

# Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville **Comprehensive Zoning By-law Update & Town-wide Urban Design Guidelines**

Draft Discussion Paper #8: Missing Middle Housing and  
Infill Development

April 17, 2026

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# Table of Contents

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<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction &amp; Background</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	Purpose of the Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines Review	3
1.2	Overview of the Housing Accelerator Fund Project	3
1.3	Purpose of this Discussion Paper	4
<b>2.</b>	<b>Jurisdictional Scan</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	Hamilton	6
2.2	Ottawa	7
2.3	Newmarket	8
2.4	Toronto	9
2.5	Key Takeaways from Jurisdictional Scan	10
<b>3.</b>	<b>Guiding Principles for the Urban Design Guidelines</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1	Role of Urban Design Guidelines	12
3.2	Existing Urban Design Guidance	13
3.3	Official Plan Policies for Missing Middle and Infill Development	13
3.4	Recommendations from the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Initiatives	16
3.4.1	Building Positioning and Setbacks	16
3.4.2	Building Heights	16
3.4.3	Lot Configuration	17
3.4.4	Lot Coverage	17
3.4.5	Landscaping and Greenery	17
3.4.6	Driveways and Parking Configuration	18
3.4.7	Residential Intensification	18
3.5	Application of Urban Design Guidelines	19
<b>4.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1	What is the “Missing Middle”?	21
4.1.1	Housing Typologies	22
4.2	Key Site Design Matters	30
<b>5.</b>	<b>Key Principles for Missing Middle and Infill Development</b>	<b>40</b>

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# 1. Introduction & Background

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This Discussion Paper reviews the current context, best practices, and future considerations of the low-rise residential areas of the Community of Stouffville from an urban design perspective and will support the creation of Town-wide Urban Design Guidelines.

## 1.1 Purpose of the Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines Review

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, one of Ontario's fastest-growing municipalities, is projected to double its population by 2051. To manage this growth, the Town adopted a new Official Plan: Re-Imagine Stouffville, in 2024, approved by the Ministry in September 2025. Following adoption of the 2025 Official Plan, the Town engaged WSP Canada Inc. to replace the Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2010-001 ZO with a new Zoning By-law aligned with the updated Official Plan and recent Provincial policies, and to meet provincial mandates. To complement the Town's new Zoning By-law, WSP will also be developing Town-wide Urban Design Guidelines which will address the vision, goals and objectives of the Town and help to bolster the effectiveness of the Zoning By-law. Concurrently, the Town is advancing a series of amendments to planning documents related to housing as part of the Government of Canada's Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). Together, these documents will establish and communicate clear and consistent rules for development which implement the Town's new vision for the future.

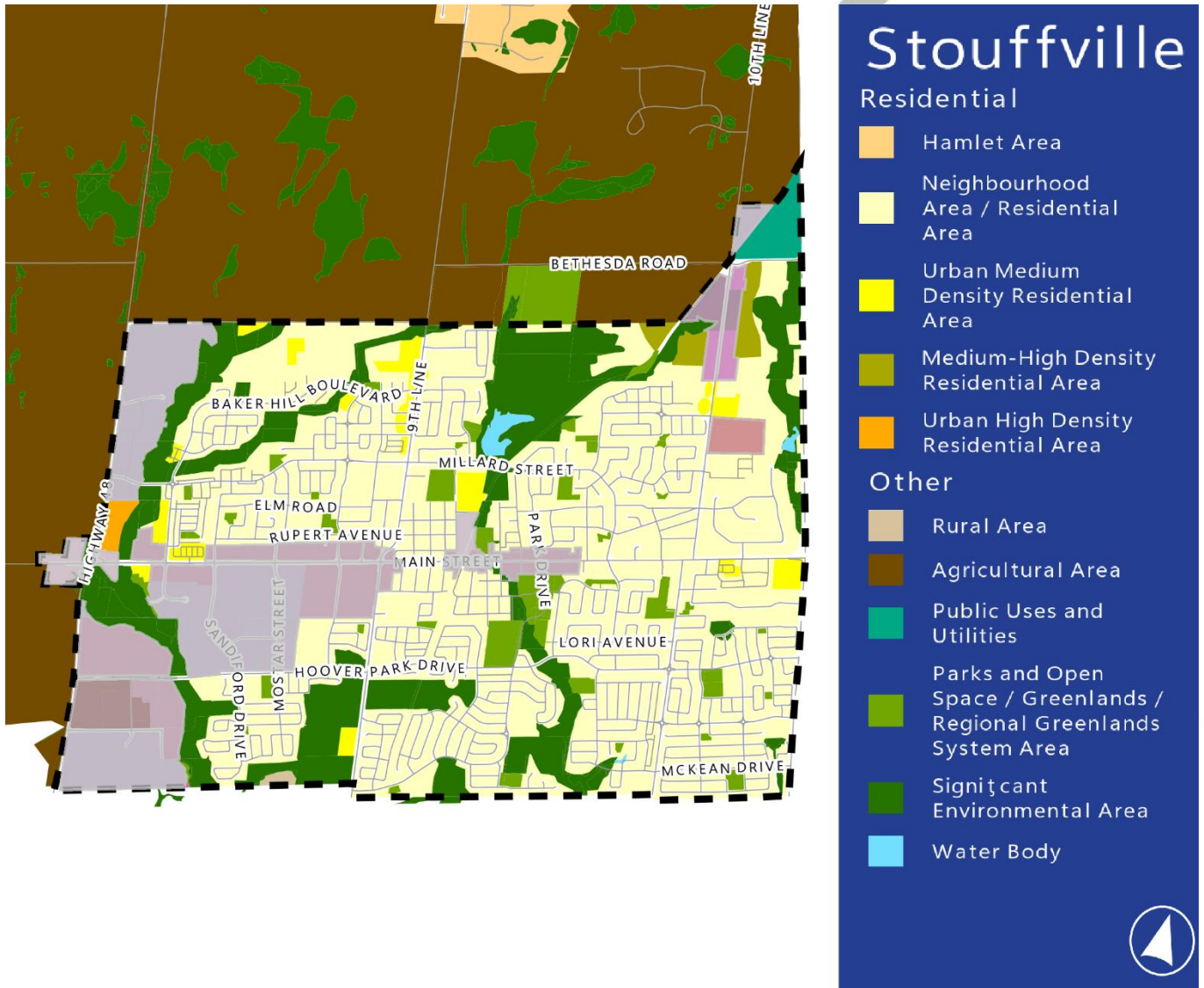
Refer to Discussion Paper #1 – General Principles and OP Conformity for an overview of the approach, concepts and ideas which help set the stage for an informed discussion on the fundamental principles of the new Whitchurch-Stouffville Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines.

## 1.2 Overview of the Housing Accelerator Fund Project

In 2025, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and the Government of Canada reached an agreement to fund the Town's efforts to increase housing supply. The Town was awarded \$8 million in funding to advance six initiatives related to: growth management; medium and high-density parking; housing incentives; missing middle housing; expedited site plan approvals; and servicing allocation. The initiatives related to medium and high-density parking and missing middle housing are being advanced by the Town in conjunction with the Zoning By-law and Urban Design Guidelines review project.

The scope of the missing middle housing study was to explore how different scale residential buildings (e.g., townhouses, duplexes, etc.) supporting the "missing middle" can be appropriately integrated into existing, fully serviced, low-density residential neighbourhoods. The purpose of this study was to review the suitability of a variety of low-rise residential typologies in response to a resolution from Council to

permit 4 units per residential lot within existing neighbourhoods. This scope was limited to predominantly single-detached neighbourhoods that are fully serviced by municipal water and wastewater services. This scope aligns with the Neighbourhood Area land use designation from the 2025 Official Plan as shown in **Figure 1-1**, and will also be the study area for this Discussion Paper.



**Figure 1-1: Existing residential neighbourhoods in the Community of Stouffville with the Neighbourhood Area land use designation applied.**

### 1.3 Purpose of this Discussion Paper

This Paper reviews the existing conditions, best practices and future design considerations for existing neighbourhoods as they experience infill development. The Paper introduces discussions on the following key topics:

- Existing neighbourhood character, and key urban design elements to be maintained.

- Different typologies and forms of housing, and specific best practices for their regulation.
- Considerations for new neighbourhoods built in greenfield areas.
- Appropriate regulatory levers to enforce quality urban design in the context of Provincial policy and legislation.
- Other specific challenges and opportunities associated with missing middle intensification in existing neighbourhoods, such as landscaping, materiality, façade integration, shadow impacts, and building massing.

The purpose of this guidance will be to encourage gentle intensification for these areas to ensure that neighbourhood character is maintained and curated as density increases. The overall intention of this Paper is to establish general principles and options related to the design of missing middle housing typologies. These guiding principles and options will form the basis for further consultation with the public and the development industry, and will inform the regulation of urban design through either the Zoning By-law or the Town-wide Urban Design Guidelines.

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## 2. Jurisdictional Scan

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The demand for residential intensification has led to many Ontario municipalities releasing Urban Design Guidelines for missing middle and infill development. A jurisdictional scan was conducted to identify municipalities with high-quality Urban Design Guidelines for missing middle housing typologies. These documents were reviewed to determine the general direction that other municipalities have taken in the regulation of missing middle development, and the overall philosophy encouraged through their guidelines. This review will help guide the overall approach to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's Urban Design Guidelines.

The municipalities identified as part of this jurisdictional scan include Hamilton, Ottawa, Toronto, and Newmarket. While all reviewed municipalities are significantly larger than the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, issues related to neighbourhood character and design for residential neighbourhoods are largely transferrable.

### 2.1 Hamilton

Hamilton's Neighbourhood Infill Design Guidelines were published in February 2024, and set city-wide direction for small-scale intensification in established neighbourhoods. The document targets multiplex infill and clarifies permissions. Triplexes and fourplexes are permitted in Low Density Residential Zones, while multiplexes require a site-specific Zoning By-law Amendment under the Neighbourhoods designation. The guidelines also summarize recent permissions for Additional Dwelling Units in principal buildings and for detached backyard units, and explain Converted Dwelling rules that allow up to three additional units in existing houses. Most residential lots can now accommodate up to four units through combinations of in-house conversions and a detached unit. The guidelines are used to inform minor variances, rezoning applications for larger multiplexes, and day-to-day design work. They frame "compatibility" as respectful co-existence rather than sameness.

Design directions in the guidelines are practical and measurable:

- Landscaping must prioritize mature tree retention and new planting with a typical minimum soil volume of 21 m<sup>3</sup> per high-branching tree, offsets of about 1.5 m from sidewalks and driveways, and 3 m from buildings, in support of the City's 40 percent urban canopy target.
- Front and flankage yards should keep at least 50 percent soft landscaping, with privacy planting and naturalized, drought-resistant species.
- Private amenity is required for each unit with a minimum depth of 1.5 metres and access to sunlight.
- Parking design favours permeable pavers, rear-yard or laneway access, minimized curb cuts, a driveway width no greater than two cars, and no tandem layouts, with bicycle parking located discreetly at the rear.

- Utilities, waste, and mechanical equipment are consolidated and screened, and lighting follows Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and dark-sky practices to limit glare and spill.
- Built-form guidance directs massing to reflect the street, step back upper storeys, keep ground floors at or near neighbouring grades, vary rooflines, and allow modest height emphasis at corners. Setbacks should match established patterns, maintain pervious area and trees, and respect a 45-degree rear angular plane when reductions are sought.
- Facades facing public edges avoid blank walls, place front doors on the street, and prioritize habitable rooms and articulated elevations.

