



Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods – Multiplex Housing - Consultation Summary

Overview

The City launched its Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods (EHON) initiative in July 2020. Since then, Planning staff have undertaken a robust engagement and consultation process accompanying the initiative in general, and informing the Multiplex component EHON in particular. This report provides a chronological account of all consultation activities related to the Multiplex Study, and summarizes the feedback received on the proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments released on February 9, 2023.

Consultation on the Multiplex Study began in October 2021, with an online survey to gauge general support for the concept of permitting multiplex building types in all *Neighbourhoods* across the city. Throughout the Spring of 2022, team members participated in a variety of engagement activities including online community consultation meetings (both city-wide and ward-based), workshops, roundtables, interviews and email correspondence. This public engagement strategy included a diverse range of parties and stakeholders to ensure as many voices as possible were represented in this process. Staff deployed a range of typical and non-traditional engagement methods to gauge public feedback and solicit input on the Multiplex Study, including:

- Virtual Consultation Meetings
- Online Survey
- Web postings
- E-updates
- Technical Advisory Committee
- Canadian Urban Institute Roundtable discussions
- Urban Land Institute –Toronto webinar panel
- Twitter space
- Jane's Walks highlighting multiplex building types
- Reddit "Ask Me Anything" event
- Design Review Panel
- Dedicated Email account (ehon@toronto.ca)

Results of these engagements were reported to City Council in the November 2021 Interim Report and June 2022 Proposals Report.

Engagement and Consultation – Draft Official Plan Amendment and Draft Zoning By-law Amendment

On February 9, 2023, Staff published a revised draft of the Official Plan Amendment and a draft Zoning By-law Amendment on the City’s website which was promoted via e-update, social media, and Councillor communications to constituents. Members of the public were invited to submit their comments via e-mail, by attending a virtual public consultation, or by completing a web survey asking about the amendments. The study and consultation events were promoted on the City’s social media accounts, with paid advertising on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, and in the Toronto Star.

Table 1 details a list of all consultation activities since the draft Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment were posted on the City's website on February 9th, 2023.

Table 1: Public Engagements, February-March 2023		
Date	Meeting	Approx. # of Attendees
February 21, 2023	Virtual Public Forum #1	218
February 22, 2023	Long Branch Neighbourhood Association	3
February 23, 2023	Virtual Public Forum #2	250
February 28, 2023	Ward 15 Stakeholder Meeting	27
February 28, 2023	Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations	40
March 6, 2023	Ward 15 Public Consultation	269
March 7, 2023	More Neighbours Toronto	7

Online Survey

An online survey was launched in tandem to solicit feedback on the draft Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendment. The survey was promoted through the EHON website and various social media channels. The survey was live from February 9 – March 10, 2023.

Email

The dedicated EHON email account was promoted as a first point of contact for sharing comments on the draft OPA and ZBL. Staff also responded to questions sent to the email account.

Summary of Feedback on Draft Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment (February 2023)

Since the February 9th release of the amendments, Staff received over 155+ emails, 2,262 survey responses, 8,255 survey comments and have engaged with approximately 800 attendees at public consultation events.

Summarized below are key comments and themes based on the consultation method as they relate to the draft Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment.

Online Survey

On February 9, 2023, Staff launched a follow up Multiplex survey to gauge public sentiment and solicit input on the proposed draft Zoning by-law and Official Plan Amendments. Respondents were asked whether they 'agree', 'disagree' or were 'neutral' regarding each proposed policy or regulation, and had an opportunity to provide freeform text comments throughout. The survey sought feedback on the Official Plan policies first, followed by the proposed changes to the zoning by-law, which would implement the Official Plan policies. Explanatory text was provided in grey boxes in order to provide context for the changes. Illustrative diagrams were provided where necessary. The survey remained open until March 10, 2023, and was accessible at [Toronto.ca/Multiplex](https://toronto.ca/multiplex). The following is a summary of the survey results and feedback.

