-Rise Apartment Buildings, policies 3.1.3.2 and 3.1.3.3.).

Following an update report which brought forward draft Guidelines to the November 16, 2015, Planning and Growth Management Committee, City Planning was instructed to initiate further consultation on the draft Guidelines and report back to the Committee during the second quarter of 2016. A first round of consultation occurred in early 2016. The input received resulted in a number of significant changes and improvements to the Guidelines. A second round of consultation on the updated Guidelines took place through the summer and fall of 2016.

At its meeting on March 26, 2018, City Council adopted the Guidelines, and directed City Planning to establish a monitoring program to evaluate the effectiveness of the Guidelines over a period of two years, after which any further changes or refinements to the Guidelines or related policies and implementation tools would be presented for Council consideration.

Monitoring the Guidelines

To measure the effectiveness of the Guidelines, City Planning collected information on development applications for townhouse and low-rise buildings applications received between Council adoption of the Guidelines on March 26, 2018 and December 31, 2020. The following sections summarize the monitoring and data on the development applications where the Guidelines were applied in their evaluation.

A variety of development application types were monitored, including Official Plan amendments (OPA), Zoning By-law amendments (ZBLA) and Site Plan Approval (SPA) applications. The types of applications made varied by District in response to the context, underlying land use designations, and zoning by-laws for the sites. This included Site Plans Approval applications made after March 26, 2018, which had application submissions for the same site, such as an OPA and/or ZBLA that was submitted and/or approved before the adoption of the Guidelines. Although not all of the guidelines would be used in the evaluation of these SPA applications in this circumstance (e.g. for elements that would have been determined through the ZBLA process such as building heights, layout of new streets, etc.), there are a number of guidelines that could still be used as part of SPA process.

The report back on the monitoring of the Guidelines is presented in this Report in three parts:

1. How Effective Are the Guidelines (with detailed information in Attachment #1)
2. The Applications: How Many, What Type and Where
3. Additional Council Recommendations and Related City Initiatives

1. How Effective Are the Guidelines?

The Guidelines include both qualitative and quantitative design guidance that when applied together, provide direction on the "what" and "how" for this form of development to promote liveability, design excellence and sustainable design of townhouse and low-rise apartment buildings. One of the main objectives of the Guidelines is to provide clarity in designing sites and buildings so that they make a positive contribution to the quality of life for residents and surrounding communities and fit into the existing and planned context. The Guidelines apply city-wide, and provide flexibility in their application, allowing for a variety of contextually appropriate design outcomes. The detailed monitoring indicates the comprehensiveness of the guidelines and their ability to apply design direction across the wide variety of existing and planned contexts in a clear, but flexible manner. Staff is not recommending modifications to the Guidelines at this time.

The City's Official Plan has a broader policy direction including where these types of low-rise developments are permitted, balancing permissions for a range of housing options with other land use issues. Built Form and Public Realm policies of the Official Plan, together with the Guidelines, provide design direction on the form of these residential building typologies and their sites and work together with policies about where these building types are permitted, which is covered in Official Plan Section 4: Land Use Designations.

The Guidelines inform the best design outcomes for development by providing design direction for understanding the site context, site organization, public realm, building design, and the pedestrian environment. Each section of the Guidelines begins with a principle guideline statement which is followed by a number of supplementary written and diagrammatic guidelines, supporting photographs, and a rationale. References to relevant Official Plan policies and other related City standards, guidelines and studies are provided in each section.

The Guidelines were effective in balancing the need for clarity and a city-wide approach, as well as providing the flexibility to deal with a broad set of existing and planned contexts across the city. The effectiveness of the Guidelines is based on information collected by City Planning Staff through a detailed, site by site review of the 80 applications submitted between March 6, 2018 and May 2020, as detailed in Attachment #1. The guideline by guideline monitoring of these applications included in Attachment #1 includes statistics and commentary on the individual Guidelines, providing a more detailed review of the effectiveness of each of the guidelines. Section 2 of this Report "The Applications: How Many, what Type and Where", provides a higher level detail on the number and type of applications and covers a timeframe of March 26, 2018 to December 31, 2020.

City Planning Staff are of the opinion that the Guidelines provided improvements to both the application process and the design outcomes for low-rise building applications of all the types included in the Guidelines. From a Staff perspective, the upfront clarity about the City's design aspirations improved and streamlined the application process, including discussions with development industry and associated professionals, from pre-application through to Site Plan Approval applications for these building types. As well, the Guidelines were effective in achieving design outcomes which implemented the Official Plan policies for Built Form and Public Realm as discussed and demonstrated further in Attachment #1.

In general, City Planning Staff's review of the guidelines indicates there are similarities across the city in terms of ability to achieve certain Guidelines, as well as certain guidelines being more difficult to achieve. There are also District variations and patterns in terms of the applicability and implementation of the Guidelines. This is based on site and area context, such as underlying zoning, land use designation, lot size and surrounding context. The Guidelines were written with an understanding of these variations and allowed for the flexibility in their application. The monitoring has demonstrated that Staff have been flexible in their consideration of a variety of design solutions and alternatives.

Overall, the Guidelines were effective in positively influencing the design of townhouse and low-rise apartment building applications to achieve the Public Realm and Built Form policies of the Official Plan. They have proven to be adaptable to the large degree of variation in the existing and planned contexts across the city, while also promoting consistency across Districts.

2. The Applications: How Many, What Type and Where

General monitoring information about how many and where was collected to provide an understanding of the role of these types of buildings in the growth of the city, and to understand the differences between Districts. Data gathered includes: Number and Type of Application, Number of Buildings and Units, Building Types, Location, Tenure Type and Appeals.