The overall philosophy promotes context-sensitive growth that strengthens neighbourhood character and everyday livability. Infill should add housing choice while protecting adjacent amenity through careful placement, scaled transitions, and good frontage design. A landscaped public realm is a priority, with trees, permeable surfaces, and coordinated grading used to manage stormwater and support canopy over time. Servicing, parking, and utilities are integrated so streets and shared spaces remain green and pedestrian friendly. The guidance relies on clear performance targets and site-specific judgment rather than one-size-fits-all rules, enabling balanced solutions for multiplex infill on constrained lots.

## 2.2 Ottawa

The City of Ottawa is currently in the process of updating its Urban Design Guidelines for Low-Rise Infill Housing. The second draft guidelines provide citywide guidance for residential infill up to four storeys within established neighbourhoods, framed by the Official Plan's transect approach. The document defines low-rise infill, sets objectives for liveable and safe neighbourhoods, and ties design decisions to street-oriented frontages, transitions to neighbours, tree protection, and climate resilience. It is used during the preparation and review of proposals, augments area-specific plans where applicable, and is not a checklist. The guidelines also highlight sustainable design expectations, encouraging low-impact stormwater strategies and voluntary standards such as the Canadian Green Building Council (CaGBC) Zero Carbon Building Standards and the International WELL Building Institute WELL Building Standard, alongside resilient energy and envelope performance.

Design directions are organized around Site Organization, Built Form, and Planned Unit Development (PUD), with practical measures that are performance-based:

- Building placement should align front setbacks with neighbours, treat public-facing elevations as principal façades, and avoid garage-dominant frontages.
- Entrances should face the street, with barrier-free routes coordinated to limit stairs and ramps, and legible pedestrian materials and lighting used for safety.
- Vehicle impacts should be reduced through shared or rear access, limited curb cuts, recessed garages, and minimal surface parking.

- Tree retention, continuous planting zones, and adequate soil volumes should be prioritized, with utilities, grading, and below-grade structures coordinated to protect the tree canopy.
- Private and shared outdoor amenity areas should be located near entrances and living spaces, separated from servicing, and designed for accessibility and comfort.
- Built form guidance calls for massing that relates to nearby heights, uses step-backs at lower edges, limits overlook through window placement, and favours inset balconies where yards are tight.
- Roofs should be designed for performance, solar readiness, and clear drainage, while materials at street level are durable and well detailed.
- For multi-building Planned Unit Developments, internal streets and courts should be pedestrian-first, with clear walking networks, consolidated servicing, and demonstrated transitions at site edges.
- Quantitative separation distances of 11 m for two storeys, 13 m for three, and 15 m for four storeys guide privacy, daylight, and usable shared space, with flexibility where objectives are met by other means.

The overall philosophy emphasizes context-sensitive intensification that strengthens the public realm while protecting neighbours' amenity areas. Street-oriented entrances, active frontages, and continuous landscaping support walkability and neighbourhood character. Servicing, parking, and utilities are integrated and screened so that public edges remain green and pedestrian-friendly. Tree health, on-site stormwater management, and resilient building assemblies advance climate objectives and long-term maintenance. The guidelines rely on clear performance targets and site-specific judgment rather than prescriptive checklists, enabling balanced solutions on constrained infill and PUD sites.

## 2.3 Newmarket

Newmarket's Urban Design Guidelines were published in August 2021 and provide Town-wide direction for all types of infill developments. This includes low-rise and missing-middle infill, focusing on single and semi-detached dwellings, townhouses in several configurations, and low-rise multi-unit buildings up to four storeys. The guidelines are used by planning staff to review applications and are organized with evaluation matrices that summarize key metrics for each housing type. They provide a flexible framework that emphasizes outcomes over strict standards, and prioritizes context, compatibility, and a strong public interface. The framework is intended to be applied alongside the Town's Official Plan and other area-specific documents.

Like other examples, the design directions from the guidelines are detailed and measurable:

- For single and semi-detached dwellings the typical maximum height is 8.5 m, front setbacks match the average of adjacent properties within 60 m, side yards are generally 1.5 m where no standard exists, and rear yards are at least 7.0 m.
- Front garages should be secondary and rear-lane access is preferred.

- For townhouses the maximum height is 11.0 m for traditional forms and 15.0 m for stacked or back-to-back forms. Blocks are capped at 60.0 m or eight units. Provide 6.0 m front setbacks where driveways are present and at least 4.5 m where they are not. Maintain 3.0–6.0 m separations between blocks, 6.0–7.5 m rear yards for traditional units, and 9.0 m for stacked forms. Use a 45-degree rear angular plane next to lower buildings and 15.0 m between facing townhouse façades. Parking is at the rear or underground, curb cuts are minimized, and front yards remain at least 50 percent landscaped when parking exists.
- For low-rise buildings provide a maximum of four storeys or 15.0 m, 5.5 m side setbacks to achieve 11.0 m between buildings where windows face, 9.0 m rear setbacks next to lower forms, and stepbacks at the third or fourth storey. Apply 45-degree rear and side angular planes next to lower neighbourhoods and provide 15.0 m between facing façades on the same site. Ground floors are active with individual unit entries or retail. Bicycle parking is expected. Trees should have access to about 30 m<sup>3</sup> of quality soil.

The overall philosophy promotes context-sensitive intensification that strengthens neighbourhood character and walkability. Examples of this include facing front doors and rooms with active uses, such as living rooms and kitchens, toward the public realm (e.g., the street), using buildings to “frame” pedestrian environments, and reducing vehicle presence by moving parking, loading, and waste away from these public areas. Transitions are managed through stepdowns, stepbacks, and angular planes to protect sunlight, sky view, and privacy for adjacent lots. Amenity is delivered as a mix of private yards, patios, rooftop spaces, and shared outdoor areas arranged for sunlight and connectivity. Safety and accessibility follow principles established by the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) approach and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Flexibility is encouraged where projects meet the stated design intent and demonstrate equal or better outcomes.

## 2.4 Toronto

The City of Toronto has implemented City-wide, as-of-right permissions for missing middle housing, including multiplexes and laneway suites. Supporting this initiative, the City’s Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines set a design framework for multi-unit buildings of four storeys or less and replace the 2003 Infill Townhouse Guidelines. The document regulates a clear range of typologies that include townhouse, stacked townhouse, back-to-back townhouse, stacked back-to-back townhouse, low-rise hybrid, and low-rise apartment. It also clarifies that stacked and back-to-back configurations that include vertical stacking are treated as “Apartment Buildings” under Zoning By-law 569-2013, which triggers shared amenity requirements. The guidelines are intended to implement Official Plan policies through development review and to balance neighbourhood fit with the need for incremental growth.

Design directions are detailed and measurable:

- A required context analysis maps a 250 and 500 m walkability radius and documents streets, open spaces, heritage, and servicing, with master planning used on large or complex sites.

- The public realm framework calls for fine-grained pedestrian links of 80 to 110 m and vehicular blocks generally under 200 m, with new public streets added per City infrastructure standards where access is lacking. Quantitative standards include facing distances tied to height at 11.0, 13.0, and 15.0 m, a minimum 7.5 m rear yard, and a 45 degree angular plane next to low-scale areas.
- Building facades align with prevailing setbacks, provide visibility to entrances, and include breaks about every 36 metres to avoid long frontages.
- Servicing and parking are internalized or placed underground, while front integrated garages are discouraged and only considered on units at least 6.0 m wide with strict limits on driveway width and soft landscaping.
- Shared outdoor amenity spaces are at grade, centrally located, at least 50 percent contiguous, and include a minimum 40 m<sup>2</sup> directly connected to indoor amenity space.

These design directions are intended to support high-quality public realms and ensure compatibility of multi-unit buildings with the surrounding neighbourhood. Infill should “fit and transition” through stepdowns, angular planes, and adequate separations that protect sunlight, sky view, and privacy. Streets, parks, and privately-owned public spaces (POPS) are framed by building fronts, with rear or service conditions kept away from public edges. Heritage is conserved through integration rather than façade retention, and materials and details are expected to be durable and contextually responsive. The guidance is flexible in application but uses clear metrics to support predictable outcomes on complex infill sites.

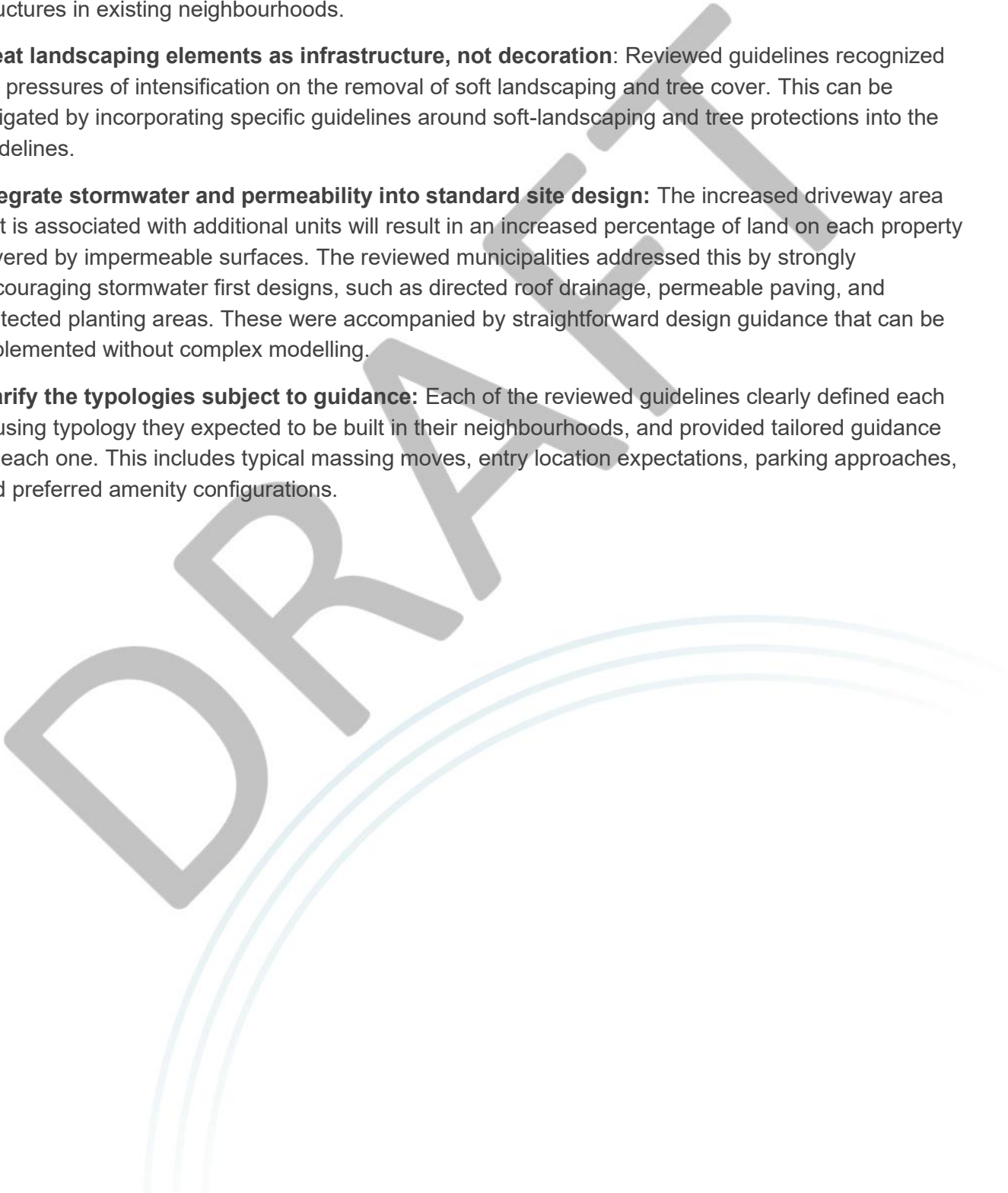
The Townhouse and Low-Rise Apartment Guidelines are intended to be read together and implemented with other applicable regulations, policies, and guidelines. The Toronto Green Standard, for example, informs stormwater, landscape, and energy performance, reinforcing a design approach that is both livable and resilient.

