

COUNCIL REPORT – LAND USE PLANNING BYLAW

Edmonton

BYLAW 21202

Text Amendments to Zoning Bylaw 20001 - Mid-block Row Housing in the RS Zone and minor changes to the RSM and RM Zones

Purpose

To amend Zoning Bylaw 20001 to address concerns raised through the Zoning Bylaw One Year Review regarding the design, scale and site functionality of row housing developments on interior sites in the RS - Small Scale Residential Zone, and address concerns related to Single Detached Housing in the RSM - Small - Medium Scale Residential Zone and the RM - Medium Scale Residential Zone.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the June 3, 2025, Urban Planning Committee meeting, the following motions were passed:

Motion 1

1. That Attachment 6 of the June 3, 2025, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02698 be revised as follows:
 - a. Deleting “for applications which are complete for review under section 7.130.2.1.2. on or after July 14, 2025” in Sections 2.10.4 and 2.10.5; and
 - b. Deleting Sections 2.10.7 and 2.10.8 in their entirety.
2. That Administration prepare amendments to Zoning Bylaw 20001, as outlined in revised Attachment 6 of the June 3, 2025, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02698, and return to the June 30, 2025, City Council Public Hearing.

Motion 2

1. That Attachment 6 of the June 3, 2025, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02698 be revised as follows:
 - a. Delete the Value “4” in Subsection 4.1.10, in table 4.1, and replace it with “2” and update the Diagram for Subsection 4.1.10 accordingly.
2. That Administration prepare amendments to Zoning Bylaw 20001, as outlined in revised Attachment 6 of the June 3, 2025, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02698, and return to the June 30, 2025, City Council Public Hearing.

Motion 4

That Administration prepare amendments to the Zoning Bylaw 20001 to:

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- a. Delete section 2.30.3.2.3.1 and replace it with “constructed as of January 1, 2024”; and
- b. Delete section 2.40.3.2.1.1 and replace it with "constructed as of January 1, 2024"

and return to the June 30, 2025 City Council Public Hearing.

Readings

Bylaw 21202 is ready for three readings after the public hearing has been held. If Council wishes to give three readings during a single meeting, Council must unanimously agree that Bylaw 21202 be considered for third reading.

Advertising and Signing

This Bylaw was advertised in the Edmonton Journal on June 13, 2025, and June 21, 2025. The Bylaw can be passed following third reading.

Position of Administration

Administration supports this proposed Bylaw.

REPORT

Background

As part of UPE02698 Zoning Bylaw 20001 One Year Review, Administration conducted targeted engagement to gather feedback on how the Zoning Bylaw has been functioning since its adoption and, as directed by Urban Planning Committee, undertook an analysis of row housing in the RS - Small Scale Residential Zone to identify future work to improve design outcomes. Feedback gathered as part of the one year review highlighted concerns about the design, scale and site functionality of mid-block row housing developments in the RS Zone.

Community participants shared concerns about:

- The size of new row housing developments compared to existing homes.
- The appearance of mid-block row housing from the street or a neighbouring residential property.
- The lack of variety in building appearances.

Internal City staff shared concerns about minimum side setbacks for mid-block row housing developments not providing adequate space for landings, stairwells, drainage swales, window wells, waste collection areas and pathways.

Concerns about privacy and overlook of mid-block row housing into rear yards have also been raised in inquiries and during information sessions related to the RS Zone.

Through an initial analysis of mid-block row housing development permits and in consideration of community concerns and engagement feedback, Administration identified potential options to improve building and site design outcomes for mid-block row housing, including:

- Additional design regulations for street facing facades for mid-block row houses.
- Increased side setbacks and limiting projections in side yards to better accommodate space for landings, stairwells, window wells and pathways.

- Reducing maximum building length.
- Reducing the number of entrances that can face a side yard.
- Expanding design articulation requirements for facades facing abutting sites.

As part of UPE02698 - Zoning Bylaw 20001 One Year Review, proposed changes were provided as a mark-up for Urban Planning Committee discussion on June 3, 2025. At this meeting, Urban Planning Committee discussed and approved motions to amend the proposed changes to mid-block row housing regulations that are part of Bylaw 21202.

At the May 20, 2025 City Council Public Hearing, Administration was previously directed to explore and clarify language in the RSM - Small-Medium Scale Residential Zone and the RM - Medium Scale Residential Zone to ensure that single detached housing built and existing prior to January 1, 2024 could be rebuilt in case of unforeseen events such as a fire. At the June 3, 2025 Urban Planning Committee, a motion was approved directing Administration to prepare amendments to Zoning Bylaw 20001 to address this issue.

