

Charter Bylaw 18662

Text Amendment to the Zoning Bylaw 12800 to create a new Residential Low Density Zone (RLD)

Purpose

To amend Zoning Bylaw 12800 to create a new Residential Low Density (RLD) Zone.

Readings

Charter Bylaw 18662 is ready for three readings after the public hearing has been held. A majority vote of City Council on all three readings is required for passage.

If Council wishes to give three readings during a single meeting, then prior to moving third reading, Council must unanimously agree “That Charter Bylaw 18662 be considered for third reading.”

Advertising and Signing

This Charter Bylaw has been advertised in the Edmonton Journal on February 8 and February 16, 2019. The Bylaw can be passed following third reading.

Position of Administration

Administration supports this Charter Bylaw.

Report Summary

This report advances an applicant-initiated text amendment to the Zoning Bylaw, by Stantec Consulting on behalf of Brookfield Residential, which proposes a new Residential Low Density (RLD) Zone to facilitate a range of low-density housing forms under a single zone. As a new zone for implementation across the City’s developing neighbourhoods, the Residential Low Density Zone reflects good planning practice and supports improved development outcomes that align with City policies and guidelines.

Report

The intent of the zone is to facilitate a range of low-density housing forms within a single zone. This will simplify zoning in greenfield developments and reduce the reliance on Direct Control zoning for low density, small-lot residential developments. The proposed Residential Low Density Zone would accommodate a

range of low-density housing forms, including Single Detached, Duplex, Semi-Detached Housing as well as Secondary and Garden Suites. It also allows for Zero Lot Line Development.

The proposed Residential Low Density Zone was originally initiated in June 2017, by an application for a text amendment to Zoning Bylaw 12800 to propose a new zone. Administration worked with the applicant to refine the application and ensure functionality of the proposed zone. The collaboration has resulted in a zone which supports a variety of key policy objectives:

- **Efficient land use:** The Residential Low Density Zone does not include minimum lot areas or widths, and allows compact low-density housing forms such as duplex, semi-detached, and single detached housing with reduced side setbacks (zero lot line), in addition to secondary suites and garden suites. This provides the City with an additional tool to facilitate small-scale residential development that attains the development density targets established by the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board.
- **Housing diversity:** A range of low-density housing types in a single zone provides a mix of housing choices to meet the needs of different households within the same neighbourhood. The mix of housing choices broadly aligns with the recent changes made to the (RF1) Single Detached Residential and (RF2) Low Density Residential Zones.
- **Well-designed communities:** The development regulations support and encourage neighbourhood design features that improve walkability and pedestrian safety, and encourage interaction among neighbours, such as uninterrupted landscaped boulevards, and houses located closer together and to the street. Minimal regulations for individual dwellings will accommodate different design preferences while requiring basic design elements such as entrance doors facing a public roadway, and similar design and materials on the front and side of buildings on corner sites.
- **Sustainable infrastructure:** The uses and development regulations encourage efficient use of infrastructure, reducing costs for development, maintenance, and future renewal. For example, compact housing forms with narrower lots require fewer roads and pipes to construct and maintain.
- **Efficient and effective service delivery:** The Residential Low Density Zone will provide a standard zone that better meets market demand than existing standard zones. It will reduce the use of Direct Control provisions for greenfield development, which are costly and labour-intensive for applicants and Administration. Row Housing has been excluded from the zone to avoid triggering higher servicing requirements that significantly increase infrastructure

costs. These increased costs have resulted in limited use of the existing Residential Mixed Dwelling (RMD) Zone, and a very high frequency of applications for Direct Control zones solely to build small lot residential developments that exclude row housing.

- **Certainty:** The application of a standard zone rather than site-specific Direct Control provisions supports transparency and fairness for developers and citizens. A standard zone may facilitate consistent development opportunities in all of Edmonton's established and developing areas, rather than a confusing range of slightly different regulations for specific sites in a variety of neighbourhoods.
- **Bylaw Maintenance:** Administration regularly updates Zoning Bylaw 12800 to address changing market demands, to facilitate new forms of development, and to provide process enhancements. These citywide bylaw updates apply to standard zones, but do not apply to Direct Control Zones. A Direct Control Zone has its own regulations tailored to a specific site, where changes applied to standard zones may or may not be appropriate or desired by the property owner. By providing a standard zone which can be utilized across the City, maintenance amendments can be applied to the Zone.

Highlights

Development regulations for the proposed Residential Low Density Zone are permissive rather than onerous, supporting practical requirements such as access and drainage, and requiring minimal basic design elements such as the provision of some landscaping and an entrance door facing a public roadway.

Where possible, regulations are simplified. For example, minimum setbacks address the distance between buildings, so the zone does not need to include provisions for minimum site area or width. This Zone provides flexibility to developers to build to different sizes, styles and configurations and can withstand swings in the marketplace, such as the current economic slowdown that is favouring more compact and affordable products.

Lane Access

An area of discussion between Administration and the applicant has been the regulation that requires that where a lane is provided, and a lot is abutting the lane at the rear lot line, access shall be from the lane. The applicant wished to retain the flexibility to use either front or rear access, even where a lane is provided. There are some lot configurations for which it would be challenging to provide lane access, or where doing so could result in an inconsistent streetscape if only some lots on a block had access from a lane. Administration explored all example scenarios provided by the applicant and drafted regulations to identify specific scenarios where front access is

acceptable. Additional exceptional situations can be addressed by seeking a variance to the regulation, making use of a different zone, or by designing street layouts that better facilitate lane access.

Requiring that access is taken from a lane where a lane is present, supports improved community and urban design and efficient use of infrastructure. It is important to note that lanes are not required in the zone.

Conclusion

The proposed Residential Low Density Zone provides enhanced opportunities and substantial flexibility for a wide range of low-density housing forms. It will attain numerous efficiencies for Administration, homeowners, and other applicants by avoiding repeated use of Direct Control Zones and supports achievement of Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board density targets.

Public Engagement

In August 2017, Administration circulated a draft of the Residential Low Density Zone to internal and external stakeholders. Feedback informed refinements to improve the functionality of the proposed zone

In December 2018, Administration undertook a second circulation of the revised draft. Feedback from internal stakeholders generally informed further technical refinements.

Comments from the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and an individual community league expressed concern that the proposed zone does not align with the regulations of the Mature Neighbourhood Overlay, and should not be applied to infill development in mature neighbourhoods. To address this concern, Administration revised the Zone's General Purpose to clarify the intent that, at this time, the zone is to be used in developing neighbourhoods. Infill Development in Edmonton Association (IDEA) would prefer that the zone be available for use in all neighbourhoods.

Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues also noted that the relatively high site coverage provides minimal space for landscaping and amenity area, and reduces permeable surfaces to absorb surface water from rain and snowmelt. To reduce flows to the storm sewer, the zone includes regulations to allow roof leaders to discharge to a rain garden or towards City right of way, rather than directly to the storm sewer.

Administration presented the proposed zone to the Urban Development Institute Planning Committee, who identified minor technical refinements and generally provided positive feedback. The Canadian Home Builders Association noted that removing the requirement for a hard-surfaced parking pad could reduce costs, but

otherwise commented that the “City’s proposals were definitely a step in the right direction.”

Attachments

1. Charter Bylaw 18662
2. RLD Zone Mark-up of Proposed Text Amendment to Zoning Bylaw 12800

Others Reviewing this Report

- T. Burge, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- G. Cebryk, Deputy City Manager, City Operations
- A. Laughlin, Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services