## 2.5 Key Takeaways from Jurisdictional Scan

The jurisdictional scan highlights some approaches that the Town could take in supporting character-specific urban design guidance for neighbourhood infill and missing middle housing. The key takeaways are:

- **Define neighbourhood compatibility as a performance standard:** Urban Design Guidelines should define compatibility for new infill development using a list of impact-based criteria, such as height transition, separation distances, overlook mitigation, and front yard alignment. These criteria could be mirrored in the Zoning By-law where appropriate.
- **Anchor built form in existing streetscapes:** Guidelines from other municipalities consistently reinforced street-oriented design, such as requiring front doors to face the street, minimizing blank walls, and reducing the dominance of garages in the streetscape.

- **Manage transitions between densities and typologies:** The municipalities reviewed shared a strategy of mitigating the impacts of larger developments through the use of setbacks on upper storeys or angular plane. This helps to protect sunlight access, privacy, and perceived scale of larger structures in existing neighbourhoods.
- **Treat landscaping elements as infrastructure, not decoration:** Reviewed guidelines recognized the pressures of intensification on the removal of soft landscaping and tree cover. This can be mitigated by incorporating specific guidelines around soft-landscaping and tree protections into the guidelines.
- **Integrate stormwater and permeability into standard site design:** The increased driveway area that is associated with additional units will result in an increased percentage of land on each property covered by impermeable surfaces. The reviewed municipalities addressed this by strongly encouraging stormwater first designs, such as directed roof drainage, permeable paving, and protected planting areas. These were accompanied by straightforward design guidance that can be implemented without complex modelling.
- **Clarify the typologies subject to guidance:** Each of the reviewed guidelines clearly defined each housing typology they expected to be built in their neighbourhoods, and provided tailored guidance for each one. This includes typical massing moves, entry location expectations, parking approaches, and preferred amenity configurations.



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## 3. Guiding Principles for the Urban Design Guidelines

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### 3.1 Role of Urban Design Guidelines

Urban Design Guidelines provide both broad and specific direction for architectural and urban design to ensure that character defining elements of a community are maintained or enhanced through new developments. Unlike the Official Plan or Zoning By-law, Urban Design Guidelines are not statutory documents that prescribe desired results. Instead, they are used as interpretive tools to be used by Town staff, developers, property owners, and designers throughout the development process.

Urban Design Guidelines are used most effectively when combined with Site Plan Control processes. Site plan control is a planning and regulatory process used by municipalities to manage and approve the design and layout of proposed developments. Site Plan Control is an additional review process that must be completed before a project can proceed to the Building Permit application. This process is enabled through Section 41 of the *Planning Act*, and allows municipalities to control aspects of site developments that go beyond the topics regulated by a Zoning By-law. Urban Design Guidelines can be used to build on the statutory requirements within the Official Plan and Zoning by-law by providing clear expectations and standards to help applicants understand the desired outcome for a neighbourhood. Additionally, Urban Design Guidelines should be written to be used alongside the Zoning By-law, and should therefore share the same terminologies to avoid confusion.

The regulations for Site Plan Control in Section 41 of the *Planning Act* were modified in 2022 by the *More Homes Built Faster Act* and the *More Homes for Everyone Act*. These two acts made key changes to the topics which can be regulated through Site Plan Control, but also the kinds of developments which can be subject to this additional review process. Under the new framework, Site Plan Control can no longer influence the external appearance of structures, and may only comment on the following topics:

- Access for pedestrians and vehicles;
- Walkways;
- Lighting;
- Waste facilities;
- Landscaping; and
- Drainage.

In addition, these changes expanded the criteria for developments that are exempt from Site Plan Control to include all residential structures with equal or fewer than 10 residential units. This excludes most missing-middle developments from Site Plan Control, therefore reducing the effectiveness of Urban Design Guidelines in guiding infill development. Nonetheless, Urban Design Guidelines still provide value for the Town, and it is recommended that missing middle and low-rise housing typologies be included as a chapter within the Town-wide Urban Design Guidelines.

## 3.2 Existing Urban Design Guidance

In 2009, the Town published the Community of Stouffville Residential Intensification Urban Design Guidelines. These guidelines were prepared in response to increasing growth pressures within the municipality's "built boundary". The built boundary at the time was significantly smaller than the "Urban Area" defined by the 2025 Official Plan, and mainly consisted of limited settlement on either side of Main Street, including the "Western Approach Area", the "Community Core Area", and "Eastern Main Street".

The guidelines set out a purpose and scope that focus on evaluating residential intensification proposals located within the Community of Stouffville. They functioned as a companion to the 2002 Community of Stouffville Urban Design Guidelines and were intended to raise design quality while ensuring that higher density housing integrated with established neighbourhoods and streets.

The existing guidelines build on the Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan, which was repealed after the adoption of the 2025 Official Plan. The guidelines translated the Secondary Plan vision into operational objectives that were intended to protect small-town character, create compact and active main streets, secure high quality architecture, support active transportation, and require context-sensitive transitions next to stable low-rise areas. The document provided a toolkit that included orientation and frontage targets, height and massing controls, stepbacks, a 45 degree angular plane, shadow analysis, façade articulation requirements, preferred materials, townhouse form guidance, and parking, access, and servicing strategies that keep the street pedestrian-focused. The guidelines also recommended adoption, transparent design review, and post-occupancy monitoring to refine practice over time.

The 2009 Stouffville Residential Intensification Guidelines prioritized growth along Main Street and addressed a narrow range of building types. The primary focus was on mid-rise mixed-use buildings, walk-up apartments exceeding three storeys, and townhouses, including stacked and back-to-back configurations. Implementation guidance was centered on frontage, massing, stepbacks, and corridor-site parking. The guidelines did not establish a comprehensive framework for smaller, house-scale multi-unit forms on interior neighbourhood lots. The chosen site typologies and design controls were calibrated to underdeveloped commercial parcels, gateway intersections, and heritage main-street frontages, rather than to gentle infill within established residential blocks.

## 3.3 Official Plan Policies for Missing Middle and Infill Development

The Official Plan: Reimagine Stouffville was adopted by the Town in 2025, and approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 2025. The Official Plan contains the Town's vision for the future, and outlines policies which form the basis of all planning documents in the municipality. This includes the Zoning By-law and any applicable Urban Design Guidelines. The Official Plan contains both general and location-specific policies related to missing middle and low-rise housing typologies. These policies include direction on where the uses are permitted, and what their development should look like. These policies are summarized below:

- Community-specific policies (Section 2.2.1) identify Stouffville as the main urban community in the Town, which will accommodate the majority of the anticipated population growth through the Plan's horizon of 2051. Specific policies support the development of a complete community with a compact built form, encouraging efficient use of land through residential intensification. These policies also call for a variety of housing typologies, as well as the expansion of the community into designated Greenfield Areas.
- The Official Plan envisions that the Town will develop into a series of complete communities, and includes policies to support this vision (Section 3.1.1.1). The policies direct the Town to manage growth through an integrated framework that supports healthy, sustainable, and complete communities with a strong economic base. They call for compact, mixed use, pedestrian-friendly, and transit-supportive built form that uses land efficiently and optimizes infrastructure. Community design should promote physical and mental health, inclusivity, and accessibility for all ages and abilities, while encouraging gentle density and a full range of housing options through neighbourhood redevelopment where appropriate. The policies recognize the positive public health role of public service facilities, such as community centres and libraries, and seek a diverse mix of housing types and tenures, affordability, employment opportunities, and well-designed parks, trails, and amenities. They also prioritize protection and enhancement of the natural environment and advance sustainable practices, including by using local materials, reducing energy consumption, and integrating green roofs and water-conserving building design.
- Town-wide urban design policies (Section 3.6.1) envision communities which are held to the highest standard for urban design and architecture. The policies aim to secure high urban design standards that ensure compatible transitions to surrounding uses through carefully-scaled building form, setbacks, and angular planes, while reflecting each community's distinct character. They encourage features that complement established patterns and rhythms without requiring replication, and they seek to showcase the Town's rural identity, agricultural context, and natural environment. The policies promote walkable neighbourhoods and vibrant public spaces by prioritizing pedestrian scale, safety, accessibility, and connectivity, and by applying a community safety approach that fosters belonging in publicly accessible places. They call for a pedestrian-oriented built form with active, all-season streets and, where required, ground-floor retail or community-serving uses. Landscaping should expand the urban tree canopy, provide year-round variety, and support environmental sustainability. Building placement and orientation should strengthen walkability and pedestrian visibility, create attractive streetscapes that support active transportation and road safety, and deliver well-defined, centrally located public spaces that encourage connectivity, physical activity, and social interaction. The policies also support the development of bird-friendly design guidelines, including attention to window areas and building orientation, to improve avian safety.
- The policies in Section 3.2.1 establish clear housing mix targets to broaden choice, with a planned distribution of low, medium, and high-density development across new supply, intensification, and redevelopment. They direct the Town to expand permitted dwelling types and to provide flexibility in land use designations so higher density housing, infill, and non-traditional forms can proceed where appropriate. They encourage cost-effective, compact, and safe construction by allowing modest

amenities and finishes, supporting adaptable unit layouts, and requiring compatibility with surrounding neighbourhoods. They also call for identifying suitable locations for missing middle housing along Regional arterial roads and other major streets.

- The Neighbourhood Area designation (Section 6.4.1) enables a full range of ground-related and missing-middle housing, including single- and semi-detached dwellings, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, and small low-rise apartments, with additional residential units supported where servicing and zoning permit. The policy intent is gentle, context-sensitive intensification that maintains existing neighbourhood scale while broadening housing choice. Heights, setbacks, and lot standards are implemented through the Zoning By-law and guided by urban design policies, and proposals must demonstrate appropriate transitions to adjacent homes through tools such as step-downs, setbacks, orientation, and landscaping.
- The Urban Medium Density Residential Area designation (Section 6.4.2) is the primary location for townhouses in various formats, including stacked, along with small low-rise apartments, and it may also accommodate other small multi-unit forms where context supports them. The planned built form is compact and walkable, with sites typically situated on collector or arterial roads and used as a transition between lower-rise neighbourhoods and higher-intensity areas. Compatibility is managed through step-backs, setbacks, and landscape buffering, along with street-oriented entrances and careful parking placement to reinforce a pedestrian-focused public realm.
- Apartments are the focus in the Urban High Density Residential Area designation (Section 6.4.3), although stacked townhouses or smaller buildings may be used at the edges to create appropriate transitions from taller buildings to the lower heights of nearby neighbourhoods. Sites are generally located on major streets and in transit-supportive places, with a strong expectation for height and massing to taper toward adjoining low-rise areas. Detailed standards are secured through zoning and design review to deliver appropriate transitions and a coherent streetscape.
- The Old Elm – Medium-High Density Residential Area designation (Section 6.4.12) permits a broad mix of townhouse formats and small apartment buildings, and it also contemplates duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes to round out missing-middle supply. The form is compact and pedestrian-oriented to support the Old Elm GO context, with more intense low-rise and modest mid-rise buildings focused on Tenth Line and collector roads and with deliberate stepping down toward established or planned low-rise neighbourhoods. Compatibility and fit are governed by setbacks, buffering, and the Old Elm Urban Design Guidelines, which reinforce street framing, consolidated access, and high-quality frontages
- The Old Elm – Residential Area designation (Section 6.4.13) emphasizes low-rise, ground-related housing such as singles, semis, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and townhouses, along with small apartments and additional residential units where appropriate. The intent is to maintain a neighbourhood scale while increasing choice, placing the more intense low-rise forms (e.g. townhouses) on collector frontages or at key corners and reserving the lower density forms (e.g. semis, duplexes) where the area abuts existing homes. Height and massing must step down at

interfaces, and the Urban Design Guidelines, together with zoning, address privacy, overlook, street framing, and access management along key corridors.