Summary of Mid-block Row Housing Analysis

Administration undertook further analysis of recently approved mid-block row housing development permits in consideration of the options noted above. Five site and building design features were assessed:

- Facade design facing the street and the interior side lot line
- Building length
- Interior side yard functionality
- Building entrance location and unit configuration
- Site Coverage

Facade design was assessed to determine how windows, exterior finishing materials and entrances were incorporated. The review found that street-facing facades for mid-block row houses often resemble the side of a building, with fewer and smaller windows, less defined entrances and fewer finishing materials than the average front facade.

The building length of mid-block row housing developments was reviewed in comparison to other housing types. In the RS Zone, the average length of a mid-block row house is 22 m in comparison to 16 m for single detached and semi-detached housing.

Interior side yards of mid-block row housing were reviewed to determine typical features. Most side yards incorporate a drainage swale, pathway, window wells, stairs and landings. There are a variety of ways to incorporate these features. For example, drainage swales can vary in width depending on their design, window wells vary in width depending on if they are needed for egress, and space needed for stairs depends on the height of the entrance and if the stairs are recessed into the building. The review concluded that the majority of side yards with entrances provide a 0.15 m swale, 0.9 m pathway and 0.76 m window well or portion of a stairwell, adding up to 1.81 m.

A review of building entrance locations on mid-block row housing found a range of zero to eight entrances in the side yard with approximately half of the developments having two or fewer entrances in each side yard.

Of the row housing development permits reviewed, dwelling units often had the following configurations:

- **Linear** - Units are arranged in a row from the front lot line towards the back lot line. Typically, four principal dwellings face the side lot line.
- **Staggered** - Units are arranged in a row from the front lot line to the rear lot line; however, the main entrances of each dwelling are oriented towards the front lot line, resulting in a staggered side setback on one or both sides of the building.
- **Quad** - Two principal dwellings units face the front lot line and two principal dwelling units face the rear lot line.

In each configuration, secondary suites were typically located in the basement, resulting in a total of six or eight dwelling units within a building. Administration found through the analysis that linear configurations with four units arranged in a row often had longer building lengths and more entrances facing the side lot line compared to the staggered and quad configurations.

See Attachment 1 - Mid-block Row Housing Building and Site Design Analysis for more detailed analysis.

Summary of Proposed Amendments to the RS Zone

Based on previous feedback received through the Zoning Bylaw One Year Review and the row housing development permit analysis, Administration recommends changes to facade design, building length, interior side setbacks, stair projections and entrance requirements to improve the building and site design of mid-block row housing in the RS Zone.

Facade Design

To improve the design outcomes of mid-block row housing facades facing streets and neighbouring residential properties, Administration proposes the following amendments:

- Facades facing a street or the side lot line of a site in a residential zone for row housing and multi-unit housing must be articulated using two or more design techniques such as variations in rooflines, vertical or horizontal building wall projections or recessions, visual breaks of building facades into smaller sections or use of a combination of finishing materials. This regulation would apply regardless of building length and windows and porches would not count towards the minimum articulation requirements.
- Row house dwellings adjacent to a front lot line must include a covered main entrance door that faces the street and have windows covering a minimum of 15 per cent of the street-facing facade area.

The proposed changes will help to reduce the perceived mass of row house building walls along interior side lot lines and establish minimum design expectations for row house facades facing a street on interior lots. See Attachment 1 for a more detailed analysis.

Building Length

To address concerns around the scale of mid-block row housing development, Administration proposes to reduce the maximum building length along an interior side lot line on an interior site from 30.0 m to 50% of site depth or 25.0 m, whichever is less.

The proposed change will reduce building mass and shadowing on neighbouring properties. Development on corner lots will still be permitted a maximum building length of 30.0 m. This is because corner lots are typically larger and share fewer lot lines with their neighbours, providing a larger buffer to surrounding residential properties. The maximum 30.0 m building length along front and rear lot lines will not be changed by these proposed amendments.

On a typical sized lot, the proposed change would result in an approximate eight per cent reduction of principal building site coverage. This could make it easier to provide parking spaces, outdoor amenity areas or to meet the minimum 30 per cent soft landscaping requirement on site. See Attachment 1 for more detailed analysis.

Interior Side Setbacks

To address concerns around the functionality of row housing side yards, Administration proposes to increase the minimum interior side setback from 1.5 m to 1.9 m for row housing and multi-unit housing where an entrance is located on the side of a building. While there are a variety of ways to design swales, pathways, window wells and entrance steps in a side yard, a setback of 1.9 m will, at minimum, allow for a 0.15 m drainage swale, 0.9 m pathway and 0.76 m egress window well or portion of entrance steps. See Attachment 1 for the detailed analysis.