Survey Summary

- 2,262 people provided input on the Multiplex web survey. The completion rate was 68% of respondents (approximately 1,500 people).
- In total, 8,255 comments were provided;
- 83% of respondents (1,900) supported the proposal to amend the Official Plan policies to permit multiplex building types in *Neighbourhoods*. 11% of respondents (approximately 250 people) disagreed;
- 'Multiplex development' criteria received the most comments and debate with 647 responses;
- 'Height' questions received the second most comments and debate with 544 responses;
- In the comments:
 - 'Tree' was mentioned 682 times;
 - 'Height' was mentioned 656 times;
 - 'FSI' or 'Floor Space Index' was mentioned 237 times;
 - 'Character' was mentioned 170 times; and
 - 'Parking' was mentioned 151 times

Respondents were asked for their opinions on the draft policies and draft zoning by-laws amendments to implement multiplexes in *Neighbourhoods*. Survey results and comments from respondents are summarized as follows:

Official Plan Amendment

Multiplex Definition

83% of respondents agreed and 8% disagreed with the definition of "multiplex", referring to a duplex, triplex or fourplex.

- A number of comments specifically cited the need to expand the definition of Multiplexes to include fiveplexes, sixplexes and beyond.

Neighbourhood Character

24% of respondents disagreed with the proposed policies for the Multiplex Development criteria, while 64% agreed with the proposed policies.

- Many respondents questioned the notion of prevailing character when weighed against the dire housing need in Toronto, noting that Official Plan character policies should not serve as a barrier to the construction of Multiplexes.
- A number of comments stated that the development criteria of the Official Plan should not be amended as this is the best way to preserve the existing composition of Toronto's *Neighbourhoods*.

Tree Canopy

59% of respondents agreed that the construction of multiplexes should not result in the injury or removal of a healthy tree; 22% of respondents were neutral and 19% disagreed with this policy.

- Of those respondents who disagreed with the proposed policy, many comments noted that current tree-protection by-laws serve as an obstacle to expanding housing options, including multiplex housing, in *Neighbourhoods*.
- Others indicated that more stringent policies are required to protect trees and protecting the City's tree canopy should remain a top priority.

Privacy

66% of respondents agreed that multiplex units should be livable with appropriate relationships between units and should minimize privacy impacts between adjacent units.

- 14% of respondents disagreed with this proposed policy, citing the need to better define the notion of privacy in the context of Canada's largest city and expressed concern that this policy would prevent the construction of multiplex housing.

Prevailing Policies and Secondary Plans

77% of respondents agreed that where there is a conflict between a Site and Area Specific Policy or a Secondary Plan, the Multiplex Site and Area Specific Policy will prevail.

- 12% disagreed with this policy, citing that localized site policies need to be respected.

Zoning By-law Amendment

Permitting up to Four Units in All Zones

87% of respondents were in favour of amending the permitted building types in all Residential zones to permit multiplexes.

85% of respondents supported amending all 'U' values to permit up to four units per lot, while 10% disagreed.

- Many respondents indicated there is a need for more than four units to adequately solve the lack of housing options in Toronto, while a number of comments indicated that the Province only requires a total of three units as per Bill 23.
- Many comments suggested that there is not a need for multiple zones and that single residential zone should be considered.

Building Depth

81% of respondents supported the permitted depth of multiplexes being extended to 17 metres (same as detached houses), while 12% disagreed.

- Many comments stated that the depth should go beyond 17 metres, for example 19 metres, in order to create more liveable units.

Height and Maximum Storeys

Questions regarding greater height permissions of 10 metres or greater to allow additional storeys for multiplexes received the second greatest number of survey comments, representing a wide range of opinions.

82% of respondents were supportive of amending the regulations to allow multiplexes to reach 10 metres in height, while 12% of respondents disagreed.

67% of respondents agreed that height permissions greater than 10 metres are required, while 16% were neutral and 17% disagreed.

81% were supportive of removing the proposed restriction on the maximum number of storeys allowed in a multiplex, while 12% disagreed.

- A number of commenters felt that four storeys is too tall and that the height of any building in a *Neighbourhood* should respect its context.
- Other comments indicated that the storey height is irrelevant if there is still a maximum height limit in metres, and that regulating the number of storeys seems unnecessary if there are already maximum building height and minimum ceiling height regulations.
- Many respondents stated that height limits should be increased to allow four full storeys, up to 12 or 13 metres, while others felt that three storeys above grade should be the limit in *Neighbourhoods*.
- Some respondents expressed concern that height restrictions are a cause of today's housing crisis and should be abolished.