The Official Plan policies noted above clearly prioritize expanded housing mix and intensification within existing neighbourhood areas, which are reflected in the land use designations in Section 6.4 of the Official Plan. While the Official Plan still envisions roughly 41% of all new housing in the Town to be provided in single or semi-detached dwellings (Policy 3.2.1.1 b), the balance of growth and intensification, including the expansion of medium-density and missing middle housing typologies, is largely concentrated to the Community of Stouffville. The Official Plan supplements the permitted uses for each land use designation with broad descriptions of the desired built form which will be defined in greater detail through the Zoning By-law.

### **3.4 Recommendations from the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Initiatives**

The HAF initiatives being advanced by the Town have introduced significant changes to the residential areas of the Town through focused Zoning By-Law Amendments related to housing typologies, parking requirements, Additional Residential Units (ARUs), driveways, building positioning, building heights, lot configuration, and landscaping. While these topics are reviewed in detail in the HAF Initiative 2 Background Report (“Background Report”) and Discussion Paper 5: Residential Areas, the recommendations are summarized below to provide context for the discussion on Urban Design Guidelines for missing middle and infill development.

#### **3.4.1 Building Positioning and Setbacks**

Within the Background Report, setbacks are treated as a primary instrument for balancing neighbourhood character with intensification capacity. The Background Report explains how front, side, and rear setbacks influence street wall continuity, spacing between buildings, tree planting opportunities, and parking accommodation. The alignment of Traditional and New Residential zone standards is recommended in the near-term through the reduction of interior side, rear, and exterior side setbacks to consistent values that support increased infill feasibility with limited neighbourhood character impact. Broad reductions to front yard setbacks to a fixed low standard are not recommended, as this can disrupt consistent building frontages. Instead, a context-sensitive approach is recommended, which allows a front setback to be adjusted based on the average of adjacent buildings, subject to a floor limit. This method aims to support compatibility between new construction and existing conditions, while still providing design flexibility.

#### **3.4.2 Building Heights**

The Background Report links building height to both compatibility and unit feasibility. It notes that the prevailing 10 m height limit supports typical three-storey forms, which accommodate up to four units in many scenarios, but limits more intensive forms such as small apartments or certain townhouse

configurations. The recommended approach is to allow modest additional height in the range of one to two metres for new multi-unit buildings in residential zones to improve design flexibility while maintaining a limited impact on neighbourhood massing. A more strategic option identified through the Background Report suggests pre-zoning select sites for up to four storeys where compatibility is achievable and using conditions such as step-backs and separation distances to further promote compatibility.

### 3.4.3 Lot Configuration

Within the Background Report, lot frontage and lot area standards are considered levers that influence the feasibility of severances and the resulting pattern of intensification. The Background Report explains that reducing these minimums can unlock gentle intensification by enabling the creation of smaller lots that support new dwellings and associated additional units; however, significantly smaller lots may alter neighbourhood appearance by increasing driveway frequency and changing the rhythm of built form. The Background Report recommends that existing lot standards be maintained in the near term, particularly in newer neighbourhoods where reductions are unlikely to yield significant near-term change. It is, however, noted that targeted reductions in older neighbourhoods may be explored at the time of the comprehensive zoning update, informed by character analysis and recent severance and minor variance activity, and accompanied by servicing impact review.

### 3.4.4 Lot Coverage

Lot coverage is addressed through the Background Report as both a built form control and a tool for managing stormwater infiltration and on-site greenspace. It is also noted that current maximums may constrain multi-unit feasibility because reasonable unit floor areas might not be achievable within existing height limits and other envelope constraints. The Background Report also recommends that the provincial requirement for higher maximum lot coverage be permitted for parcels supporting ARUs or multi-unit developments. The recommended short-term approach is to maintain existing lot coverage maximums for single-unit dwellings while increasing the permitted lot coverage to 45 percent for lots with two or more units.

### 3.4.5 Landscaping and Greenery

Landscape retention is identified as a recurring community concern within the Background Report, especially in established areas with significant canopy. It is noted that the Zoning By-law currently regulates landscaped open space in specific ways, while the Tree Protection By-law controls injury and removal of protected tree classes and is administered through the building permit process. For the HAF project, the recommended approach is to rely on the existing Tree Protection By-law in the short term, while considering additional planning and zoning tools through the comprehensive update. The Background Report also identifies options to retain or modestly adjust front yard landscaped open space requirements, including a potential reduction for wider lots to increase parking flexibility, subject to further analysis of impermeable surface impacts and neighbourhood-specific constraints.

### 3.4.6 Driveways and Parking Configuration

Beyond the required parking rate, the Background Report recommends addressing the geometry and placement of parking because these factors affect site functionality and the achievable unit yield. It identifies tandem parking as an efficiency tool that is already permitted for ARUs and suggests that permission be continued, with awareness of potential operational conflicts in multi-unit contexts and the option to add qualifiers. It also recommends considering broader flexibility in parking location, including expanded ability to locate parking in rear and side yard areas, supported by mitigating standards such as screening, landscaped open space minimums, and setback compliance. Wider driveways are acknowledged as a possible tool for accommodating more spaces, but the Report does not recommend that change within the HAF project due to public realm and landscaping impacts, and it defers that issue to the comprehensive zoning work.

### 3.4.7 Residential Intensification

As part of the HAF initiatives, the Town is also considering options to expand zoning permissions for low-rise apartment buildings up to four storeys in height along certain major roads in the Community of Stouffville. These expanded permissions would implement policy direction from the Town's new Official Plan, distinguishing low-rise apartment buildings as any building with more than four dwelling units (i.e., larger than a fourplex). As of the writing of this Discussion Paper, no amendment to the Town's existing Zoning By-law is being brought forward to implement these changes, which require more consideration through the main Zoning By-law Review project. For more information, refer to Discussion Paper 5: Residential Areas.

#### HAF Options for Low-Rise Apartments

**Option 1 | Permit along major roads on select parcels** – Through general provisions, permit low-rise apartment dwellings of 5 or more units if a residential parcel fronting onto Main Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Line, or 10<sup>th</sup> Line can meet the lot requirements set out in the RM1 Zone. Analysis shown in the Background Report shows that the number of parcels that meet these criteria are very limited, though there is potential for developments to proceed following parcel assembly.

**Option 2 | Permit along major roads through broader permissions** – Through rezoning, apply a low-rise residential zone to all residential properties which front onto Main Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Line, or 10<sup>th</sup> Line. The mapping shown in Appendix B reveals that the rezoning approach would enable far more density as-of-right, though ambiguity exists in the approach as to which properties should be included in the rezoning.

## 3.5 Application of Urban Design Guidelines

The construction of missing middle housing typologies can occur in different settings, and it will be prudent for the Town-wide Urban Design Guidelines to consider all potential scenarios when developing guidance for missing middle housing. The following types of activities should be considered:

### Construction of Attached or Detached ARUs

The construction of ARUs on existing residential lots has become a popular method for adding gentle density to neighbourhoods without disrupting character or community function. The Province of Ontario has endorsed ARUs as an intensification strategy. In 2024, O. Reg 299/19 was amended to require zoning by-laws to reduce barriers to ARU development, including:

- Permitting a maximum lot coverage of 45%;
- Removing any limits on floor space index (FSI) established in the Zoning By-law, subject to any maximum height and minimum setback provisions being met;
- Prohibiting angular plane requirements;
- Requiring 4 metres of separation between residential structures on a lot; and,
- Requiring the same minimum lot area for a residential parcel, regardless of whether an ARU is present.

With the relative reduction in control over ARUs in the Zoning By-law, there is an opportunity for Urban Design Guidelines to provide additional clarity on reducing neighbourhood impact where construction of an attached or detached ARU is being considered.

### Conversion of Existing Dwellings

The internal conversion of existing dwelling into multiple dwelling units is a common strategy for residential intensification and has the benefit of requiring very limited external modifications.

### Infill on underutilized sites

Another potential scenario for residential infill is the development of underutilized parcels or buildings. This can involve the severance of larger parcels into two or more developable lots, while retaining the existing dwelling. Urban Design Guidelines can assist in this process by providing guidance on the preferred forms of dwellings based on the size of the severed lot, or guide alternative design solutions.

### Full Redevelopment

The full redevelopment of properties in existing neighbourhoods represents the most substantial physical change to existing built form conditions. This typically involves the demolition of an existing dwelling and

the construction of a new building, which may differ in scale, massing, and site configuration from surrounding development. In this scenario, Urban Design Guidelines can support site design through appropriate building siting, height, massing, and architectural styling.

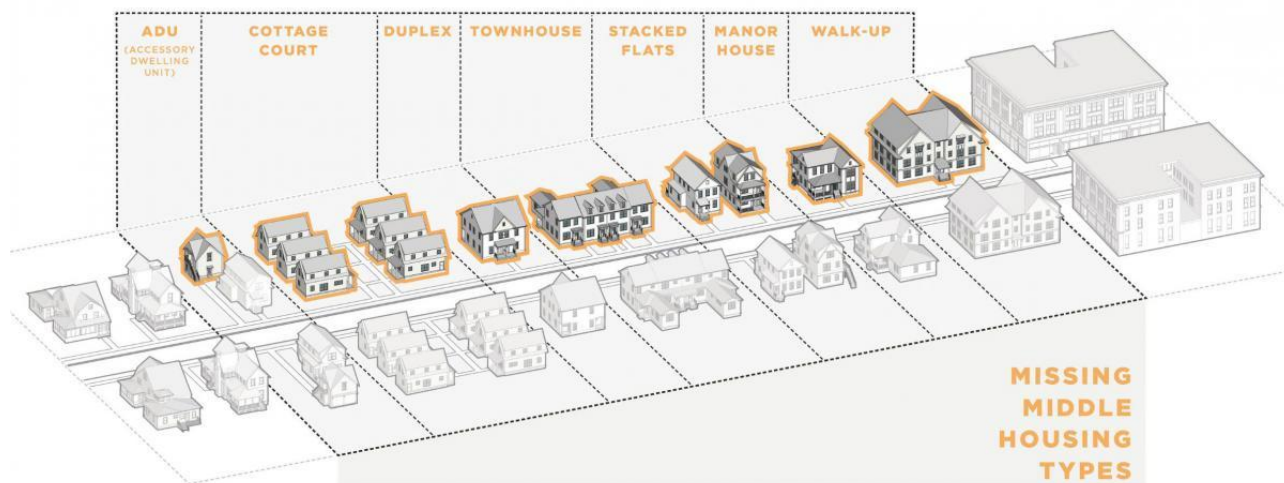
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## 4. Key Issues

The development of urban design guidance for missing middle and infill developments in the Town should be informed by the range of potential housing typologies that could be built, as well as a consideration of key issues related to each typology. This section reviews the variety of typologies present in the “missing middle”, and reviews key design matters which should be addressed through the Town’s Zoning By-law.