Number and Type of Application

Since the Guidelines were adopted by Council on March 18, 2018 (to December 31, 2020), there have been 107 development applications to which the Guidelines applied. Of these 107 applications, 26 applications were for Site Plan Approval which had application submissions (i.e. Zoning By-law Amendments or Official Plan Amendments) which were submitted and/or approved before the monitoring start date of March 18, 2018. These 107 applications for townhouse and low-rise apartments were unevenly distributed across the four Districts:

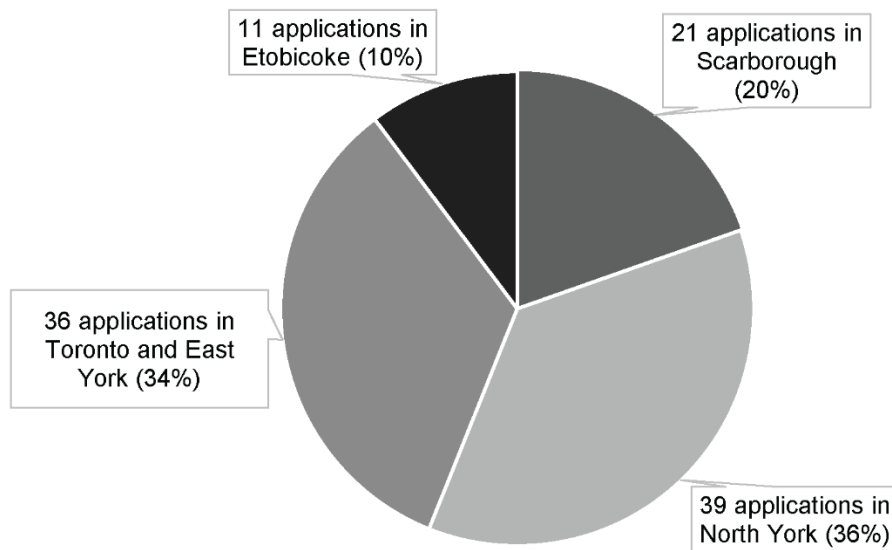


Figure 1: Proposed Number of Applications by District

Number of Buildings and Units

A more detailed look at the applications shows differences across the Districts in terms of the size of the applications measured by the number of buildings in the application as well as the total unit count. The total number of buildings in the 107 applications are:

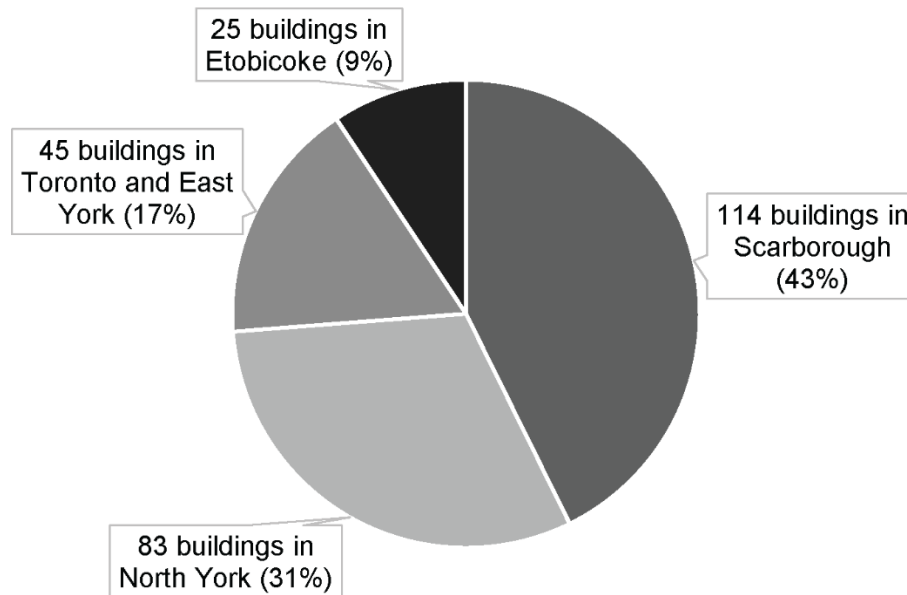


Figure 2: Proposed Number of Buildings by District

The number of units within these buildings also varied by District depending on the building type, the number of buildings and size of lots. The total number of units in the 107 applications were 3,780 and distributed across the city as follows:

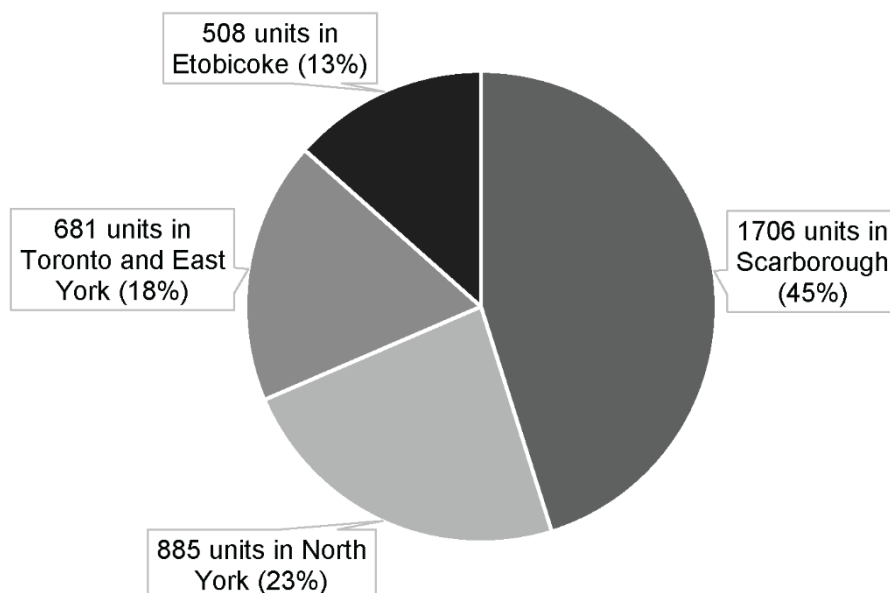


Figure 3: Proposed Number of Units by District

Building Types

The number of units in an application varies considerably depending on the size of site, the number of buildings and the building type. The Guidelines provide a catalogue of the various ways that townhouse buildings can organize units, front doors, shared halls and dividing walls and roofs. These buildings are all called "townhouses", but have fundamentally different unit layouts, as well as internal organization and massing which are appropriate for some sites and not for others. Six types of townhouses as well as other low-rise forms were identified and illustrated in the Guidelines, including townhouses, stacked townhouses, back-to-back townhouses, stacked and back-to-back townhouses, low-rise hybrid apartments and low-rise apartments. This addition to the 2018 Guidelines was a significant change from the 2003 Guidelines, which did not analyze or give direction on how these differently organized but similar looking building types fit into their context.