- Others indicated that height should be regulated by the height of the existing houses in the neighbourhood. Tall, four-storey buildings located next to bungalows are four times taller and majorly inappropriate.
- Four-storey buildings will require an elevator, creating construction and cost issues.
- Building code and ceiling height regulations are at odds with one another.

Floor Space Index (FSI)

While the proposed zoning by-law amendment did not propose to amend Floor Space Index regulations, and there were no specific questions related to them, 'FSI' or 'Floor Space Index' was mentioned 237 times in the comments and was a very popular topic of discussion.

- The majority of comments stated that FSI should be removed and is redundant, as form-based regulations for building envelope, setbacks and height already achieve the intended effect.
- Some comments argued that FSI is an important measure of building volume, which relates directly to neighbourhood character. If multiplexes are to be part of the neighbourhood, they should be subject to the same rules as a detached house.
- Many noted that with existing FSI restrictions, it is impossible to build a multiplex.

Email Correspondence and Public Engagement

A dedicated email inbox was established to receive feedback and comments on the proposed Multiplex Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment at ehon@toronto.ca. Over 160 emails with comments related to multiplexes have been received to date since the release of the revised draft Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments, both from residents' associations and individual residents (emails continue to be received). Staff received a range of feedback, while comments and questions largely mirrored the responses received in the survey.

In addition, as detailed in Table #1, Staff engaged with the public through a number of public consultation events regarding the proposed OPA and ZBL, including two virtual public forums and meetings with resident associations and stakeholder groups. Participants in formal online consultations were invited to share their views or questions using the Chat and Q&A features in WebEx, which staff retained for future reference. In total, Staff engaged with over 800 people through these virtual forums.

Issues, questions, comments and concerns raised by members of the public at meetings and through email included:

Multiplex Housing

- Overall, general support for permitting multiplexes in all *Neighbourhoods* was a consistent theme through email correspondence and the two virtual public forums.
- Meetings with stakeholders and residents' associations, while not wholly unsupportive, tended to articulate more concerns about multiplex Housing.
- The feasibility of constructing and financing multiplex housing was a source of concern.

Permitting up to Four Units in All Zones

- The majority of correspondence supported the permission of four units across all *Neighbourhoods* designated areas.
- Many felt that multiplexes are a means to add more housing stock and provides residents of Toronto more options.
- In some instances, individuals expressed the need to permit more than four units per lot across *Neighbourhoods*.

Built Form, FSI and Neighbourhood Character

- Meeting participants and correspondents expressed a range of opinions on respecting existing neighbourhood character:
 - Many participants in online consultations expressed that there should be greater emphasis on the “planned context” for a neighbourhood rather than existing “prevailing” neighbourhood character.
 - Residents' Associations were mainly of the opinion that the development criteria should not be amended in the Official Plan because this helps maintain character of a neighbourhood.
 - Many questioned the need to maintain a neighbourhood character at the cost of additional housing units.
 - Many emphasized that multiplexes should maintain the low-rise form of neighbourhoods.
- Most participants felt that a maximum Floor Space Index (FSI) requirement was not necessary and were supportive of eliminating FSI in favour of more form-based zoning.
- Many felt the proposed zoning by-law amendments were still too restrictive, and did not allow for the full use of the proposed building envelope.
- Majority of participants felt that multiplexes should be permitted to have a depth of at least 19 metres, which is two metres above the current draft zoning by-law.
- Most felt having a 1.4 metres step back at the top floor was unnecessary and would result in inefficient design.

Height

- Many felt the height requirement of 10 metres was not sufficient, and should be increased to 12 to 13 metres to allow four storeys per the *Neighbourhoods* designation in the Official Plan.

- Within the same meetings, many expressed concerns over increased height permissions, and how it would impact sunlight, create overbuilding, and disrupt the character of neighbourhoods.
- Most felt having a maximum platform area size would be too restrictive for multiplexes, although many expressed the need to mitigate privacy impacts on adjacent properties.

Sustainability and the Environment

- Many felt that Staff should strengthen policies to maintain and expand the tree canopy through contiguous landscaped open space.
- Majority of participants expressed the importance of encouraging sustainable design and the elimination of carbon-intensive basement construction.
- Most felt that policies should incentivize sustainable building practices by allowing zoning variances where they are needed to accommodate environmental design and building.
- Others suggested incentivizing multiplex construction that can preserve and enhance on-site soft landscaping and tree planting.
- Many expressed that current tree-protection by-laws create challenges for new housing options.