### 4.1 What is the “Missing Middle”?

The “missing middle” refers to residential buildings that contain a higher density than a single detached house but lower density than a mid-rise building, ideally at different thresholds of affordability to deliver a full range and mix of housing options. Mid-range housing types and densities are intended to fit within the context of existing lower density and higher multiple unit density housing, which helps the Town achieve a full range of housing (**Figure 3-1**).



**Figure 3-1: Missing Middle Housing typologies (Source: The Congress for New Urbanism)**

The missing middle encompasses a variety of housing typologies, and the Town has adequately supported some forms within the Community of Stouffville. Townhouses and semi-detached dwellings have become increasingly available within Stouffville through the New Residential zones. Additional Residential Units (ARUs) have also received specific planning policy changes as a result of new Provincial regulations, as well as recent changes through the HAF project.

## 4.1.1 Housing Typologies

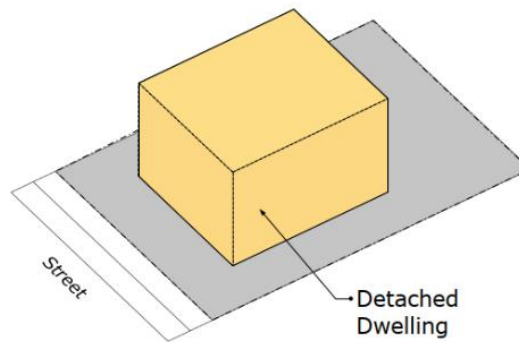
There are a variety of housing typologies that would fall under the Official Plan’s definition of “low-rise” residential development. Many of these typologies are considered missing middle housing, while others are key components of the existing residential neighbourhoods in the Town.

### Single Detached Dwelling

A single detached house is a completely separate house sitting on its own lot. A single detached house is allowed to include up to two “additional residential units” on the lot.

Current Zoning Regulations:

- Zones permitted in: R1, R2, R3, R4, New RN1, RN2, RN3
- Minimum lot size: 200 m<sup>2</sup> to 555 m<sup>2</sup>
- Minimum lot frontage: 6 m to 18 m
- Minimum front yard setback: 3 to 7.5 m
- Minimum interior side yard setback: 1.2 m to 1.5 m
- Minimum exterior side yard setback: 3 m to 4 m
- Minimum rear yard setback: 7 m to 7.5 m
- Maximum lot coverage: 35% to 43%
- Maximum height: 10 m



**Figure 4-1: An example (Top), and a diagram of a single detached dwelling (Bottom)**

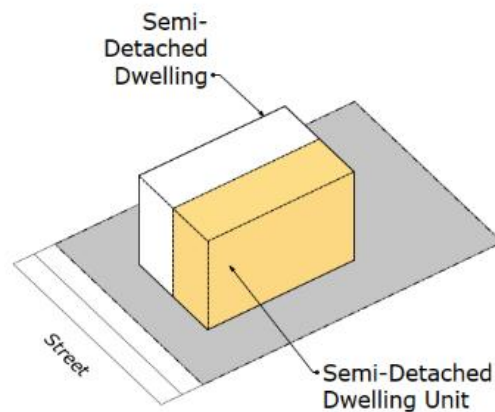
## Semi-Detached Dwelling

A semi-detached house is one of two residential buildings that are attached and share a vertical separation wall on the lot-line with another semi-detached house. Two semi-detached houses can be located on a single lot, but they are usually divided with each unit under separate ownership and with separate water/sewer connections. Both of the units can be owned by one person, in which case one or both units is rented. However it is more common for semi-detached houses to be individual freehold, especially semi-detached houses that are more recently constructed.

The City of Ottawa regulates a form of back-to-back residential infill housing called the long semi-detached dwelling, or the “long semi”. This housing typology is similar to a regular semi-detached dwelling in that it has two units in a single building which are vertically separated, and are often on separate lots. The difference is the orientation, as long semis are typically developed on narrow urban infill lots, with the land severance taking the form of a flag lot for the rear dwelling unit.

### Current Zoning Regulations:

- Zones permitted in: R3, R4, RN3, RN4
- Minimum lot size: 195 m<sup>2</sup> to 370 m<sup>2</sup>
- Minimum lot frontage: 6 m to 12 m
- Minimum front yard setback: 3.0 m to 7.5 m
- Minimum interior side yard setback: 1.2 m to 1.5 m (0 m along common wall)
- Minimum exterior side yard setback: 3.0 m to 4.0 m
- Minimum rear yard setback: 7.0 m to 7.5 m



**Figure 4-2: An example (Top), and a diagram of a semi-detached dwelling (Bottom)**

- Maximum lot coverage: 35% to 42%
- Maximum height: 10 m

### Townhouse Dwelling

A townhouse is one of three or more residential buildings that are attached to one another via shared vertical dividing walls. The term ‘townhouse’ can sometimes refer to the connected row of houses as a whole or to each individual townhouse unit. Townhouses may also be referred to as “Rowhouses”.

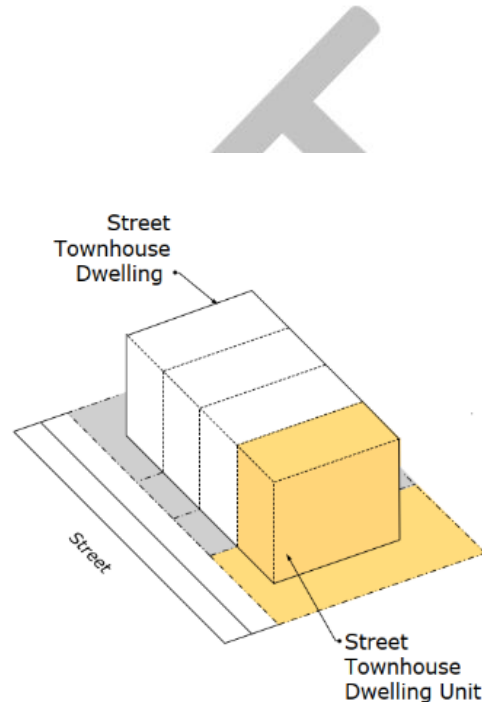
Townhouses can take many different forms. Each townhouse unit may be located on an individual lot (privately owned) or it may be part of a condominium, discussed above.

When townhouse developments form part of a condominium, they are sometimes referred to as “cluster townhouses” (or “block townhouses”) but they would appear similar to freehold townhouses, except that there are elements of the development that are commonly owned by all owners of the condominium, such as roads, parking areas, and amenity spaces. Cluster townhouses can also take the form of purpose-built rental, where every unit is rented and the overall development is owned by one organization who maintains the units and the property.

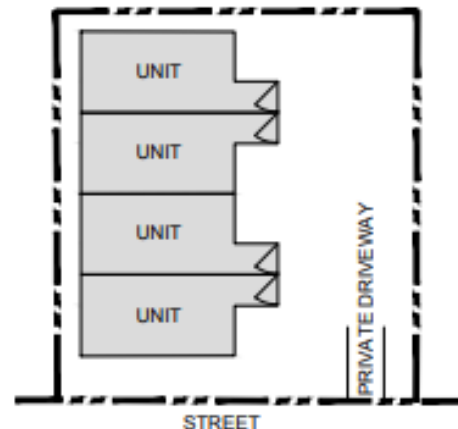
Furthermore, in accordance with Provincial requirements, each townhouse lot is allowed to have up to two additional residential units such as a basement apartment and a tiny home in the backyard.

### Current Zoning Regulations:

- Zones permitted in: R4, RM1, RN4
- Minimum lot size: 153 m<sup>2</sup> to 222 m<sup>2</sup> (per unit)



Street Townhouse (Each Townhouse is on a Separate Lot)



Block or Cluster Townhouse (All townhouses are part of one lot and a plan of condominium)

- Minimum lot frontage: 6 m to 6 m (per unit)
- Minimum front yard setback: 3 m to 4.5 m
- Minimum interior side yard setback: 1.2 m to 1.2 m (0 m along common wall)
- Minimum exterior side yard setback: 3.0 m to 4.5 m
- Minimum rear yard setback: 6.0 m to 7.5 m
- Maximum lot coverage: Not specified
- Maximum height: 10 m



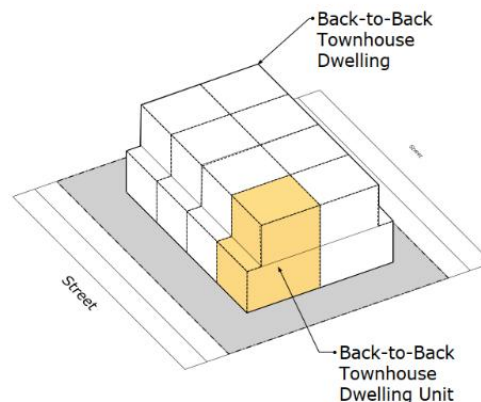
**Figure 4-3: Diagram of a street townhouse (Top), diagram of a block townhouse (Middle), and an example of a street townhouse (Bottom)**

### Back-to-Back Townhouses

Back-to-back townhouses are a townhouse variant where two or more townhouse units share a side wall, as well as a rear wall with the unit behind them. Each unit typically has their own private entrance, but may not have a backyard.

Current Zoning Regulations:

- Zones permitted in: RN4
- Minimum lot size: 80 m<sup>2</sup> (per unit)
- Minimum lot frontage: 6 m (per unit)
- Minimum front yard setback: 3.0 m
- Minimum interior side yard setback: 0 m
- Minimum exterior side yard setback: 3.0 m
- Minimum rear yard setback: Not specified
- Maximum lot coverage: Not specified
- Maximum height: 10 m



**Figure 4-4: Example (Top) and diagram of a back-to-back townhouse**

## Duplex Dwelling

A duplex is a term used to refer to a two-unit house on a lot. The units are separated horizontally. When units are divided vertically with a common wall, they are typically referred to as a semi-detached house, as defined above.

Current Zoning Regulations:

- Zones permitted in: R3, R4, RN4
- Minimum lot size: 222 m<sup>2</sup> to 370 m<sup>2</sup>
- Minimum lot frontage: 6 m to 12 m
- Minimum front yard setback: 3 m to 7.5 m
- Minimum interior side yard setback: 1.2 m to 1.5 m
- Minimum exterior side yard setback: 3 m to 4 m
- Minimum rear yard setback: 7 m to 7.5 m
- Maximum lot coverage: 35% to 42%
- Maximum height: 10 m

## Triplex Dwelling

A triplex is a detached building on a lot that contains three dwelling units and where the units are divided horizontally or a combination of horizontal and vertical divisions. Access to the units is usually provided by exterior private doorways to each unit. Note that when three attached units are divided vertically by shared common walls, they are usually referred to as townhouses.