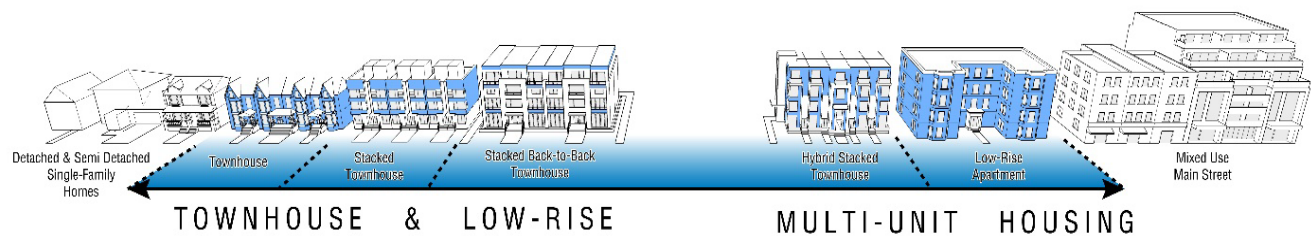


Figure 4: Illustration of townhouse and low-rise building types included in the Guidelines

Of the 107 applications received, a summary of the building types across the city includes:

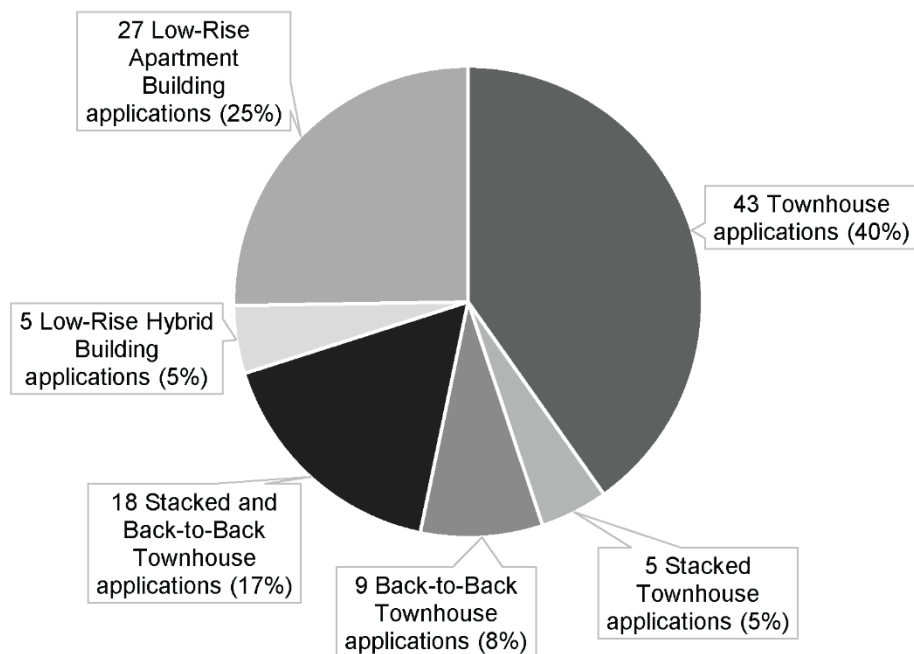


Figure 5: Proposed Number of Applications by Built Form Type

The 6 types of low-rise residential buildings identified in the Guidelines are not evenly distributed across the city. City-wide, there were 43 applications for traditional townhouse type, found mostly in North York and Toronto and East York Districts, marketed as luxury units. The more intensive forms of back-to-back, stacked, and stacked back-to-back were found in 32 applications, many as part of larger sites in Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough Districts. Low-rise hybrid apartments and low-rise apartments were only located in Toronto and East York and North York Districts on smaller, more constrained sites with high land values, likely because these types are more expensive to build due in part to requirements to meet Building and Fire codes. See Attachment #2 – Building Types & Location for a map of the applications by building type.

The inclusion of more intensive townhouse types, as well as the low-rise apartment in the updated Guidelines has proven useful given the increase in these types across the city. The six types identified in the Guidelines has proven comprehensive, as all applications monitored fell into one of these types.

Location

The location of the applications varies widely across the city and by District. The map in Attachment #3 shows the locations of applications city-wide. In general, the applications are located along major streets identified in Official Plan Map 3, where this building type is anticipated.

