# NEIGHBOURHOOD INFILL DESIGN GUIDELINES



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# **1.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD** INFILL DESIGN OBJECTIVES

Hamilton's Official Plan places a strong emphasis on sustainable growth by promoting intensification and compact built form throughout the built-up areas of the City, growth that makes use of existing infrastructure and services. The livability and vitality of the City affects both current and future residents as Hamilton grows to a total projected population of 820,000 people by 2051. To support the Official Plan's intensification objectives, residential intensification is directed to three areas: the downtown, nodes and corridors, and neighbourhoods.

In the past, residential intensification has primarily been directed to the downtown and at nodes and along corridors; nodes - areas with more compact built form, and along corridors - major streets served by transit. While these areas remain important locations for future residential intensification, so are Hamilton's neighbourhoods as a more equitable distribution of growth is prioritized across the City.



Hamilton's Neighbourhoods

Opportunities for neighbourhood infill development have expanded to allow for small-scale intensification in neighbourhoods. **The purpose of the Neighbourhood Infill Design Guidelines is to guide multiplex infill development**; triplexes and fourplexes which are permitted in Low Density Residential Zones, and proposals for fiveplexes and sixplexes which the Official Plan permits in the Neighbourhoods Designation but which require approval of a Zoning By-law Amendment application to evaluate the merits of the proposed development. The Guidelines can also guide this form of development if proposed on lands being redeveloped for residential uses.

The Residential Intensification policies of the Urban Hamilton Official Plan identify a series of priorities in the evaluation of residential intensification in neighbourhoods, including:

- compatibility with adjacent land uses;
- height, massing and scale;
- transitions in height and scale to adjacent dwellings;
- the provision of amenity space;
- the ability to respect and maintain or enhance streetscape patterns and setbacks;
- the ability to complement the existing functions of the neighbourhood.

The Urban Hamilton Official Plan defines **compatibility** as: land uses and building forms that are mutually tolerant and capable of existing together in harmony within an area. Compatibility or compatible should not be narrowly interpreted to mean "the same as" or even as "being similar to".

The Neighbourhood Infill Design Guidelines reflect Official Plan policy and design objectives, best practices, and the City's climate and sustainability goals to guide multiplex development that prioritizes the compatible integration of new development that acknowledges the existing built form and surrounding neighbourhood context.

### **1.1 NEIGHBOURHOOD INTENSIFICATION**

Hamilton's neighbourhoods contribute substantially to what defines the urban fabric of the City. Neighbourhoods make up a significant portion of the lands within the Urban Area of Hamilton. Until recently, the zoning in these neighbourhoods (which directs the use of land), has primarily permitted single detached dwellings, to the exclusion of other forms of housing. Planning initiatives are now placing a greater emphasis on a more equitable distribution of growth, removing the regulatory barriers of exclusionary zoning to provide greater housing choice in neighbourhoods and more affordable housing options for residents.

#### The Benefits of Small-Scale Intensification in Neighbourhoods:

Removes the barriers of exclusionary zoning which restricts the types of housing permitted in neighbourhoods.



Promotes sustainable growth that makes use of existing infrastructure and services.

Provides more housing options for residents at various stages of life.

Provides housing choice and more affordable housing options for residents

The opportunity for small-scale intensification in neighbourhoods has been developed incrementally. At each stage, the City has moved the benchmark forward, creating more opportunities for intensification by removing regulatory barriers. Collectively, these changes have increased the types of housing permitted in neighbourhoods and allowed existing houses to be converted to contain additional units. Additional Dwelling Units - Detached are also permitted on residential properties that have the space to accommodate these detached dwelling units.

#### 1.1.1 ADDITIONAL DWELLING UNITS

In 2021, Additional Dwelling Unit permissions were introduced city-wide across Hamilton. Additional Dwelling Unit – Detached permissions were introduced at the same time to the Urban Area.



are separate and self-contained detached dwelling units that are accessory to and located within the main dwelling on a lot.

#### ADDITIONAL DWELLING UNIT — Detached (ADU-D)

are separate and self-contained Dwelling Units that are accessory to the main dwelling on a lot and located separate from but on the same lot as the main dwelling.



## 1.1.2 CONVERTED DWELLINGS

In 2022, Converted Dwelling permissions were introduced to neighbourhoods in the Urban Area. Dwellings can convert to contain up to three Additional Dwelling Units. Most residential properties are permitted to contain up to four dwelling units, either within the existing house, or as three units in the existing house, along with an Additional Dwelling Unit – Detached on the property, typically in the rear yard.



