



Housing Action Plan: As-of-Right Zoning for Mid-Rise Building on Avenues and Updated Rear Transition Performance Standards - Consultation Summary

Since the inception of the study, Staff received over 40 emails, 63 survey comments and have engaged with approximately 500 attendees at public and industry consultation events.

Summary of Draft Zoning By-law Changes and Revised draft Update to the Rear Transition Performance Standards Urban Design Guidelines (March 2024 to April 2024)

City staff hosted four in person public consultations and two virtual public consultation meetings, with sessions held during the daytime and in the evening to facilitate attendance. City Staff also held a forum with the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD). In total, the 2024 consultations included approximately 300 participants.

Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD)

City Planning staff held an additional stakeholder meeting with BILD's Toronto Chapter members on May 7, 2024, with approximately 40 BILD members.

- BILD members continue to be in favour of removing the rear angular plane and simplifying the rules for midrise buildings.
- Members continue to generally support the proposed changes to streamline the planning process and allow for more mid-rise developments as-of-right.
- Some members continue to suggest increasing the mid-rise building heights to address the economic challenges associated with mid-rise development.
- Members suggested that a financial feasibility analysis be undertaken for the proposed zoning changes.

Public Consultation Meetings and Feedback

The following provides a summary of the feedback provided by members of the public:

General

- Overall general support for enabling more mid-rise developments along Avenues.
- Some stakeholders expressed that the draft changes were not significant enough and didn't apply to enough of the City's Avenues. This included suggestions that the City review existing area-specific policies to increase their permissions.

Attachment 4: Summary of Consultation

- Some expressed concerns about developers' ability to request additional height and density above the proposed zoning changes through a minor variance application.
- A number of attendees favored prioritizing housing over perceived impacts on adjacent low-rise residential areas through the removal of the rear angular plane.
- Some raised concerns that existing infrastructure capacity such as water, sewage and community facilities may not be adequate in some areas to accommodate the intensification from the proposed zoning changes.
- Many questions and comments were raised on how the Mid-rise study would affect or interact with existing and under-review policy frameworks (Site-and-Area Specific Policy areas, Secondary Plan areas, Avenue Study areas, natural heritage areas, and Heritage Conservation Districts).
- There was interest in other active planning items including Major Transit Station Areas, the Housing Action Plan Avenues Policy Review, and the broader mid-rise urban design guidelines review.

Height and Density

- Some attendees noted that Floor Space Index ("FSI") limits can be a barrier to creating more housing and suggested its removal.
- Opinions on the proposed permitted maximum heights ranged from concerns about applying the same height criteria city-wide, to suggestions that 11 storeys should be the base permission and that taller mid-rise buildings should be permitted, while others suggested considering increased height and FSI permissions only if affordable housing is provided.
- Concerns were raised about how to manage the influx of additional density while keeping communities livable, namely through built form transition, green spaces, and infrastructure capacity.

Built Form Transition

- Feedback from those opposed to the proposed rear transition included the following:
 - Some questioned the utility of the proposed 7.5 m rear setback and the enhanced setback to the edges of parkland.
 - Some felt that the proposed setbacks and step-backs continue to be a barrier to development, dwelling unit counts, and to the use of alternative building materials and methods.
 - Some suggested that step-backs above the 6th storey should be removed to further simplify the built form, allow more design flexibility, and enable the creation of additional units.
 - Some suggested the setbacks and step-backs would still require additional height to compensate the loss of floor area in the building.
 - Some stated that step-backs at the 6th storey should not be required as they are not perceived at street level, and that only pedestrian-level built form outcomes should be prioritized.
 - Some felt that angular plane requirements should be retained to control shadow impacts and provide for sunlight especially on parks, schools and open spaces.
 - Some felt that greater setbacks and step-backs should be required for buildings taller than six storeys, to provide for outdoor space and soft landscaping.

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- Some attendees were concerned that the removal of the rear angular plane would result in less rooftop outdoor space for building residents.
- Feedback from those that support the proposed rear transition included the following:
 - Multiple people agreed with the need for a built form transition to neighbourhoods to mitigate impacts including shadows.
 - Many participants supported replacing angular planes with the proposed step-backs and setbacks.
 - Some agreed that step-backs are important to break up height and massing of mid-rise buildings.
 - Many agreed with the need for setbacks and step-backs to allow parkland vegetation to receive adequate sunlight.
 - Participants agreed with the importance of the public realm and providing variations in mid-rise buildings, rather than a box shape with no setbacks or step-backs.

Other Topics

Several comments or concerns involved matters falling outside of the scope of the Mid-rise Buildings Performance Standards Urban Design Guidelines or proposed zoning changes. The following summarizes those comments:

- Some raised concerns about competition for on-street parking as a result of intensification on avenues and the removal of required minimum parking. Some suggested that additional on-street parking permits should be prohibited, or that height and density increases should be limited to areas where on-street parking is permitted.
- A number of participants noted that changes to Ontario Building Code requirements for exit stair and corridors are also needed to support the feasibility of mid-rise development.
- Participants expressed differing views on the effect of step-backs on energy efficiency, with some skeptical that changes to facilitate mass timber construction would make housing more feasible and sustainable due to cost and forest capacity.
- Some felt that the requirement for tall first floor ceiling heights create homogeneity in design for retail, is more costly, and unnecessary for most tenants.
- Some suggested removing requirements for large loading spaces to allow more rooms for other ground floor uses such as retail uses, and others suggested the need for smaller drop-off spaces for deliveries.
- Some suggested support for active first floor uses (e.g., residential entrances and retail uses) facing parks.