The underlying land use designations for the 107 applications reviewed also varies across the city. The development application type (ZBLA and/or OPA) will also change based on the underlying Designation. The breakdown of application by land use designation was:

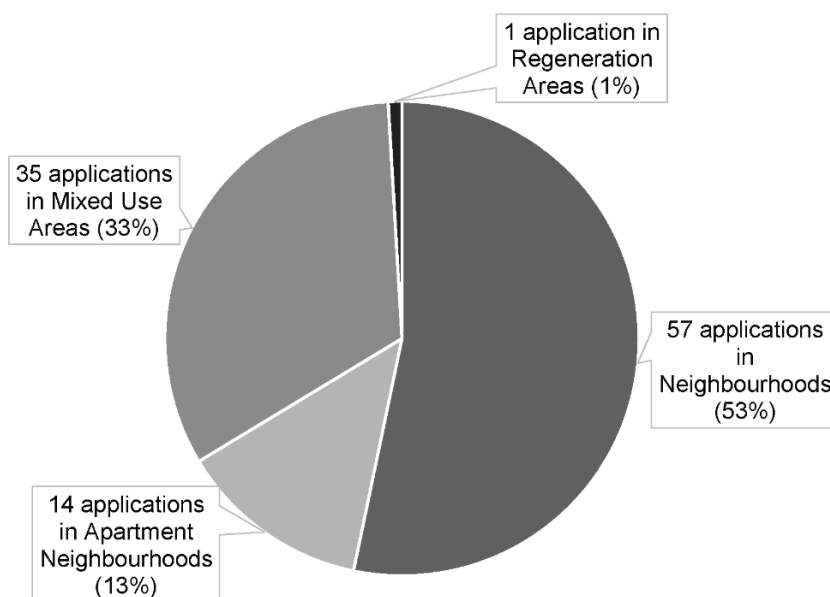


Figure 6: Proposed Number of Applications by Official Plan Land Use Designation

Generally, most applications in Toronto and East York District were on small, infill sites, and on larger sites in Etobicoke, North York, and Scarborough Districts. An overview of the District context is below:

Etobicoke-York

In Etobicoke, almost all applications were located south of Eglinton Avenue and along Major Streets (as identified in Official Plan Map 3). This included a mix of large sites with multiple buildings and blocks, as well as small sites with single blocks of townhouses.

North York

In North York, most applications were located along Major Streets. Included in this is Bayview Avenue, where the Bayview Area Study Design Guidelines and Bayview Townhouse Design Guidelines provide design direction for townhouse development on certain lots along different sections of Bayview Avenue. Site Plan Approval applications for townhouses were also located in Lawrence Heights, a master planned area which has a comprehensive ZBLA that established the site organization, including new public roads and open spaces.

Scarborough

In Scarborough, most applications were on large and deep sites designated *Neighbourhoods* or *Mixed Use Areas* along Major Streets. Among the total 21 applications, 6 were located along Eglinton Avenue East, Lawrence Avenue East and Victoria Park Avenue. The projects in Scarborough were primarily in stacked back-to-back townhouse form on large sites or as part of the applications with a mix of building types in master planned areas.

Toronto and East York

In Toronto and East York, most applications were located in neighbourhoods outside of the Downtown. Most of the sites had underlying zoning which permits these building types. The applications were typically small, infill sites which went through ZBLAs, Committee of Adjustment and Site Plan Approval. Most applications were for townhouses, stacked and hybrid apartments on small infill sites.

Tenure

The review of applications also included compiling information on tenure of the units proposed. The Guidelines are focused on the public realm and built form design direction for these buildings and did not directly address tenure type, however, this information is important as it relates to other City-initiated housing work. Of the total 3,780 units proposed city-wide:

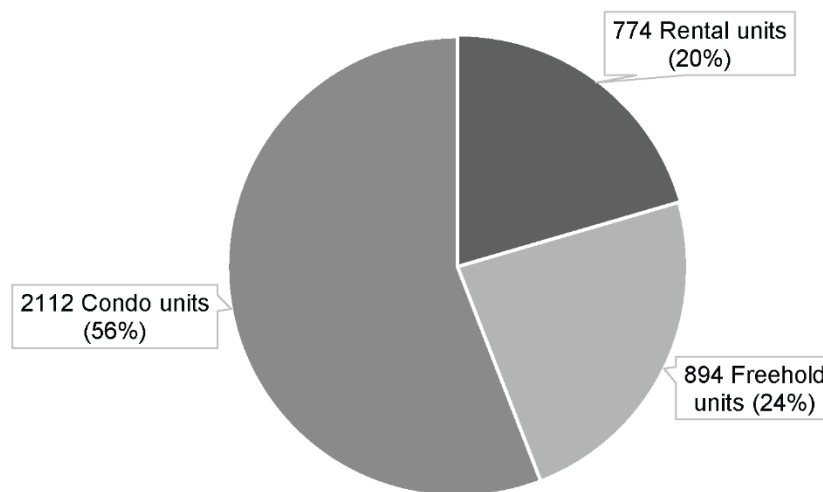


Figure 7: Proposed Number of Units by Tenure

Appeals

A total of 16 of the 107 applications reviewed were appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT). Appeals were made for a variety of reasons and not necessarily related to built form and/or public realm considerations related to the Guidelines. In some instances the underlying Zoning By-law or land use designations may not have allowed for a townhouse or low-rise apartment form. Other applications were appealed because the proposal was considered overdevelopment of the site, which may have been deemed as such through use of the Guidelines.

In instances where the appeal did relate to built form and/or public realm considerations, Staff have indicated that the Guidelines assisted in improving outcomes of these appeals, whether through negotiated settlement or through contested hearings.

3. Additional Council Recommendations and Related City Initiatives

As part of the March 26, 2018 Council meeting during which the Guidelines were adopted, Council adopted several other recommendations related to this work. This section of the report provides an overview of some of these recommendations as well as how the monitoring and Guidelines themselves align with other emerging and ongoing City-initiated work.

City Council directed City staff to conduct staff training sessions for the "Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines" to develop a consistent and comprehensive understanding of the applicability, objectives, and limitations of these Guidelines.

Following Council adoption of the Guidelines, Staff coordinated and undertook training with City staff (including staff from City Planning, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Transportation Services) that also included participation from Toronto Community Housing (TCH) and private sector developers, of built townhouses and low-rise apartment projects. Staff in the four Districts coordinated an information session that included an overview of the Guidelines and an introduction to projects in the District and the route for site tours. Presentations and discussions were focused on the content of the guidelines as well as technical and "real world" issues experienced by the building industry. Developers of the projects included in the site tours also gave short presentations on the projects included in the tour. Staff, together with the developers, led the tours of these built or in-progress projects. Approximately 115 staff participated in the various training sessions and tours.