Steps in the Side Yard

To address concerns around the functionality of row housing side yards, Administration proposes to require a minimum 1.1 m distance between steps and the interior side lot line, where steps are oriented toward the side lot line.

Unlike the other proposed amendments, which pertain only to the RS Zone, this change would be made to Section 5.90 - Projections into Setbacks, which would apply to all zones. The minimum 1.1 m distance will allow space for a minimum 0.9 m wide pathway or landing area and a minimum 0.15 m wide drainage swale. The proposed amendment will not apply to steps that are oriented toward the front or rear lot line of a site. See Attachment 1 for the detailed analysis.

Building Entrances in the Side Yard

To address concerns around the appearance of row housing from neighbouring properties and activity in the side yard, and as directed by Urban Planning Committee on June 3, 2025, Administration proposes to limit the number of entrances permitted on the side of a building to two. The proposed change will encourage more entrances on the front and rear of the building so that development does not result in a concentration of side entrances facing the neighbour's side lot line. Regulating the distribution of building entrances on a site can help reduce perceived impacts on neighbouring properties and activity in the side yard.

Based on an analysis of a sample of approved row housing applications in 2024, the proposed change will accommodate approximately half of existing row house designs. See Attachment 1 for the detailed analysis.

Unit Configuration

Administration is not proposing to directly regulate mid-block row house unit configuration. While the proposed amendments noted above may lead to changes in some mid-block row housing configurations, the changes will not prevent eight dwelling units from being developed within a building or on an interior site. The proposed amendments in combination with existing regulations, including minimum front and rear setbacks, maximum height, maximum site coverage, minimum soft landscaping and minimum site area per dwelling, will influence how many dwelling units a building can accommodate. See Attachment 1 for the detailed analysis.

Site Coverage

Administration is not proposing to change the maximum site coverage regulation in the RS Zone. The proposed amendments to maximum building length and minimum side setbacks will result in an approximate eight per cent reduction in principal building site coverage on a typical sized lot, leaving more space for garages, soft landscaping, parking pads, or outdoor amenity areas. See Attachment 1 for the detailed analysis.

The proposed amendments aim to balance diverse housing options within the RS Zone with ensuring development is sensitive to the redeveloping context.

While the proposed amendments are primarily focused on the RS Zone, Administration will continue to monitor development trends to determine if similar adjustments are required to improve building and site design outcomes for mid-block row housing in other residential zones.

Summary of Proposed Amendments to the RSM and RM Zone

Amendments to the RSM and RM Zones are also proposed to address the Urban Planning Committee Motion from June 3, 2025. See Attachment 2 - Mark-up and Rationale of Proposed Text Amendment to Zoning Bylaw 20001 for more details.

Zoning Bylaw 20001 currently only permits single detached housing, semi-detached housing, and duplex housing in the RSM and RM Zone where it is “existing as of January 1, 2024”. This requires the building to have a valid development permit as proof of the building’s existence in order to comply with Section 7.20.1.8.11. To address the June 3, 2025 motion from Urban Planning Committee, Administration proposes to revise the wording from “existing as of January 1, 2024” to “constructed as of January 1, 2024” in both the RSM and RM Zones. This change is intended to clarify that a development permit or other documents can be used as indication of a building’s existence in order to continue its use.

Implementation

If the proposed bylaw receives three readings at the June 30, 2025 public hearing, the changes will come into effect immediately. This means that the new rules will apply to applications still under review as of June 30th, and all new applications submitted after the Bylaw is approved.

Administration is working with applicants to notify them of the proposed amendments and the proposed effective date. Applications that are currently under review are not being expedited.

Community Insight

Administration conducted targeted engagement interviews from October to December 2024 as part of UPE02698 Zoning Bylaw One Year Review to gather feedback from individuals, organizations and businesses on how Zoning Bylaw 20001 has been functioning since its adoption. The concerns received from participants regarding the design, scale and site functionality of mid-block row housing were used to inform this report. No engagement was conducted specifically about these proposed amendments.

Policy Analysis

The proposed amendments will continue to support The City Plan by enabling residential infill to occur at a variety of scales, densities and designs where the RS Zone is applied. The proposed changes will continue to meet District Policy goals of managing the transition in height, scale and massing of new built form to adjacent development and supporting small scale housing types in urban mix areas outside of nodes and corridors.

Attachments

1. Mid-block Row Housing Building and Site Design Analysis
2. Mark-up and Rationale of Proposed Text Amendment to Zoning Bylaw 20001
3. Bylaw 21202