

# Mid-Rise Building Design Guidelines

## Virtual Public Consultation

March 11, 2026  
10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.



# Acknowledgments

## **Indigenous Land Acknowledgement**

This land is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples. Toronto is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and that Scarborough is part of the lands governed by the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa nations.

## **African Ancestral Acknowledgement**

The City of Toronto acknowledges all Treaty peoples – including those who came here as settlers – as migrants either in this generation or in generations past – and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.

# Staff Presentation



# Unlocking Mid-Rise Housing

- Mid-rise buildings play a vital role in creating a more diverse and inclusive housing supply, offering a broader range of family-friendly units.
- Through the Mid-Rise Housing Implementation Initiative, the City continues to study and advance changes to policy, zoning, guidelines, and processes to create a more supportive regulatory framework that enables more mid-rise development across the city.
- The update to **the Mid-Rise Building Design Guidelines** is part of that effort.



# What is a Mid-Rise Building?

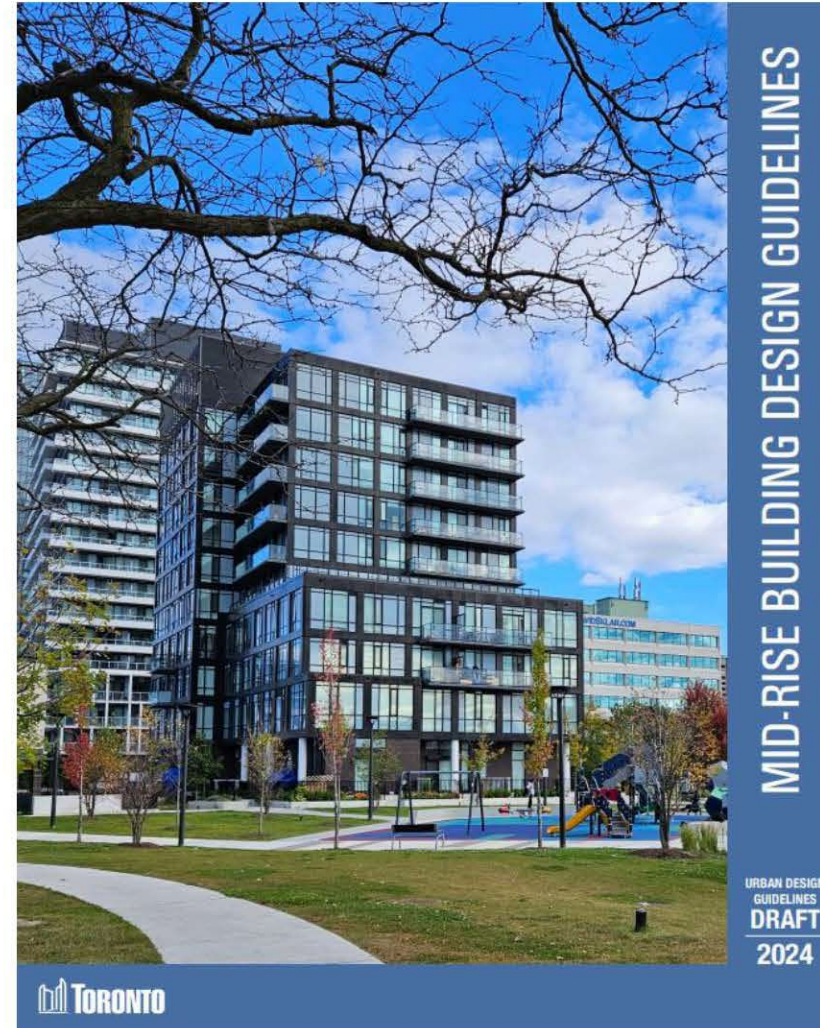
Mid-rise buildings are medium-height buildings—taller than houses and low-rise apartments, but shorter than high-rise towers.

They usually range from 5 to 14 storeys, depending on the width of the right-of-way ("ROW") they're built on. These buildings are designed to support public transit and add more homes and businesses in a way that fits well with the surrounding area.



# What are the Mid-Rise Building Design Guidelines?

- A set of urban design guidelines that help implement the policies of the Official Plan.
- The purpose of the Guidelines is to illustrate how the public realm and built form policy objectives of the Official Plan can be addressed.

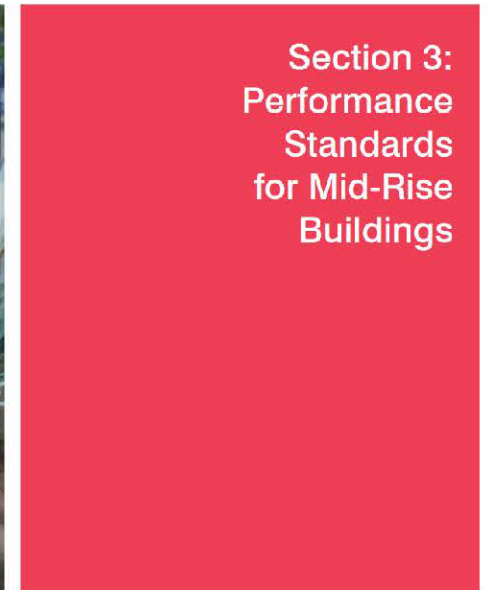
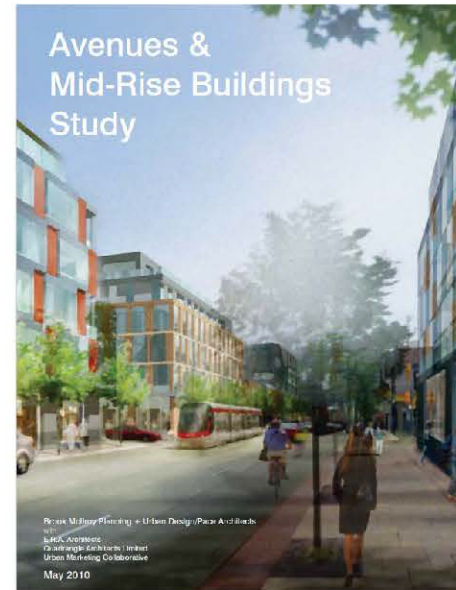


# How to Apply the Guidelines?

- The Mid-rise Guidelines are intended to be read together with, and to implement Official Plan, Zoning By Law, Heritage Conservation District Plans, area specific Urban Design Guidelines, etc.
- The City-wide Mid-rise Guidelines represent the most current City-wide direction on mid-rise building design and public realm improvements.
- Where differences arise between these City-wide Guidelines and local guidelines, the City-wide Guidelines will generally prevail as the most current direction.
- Local guidelines may continue to be relevant and will play an important role in supporting local and special character.
- The City-wide Guidelines should be applied with flexibility and be balanced against broad city building priorities.