City Council requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to report back to the Planning and Growth Management Committee on amendments to the Zoning By-law to delete the permission for townhouse buildings to have multiple unit entrances accessed via shared landings along public streets. The shared entrance with multiple doors is a building entrance element which is found in stacked, and stacked back-to-back townhouses. This is a result of Ontario Building Code requirements which does not require a second fire exit if each unit has its own stair and exit to the street. Changes to the Zoning By-law would not eliminate this feature without removing permissions for this important missing middle building type. There was concern on Council that porches with multiple, blank fire doors, do not fit into streetscapes with traditional porches, stoops and other entry features typically with only one or two doors. Staff have used the guidelines to improve the design quality of these spaces across the city and where appropriate, encouraged low-rise apartments and hybrids which do not employ this multiple door entry element. For example, in Toronto and East York District, low-rise and low-rise hybrid apartments accounted for 20 of the 36 applications and only 1 stacked back-to-back was approved with the multiple door feature.

Changes to the Zoning By-Law with regard to specific types of townhouse and low-rise forms may emerge through the Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods study currently underway. In the meantime, the Guidelines have fostered more low-rise and hybrid apartment types which avoid the multiple unit entrances via shared landings along public streets.

City Council requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to report to the Planning and Growth Management Committee in the second quarter of 2018 on, in some cases, exempting low rise apartment buildings from parking requirements, and other potential incentives to promote purpose-built rentals in Neighbourhoods-Designated areas.

The Guidelines provide direction on how to design parking on sites with a range of approaches from front or rear parking integral to the unit, below-grade parking, at-grade parking or decked parking, but does not set standards for number of spaces. Parking standards are set in the By-law by type and location in the city and are often reviewed as part of individual townhouse developments, through parking studies submitted as part of development applications. The City provides for reduced parking ratios (0.1 spaces for each unit) in the Zoning by-law for alternative housing, which is typically applied to new affordable projects, such as Open Door. The monitoring identified 32 low-rise apartment and hybrids projects across the city and 6 of these have no parking, 1 in Scarborough and 5 in Toronto and East York District.

There is continuous pressure to lower the parking standards across the city for all forms of development, not just townhouses or low-rise apartments. A review of the parking standards in Zoning By-law 569-2013 is underway which may result in changes to the standards for building types identified in the Guidelines. This review will consider the building use, location, availability of alternative travel modes and the impacts on existing uses when proposing changes to existing parking standards. The need for other parking policies or regulations to minimize the parking-related impacts of development on existing uses will also be considered. City Planning brought forward a report to Planning and Housing Committee at its January 15, 2021 meeting that responded to this request and adopted without amendment:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.PH20.4>

Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods

At its meeting on July 28, 2020, Council adopted a work program to encourage a wider variety of housing types in areas designated as *Neighbourhoods*. Led by City Planning, and working with other Divisions, several work programs are underway to advance this.

Broadening permissions for residential building types beyond detached homes could include different townhouse and low-rise apartment types which are found in these Guidelines. Therefore these Guidelines, the public realm and built form guidance as well as direction on fit and context, may provide useful for various streams of work currently underway in the Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhood work program.

Next Steps & Conclusion

Provincial Policy direction and the Official Plan require the provision of a mix of unit types and sizes. As implementation of the Guidelines continues, Staff will engage in ongoing monitoring of the development pipeline and collect data on occupied units in the townhouse and low-rise apartment forms to measure the supply this type of building in new construction and housing occupancy trends.

The monitoring indicates that the Guidelines are working well, and have been effective in positively influencing the design of townhouse and low-rise building applications to achieve the Public Realm and Built Form policies of the Official Plan. Their application as Guidelines has proven informative, but not determinative, promoting a consistent approach to design issues while also allowing for flexibility in their application across all Districts of the city, by land use designation, building type, lot size and surrounding context. The monitoring has reinforced their importance and usefulness as part of the development application review process and no revisions to the Guidelines are recommended by staff at this time.

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SIGNATURE

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City Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: How Effective Are the Guidelines: A Detailed Response

Attachment 2: Building Types & Location

Attachment 3: Location of Applications

Attachment #1

How Effective Are the Guidelines: A Detailed Response

The following is a guideline-by-guideline description of the monitoring of the individual guidelines contained in the Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines. The information in this Attachment is based on applications submitted between March 26, 2018 and May 31, 2020, which included a total of 80 applications.

Section 1: Site Context

The first section of the guidelines provides design direction on responding to the existing and planned context, understanding when there is a need for new public realm such as streets and parks and other open spaces for larger sites, as well as responses to Heritage buildings and landscapes.

This section is about promoting an understanding of the site before undertaking a review of the details of a development application. This section which was not part of the 2003 guidelines, has proven very effective in promoting good site organization as part of larger sites in a variety of contexts, making the guidelines effective and resilient city wide.

Guideline 1.1 – Context Analysis and Planning for Larger Sites & Guideline 1.2.1 – Public Realm Framework: Street and Block Patterns

Large sites with multiple townhouse and low-rise apartment buildings require extensions to the public realm into the site to provide access, address and to service the units. The introduction to these guidelines illustrate alternative approaches and links back to the Official Plan policies. More detailed design direction for public streets, lanes and walkways is found later in the document, but this introduction to large site organization discusses the "why" and "how" of large site layout. Supporting diagrams illustrate how these public realm elements work together with buildings, existing streets and parks and open spaces on sites. These sections have helped in the evaluation of large sites.

