

# RA9 High Rise Apartment Zone Review

## Recommendation:

That the June 7, 2017, Sustainable Development report CR\_4624, be received for information.

## Report Summary

**This report identifies barriers to development of modest high rise apartments within the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9), and proposes a work program to address the barriers through text amendments to the zone.**

## Report

### Background and Timing

In 2013, Administration initiated a review of the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9). A draft bylaw was produced and shared with stakeholders in April 2014, and a stakeholder workshop was held in July, 2014. Due to changing priorities, the project was put on hold and industry was advised.

In 2015 and 2016 the development industry requested that Administration restart the review. The Zoning Bylaw 2017 Work Plan identified this work for completion later this year, with presentation to Council in the first quarter of 2018.

Timing of this renewed work aligns with a related initiative on urban design guidelines for midrise and highrise buildings and public amenities in Site Specific Direct Control Provisions (DC2). The High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) update may incorporate the findings of this concurrent work as it is completed. The stated General Purpose of the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) is “to provide for High Rise Apartment buildings.” The areas of the City with the most High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) sites are the Olivier, Garneau, Strathcona, Cromdale, Boyle Street, and Parkdale neighbourhoods. The distribution of these sites is shown in Attachment 1 - Map of High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) Properties.

The zone is underused as a result of incompatible regulations that do not function to allow high rise development to be attained on most sites. An absence of urban design regulations also leads to uncertainty about the compatibility of development with its surroundings in established areas. Revising the general purpose of the zone would create opportunity to tailor this zone for urban neighbourhood lot consolidation and redevelopment; development along main street commercial areas, or major corridors; and within close proximity to transit stations.

A 15 to 18 storey residential apartment is a normal high rise for a mid to large sized city. This scale of building is what will be commonly used in master-planned transit oriented development going forward. The alternative to using a standard high rise

apartment zone, is doing all transit oriented development as Site Specific Direct Control Provisions (DC2) rezoning, which is cumbersome due to the length of time and involvement required to complete the process. Site Specific Direct Control Provisions (DC2) are also very specific and therefore do not offer flexibility to develop product that aligns with market changes. Buildings greater than 18 storeys required close review and extra attention offered by the Site Specific Direct Control Provisions (DC2) to mitigate the potential impacts of high rise development. The Site Specific Direct Control Provisions (DC2) can also ensure a sensitive addition to the neighbourhood while enhancing livability.

Exceptional high rise apartments are currently approved through the Site Specific Direct Control Provisions (DC2) rezoning and a subsequent Development Permit, or through the Development Permit process for sites in the Downtown. The Downtown Special Area zones were updated in 2010 to include additional regulations to address increased height and to add design regulations. Permits issued for high rise residential development in the Downtown included a number of towers in the Heritage Area Zone (HA), the Jasper Avenue Main Street Zone (JAMSC), and the Urban Warehouse Zone (UW). In the past six years only ten projects have been permitted and completed in the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9); and only one in 2016.

### Other Jurisdictions

Administration reviewed the approach to high rise development in Canada and found standard high rise apartment zones are used to routinely permit high rise development in the following cities: Calgary, Victoria, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Mississauga, Toronto, and Halifax. The relevant land use regulations are provided for reference in Attachment 2 - High Rise Building Zoning Approach in Other Jurisdictions.

### Issues and Challenges with High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9)

Renewed engagement with industry and community stakeholders in the first quarter of 2017 explored stakeholder's values and priorities. Stakeholders identified several issues and challenges with the current High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9), as follows:

- the general purpose is not descriptive enough
- the regulations do not enable the development of high rise on a typical site; various requirements of the zone make it difficult to achieve high rise development on urban sites, and require a large tract of land for suburban sites
- the list of uses does not provide a mix of residential, residential-related, and non-residential uses that would be compatible on a high rise apartment site
- the setbacks do not contribute to, or reinforce, the pedestrian shopping street design, and they also make redevelopment and lot-assembly more difficult
- increasingly, Site Specific Direct Control Provisions (DC2) have been used to authorize high rise apartment development

- Absence of urban design regulations to shape the built form, and ensure integration of the architecture to the surrounding development, leaves little confidence in using the zone.

The results of initial consultations are presented in Attachment 3 - What We Heard and Insight Survey Results. The engagement identified several ways to improve the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9); including updating the zone, and creating a new high rise apartment zone(s). Based on the feedback received, as well as analysis of the existing High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9), Administration has identified an approach for improving the opportunity for permitting high rise development through a standard zone.

### Utilization of the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9)

A technical analysis of the current High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) reveals there are 421 titled parcels with High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9). Of these parcels,

- 36.8 percent are built to their development potential (high rise development, either as condominium, rental, or seniors housing)
- 37.1 percent contain low density residential development (Single detached, Single detached with a suite, Duplex, and Fraternity Houses).
- 14.7 percent are walk-up apartments and other multi-unit development (row housing, carriage homes)
- 4.7 percent are non-residential uses such as offices, religious assembly, or funeral homes
- 6.4 percent are surface parking lots.