# Are the Mid-Rise Building Design Guidelines New?

- No, City Council adopted Mid-rise Building Performance Standards in 2010 and an Addendum to these Standards in 2016.
- The Mid-rise Building Design Guidelines replace the Mid-rise Building Performance Standards (2010) and Addendum (2016).
- The Guidelines incorporate many of the original principles from the performance standards while modernizing many of the approaches to better address today's policy context and planning priorities.

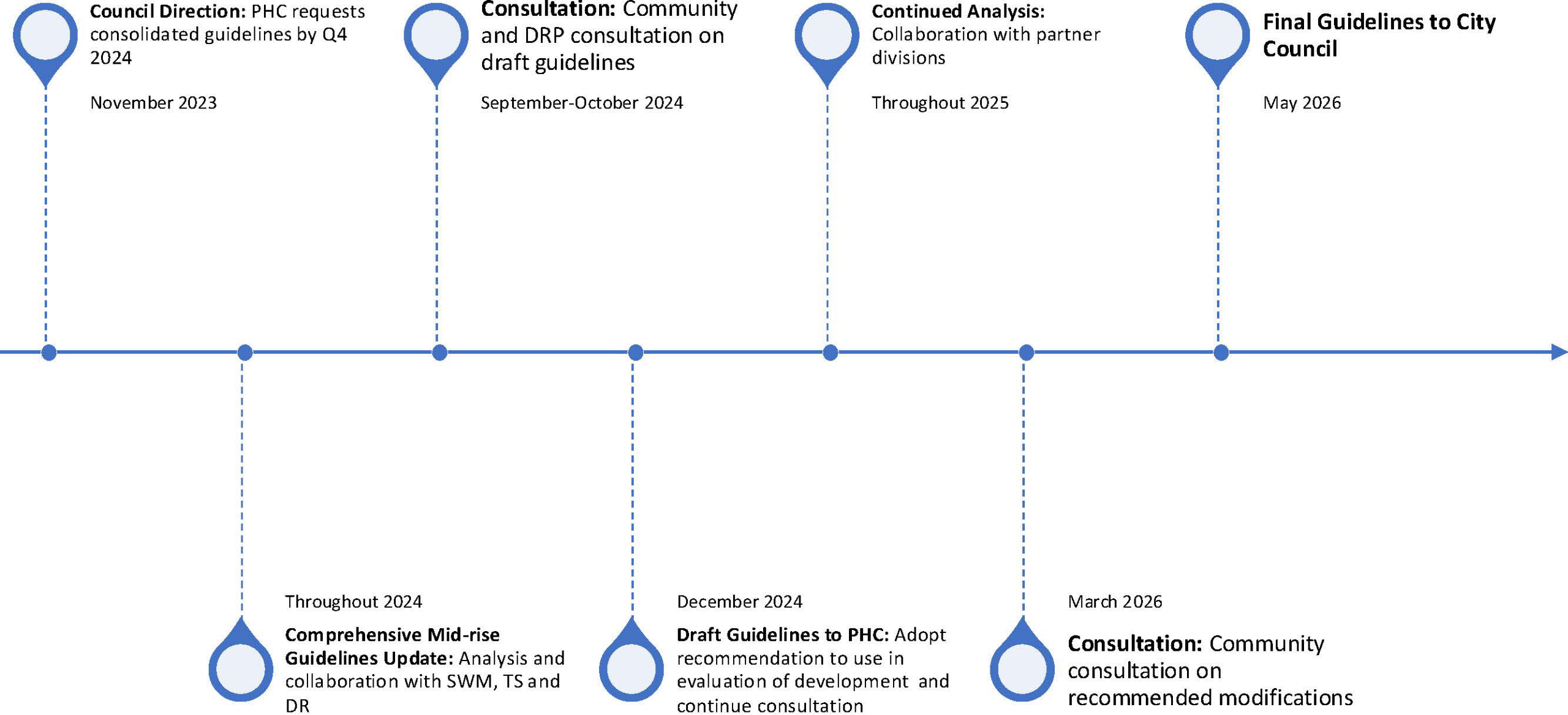


Mid-rise Building Performance Standards in 2010



Mid-rise Building Design Guidelines in 2024

# Project Timeline



# Purpose of the 2026 Update

- The intent of the updated guidelines is to offer clear direction for mid-rise buildings, simplify their design and construction, and encourage mid-rise development that is more economical and environmentally sustainable.
- The 2026 Guidelines include the proposed new guidelines that were presented to PHC in Dec 2024 as well as some additional refinements.



# Key Updates from the 2024 Mid-Rise Building Design Guidelines

## Simplify Building Envelopes

- Fewer and aligned step-backs for better performance and flexible structural systems (e.g., mass timber)

## Remove Angular Plane Requirements

- Eliminate front and rear angular planes

## Update Mid-Rise Heights

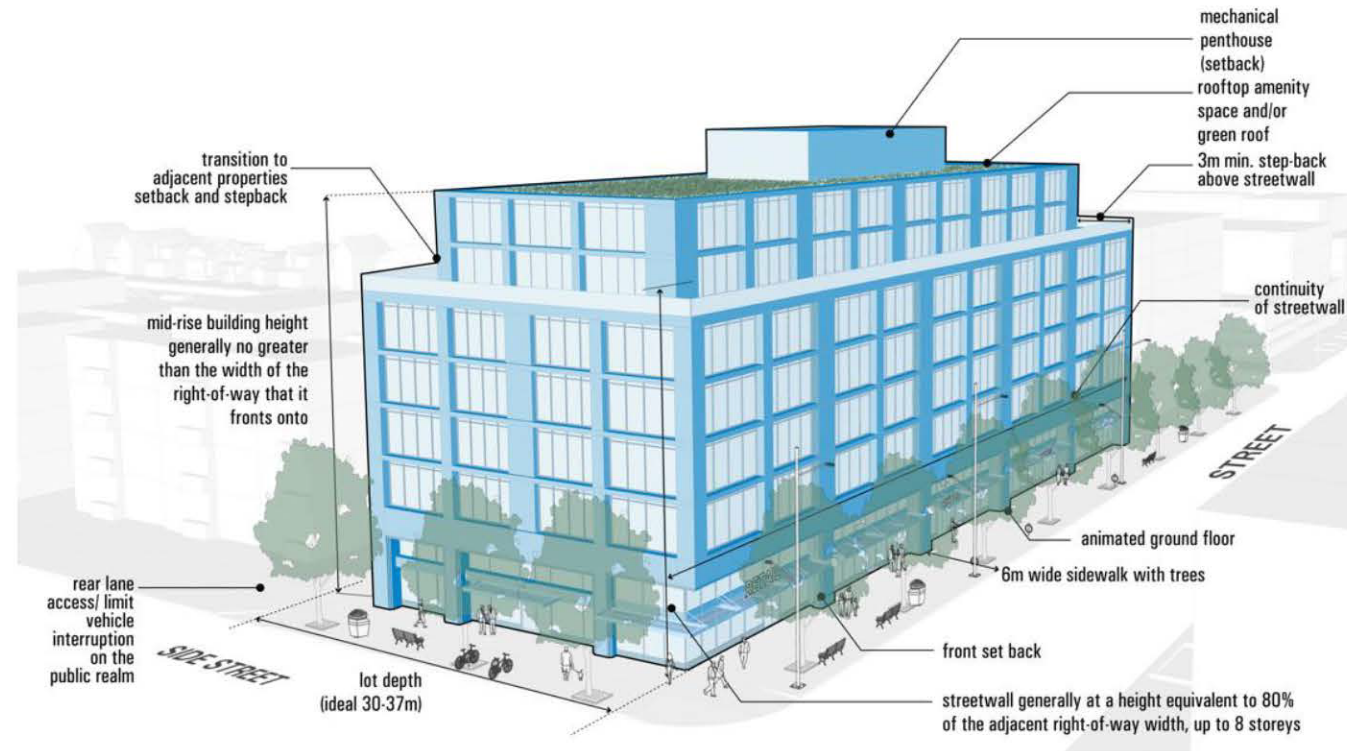
- Permit up to 14 storeys on 45 m ROWs
- Consider additional height on deep lots where OP and guideline objectives are met