Guideline 1.2.2 – Public Realm Framework: Public Parks and Open Spaces

On-site parkland dedication has its own process, and through that process, the appropriateness of the site, as well as the size and general location criteria for new parks would be determined. The guidelines support this process, as well as encouraging the introduction of new open spaces, by providing further design direction for the siting of the park and/or open space in relationship to the buildings and landscaped edges. New and/or expanded parks and/or open space, including POPS, were secured as part of 17 applications across the city. For the applications where this was introduced, the guidelines have been effective in guiding the siting and organization of open spaces.

Guideline 1.3 – Heritage

Five applications noted consideration for heritage, with 1 application requiring integration of an on-site designated heritage structure. The guidelines informed the siting and organization of the new buildings to maintain the visibility of the heritage structure and a Conservation Agreement was provided to ensure the conservation of designated aspects of the building.

Section 2: Building Types

In response to the wide variety of townhouse and low-rise building types identified in applications after the 2003 Guidelines which focussed on freehold townhouse types, the 2018 Guidelines identified 6 different types of townhouse and low-rise apartments. These types were defined by their form including the organization of units, shared walls and roofs and shared spaces such as porches, stairs and corridors. With each of these types, there are different site relationships, including front door location for individual units, building heights and depths, and parking. Classifying and clarifying the distinctions between the types has allowed for development to fit into a variety of site contexts.

The number of applications for each of the types and the location of these developments in the city have been described earlier in the report. The identification of these types assists in ensuring the best fit of townhouse and low-rise buildings to the site context, promoting good built form relationships for building frontage and service areas of the site.

All of the applications reviewed through the monitoring fit into one of the 6 types of townhouses identified in the Guidelines, therefore no modification is recommended to the type classifications outlined in the Guidelines.

Section 3: Site Organization

This section the Guidelines provides design direction on the structuring elements of the public realm, as well as how buildings should interface with the public realm.

Guideline 3.1 – Streets, Lanes, Mews and Walkways

For larger sites, new public realm elements are required to provide access and address for individual units where they cannot take address from an existing street. These public realm elements are both functional, but also fundamental to creating appropriate settings for community life for new residents and to integrate the development into the surrounding community. The guidelines in this section build on the Official Plan by providing dimensions and relationships to other policies and standards, including Development Infrastructure Policy & Standards (DIPS), for the design of new streets, as well as providing options for sites where narrower pedestrian mews can be used for address and access.

The breakdown of these additional public realm elements is below. Many of the sites that required new public realm incorporated a combination of the different types.

No sites in the Toronto and East York District provided new public realm elements (new streets or mews). The introduction of these public realm elements was mostly outside of Toronto and East York due to the size of sites for these types of developments. As well, out of the total 27 projects in Toronto and East York, 14 were hybrid types or low-rise apartments which use a common door and interior corridors to avoid space consumptive public realm elements on small urban sites.

Streets

The guidelines in this section only refer to public streets and reference the DIPS standards which were approved by Council in 2005 for use in the design of new local streets. DIPS standards are used when new local streets are integrated into large site applications giving access, address and utility connections for multiple buildings on lots.

The guidelines' reference to public streets is consistent with the recently updated Official Plan Public Realm policies (OPA 479) which received Ministerial approval on September 11, 2020. The policies reinforce the City's preference for public streets as the framework for development. The new policies allow for the City to approve private streets where appropriate, provided they are designed to look and function like a public street and the Guidelines reflect this policy direction.

Prior to Council adoption of the Guidelines in 2018, industry stakeholders expressed concern during consultation that the guidelines' reference only to public streets would require all developments to provide public streets, making some sites undevelopable. This concern is related to the land consumptive nature and the process time for public streets. In response to the industry feedback, at its March 26, 2018 meeting, Council also recommended "2. City Council direct City staff to monitor the effectiveness of the Guidelines, including the Development Infrastructure Policy and Standards and other related policies for a period of at least two (2) years to determine if any further revisions are warranted for Council consideration."

The monitoring indicates that across the Districts, staff applied the guidelines according to site specific considerations and context, and when new streets were introduced, not all were required to be public streets. Of the applications monitored, only 13 ultimately included public streets. As well, of the 22 applications with new streets, 9 of these were approved with private streets which met the policies of the Official Plan. The City has continued to approve applications with private streets as part of large sites, as well as pedestrian mews, indicating the application of the guidelines has been flexible and with recognition of context.

- Etobicoke District had 1 applications with a new street, which was private streets designed like a public street.
- North York District had 14 applications with new streets, of these 7 were new public streets and 7 were private streets designed like public streets.
- Scarborough had 6 applications with new streets, 5 of which were public streets and 1 was a private street.

- Toronto and East York had 1 application with a new street, which was a private street designed like a public street (located in the Etobicoke York District prior to Ward boundary changes).

Together, the Guidelines and DIPS provide an appropriate framework to review large sites. DIPS apply much more broadly than to just townhouses and low-rise forms and inform new local street design in a wide range of applications. Therefore, it was not appropriate to undertake a review of DIPS as part of this townhouse and low-rise apartment monitoring work program. DIPS, which are used city-wide for review and design of new local streets for a range of projects, may be reviewed sometime in the future as standards for tree planting, sidewalk widths and other technical standards evolve. At that time, City Planning will be part of that work program and rely on the experience of using DIPS in the review of townhouse and other low-rise building types.

Pedestrian Mews

A pedestrian mews is the least space intensive and least costly approach to providing access and address and was often applied on larger sites, sometimes alone but often in combination with new public and/or private streets. The monitoring illustrates that the guidelines have been applied flexibly and that 18 applications were able to use the less space consumptive pedestrian mews to provide access and address without requiring a public street. Mews were found in: 4 applications in Etobicoke; 8 applications in North York; and 6 applications in Scarborough.