In the current Zoning By-law, triplexes are considered apartment dwellings, and must follow these regulations:

- Zones permitted in: RM1, RM2, RN5
- Minimum lot size: 222 m<sup>2</sup> to 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> (0.3 ha)

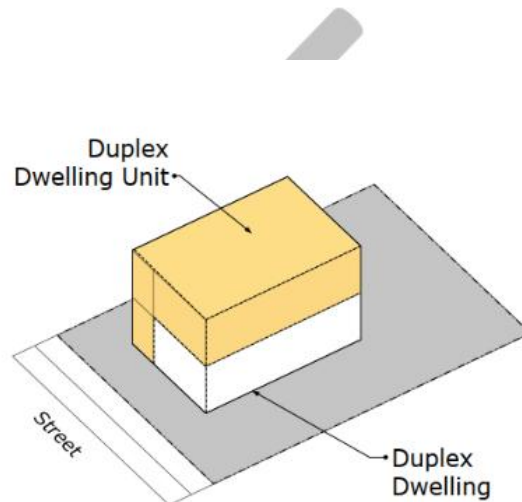
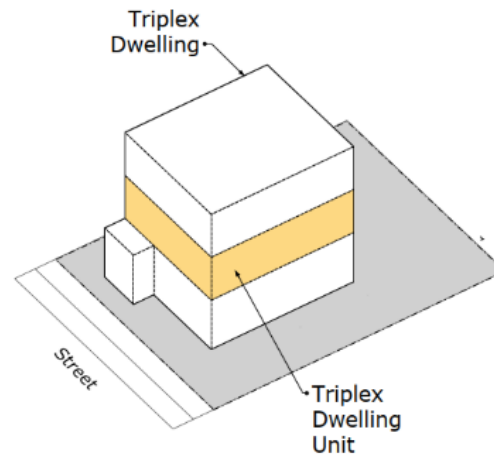


Figure 4-5: Diagram of a duplex dwelling



- Minimum lot frontage: 20 m
- Minimum front yard setback: 4.5 m to 6.0 m
- Minimum interior side yard setback: 6.0 m
- Minimum exterior side yard setback: 4.5 m to 6.0 m
- Minimum rear yard setback: 6.0 m
- Maximum lot coverage: 35% to 35%
- Maximum height: 12 m to 20 m



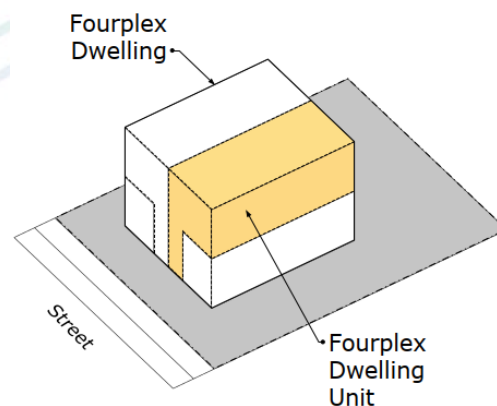
**Figure 4-6: Example (Top) and diagram (Bottom) of a triplex dwelling**

### Fourplex

A fourplex is usually defined as any detached building that contains four separate housing units. The units may be accessed via private exterior doorways, or there may be a shared interior access. Note that when four attached units are divided vertically by shared common walls, they are usually referred to as townhouses.

In the current Zoning By-law, fourplexes are considered apartment dwellings, and must follow these regulations:

- Zones permitted in: RM1, RM2, RN5
- Minimum lot size: 222 m<sup>2</sup> to 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> (0.3 ha)
- Minimum lot frontage: 20 m
- Minimum front yard setback: 4.5 m to 6.0 m
- Minimum interior side yard setback: 6.0 m
- Minimum exterior side yard setback: 4.5 m to 6.0 m
- Minimum rear yard setback: 6.0 m
- Maximum lot coverage: 35% to 35%
- Maximum height: 12 m to 20 m



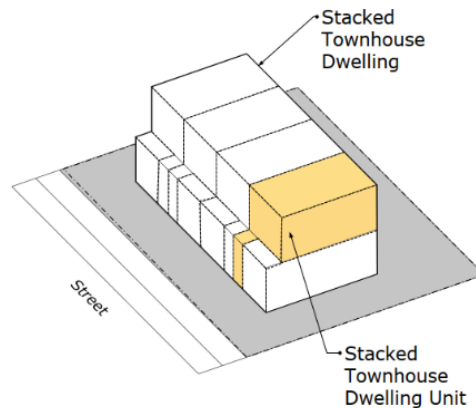
**Figure 4-7: Diagram of a fourplex**

### Stacked Townhouse Dwelling

A stacked townhouse is essentially a low-rise apartment building where the unit entrances are on the exterior, with stairways used to access the entrances. Since there are typically no elevators provided, stacked townhouses will usually be limited to 3-4 storeys. The configuration of the units will vary, as some stacked townhouses will have multi-floor units and others will have one-floor units. Parking is usually provided on a lot or in a garage on the property.

Current Zoning Regulations:

- Zones permitted in: RM2, RN4
- Minimum lot size: 145 m<sup>2</sup> (per unit)
- Minimum lot frontage: 6 m (per unit)
- Minimum front yard setback: 3.0 m
- Minimum interior side yard setback: 0 m
- Minimum exterior side yard setback: 3.0 m
- Minimum rear yard setback: 6.0 m
- Maximum lot coverage: Not specified
- Maximum height: 12 m



**Figure 4-8: Example (Top) and diagram of a stacked townhouse dwelling**

### Apartment

An apartment building is a single building consisting of more than three individual dwelling units with common walls and/or floors dividing the units. The units are accessed via common hallways and a common exterior entrance.

Apartment buildings may be developed as rental buildings or condominiums, depending on the ownership structure. In condominium apartment buildings, individual dwelling units are privately owned, while common elements, such as lobbies, corridors, and amenity spaces, are jointly owned and



maintained by a condominium corporation. By contrast, in purpose-built rental apartment buildings, all dwelling units are typically owned and managed by a single entity.

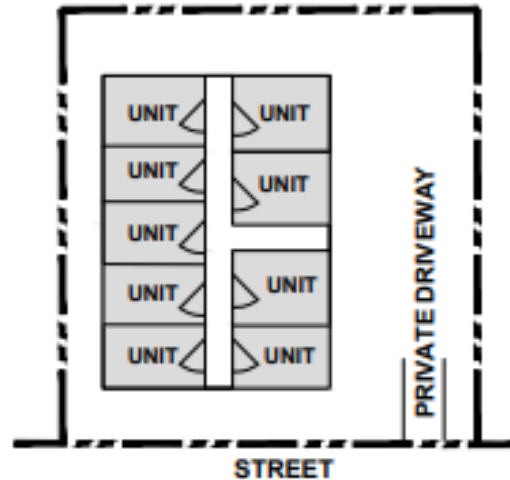
Current Zoning Regulations:

- Zones permitted in: RM1, RM2, RN5
- Minimum lot size: 222 m<sup>2</sup> to 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> (0.3 ha)
- Minimum lot frontage: 20 m
- Minimum front yard setback: 4.5 m to 6.0 m
- Minimum interior side yard setback: 6.0 m
- Minimum exterior side yard setback: 4.5 m to 6.0 m
- Minimum rear yard setback: 6.0 m
- Maximum lot coverage: 35% to 35%
- Maximum height: 12 m to 20 m

### Cottage Court

Cottage courts, also known as cluster housing, are a building typology that places a group of smaller (1 to 1.5 storey) detached structures on a single property, and arrange them around a shared courtyard. Cottage courts typically follow a condominium format, though they differ from block townhouses in the creation of multiple standalone structures, and are meant to provide gentle intensification on smaller lots.

The current Zoning By-law does not provide specific regulation of cottage courts, though it does prohibit multiple standalone dwelling units that are not detached ARUs except as established on a plan of condominium.



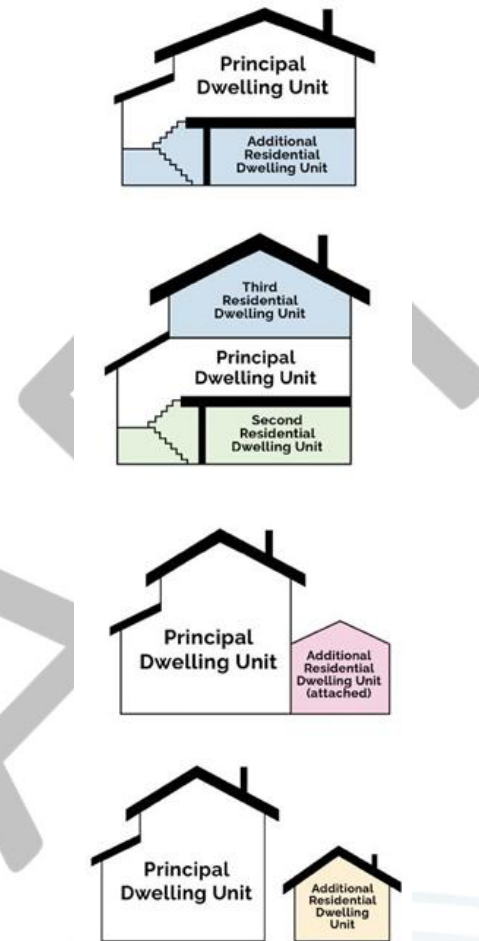
**Figure 4-9: Example (Top) and diagram (Bottom) of an apartment dwelling**



**Figure 4-10: Example of a Cottage Court (Source: Congress for New Urbanism)**

**Additional Residential Unit**

An additional residential unit refers to a dwelling unit that is “additional” to a single detached house, semi-detached house, or a townhouse dwelling.

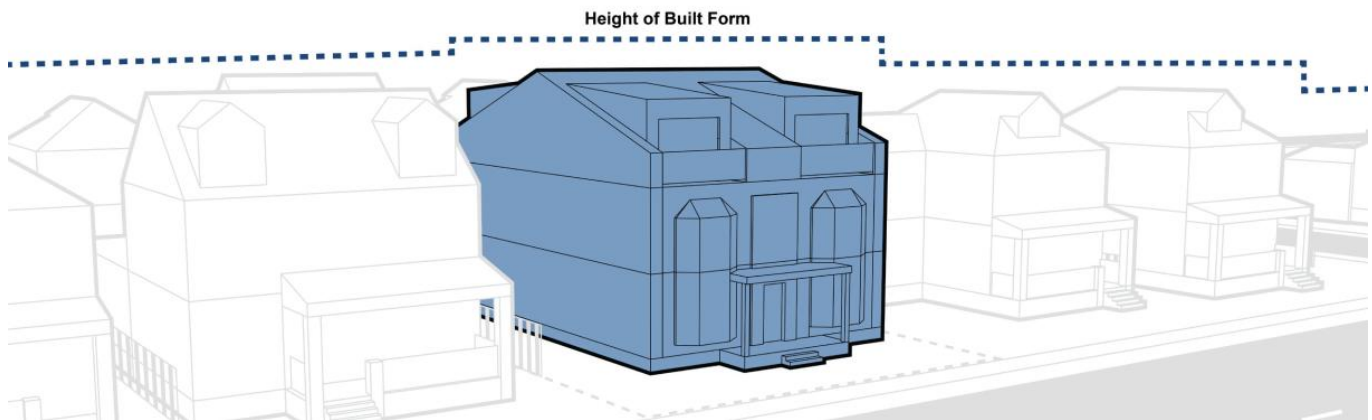


**Figure 4-11: Typologies of ARUs**

**4.2 Key Site Design Matters**

**Building Height**

Building height is often one of the most visually prominent characteristics of new developments, which makes the height of infill development a strong focus of community interest and municipal regulation.



**Figure 4-12: Building height diagram (Source: City of Hamilton)**

Building height is one of the key regulations defined within the Zoning By-law. However, strict height regulations are often a point of contention with the development community, as strict definitions of height often conflict with architectural styling. To provide more flexibility while retaining general character, some municipalities have begun regulating structure height using the more abstract unit of “storeys”. This helps alleviate pressures on the architectural design, though the broad definition can result in unintended consequences for the build form of the neighbourhood.

