

Zoning In On Residential Driveways

The Basics

Driveways are a key component of residential development, with meaningful impacts on both neighbourhood form and function. Traditional low-density developments in the Town have been designed to provide driveways for both access to garages and additional parking for residents. As neighbourhoods begin to welcome new neighbours through the construction of additional dwelling units, other forms of infill development, and intergenerational living, demand for parking can increase. This can create pressure to expand front yard parking and widen driveways. Expanding parking areas across front yards can conflict with other neighbourhood objectives such as improved stormwater management and supporting pedestrian safety.

As Whitchurch-Stouffville looks to enable a broader range of housing types in its neighbourhoods, the Zoning By-law plays a role in setting appropriate standards for driveways that balance current vehicle demands with other objectives like sustainable development, pedestrian safety, placemaking, and supporting other modes of transportation.

Current Situation

Zoning By-law 2010-001-ZO defines ‘driveway’ as an area providing access for motor vehicles from a street or lane to a parking space, parking lot, parking pad, loading space or private garage, related to a single building. The By-law regulates driveways as follows:

- **Maximum Width:** The By-law provides three ways to determine the maximum width of a driveway on a lot. All three options require 35% of the front yard to be landscaped, except for lots less than 11 m wide.

Reasons for Change

- Confirm that driveway sizes align with changes to permitted dwellings and infill pressures
- Support permeable surfaces and landscaping
- Balance parking needs with neighbourhood character
- Review driveway standards, such as placement rules and shared configurations



- **Location:** The By-law contains requirements which guide the placement of driveways based on the Zone.
 - **RPS, RV, RM1, RM2, RN5, and Rural/Environmental Zones:** Driveways in the front yard must be at least 1.5 m from interior side lot lines and must abide by the zone setback for exterior side yards.
 - **All other residential Zones:** Driveways in the front yard must abide by all side yard setbacks in the respective zones.
- **Number of Driveways:** The By-law generally limits residential uses to a single driveway but permits circular driveways and second driveways for detached garages, subject to specific separation requirements.

The Town’s Official Plan acknowledges the role of driveways in contributing to stormwater runoff, and encourages driveway designs in Hamlet areas that minimize tree loss through narrower designs. In Strategic Growth Areas, the Official Plan encourages shared driveway access to reduce traffic flow interruptions.

Looking Elsewhere

Zoning by-laws are one of the primary regulatory documents for driveways, and many municipalities have specific provisions to guide their development. We looked at driveway rules from municipalities in Ontario and beyond. All municipalities reviewed regulated driveway width. The scan also highlights alternative and creative approaches to managing driveways in residential areas.

Municipality	Residential Driveway Requirements
Waterloo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Driveways must be a minimum width of 3 m and a maximum width of 7 m, or 7.6 m on lots fronting a regional highway. ▪ Zones provide location provisions and limits on the number of driveways permitted. ▪ Except for townhouse dwellings with no garages, the By-law prohibits driveways from being located in front of any habitable portion of any building, meaning driveways can only lead directly to a garage, or to the side or rear yards.
Halifax, NS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In low-density residential Zones, no more than 33% of the front yard may be used for vehicle access or storage. ▪ Driveways are required to be constructed of stable materials such as gravel, asphalt, concrete, bricks or paving stones.
Richmond Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The City of Richmond Hill regulates residential driveways through the Front Yard Parking By-law, which sets out driveway widths and landscaping requirements.

Municipality	Residential Driveway Requirements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A minimum of 45% of the front yard must be landscaped. ▪ Maximum driveway widths are regulated by lot width, with 3 m driveways for lots less than 9 m wide, 6 m driveways for lots between 9 and 18 m, and 9 m driveways for lots 18 to 30 m wide.
Ottawa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The maximum width of driveways and walkways must not exceed 50% of the lot width, or 50% of the lot depth for driveways on exterior side yards. ▪ Driveways must be at least as wide as the parking space they are intended to serve and are prohibited on lots less than 6 m wide. ▪ The By-law provides siting and specific width requirements for certain Zones, though the By-law does permit shared driveways between multiple properties.

Going Forward

The Town’s new Zoning By-law should continue to regulate driveways and could expand provisions to include material requirements and innovative solutions, such as shared driveways for smaller lots. The objective should be to provide adequate vehicle access and storage for new residential areas and infill development, while respecting the existing character of these areas. Driveway standards should consider the number of permitted units in each zone to better align requirements with parking demand, while also accounting for factors such as environmental impact and pedestrian safety. Consideration should also be given to the types of materials used for driveways. This could look like providing flexibility for developments that use permeable surfaces without requiring them in all cases. Finally, the Town could explore the use of shared driveways to reduce the number of access points to roads, or consider setting a maximum width for curb-cuts so driveways taper towards the street.

Let’s discuss!



When developing updated driveway regulations in the Zoning By-law...

- Do existing driveway rules provide enough parking for households?
- Should permeable or sustainable paving materials be regulated or required?
- Do current driveway regulations work well for all housing types?