Lanes and Shared Driveways

Lanes and shared driveways are an important part of townhouse development applications, they provide vehicular access to servicing areas, parking and garages. Lanes do not generally provide address and access for units. A shared private driveway is the privately-owned equivalent of the public lane. An important aspect of the 2003 Infill Townhouse Guidelines was to discourage integral front garages and parking in the front setback. The integral front garage has a negative impact on streetscape including loss of landscaping, street trees and multiple curb-cuts crossing the sidewalk. This preference for rear access parking and removing garage doors and parking from the building front, was a success of the 2003 Guidelines and this direction for building and site organization was carried forward in the current Guidelines.

Of the 80 applications monitored, only 5 had integral front garages, 4 in Toronto and East York and 1 in Scarborough.

Guideline 3.2 – Shared Indoor and Outdoor Amenity Space

On larger sites, shared amenity space is critical and often provided as space for children's play areas and gathering. The Guidelines did not provide thresholds for the provision of these spaces, as this requirement is already contained in the Zoning By-law for applications with more than 30 units. The Guidelines provide guidance for siting, organization and design aspects of these spaces, should they be required and appropriate for a given site. Individual sites were evaluated to understand the amenity requirements based on the application itself as well as the existing and planned context. Across the city, 26 projects provided shared indoor and/or outdoor amenity space.

Guideline 3.3 – Building Placement and Address

This section along with the demonstration projects and Section 1.2 – Public Realm Framework, provides clear direction for larger sites and how to organize the public realm to locate buildings to promote clear and direct access to units from streets. The guidelines also provide direction on the role of buildings to define edges of, and support the adjacent public realm through windows and doors.

The demonstration plans provide design approaches to site layout on deep sites – by organizing building frontages parallel the street frontage, or perpendicular to a street frontage, aligned along new streets or pedestrian mews. Ultimately, the guidance for the building placement is established to avoid a townhouse behind a townhouse siting, where there is a back to front relationship.

These building placement and address related guidelines were implemented flexibly across the city, with many sites adopting the approaches recommended. Only 4 sites provided a back to front relationship. The guidelines were effective in promoting good building placement and organization, responding to existing and new public realm frameworks.

Guideline 3.4 – Site Services, Access and Parking

This section provides more specific design direction to organizing the parking, back of house, and servicing areas of developments, for both small and large sites. Together with Section 1 – Site Context and the Demonstration Plans, the monitoring demonstrated the guidelines were effective in achieving the Official Plan policies related to these matters.

The monitoring indicated that higher land prices have not only shifted applications from townhouses to more intense forms such as the stacked, back-to-back and stacked back-to-back in all Districts, but this shift also influenced an increase in below-grade parking which is more expensive to build but allows for more units per site. Parking was located below-grade in: 5 of the 8 applications in Etobicoke; 14 out of 32 applications in North York; 7 out of 13 applications in Scarborough and 8 out of 27 in Toronto and East York. Some of these applications applied more than one form of parking.

Below-grade parking access is provided via ramps and the guidelines direct these ramps to be located within buildings rather than free-standing, to reduce the impact of these large and often noisy elements on the site and neighbouring units. Most applications with below-grade parking applied this approach.

As discussed earlier, the provision of lanes and shared driveways limited the use of integral front garages, with only 5 of 80 projects across the city incorporating them. This supported rear access parking in 17 townhouse projects. On larger sites with a mix of townhouse types, a range of parking solutions were applied, including surface parking on 12 sites.

In general, Staff indicated that the guidelines assisted in improving the layout and design of parking on sites using a wide variety of approaches that varied by location in the city, lot size and number of units.

4.0 Building Design

Guideline 4.1 – Fit and Transition

The guidelines were effective in providing direction on transition in scale. Townhouses are sometimes proposed as part of larger sites that also have tall and mid-rise buildings and often incorporated and located on these sites to implement the transitions policies of the Official Plan as well as to define the edges of streets where there is a context of narrow residential frontages.

Guideline 4.2 – Facing Distances and Setbacks

The Guidelines included recommendations for the distance between buildings on sites. Diagrams illustrating these also supports the ambitions for new public realm on large sites and provides clear direction on the spacing between buildings.

Similar to other dimensions in the City's built form guidelines (e.g. Mid-Rise Performance Standards), these dimensions are based on proportion of height to distance between buildings, to allow access to direct sunlight and daylight to improve liveability. In general, the guidelines for facing distance and setbacks have been met in the development applications, in particular on larger sites in North York, Etobicoke and Scarborough Districts. On smaller infill sites, notably in Toronto and East York, some sites have been approved with narrower setbacks but generally in keeping with the surrounding context.

Guideline 4.3 – Primary Entrances

The entrance to the unit and/or building and circulation is an important feature of townhouse and low-rise apartment buildings. The guidelines were effective in providing design direction to this important feature including the grading, materials, etc. The guidelines encourage the use of details found in traditional grade-related house form buildings, including stoops, porches, and patios, which help to break up the scale of these buildings and fit into low-rise residential streetscapes.

To help achieve this, the guidelines provided limits to the height of entry stairs at no more than 7 stairs to ensure windows with active rooms overlook the street. The guidelines were effective to meet this guideline, as only 9 projects had more than 7 entry stairs.

The Guidelines also discouraged sunken amenity areas along street frontages for lower units. The guidelines were effective in discouraging this along the street with flexibility to provide lower entrances without the patio.

Guideline 4.4 – Private Outdoor Amenity Space

Design directions for a range of private outdoor amenity for individual units was provided through a broad range of approaches including balconies, rooftop terraces, and grade-related patios. The guidelines were effective in providing design direction for the provision of these spaces so that they are useful to residents and appropriately located and designed to allow for usability and privacy.

The guidelines discourage below-grade, private amenity spaces along public streets. The guidelines provided flexibility to apply this type of amenity along pedestrian mews where adequate space for landscape can be provided to ensure privacy without compromising security and safety. The guidelines were effective in discouraging the placement of private amenity space in this manner, with only 2 projects incorporating this.