## Advance Sustainability

- Encourage simplified structures to avoid transfer systems and reduce embodied carbon

## Enhance the Public Realm

- Wider sidewalks, more tree planting, preserve mature trees
- Improve comfort, safety, accessibility, and sustainability



# Site Context



Provide a context analysis at a "walkable" scale to understand how the proposed mid-rise building will fit within and reinforce existing or planned built form patterns, while responding appropriately to changes in land use and scale.



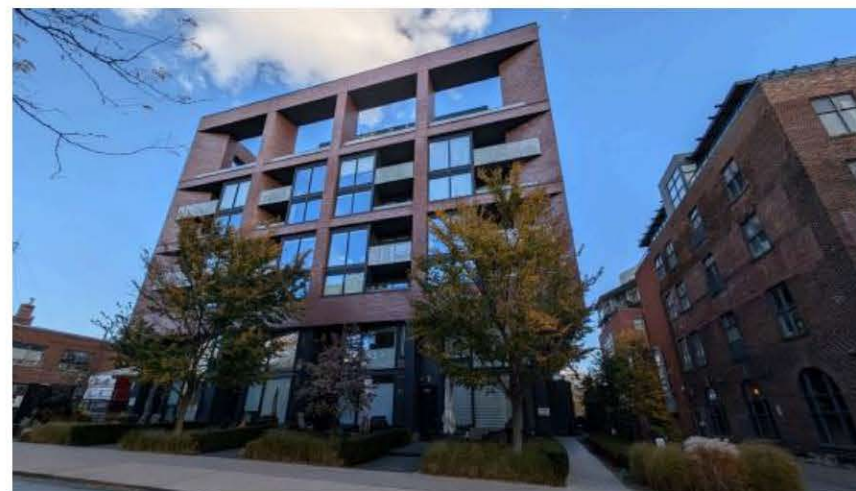
Provide context specific guidelines that related to the character of the street.

**Residential Context** - typically includes regular landscaped breaks between buildings and expanded with landscaped front yard setbacks.

**Main Street Context** - typically defined by a continuous, pedestrian-scale streetwall close to the street.



Example of Main Street Context



Example of Residential Context

# Site Organization and Public Realm



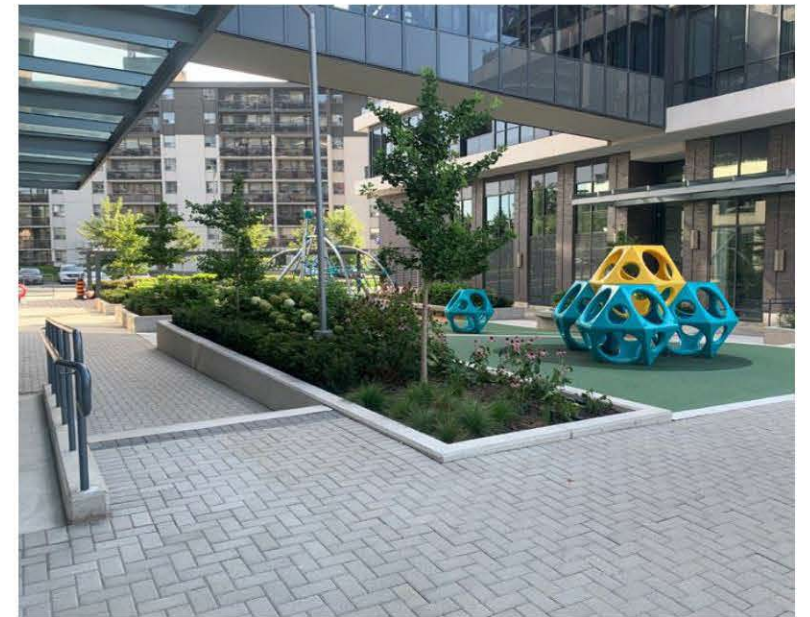
Encourage publicly accessible open spaces, mid-block connections and other interventions for site permeability.



Increased minimum sidewalk zone from 4.8 metres to 6.0 metres along streets with ROWs less than 30 metres wide to provide adequate space between the front of the building and adjacent street curbs.



Flexibility is built into the guidelines to provide exceptions to the 6.0-metre sidewalk requirement in various situations, such as where buildings are adjacent to heritage buildings, where the existing setback pattern differs.



A publicly accessible open space with seating, whimsical elements for children, landscaping and decorative paving.