There are also potential variations on height limits through the definitions applied within the Zoning By-law. The Town’s in-effect Zoning By-law defines height using a series of potential scenarios:

“**Height:** the greatest vertical distance between the average grade level and:

- i) in the case of a flat roof, the highest point of the building;
- ii) in the case of a pitched roof, including a mansard roof, a point located one half of the vertical distance between the eaves and the ridge of the roof;
- iii) in the case of a roof having any eave less than 2 m grade, a point three quarters of the vertical distance between the eave and the ridge of the roof, measured from the eave;
- iv) in the case of a roof having a dome, a point located one half of the vertical distance between the eaves and the ridge of the roof; or
- v) in the case of a “Quonset” building or an air supported structure, the highest point of the building.”

This definition relies on the process dictated in the Zoning By-law for determining what the average grade is. In this case, average grade is determined by measuring the average elevation of the ground level at each wall of a building.

Urban Design Guidelines have been used by other municipalities such as Hamilton to provide broad direction on building heights for infill development. Where possible, however, it is generally preferable to

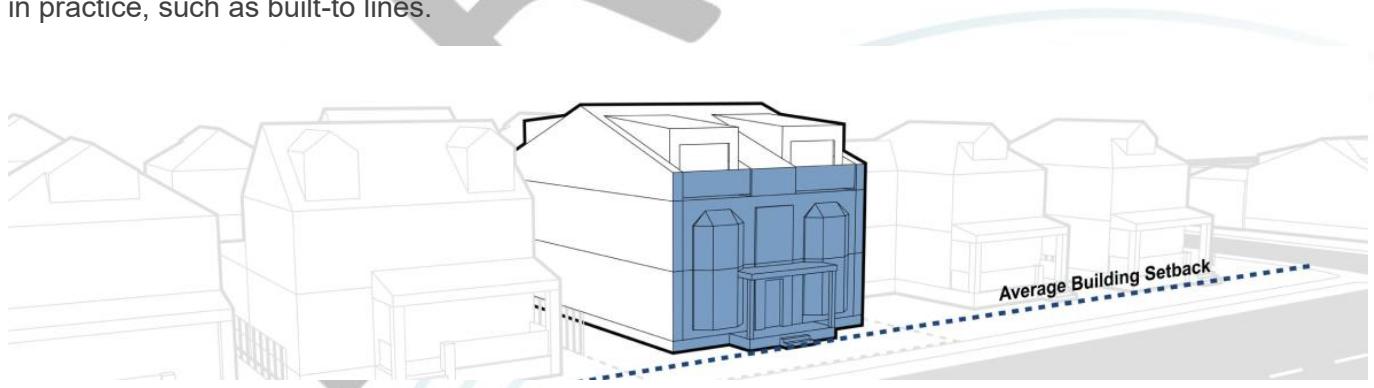
provide a more prescriptive approach to regulation that is sensitive to the local context, rather than relying on general directions. This approach provides stronger support for compatibility with surrounding uses.

## Building Positioning

As the Town’s residential areas begin to intensify, there is a potential for privacy impacts through buildings being built too close to neighbouring properties. For instance, structures that are taller or located further towards the rear of the property than the neighbouring homes may have windows that overlook into rear yards. These concerns should be reflected in the urban design guidance of the Town, though there is potential to minimize adverse effects through zoning regulations as well.

The current Zoning By-law regulates building positioning and placement through minimum required yards and setbacks. By prescribing how far a building can be from any given lot line, the options for where a building can be built are generally confined to a consistent placement across all lots in a given zone. However, the outcomes of using setbacks to prescribe building placement become far less predictable on larger lots. For instance, a 7 m setback from the property line will be far more restrictive on a 30 m lot than a 250 m lot. To address these challenges, zoning by-laws can incorporate additional levers, such as maximum building setbacks, built-to lines, and landscaped buffer requirements to further refine building placement and regulate neighbourhood character through granular details.

Given the removal of missing middle housing typologies from the purview of Site Plan Control, Urban Design Guidelines are no longer the appropriate tool for the regulation of building siting. Instead, Urban Design Guidelines can support this regulation by providing visual examples of the various zoning levers in practice, such as built-to lines.



**Figure 4-13: A visual description of a built-to line. (Source: Hamilton Neighbourhood Infill Design Guidelines)**

## Additional Residential Units

Detached and integrated ARUs are a Provincially mandated form of gentle intensification that result in modest built-form changes. Detached ARUs exist within accessory structures, and are typically located entirely within the rear yard of the principal dwelling unit. Conversely, integrated ARUs can be located entirely within the envelope of the principal dwelling, or exist in an addition that is attached to the

principal dwelling. The construction of ARUs is intended to be minimally impactful to the surrounding properties, though there are challenges involved with increased density that will need to be addressed through the Town's Zoning By-Law.

For instance, both integrated and detached ARUs have the potential to reduce the privacy of the neighbouring properties through overlook into rear yards. There are also challenges related to increased vehicle parking, as discussed in the Driveways section (in an upcoming section).

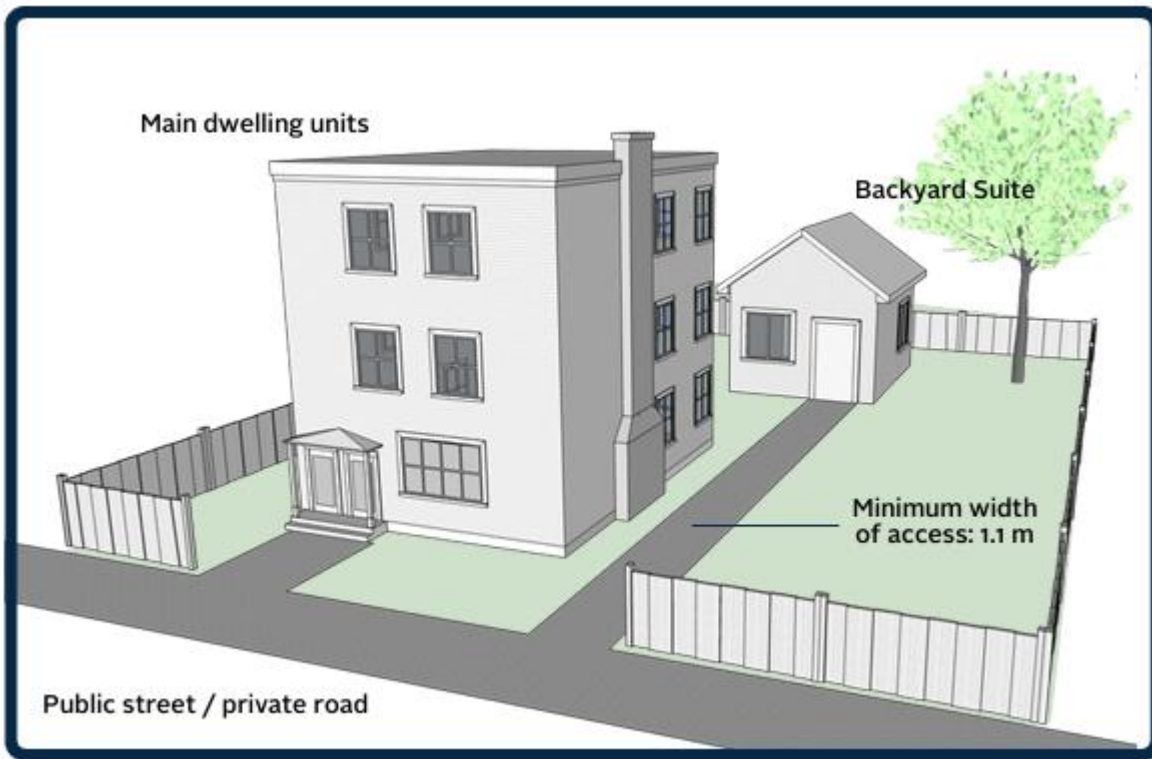
The Zoning By-law is limited in its ability to regulate ARU siting and design due to recent Provincial interventions. As noted in Section 3.5 of this Paper, the siting and lot configurations for properties with ARUs have been dictated through O. Reg 299/19. However, the Zoning By-law can still require additional screening to encourage privacy between uses.

Urban Design Guidelines can provide more specific direction to reduce concerns related to privacy, such as detailed landscaped buffer guidelines or direction on building massing to avoid overlook issues.

## Access to Units

Consideration must be made for the ways in which residential units are accessed. For example, the construction of detached ARUs with unclear access to the road or frontage can cause challenges, such as barriers to emergency services (e.g., not having clear access to get into a unit in an emergency). Potential impacts to adjacent property privacy can also cause concerns if, for example, access to a converted multi-unit dwelling is provided through a narrow interior side yard, which faces into the neighbouring property.

The current Zoning By-law contains levers which could be used to address these issues. Many Site-specific Exception zones define required walkway access for specific uses, and even define walkway width as 1.5 m in these cases. This could be applied to the general provisions, as was done in Halifax (**Figure 4-14**). In this case, Urban Design Guidelines are able to provide further guidance on items regulated by the Zoning By-law.



**Figure 4-14: Diagram of access requirement for "Backyard Suites" (Detached ARUs) from the Halifax Regional Municipality**

## Amenity Spaces

Amenity spaces are typically required for multi-unit dwellings of a certain size, though the zoning by-law is limited in prescribing what these amenity spaces can look like. The current Zoning By-law requires a minimum of 2 m<sup>2</sup> of indoor amenity space (i.e., indoor common areas for residents of the building, such as indoor pools, activity rooms, fitness facilities, lounges, or similar uses) for every apartment dwelling unit in a building with 18 or more units. Exception zones also require outdoor amenity spaces on certain developments, but they are not required in any parent zone. While amenity space is not required for any missing middle housing typologies, the provision of on-site amenities greatly improve the quality of life for residents, and should therefore be encouraged.

Outdoor amenity spaces, such as balconies, porches, decks, or at grade spaces are typically encouraged through Urban Design Guidelines. Specific guidance can include requirements for amenity spaces to have direct access to sunlight, be contiguous or have minimum size requirements, and recommend utilizing rooftops for outdoor amenity space.

## Front Yard Parking

Building facades are a significant contributor to neighbourhood character. Consequently, the expansion of driveways into front yards to serve as parking represents a marked shift in the character of a neighbourhood. It is a best practice to discourage front yard parking wherever possible in residential areas.

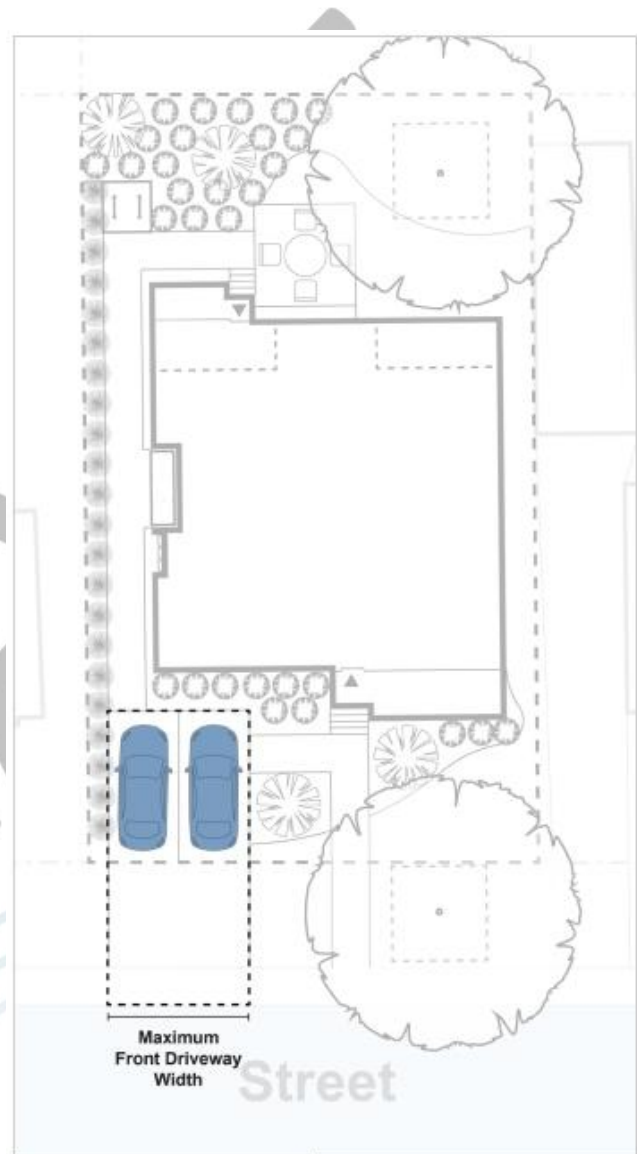
The current Zoning By-law prohibits parking in front yards in all residential zones, with the exception of driveways provided for access to garages, or a single parking pad with a maximum size of 2.75 m by 5.5 m. The Zoning By-law also permits circular driveways, which are more common on larger parcels in the less urban portions of the Town. The Zoning By-law restricts driveway width, though it does make concessions for properties with three-car garages.