Guideline 4.5 – Building Relationship to Grade and Street

This section provides direction on the relationship of the building to the street and surrounding grade to ensure that new buildings frame the street in a manner that improves the quality of the public realm and will not create problems for pedestrian access, drainage. This, together with the direction for discouraging private amenity space below-grade along public streets, and the primary entrances, have an impact on the public realm. The monitoring of both the number of risers to the front entrance, as well as the private outdoor amenity space indicate these guidelines have been effective.

Section 5: Pedestrian Realm

The last section of the Guidelines provides qualitative design direction on the provision of public realm and built form elements that are well integrated, well-designed and functional.

Guideline 5.1 – Streetscape, Landscape and Stormwater Management

Soft landscaping is an important aspect of the site design, providing non-paved areas for planting, including street trees and other soft landscape. Small sites in particular have a difficult time providing soft landscape area, mostly limited to front setbacks. On some sites, it is difficult to provide soft landscape and in particular, street trees, due to utility conflicts.

The Guidelines proved effective in increasing opportunities for soft landscaping, particularly on larger sites with new streets and public or private and pedestrian mews, as dimensions were set to allow for adequate soil volume (in coordination with the Toronto Green Standard), even when these spaces are above parking garages.

Guideline 5.2 – Site Elements

The guidelines include direction for the location, organization and design of site elements such as utilities, lighting, and other shared elements. The monitoring did not capture detailed information related to these qualitative guidelines, but Staff have noted

that they did prove effective in evaluating and making recommendations for these elements as part of development applications.

Guideline 5.3 – Building Elements

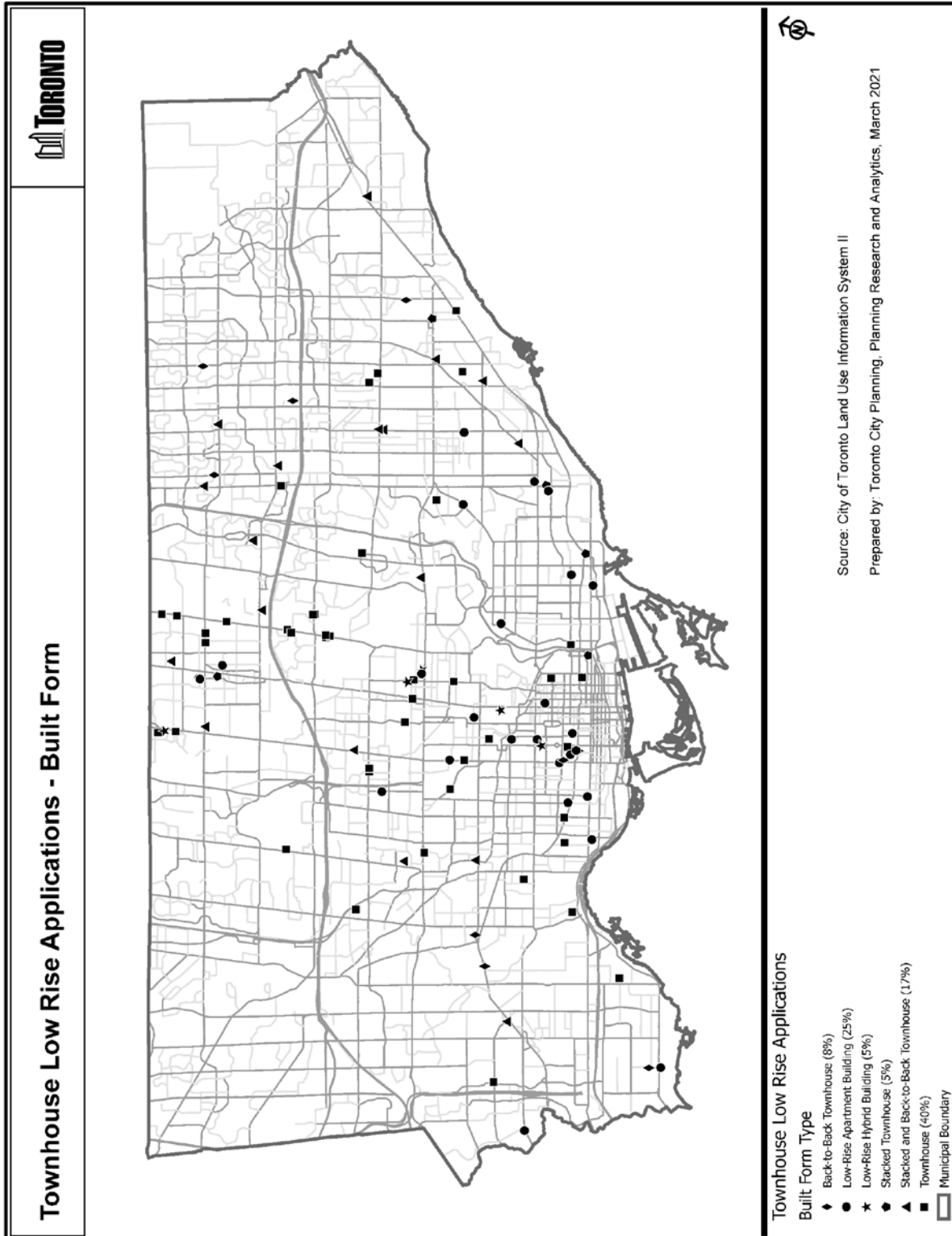
The guidelines included in this section provide qualitative guidance on the architecture and materials for townhouse and low-rise apartment buildings. Staff noted that the guidelines supported their review and evaluation of these matters at the Site Plan Approval stage.

Guideline 5.4 – Public Art

The guidelines identify opportunities for incorporating public art into townhouse and low-rise apartment building sites. None of the applications reviewed as part of the monitoring included public art dedication. This is due to the relatively small scale of these types of projects.

Attachment #2

Building Types & Location



Attachment #3
Location of Applications