Generous sidewalk zone to support an active frontage

# Mid-Rise Building Height



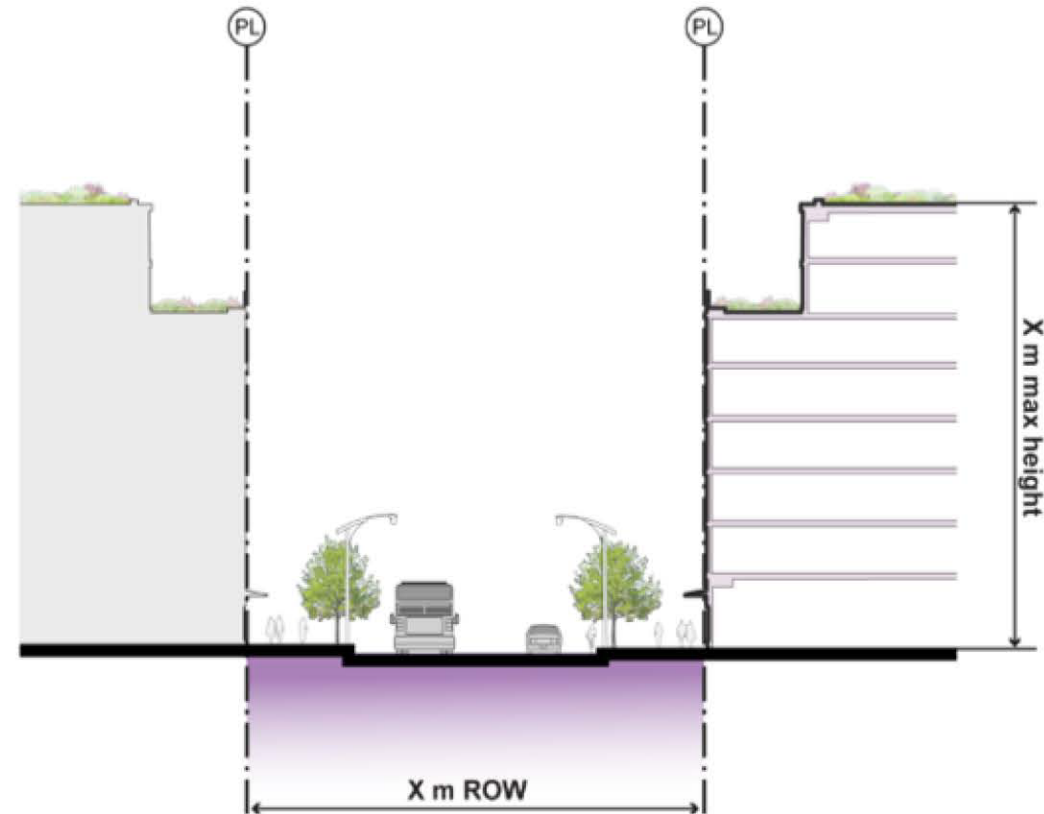
The Official Plan states that “mid-rise buildings will be designed to have heights generally no greater than the width of the right-of-way that it fronts onto”.



Include 45-metre rights-of-way and provide guidelines for buildings up to 45 metres (14 storeys) in height.



Additional height taller than the ROW width may be considered on deep lots, provided that the development meets the objectives of the Official Plan policies and other guidelines in the document.



# Front Facade



Eliminate the front angular plane requirement. Adopt a performance-based approach, ensuring the 5-hour consecutive sunlight window on the street at equinoxes.



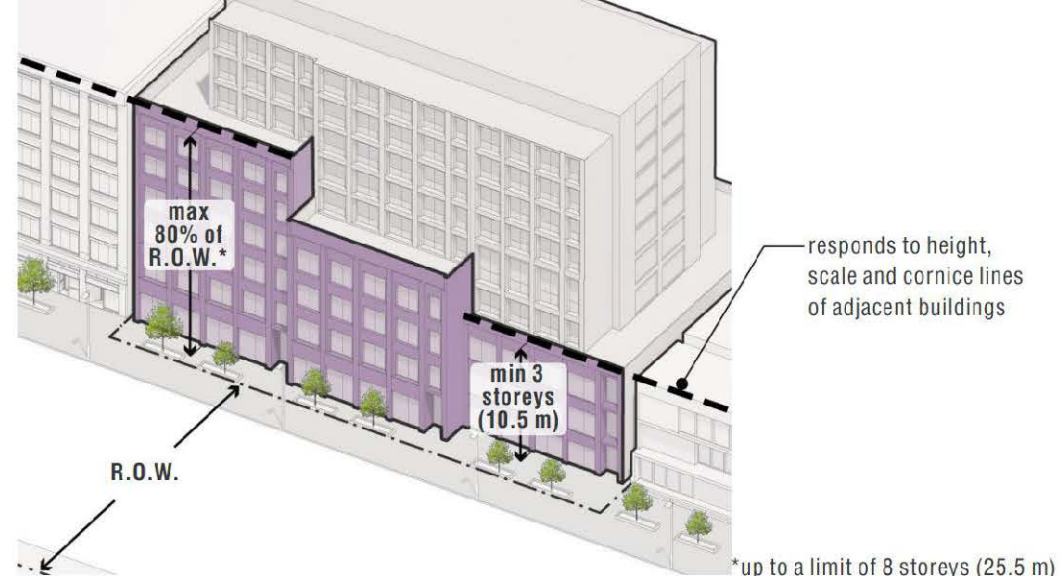
The Official Plan states that “mid-rise buildings will be designed to maintain street proportion and open views of the sky from the public realm by stepping back building massing generally at a height equivalent to 80% of the adjacent right-of-way width”.



Provide a streetwall height between 3 storeys (10.5m) and 80% of the adjacent street right-of-way width, up to a limit of 8 storeys (25.5m) in height. An increased streetwall height, up to 6 storeys (20m), may be appropriate along the streets with a ROW width of less than 27metres.



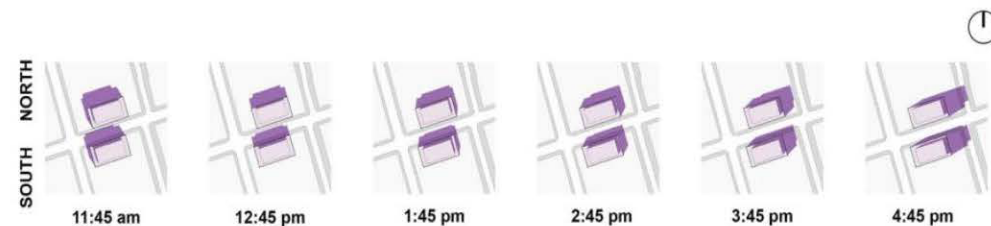
Require a 3-metre pedestrian perception step-back above the street wall. Encourage align the pedestrian perception step-back with the structural grid to reduce embodied carbon and improve energy efficiency.



## Sample / Shadow Studies

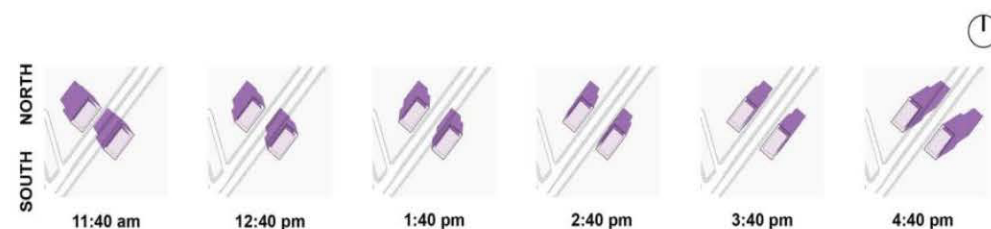
Queen Street East (between Beech Avenue and Neville Park Boulevard)

March 21st



Kingston Road (between McCowan Road and Bellamy Road South)