Parking and Traffic

- Many expressed concern and comments regarding the perceived inadequacy of parking for both residents and visitors.
- Other questions and concerns related to traffic impacts on local streets.
- Concerns were expressed that multiplexes will place a strain on street parking in residential areas.
- Some suggested that policies should encourage active transportation to avoid too many vehicles on one lot.

Affordable Housing and Financial Feasibility

- Questions and concerns were expressed regarding the affordability and financial feasibility of constructing multiplex housing.
- Most of participants felt that development criteria policies should be reduced to minimize prohibitive costs to building.
- Many expressed concern development charges would still be a barrier for people contemplating the construction of a multiplex.
- Many felt that the building envelope must be expanded, and the draft zoning by-law amendments would impact the feasibility of multiplexes.

Safety and Accessibility

- Some felt the City should ensure that all multiplexes are built to code and are safe for all.
- Others expressed that multiplexes should be designed with an accessibility lens.

Other

- Some concerns were expressed regarding the addition of more residents to areas which do not have adequate infrastructure like public sidewalks, on-street parking permissions, garbage collection, nearby parks, emergency services, and adequate school capacity.
- Members of the public expressed the need to permit additional uses within *Neighbourhoods* such as grocery, childcare, restaurants, cafes, and healthcare.
- Proposed policies should be bolder and include incentives to allow more change to happen sooner.
- Multiplexes should be designed to respond to neighbourhood character.
- Policies should reflect idea that neighbourhood character is evolutionary.

All Consultation and Engagement Activities to Date

The following section provides a summary of consultation activity and methodologies that informed the Multiplex study.

Detailed feedback and results from the earlier consultation and engagements activities are available at the following link in the June 2022 Proposals Report:

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/ph/bgrd/backgroundfile-227724.pdf> and the November 2021 Interim Report:

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/ph/bgrd/backgroundfile-173156.pdf>

List of Engagement Events

Table 2 and Table 3 provide a comprehensive list of all consultation activities undertaken throughout 2022-23.

Date	Meeting	Approx. # of Attendees
February 22, 2022	Scarborough-Rouge Park Ward Meeting	25+
February 24, 2022	Scarborough Centre Ward Meeting	40+
March 1, 2022	Etobicoke-Lakeshore Ward Meeting	100+
April 5, 2022	North York District	65+
April 6, 2022	Reddit Ask Me Anything (AMA)	200 comments
April 7, 2022	Scarborough District	65+
April 12, 2022	Etobicoke District	80+
April 13, 2022	Toronto-East York District	85+
April 20, 2022	City Wide (PM)	55+
April 21, 2022	City Wide (AM)	15+
April 27, 2022	Twitter Space	240+

Table 2: All Public Engagements		
Date	Meeting	Approx. # of Attendees
May 5, 2022	Willowdale Ward Meeting	15+
May 7, 2022	Jane's Walk	40+
May 10, 2022	Toronto-St. Paul's Resident Associations	15+
February 21, 2023	Virtual Public Forum #1	218
February 22, 2023	Long Branch Neighbourhood Association	3
February 23, 2023	Virtual Public Forum #2	250
February 28, 2023	Ward 15 Stakeholder Meeting	27
February 28, 2023	Federation of North Toronto Residents Associations	40
March 6, 2023	Ward 15 Public Consultation	269
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Table 3: Technical and Advisory Committees/Groups	
Date	Meeting
February 7, 2022	EHON Roundtable #1
February 24, 2022	EHON Roundtable #2
March 24, 2022	EHON Roundtable #3
March 29, 2022 April 1, 2022	Urban Land Institute Technical Advisory Panel
April 14, 2022	Design Review Panel (DRP)
May 9, 2022	Confronting Anti-Black Racism Advisory Committee
October 14, 2022	Community Services and Facilities + School Boards
November, 2022	Toronto Building Review of multiplex case studies

Online Surveys

Surveys designed to solicit general opinions about introducing and expanding multiplex housing in *Neighbourhoods* were published on the City's website. The surveys were promoted through the Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods website and various social media channels.

- Online Survey #1 (October 19, 2021 – December 31, 2021)
- Online Survey #2 (February 8, 2023 – March 10, 2023)

Email

A dedicated email at EHON@toronto.ca was established to receive comments and feedback on the proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment.