

Housing Action Plan: As-of-Right Zoning for Mid-rise Buildings on Avenues and Updated Rear Transition Performance Standards – Supplementary Report

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To: Planning and Housing Committee

From: Interim Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

Wards: All

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SUMMARY

The City is advancing several initiatives under the Housing Action Plan (HAP) and the Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods (EHON) initiative to make changes to the City's Official Plan, Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines to enable more housing in neighbourhoods. The HAP includes a number of action items that address mid-rise development and Mixed Use Areas along major streets, Avenues, in transition zones and in major growth areas. These initiatives build on each other to facilitate growth at all scales, unlocking more housing types along the Major Streets and Avenues, while identifying more opportunities throughout the city for taller buildings, and providing choice for residents. The work program focuses on updating the City's policies and zoning permissions to expand the Avenues and Mixed Use Areas, update built form and public realm standards, and implement as-of-right zoning permissions to make it easier, faster, and cheaper to build mid-rise buildings.

In 2010, the Avenues and Mid-Rise Buildings Study and Performance Standards resulted in a set of generalized urban design guidelines to help catalyze the re-urbanization of the Avenues while providing transition to adjacent areas. From 2010 to 2023, over 136 mid-rise buildings were completed.

This supplementary report provides an overview of the HAP's Avenues, Mid-rise and Mixed-Use Areas projects, how they cumulatively remove barriers, ease administration, and support the goal to achieve or exceed the provincial housing target of 285,000 new homes over the next 10 years, to continue to achieve intensification and housing opportunities along Toronto's Avenues. Together, the outcomes of the work program may include expansion of the lands that benefit from the Avenues policy framework; an increase in the planned intensification along Avenues; and as-of-right zoning permissions for intensification that will reduce the need for mid-rise development to obtain site-specific zoning permissions. Key opportunities to enable additional residential intensification through the work program are:

- On-going review of mid-rise design guidelines to consider taller and denser built-form along Avenues;
- The Official Plan review of Avenue policies, followed by implementing zoning; and
- Re-examining older Avenue Studies.

BACKGROUND

Housing Action Plan 2022-2026

The Housing Action Plan (HAP) for the 2022-2026 term of Council was approved by Council in December 2022, and sets out a wide range of actions, policies and programs to increase the supply of housing. The HAP actions focus on removing policy and zoning barriers to building housing; leveraging public lands to increase housing supply; preserving existing rental homes; supporting the development of a range of purpose-built rental homes (including market and non-market) through new and strengthened housing policies and programs; and supporting the community sector (including non-profit and co-op housing providers) to modernize and grow their stock.

Housing Accelerator Fund

In accordance with Council direction through Item [2023.MM5.28](#), City staff submitted a Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) application to CMHC on June 14, 2023, followed by a revised submission in September 2023. The City's HAF application included an action plan with a list of eight initiatives focused on increasing the supply of new homes; protecting existing homes and renters; revitalizing neighbourhoods across Toronto; and enhancing the City's capacity to accelerate the review, approval, and delivery of new homes through organizational re-alignment and new technology tools. The objectives and initiatives set out in the HAF build on and are aligned with the HAP.

Major Transit Station Areas and Protected Major Transit Station Areas

The Provincial Planning Statement (2024) defines Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) as the area around any existing or planned higher order transit station or stop within a settlement area. The *Planning Act* sets out the ability for municipalities to establish Protected Major Transit Station Areas (PMTSAs), which are a subset of station areas that specify targets for minimum residents and jobs per hectare, permitted land uses, and required minimum densities, by delineating these MTSAs and PMTSAs in the Official Plan. Approval of the PMTSA delineations is a prerequisite for the use of inclusionary zoning, through which certain developments above a specified size threshold may be required to include a proportion of residential units as affordable units.

To date, City Council has adopted Official Plan Amendments (OPAs) that delineate 29 MTSAs and 105 PMTSAs, many of which overlap with the Avenues. These OPAs have been submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval. At the time of writing of this report, the Minister has not yet issued a decision on any of these OPAs.

COMMENTS

Housing Action Plan: Avenues, Mid-rise and Mixed Use Areas projects

The following provides an overview of the HAP and HAF studies that focus on future policy, regulatory and guidelines changes on the Avenues and Mixed-Use Areas across the city.

Official Plan Policy initiatives

Avenues Policy Review

- Official Plan policy study to explore opportunities to streamline study requirements; extend, and potentially introduce new Avenues; update the vision and policy direction for how Avenues develop; and examine options for creating areas of transition between Avenues and Neighbourhoods to enable more housing.
- Timing: Q1 2025

Expanding Mixed Use Areas Designations

- Review of the Official Plan's Land Use maps to explore opportunities to expand the *Mixed Use Areas* designation in certain geographies, including new Avenues identified as part of the Avenues Policy Review.
- Timing: Q4 2025

Highlights

- Extensive consultation throughout the summer and fall 2024 on proposed expansion of Avenues throughout the City with new Official Plan policies, identifying more than 120km of potential new Avenues.
- Proposed new Official Plan policies to encourage mid-rise buildings on Avenues and tall buildings where there is access to higher order transit.
- Proposed new Official Plan policies to protect and enhance businesses on Avenues
- Proposed removal of Avenue Segment Review policies.