March 21st



# Rear Transition



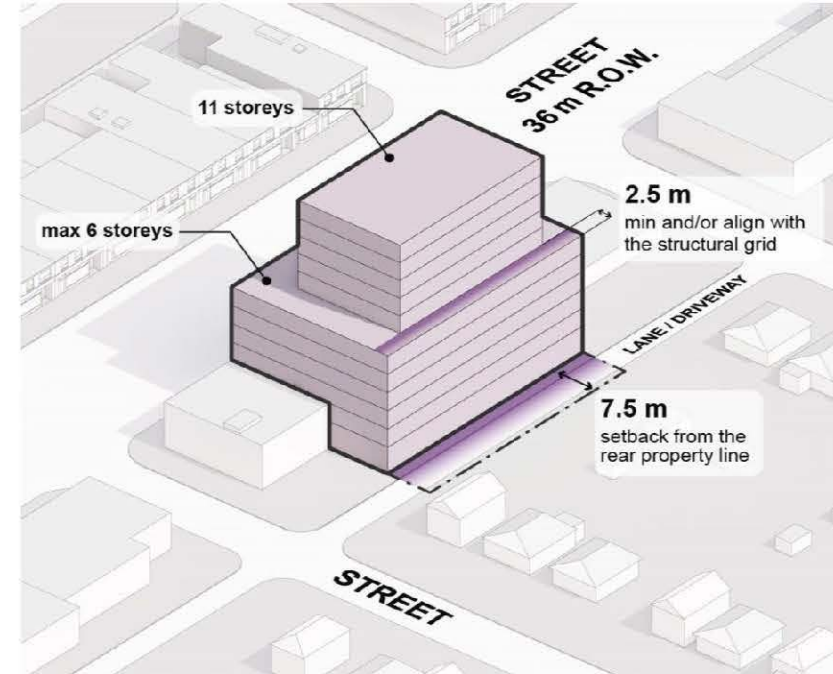
The guidelines incorporate the updated rear transition Zoning By-law amendments adopted by City Council in November 2024.



The setback and step-back requirements for 14-storey mid-rise buildings are consistent with those for 11 storey mid-rise buildings to promote sustainable building technologies, reduce embodied carbon & construction costs.



For mid-rise buildings that have additional height above the 1:1 ratio and/or building frontages exceeding 60 metres, building massing articulation and additional separation may be required to meet the objectives of the Official Plan and other guidelines in this document.



Example of mid-rise taller than 6 storeys – 1 rear step-back



Image of building with individual units along park edge

# Side Yard Setbacks



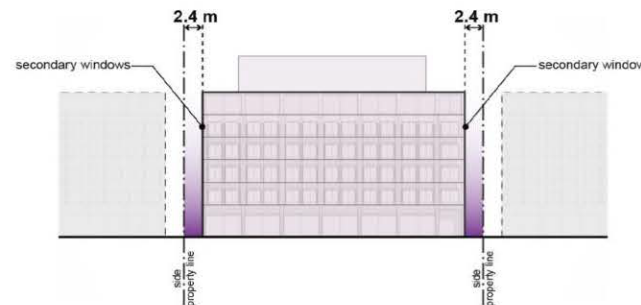
Clarity for setback requirements for various facing conditions, including no windows, secondary windows, primary windows and primary windows on long facades perpendicular to the street.



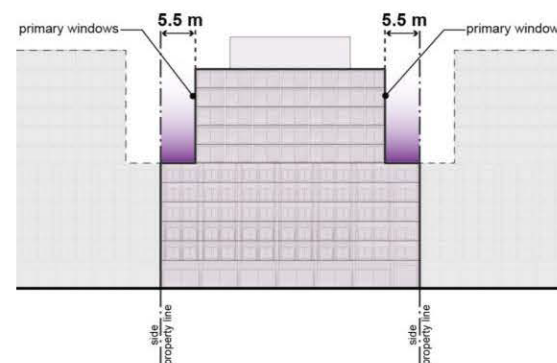
Flexibility for narrow sites, including reduced step-backs, lightwells, notched elevations and other design considerations.



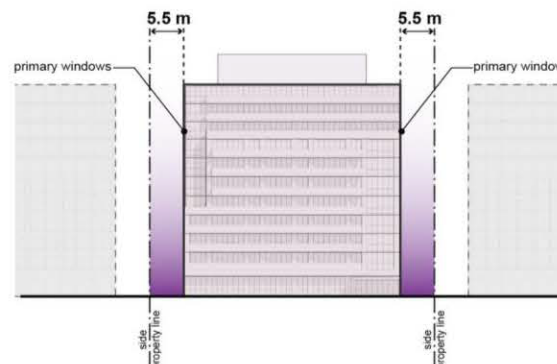
Greater recognition of design considerations for pavilion typology (4-sided) buildings and non-main street contexts where additional setbacks are desirable.



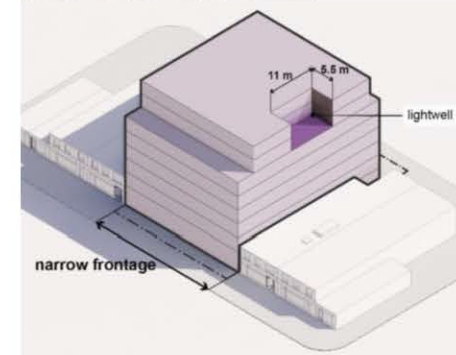
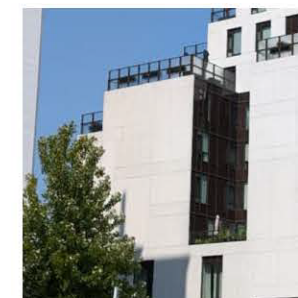
6-storeys or less with secondary windows



Continuous street wall with primary windows above

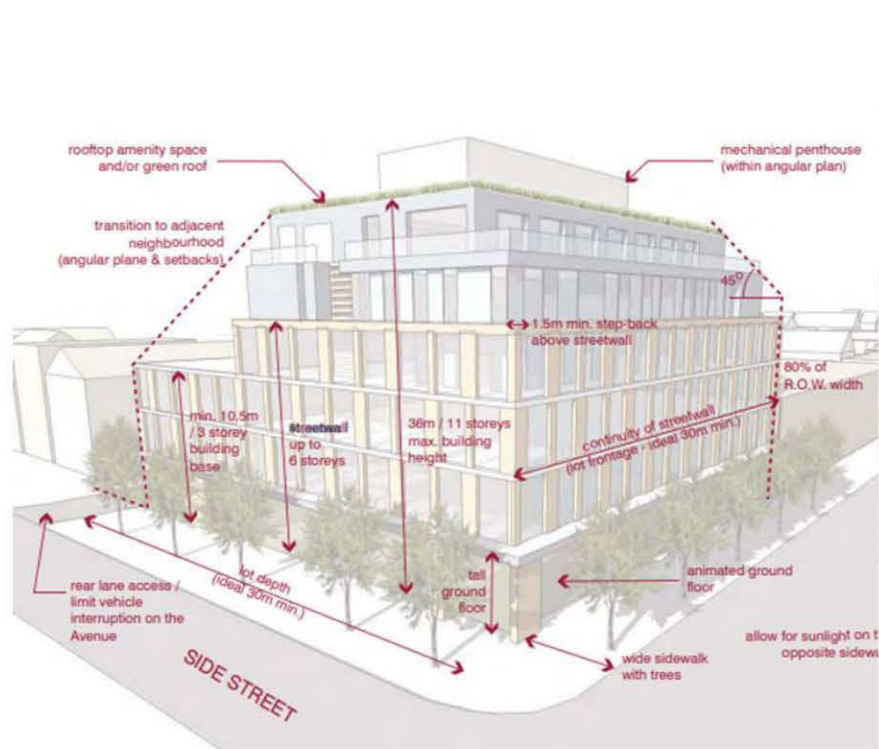


Porous street wall (pavilion typology building) with primary windows in residential contexts