Zoning by-laws can incorporate prescriptive standards for front yards that have the effect of limiting front yard parking, such as minimum soft landscaping percentages.

Urban Design Guidelines can support the Zoning By-law's provisions by providing visual examples of the provisions. The Urban Design Guidelines can also incorporate guidance around alternative solutions for parking, such as side yard and rear yard parking pads.

## Rear and Side Yard Parking

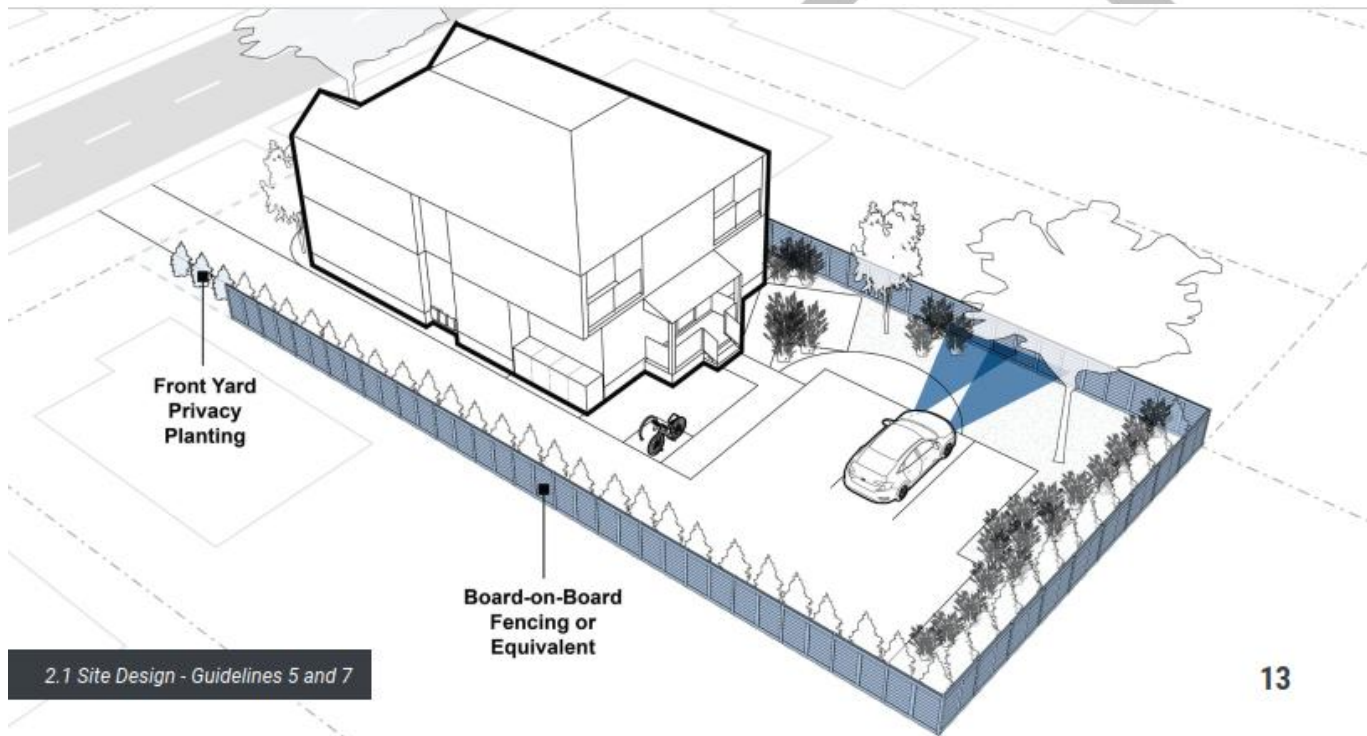
To preserve neighbourhood character and reduce the impact of increased parking needs on the streetscape, side and rear yard parking become one of the primary options for infill and missing middle housing. The existing Zoning By-law already encourages side and rear yard parking through strict



**Figure 4-15: Front yard parking guidelines (Source: City of Hamilton)**

restrictions on front and exterior side yard parking. Nonetheless, the Zoning By-law can do more to support this type of parking configuration, such as by providing increased side yard setback requirements to provide room for a driveway leading to the rear yard. Where intensification is proposed, shared or grouped parking should be encouraged. This helps reduce the number of driveway entrances along the street and supports a more continuous, attractive streetscape.

The Urban Design Guidelines can support this effort by providing visual examples of how side and rear yard parking could work on urban sites, as shown in **Figure 4-16**. Rear and side yard parking still have the potential to be visible from the street, and Urban Design Guidelines can provide strategies for screening these areas.



**Figure 4-16: Parking Site Design Example (Source: City of Hamilton)**

## Driveways

As residential intensification increases demand for off-street parking and driveway space, there is a potential for driveways to “dominate” the front yard of developments with multiple units. Driveways are the only portion of a front yard where vehicle parking can be appropriate in a residential setting. Zoning by-laws are the primary regulatory tool for municipalities to manage driveways. The current Zoning By-law dictates the maximum width, minimum setback from properties, and the maximum number of driveways for all residential zones. Zoning by-laws in Ontario can also regulate the placement of a

driveway on the lot as it relates to structures. For instance, the City of Waterloo prohibits driveways from being located in front of habitable portions of a building.

Urban Design Guidelines cannot enforce specific standards for driveways, but they can set design expectations related to reducing impacts on the sidewalk and street, accessibility, streetscape quality, and driveway materials.

## Garages

Garages are a significant amenity offered to lower density dwellings, though their placement and orientation can have significant impacts on urban design and streetscapes. Integrated double or triple garages can dominate a building façade, leading to less inviting and pedestrian friendly streetscapes.

The current Zoning By-law has limited guidance on garages, recognizing them as a normal part of a residential property. Integrated garages are considered a part of the main building and have limited restrictions, while detached garages are treated as accessory structures subject to specific size and siting requirements.

The Urban Design Guidelines can provide guidance related to reducing garage dominance, limiting visual mass and projection, and guiding garage placement to rear lanes. For example, design guidance could encourage homes to be positioned closer to the street, with garages set back or located behind the main dwelling, so that they do not dominate the home's appearance from the street. Urban Design Guidelines can also speak to the relationship of garages to other design topics, such as driveways, landscaping, and pedestrian access to the main dwelling.



**Figure 4-17: A front yard parking pad (Source: Town of Newmarket)**

## Shared Access

To maximize landscaping and minimize the number of access points onto a road, some developments have incorporated shared driveways and walkways. This would mean that two or more properties would share a single access point, often placed on the property line between the properties, as shown in **Figure 4-18**. These arrangements usually rely on shared access rights registered on both properties and are often managed through a condominium ownership structure. This arrangement is most common when two adjacent properties



**Figure 4-18: An example of a shared driveway (Source: The City of Ottawa)**

are redeveloped at the same time by the same developer. Shared driveways are a good solution for missing middle typologies located on narrow, deep lots, such as long semi-detached dwellings.

The Zoning By-law can permit shared driveways, though mandating shared driveways for infill developments may cause additional frustration for property owners, especially if only a single site is being redeveloped.

Urban Design Guidelines could play a larger role in the creation of shared access arrangements by providing specific guidance on the design and treatment.

## Landscaping and Trees

Landscaping and tree cover are core components of neighbourhood character and identity. As neighbourhoods intensify, there is often a need to remove existing landscaped space and trees to make room for larger structures, parking, or construction activity. Zoning By-laws can require high-level landscaping requirements and often include granular details around the required composition of soft landscaping. Tree Protection By-laws, by contrast, control injury and removal of protected tree classes. Where landscaping requirements in Zoning By-laws are overly prescriptive, however, even slight site variations can necessitate a minor variance application. Urban Design Guidelines can help address this challenge by offering flexible, yet thoughtful, guidance on landscaping approaches.

Examples of topics appropriate for Urban Design Guidelines include specific species of trees and other foliage to be included in landscape design, strategies to maximize on-site benefits of soft landscaping, and technical specifications related to soil volume and composition. Urban Design Guidelines can also provide best practices for developments with existing trees on site, as shown in **Figure 4-19**. It should

also be noted that trees can be regulated through standalone by-laws, which often include replacement provisions for any trees removed as part of the development process.

## Permeability

As mentioned, increased intensification on residential lots will inherently involve a larger portion of the parcel being covered in surfaces which are impermeable to water. Rain and other forms of surface water require permeable ground materials such as grass and other soft landscaping in order to be absorbed into the water table. If water cannot be absorbed into the ground, it begins to accumulate, and increases the risk of flooding.

Zoning by-laws cannot dictate materials used for landscaping, but they can regulate permeability through specific measures, such as limiting lot coverage will reduce the portion of land covered by structures. This can be complemented by landscaping requirements that dictate a percentage of landscaping required in yards.

Urban Design Guidelines can be used to promote the incorporation of permeable materials by providing examples and best practices for infill development. Urban Design Guidelines can also be used to add additional context to the zoning regulations, as shown in **Figure 4-20**.



**Figure 4-19: Permeable surfaces (Source: City of Ottawa)**

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## 5. Key Principles for Missing Middle and Infill Development

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This Discussion Paper has reviewed policies and zoning around missing middle housing and infill development, and also highlighted best practices for consideration. As a result of this discussion, the following general principles and key matters are proposed for further consultation:

- **Urban Design Guidelines should not suggest treatments which would be inconsistent with other regulations or legislation** – Some treatments have specific requirements which are set out in Provincial regulations, such as accessibility features. Urban Design Guidelines should be cognizant of other regulations for topics they engage with.
- **The Zoning By-law should enforce non-negotiable urban design standards** – With changes to the Provincial legislative and policy context, only the Zoning By-law can be enforced by a municipality. Any major urban design treatments should therefore be included as zoning regulations wherever possible to maintain the intention of the Urban Design Guidelines.
- **Infill and missing middle development should prioritize the public realm** – New development in existing residential areas should strengthen the street by improving tree coverage, promoting walkability, and enforcing a human-scaled street wall.
- **Urban design guidance should define compatibility as a performance standard** – Compatibility should be measured by impacts to neighbouring properties, such as shadows, overlook, and massing transitions as opposed to mimicking architectural styling.
- **Missing middle housing typologies should incorporate site design guidance that addresses key design elements** – Each unit should be built with consideration to the full range of site design elements that influence neighbourhood fit and livability, including building form and positioning, access, parking, amenity space, landscaping, and the relationship between buildings and the street.