Urban Design Guideline updates

Updated Mid-Rise Building Rear Transition Performance Standards

- A focused review of these performance standards to create additional opportunities to facilitate the development of mid-rise buildings, supporting increased housing supply in walkable, complete communities.
- Timing: Endorsed at June 2024 PHC meeting

Updated Consolidated Mid-Rise Building Urban Design Guidelines

- A broader review to update, revise and consolidate the existing Mid-Rise Building Urban Design Guidelines that incorporate recommendations from mid-rise monitoring, public and stakeholder consultation, and further analysis to promote economical and sustainable mid-rise development.
- Timing: Q4 2024

Highlights

- The updated rear transition performance standards generally enable 30% more units in typical mid-rise development by eliminating the rear angular plane. The rear angular plane has been replaced by a simplified setback and stepback.
- The rear transition update is only the first step. Further updates are targeted to come forward to Planning and Housing Committee in December 2024

- Updates to the Mid-rise Building Design Guidelines are considering limited additional heights above the 1:1 ratio between the building height and the adjacent right of way width for deep and/or large development sites, as well as providing more flexibility to the mid-rise building massing.

Zoning initiatives for Avenues

As-of-Right Zoning for Mid-rise Buildings on Avenues (without Avenue Studies)

- Zoning amendments to increase permitted heights and densities for Avenues where an Avenue Study has not been completed.
- Timing: Final Report to October 2024 PHC meeting

Implementing Zoning for Avenues with completed Avenue Studies

- As-of-right zoning for Avenues for completed Avenue Studies (without implementing zoning) that conforms to the adopted Area-Specific Policies and Urban Design Guidelines
- Timing: Q4 2025

As-of-Right Zoning for Mid-rise Buildings (New Avenues and Mixed Use Areas)

- Project to update zoning permissions for new or extended Avenues and expanded Mixed Use Areas designated by the HAP Official Plan Policy projects.
- Timing: Q4 2025

Zoning Review for Transition Zones

- Project to create as-of-right zoning permissions and performance standards for additional housing opportunities in areas located between different areas of scale, typically between the Neighbourhoods and Mixed Use Area designated Avenues.
- Timing: Q4 2025

Highlights

- The first As-of-Right Zoning project implements the updated rear transition performance standards for midrise buildings and increases permitted heights from 3-4 storeys to 6-11 storeys where it applies, enabling approximately 61,000 additional dwelling units above the 21,500 dwelling units enabled by existing zoning standards.
- The new standards and permissions will form the foundation for updated zoning on new Avenues and Mixed-Use Areas designated through the Official Plan policy initiatives, allowing swift implementation of As-of-Right Zoning in these areas.

- The Implementing Zoning for existing Avenue Studies will put in place permissions that enable development in keeping with local area-specific policy frameworks, including mid-rise and some tall buildings to proceed without rezoning applications.
- Transition zones will enable more housing options in neighbourhoods adjacent to Avenues and may take the form of permissions for low-rise townhouses and apartment buildings up to four storeys.

Zoning for Protected Major Transit Station Areas

Implementing Zoning for PMTSAs and MTSAAs

- Zoning amendments to implement Provincially-approved land use policies and permissions near Major Transit Station Areas
- Enables use of inclusionary zoning around PMTSAs
- Timing: Dependent on Ministerial Approval of land use policies.

Highlights

- There is overlap between the Avenues and the City-delineated PMTSAs and MTSAAs. Where the final approved policies support development at greater heights and densities than the general Avenues context, the Implementing Zoning for P/MTSAAs project will put in place appropriate permissions and standards to enable this development.

The work program summarized above, to review the Avenues policy framework and opportunities for intensification in mid-rise form, is extensive. Together, the outcomes of the work program may include expansion of the lands that benefit from the Avenues policy framework; an increase in the planned intensification along Avenues; and as-of-right zoning permissions for intensification that will reduce the need for mid-rise development to obtain site-specific zoning permissions. Key opportunities to enable additional residential intensification through the work program are:

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CONCLUSION

The Housing Action Plan 2022 - 2026 Avenues, Mid-rise and Mixed-Use Areas projects work together to support the creation of more housing as part of the HAP to achieve or exceed the provincial housing target of 285,000 new homes over the next 10 years.

These projects advance the objectives of the Housing Action Plan by expanding the Avenues and modernizing their development framework, to optimize their potential for

new mixed use development in a mid-rise form that enables the delivery of housing along the City's Avenues.

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SIGNATURE

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