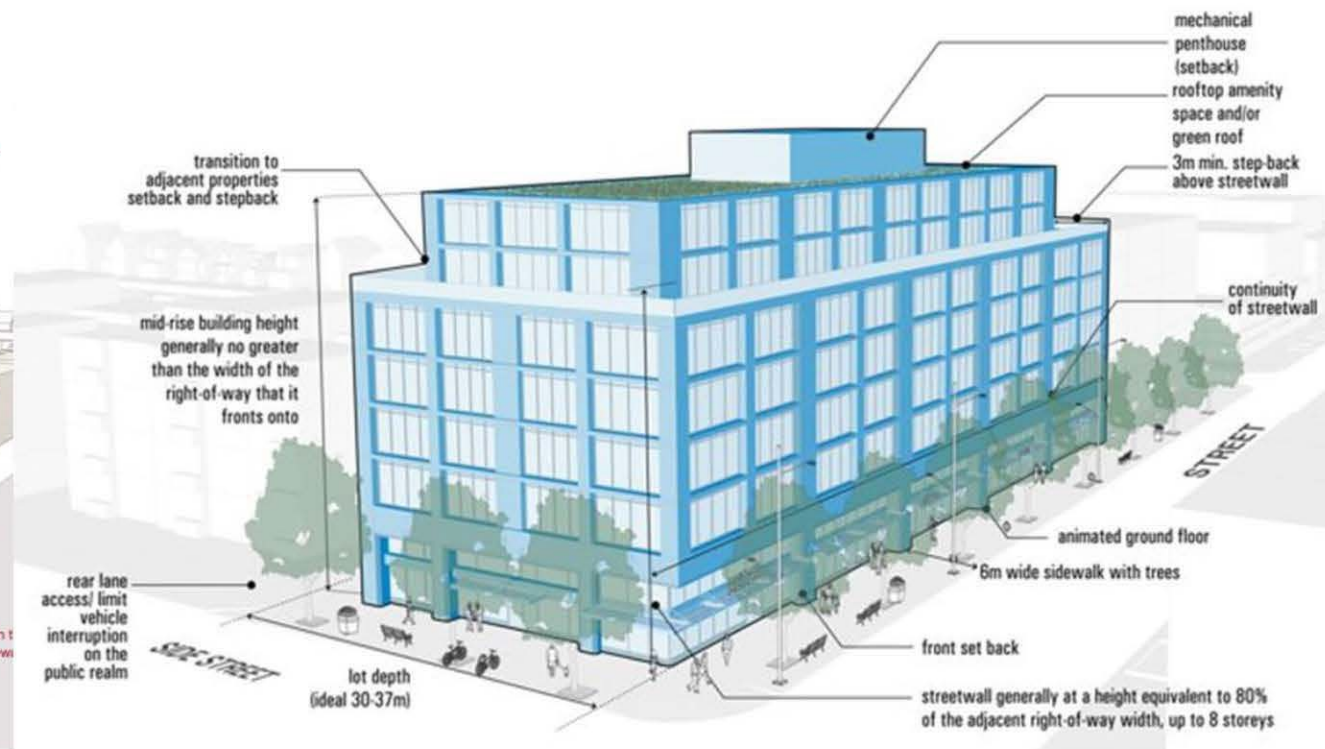


Example of an alternative massing solutions such as a lightwell

# Guidelines Comparison

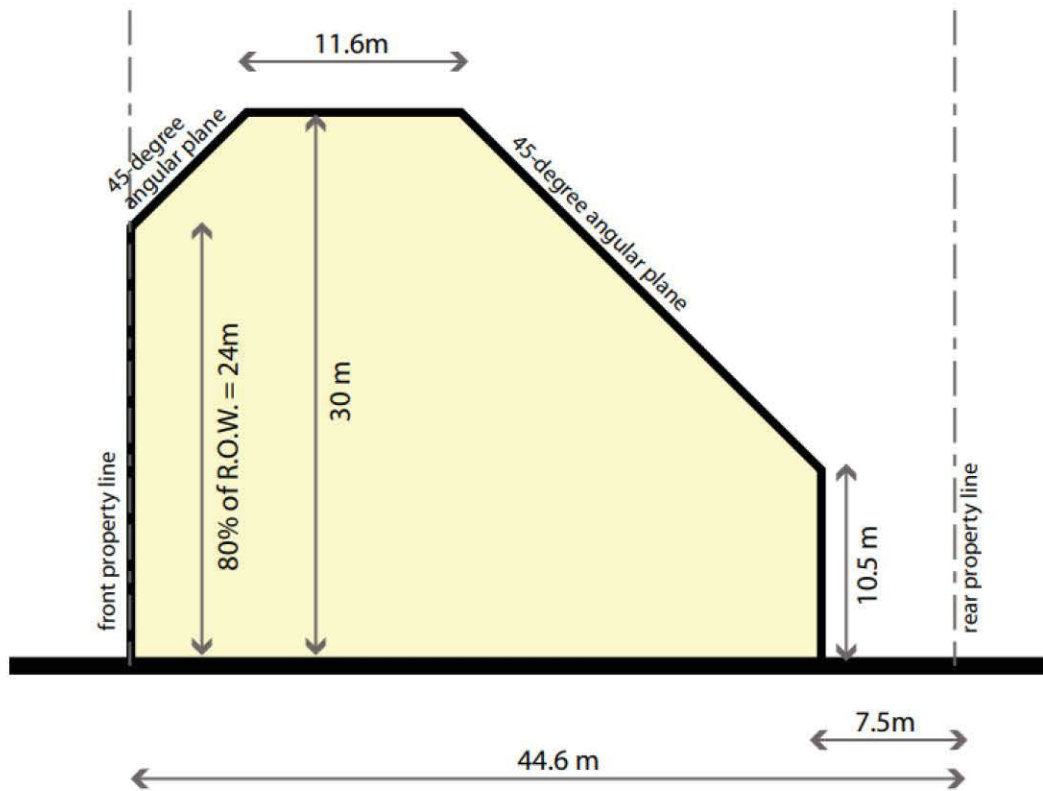


2010 Mid-Rise Performance Standards

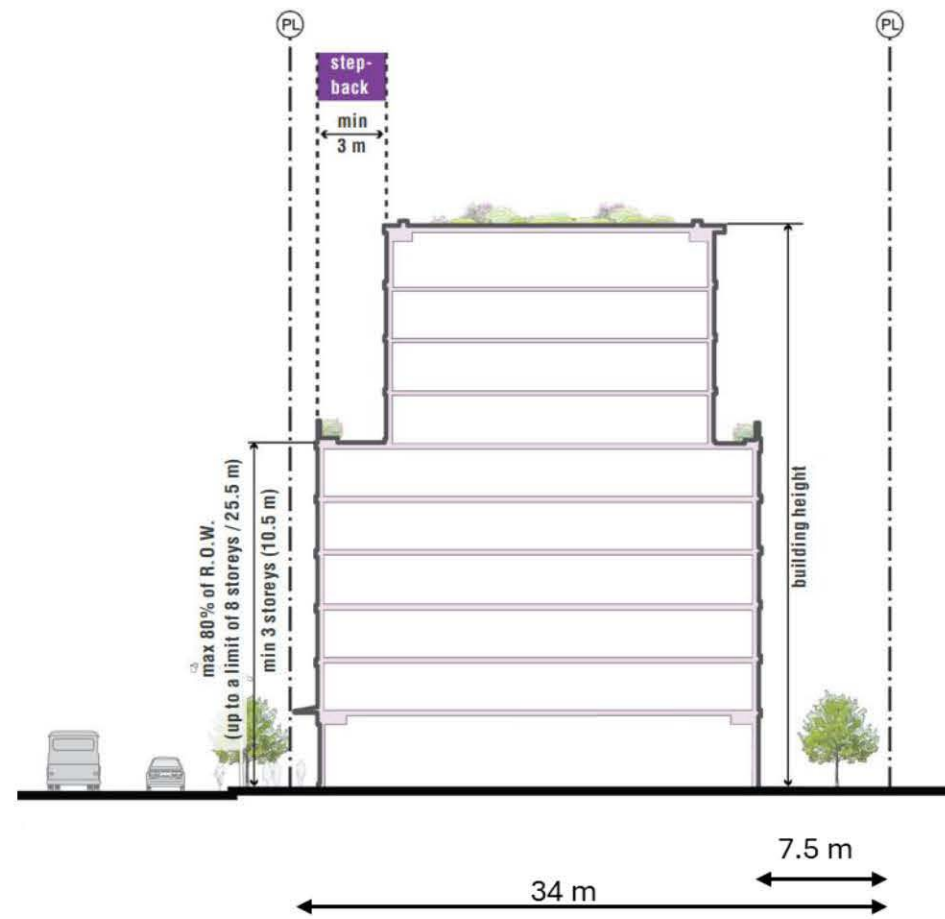


2026 Mid-Rise Building Design Guidelines

# Guidelines Comparison



2010 Mid-Rise Performance Standards



2026 Mid-Rise Building Design Guidelines