These findings indicate that there remains ample redevelopment potential within existing High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) zoned sites.

### Updating the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9)

The focus is on revising the zone so that the development regulations will permit a high rise apartment (15 to 18 storeys) on a typical site. Updates to the zone will address the following:

- a new, descriptive general purpose, which is more specific about the types of development that this zone should achieve
- review and expand the list of permitted uses to be consistent with appropriate mixed uses in a residential tower
- changes to minimum setbacks, maximum floor area ratio, and maximum residential density to achieve the stated purpose of the zone
- urban design development regulations to improve the overall built form both at street level, and above ground; and provide confidence in the quality of the outcome
- reduce the minimum parking requirement for residential and non-residential uses

- Simplify the rate for non-residential uses to be uniform for all commercial uses.

Expected results from the proposed update:

- the opportunity for high rise apartments will be more obtainable on typical sites that are already zoned High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9)
- there would be an addition of design regulations in the zone, in alignment with the principles of the Urban Design Guidelines for Tall and Mid-Rise Buildings
- required on-site parking rates will be updated to reflect recent changes to address reduced ratios being implemented throughout the bylaw and in support of the transit oriented location of most High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) sites
- The changes would take effect upon approval by City Council.

More detail is provided in Attachment 4 - Contemplated Update to the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9).

### Amenity Contributions

Amenity contributions may be incorporated into a future version of the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9), or considered as part of a comprehensive review of Zoning Bylaw 12800. This is primarily due to the current ongoing engagement required to support this work, which is underway as described in the May 3, 2017, Urban Planning Committee report CR\_3883 - Increasing Floor Area Ratio in the City Core and Transit Oriented Developments through Direct Control Rezoning - Further Research and Stakeholder Engagement.

### Conclusion and Next Steps

An update to the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) aims to accomplish the following:

- modest height (15 to 18 storey) apartment housing with opportunity for mixed uses
- urban form is regulated to ensure outcomes align with the modern city-building practices in alignment with the Urban Design Guidelines for Tall Buildings
- gives Council and communities the confidence to support development in the zone as design regulations ensure integration at the street and improved development outcomes
- The metrics in the zone are adjusted to ensure high rises can be developed.

Based on the feedback received during the circulation, Administration recommends completing additional work, including development modeling and testing.

Administration would then return to Urban Planning Committee in first quarter of 2018 to present a draft mark-up of the proposed text amendment and the modeling analysis. Administration will also assess the current status of High Rise Residential Overlay to

determine its performance and impact on opportunities for high rise apartment construction.

## Policy

The proposed approach supports *The Way We Grow*, Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan policies

- 4.4.1 Ensure neighbourhoods have a range of housing choice to meet the needs of all demographic and income groups and create more socially sustainable communities
- 5.1.1 Embrace high quality urban design throughout Edmonton
- 5.3.2 Ensure that as development occurs around LRT stations and transit centres, high quality public spaces, streets and buildings emerge to support compact living and encourage transit ridership.

## Public Consultation

Administration hosted a multi-stakeholder workshop on February 23, 2017, to obtain information on improving the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9). The workshop provided understanding of the participant's priorities and values.

On March 8, 2017, Administration attended a roundtable discussion at Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues.

On March 14, 2017, Administration launched an Edmonton Insight Community survey that contained questions about high rise apartments and the results informed this report. Survey result can be found in Attachment 3 - What We Heard and Insight Survey Results.

On March 22, 2017, Administration circulated a draft of this report with options to improve the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) zone. The results of the survey and circulation feedback informed Administration's decision to proceed with an update to the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9).

## Metrics, Targets and Outcomes

Metrics	Targets	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 permits in the last six years (2011-2016)</li> <li>• There are 520 High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) sites in Edmonton</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of permits issued for High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) sites compared to 2011-2016 results</li> <li>• Decrease in number of Site Specific Direct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve urban design in the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) developments</li> <li>• Residential densification in areas supported by transit and other</li> </ul>

	<p>Control Provision (DC2) applications that are substantially similar to High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) compared to 2011-2016 results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Applications use at least 80 percent of development rights in the zone, resulting in high rise development forms.</li></ul>	<p>services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● New opportunities for businesses in high density residential towers</li></ul>
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### Attachments

1. Map of High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9) Properties
2. High Rise Zoning Approach in Other Jurisdictions
3. What We Heard and Insight Survey Results
4. Contemplated Update to the High Rise Apartment Zone (RA9)

### Others Reviewing this Report

- T. Burge, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- C. Campbell, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- A. Laughlin, Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services