

2025.06.06

Planning and Housing Committee
City of Toronto
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

RE: PH22.4 - Housing Accelerator Fund: Expanding Permissions in Neighbourhoods for Low-Rise Sixplexes

Dear Members of the Planning and Housing Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the recommendations set out in the city-wide Sixplex Study, which proposes amendments to the City of Toronto's Official Plan and Zoning By-law to permit multiplexes with up to six dwelling units in detached buildings on lands designated Neighbourhoods on a city-wide basis.

Advancing Housing Equity and Livability

The proposed policy changes are a logical and necessary extension of the City's 2023 Multiplex framework and the 2025 Ward 23 Pilot Study. These reforms recognize that Toronto's low-rise neighbourhoods must evolve to accommodate a wider range of households, life stages, and income levels. By enabling five- and six-unit buildings across all residential zones, the City is helping to unlock much-needed housing supply—particularly purpose-built rental housing—within walkable, infrastructure-served communities.

Importantly, these units can provide ground-related homes for families, multi-generational households, seniors aging in place, and newcomers seeking long-term stability. Requiring at least one two-bedroom unit per building and allowing for accessible design within the permitted envelope ensures these homes are both livable and inclusive.

In many suburban areas, population decline and an aging demographic are already affecting school enrolment, local businesses, and community vitality. These changes will accelerate unless modest infill housing is permitted. Sixplexes can allow seniors to downsize in their own communities, grown children to stay near their families, and caregivers or multi-generational households to live under one roof—all without displacing anyone or overburdening existing services.

Citywide consultation and survey data indicate that the majority of residents support expanding permissions to six units, especially where projects are well-designed and context-sensitive. The proposed changes reflect this growing public consensus around the need for more diverse housing options in our neighbourhoods.

Built Form Compatibility and Design Feasibility

City staff, through the Multiplex Monitoring Program and collaboration with ReHousing Canada, have demonstrated that sixplexes can be comfortably accommodated within the existing low-rise building

envelope. The modest increase in building height from 10.0 to 10.5 metres enhances livability for basement units while preserving the low-rise scale of neighbourhoods. Crucially, no changes are proposed to landscaping, parking, or building depth standards. This reflects a sensitive, contextually-aware approach to intensification—one that responds directly to public feedback while prioritizing good design.

This approach offers a way to gently accommodate growth within existing neighbourhoods without requiring major infrastructure expansions or disruptive land assemblies. Detached sixplexes generally fit within the same building envelope as other low-rise housing types and are compatible with the character of suburban neighbourhoods. Rather than large-scale redevelopment or tower proposals that can feel imposed on a community, these homes offer a respectful, fine-grained alternative that allows growth to be gradual and locally scaled.

I also support continued monitoring and refinement of performance standards as implementation progresses. The City's commitment to evidence-based planning through the Multiplex Monitoring Program will be vital to ensuring successful outcomes on the ground and maintaining public confidence in the initiative.

Local Economic and Environmental Benefits

The city-wide permissions for sixplexes offer significant economic and environmental co-benefits. They will support Toronto's climate goals by enabling compact, energy-efficient infill development that leverages existing infrastructure and reduces per capita emissions. These smaller-scale projects are well-suited to use locally sourced, low-carbon materials and can more easily meet or exceed sustainable development standards.

The construction and retrofitting of sixplexes will generate local employment opportunities, benefiting small builders, skilled trades, and neighbourhood-serving suppliers. This type of incremental development strengthens Toronto's economy by keeping investment in the hands of local actors and diversifying who participates in the delivery of housing.

Financial Viability and the Need for Pragmatic Zoning Reform

Perhaps most critically, the proposed changes align zoning permissions with financial feasibility. In today's economic environment, four-unit projects are increasingly unviable due to high land costs, construction inflation, and tight margins. By enabling five- and six-unit buildings as-of-right, the City is removing a key regulatory barrier that currently suppresses gentle density in precisely the areas best positioned to absorb it.

The as-of-right nature of these regulations ensures predictability, while avoiding prolonged and expensive variance processes that create uncertainty for residents and applicants alike. Municipal performance standards and enforcement mechanisms remain in place, ensuring each project meets local requirements for setbacks, landscaping, and livability.

Importantly, City staff have acknowledged that development charges represent a significant cost pressure for small-scale infill housing and have committed to exploring potential relief mechanisms. Any future adjustment to development charges at this scale would further improve the viability of sixplexes and similar gentle density forms, helping ensure that these new permissions lead not only to new approvals—but to new homes being built.

This is the kind of gentle density that Toronto's planning framework has long envisioned—modest in scale but meaningful in impact. These reforms also fulfill Toronto's commitments under the Housing Accelerator Fund, the Provincial Planning Statement (2024), and the City's own Official Plan vision for inclusive, climate-resilient, and complete communities.

Conclusion

I strongly urge the Committee to adopt the proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments as a critical step toward restoring housing affordability, delivering on federal and provincial commitments, and ensuring our neighbourhoods grow sustainably and inclusively. This is not radical change—it's a balanced, low-impact solution that gives Toronto's suburban and urban neighbourhoods alike the tools to grow responsibly, equitably, and in keeping with their context.

Thank you for your leadership in advancing this important work.

Sincerely,



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