# Additional Modifications to the 2024 Mid-Rise Building Design Guidelines

In addition to the updates to the 2024 guidelines, we are proposing additional modifications:

## 1. Servicing and Waste Collection

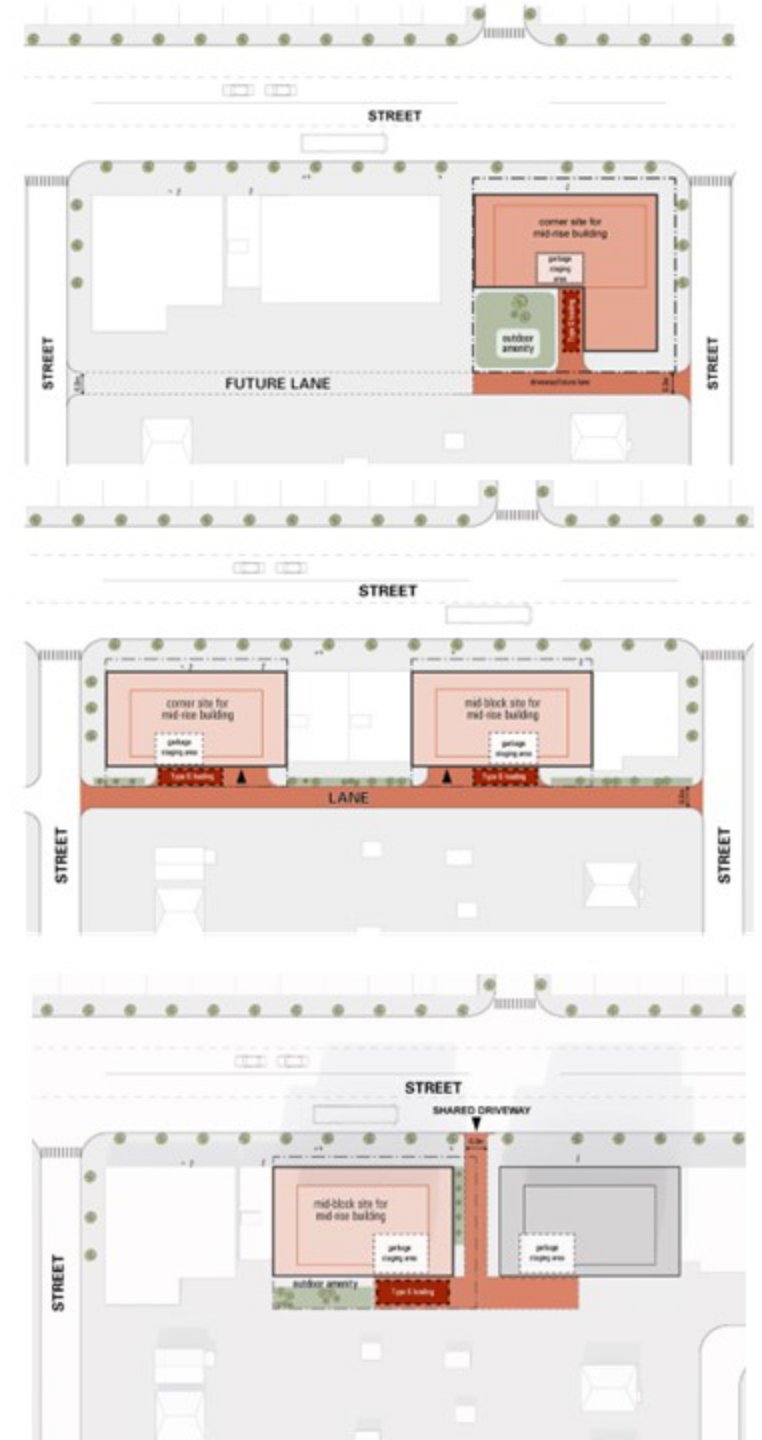
- Introduce additional solid waste collection design strategies based on current municipal standards to minimize their impact on ground-floor layout efficiency.

## 2. Retail

- Reduce ground-floor heights for small retail uses to support more sustainable and economically efficient building design.

# Type G Loading Servicing Design Improvements

- Expand and standardize public lane networks to ensure safe, reliable, and consistent access for service, loading, and deliveries in support of mid-rise development.
- Minimize the extent of site area dedicated to servicing and vehicular access through the use of shared infrastructure and efficient layouts to prioritize at-grade space for retail, outdoor amenity areas, landscaping, and public realm enhancements, especially on constrained sites.
  - Use lay-by loading areas in rear lanes, as well as shared driveways and loading spaces, to support efficient site layout.
  - Explore opportunities for shared or consolidated waste collection areas to optimize space and reduce conflicts with other site functions.



# Curbside Pickup Design Improvements

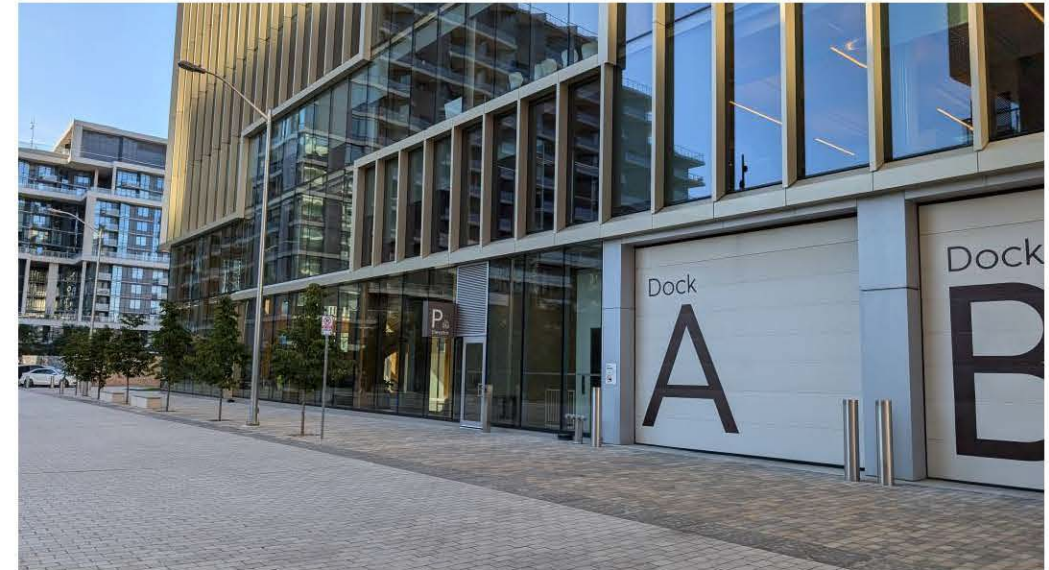
For mid-rise buildings serviced by curbside solid waste collection, the design of buildings and bin placement areas should ensure that collection activities do not compromise the quality or functionality of the public realm by:

- Preserving adequate space for street tree planting.
- Maintaining the integrity of the pedestrian clearway and ensuring comfortable, unobstructed movement for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Avoiding obstructions within the clearway while still providing practical and serviceable locations for waste collection.
- Providing compact, well-organized staging areas within the public right-of-way where feasible.
- In situations where the public right-of-way is narrow for accessible bin setout, providing compact and well-organized staging areas on private property, located along the property edge.



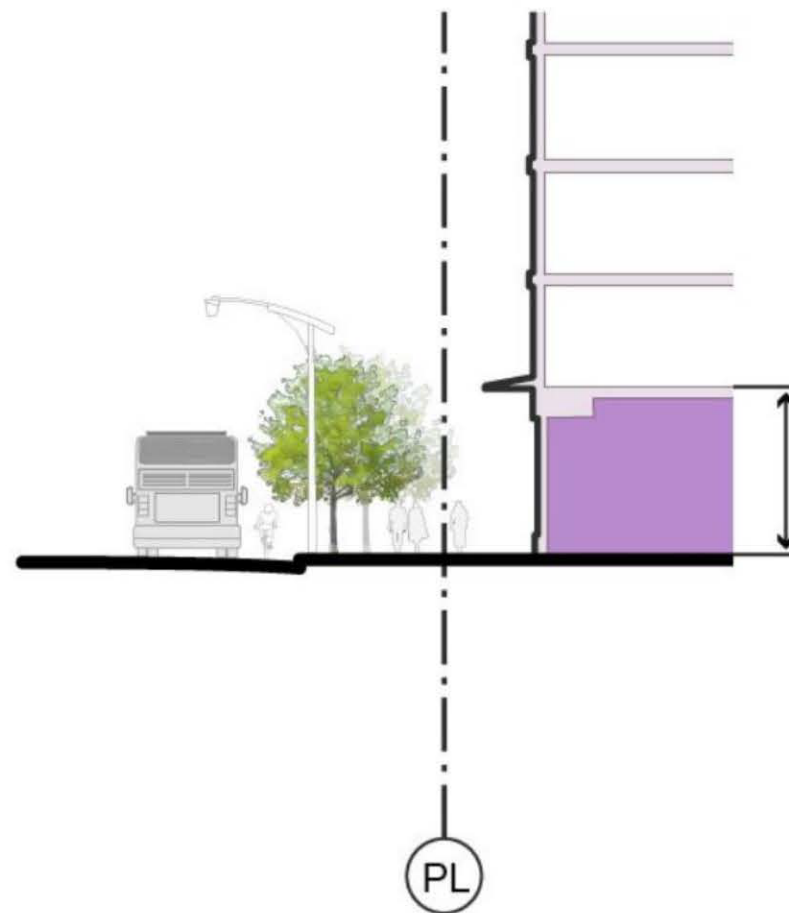
# Why are we proposing these changes?

- **Address Industry Concerns**
- **Align with Avenues Policy Update**
- **Increase Ground Floor Space for Active Uses, Especially for Small Constrained Mid-rise Sites**
- **Protect sidewalk clearways, supports tree planting, and improves public safety.**



# Retail Design Improvements

- For mixed-use buildings, the minimum floor to floor height of the ground floor should be 4.5m to accommodate retail uses.
- The floor-to-floor height may be reduced if the primary uses are small-scale retail and residential at grade.



# Why are we proposing these changes?



- **Reflect Industry Concerns**
- **Support Small-Scale Retail**
- **Reduce Built Form Impacts**
- **Enhance Human-Scale Design**

# Next Steps





# Next Steps

## Planning and Housing Committee

- May 7, 2026

## City Council

- May 20-22, 2026

# Thank you

[Toronto.ca/MidriseGuidelines](https://toronto.ca/MidriseGuidelines)

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