#### 1.1.3 EXPANDING THE USES PERMITTED IN NEIGHBOURHOODS

The types of housing permitted in the City's neighbourhoods has also expanded to permit a range of low density residential uses, providing greater housing choice for residents



Fourplex

Street Townhouse

# **1.2 HOW TO USE THE NEIGHBOURHOOD INFILL DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The guidelines are meant to guide the creation and evaluation of multiplex infill development in the City's neighbourhoods to promote high quality design that has been adapted to complement the existing streetscape.

#### THE GUIDELINES ARE TO INFORM THE FOLLOWING:

- The evaluation of **Minor Variance** applications before the Committee of Adjustment;
- The evaluation of **Zoning By-law Amendment** applications proposing fiveplexes or sixplexes; and,
- As a guide for **architects and designers** working on multiplex development proposals.

NEIGHBOURHOOD INFILL DESIGN GUIDELINES

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### 2.1 SITE DESIGN

#### LANDSCAPING

- Provide natural vegetation and tree planting within the landscaped area on a lot. Every effort should be made to retain healthy mature trees in-situ during the redevelopment of a property. If this cannot occur, trees should be replaced and new trees added to support the City's 40% urban tree canopy coverage target, in accordance with the following:
- a. Space tree plantings to encourage mature tree growth;
- b. Tree planting for high branching trees should be located away from existing or new structures, from the lot lines and existing mature trees to provide adequate space for tree growth. An offset of 1.5 meters is recommended for a street tree from sidewalks and driveways, and 3 meters from any building;
- Plantings should include minimum one new high branching deciduous tree among other plantings, with a minimum soil volume of 21 cubic meters;
- **d.** Plant high branching native trees within the front yard on public or private property where there is the most adequate space to support mature tree growth;
- e. Where the retention of existing trees cannot be accommodated, tree replacement should be prioritized following Hamilton's Tree Protection Guidelines replacement ratio of 1 for 1 compensation for the loss of each 10 cm DBH or greater tree;
- Plant selection should prioritize a diversity of species to avoid monocultures, and drought resistant plant material; and
- g. Refer to Hamilton's Tree Protection Guidelines Appendix 4 for a list of recommended species on private property and refer to City of Hamilton's Design and Preservation Standards for Working within the Public Right of Way (latest version) for right-of-way design guidelines and approved street tree species.









2.1 Site Design - Guideline 2a



2.1 Site Design - Guideline 2b and 2d







- 2. Provide soft landscaped areas along public frontages and ensure a minimum 50% landscaped area is maintained in the front and flankage yards in accordance with the following:
- Plantings/gardens should be naturalized, low maintenance, and resilient with vegetation maximizing the coverage of the landscaped area; refer to Appendix K Naturalized Trees in Hamilton's Park and Open Space Development Guide;
- **b.** Plant native perennial non-invasive trees and shrubs to help restore and enhance Hamilton's plant biodiversity;
- c. Incorporate low maintenance landscape materials that assist with stormwater infiltration; and
- **d.** Plant shrubs/hedges that retain their leaves in winter to create a privacy screen for the ground floor units in the front and flankage yards.
- **3.** Provide privacy planting in the following situations:
- **a.** Use privacy planting to screen utilities, parking, and servicing areas; and
- b. Should privacy planting be provided, it should be those that retain their leaves throughout the year for additional screening along the side and rear lot lines to create a privacy screen between the proposed units and adjacent uses.

#### FENCING

- 4. Where fencing is provided, it shall act as a visual barrier / screen along the side and rear lot lines abutting existing residential uses.
- 5. Where rear yard parking exists, provide solid screening along side and rear lot lines to block headlight trespass from cars to abutting residential uses.
- 6. Fencing should be constructed of renewable and durable low-maintenance materials.
- **7.** Fencing in the front yard should be avoided with privacy planting preferred.









#### GRADING

- Maintain the existing grades across the property to preserve existing vegetation and topography and to avoid drainage onto the neighbouring properties.
- Grades should match the grades along neighbouring property lines and retaining walls should be avoided between properties.
- **10.** The grades of proposed parking areas should be equal to or lower than the grade of the adjacent lots.

#### **AMENITIES**

- **11.** Provide on-site private and/or communal amenity area for each residential unit via a porch, balcony, deck or at grade space.
- **12.** Private amenity spaces must have direct access to sunlight.
- **13.** Private amenity spaces must have a minimum depth of 1.5 meters and should be screened with a railing/screen and/or privacy planting.
- 14. Private amenity spaces above the ground floor shall face the front and/or rear yard, and/or exterior side yards fronting a street only.
- **15.** Planting is encouraged within amenity spaces and green roofs are encouraged.



#### PARKING

Alternative modes of transportation should be prioritized. Where parking is provided, it should be designed in accordance with the following guidelines:

- **16.** To maximize the pervious area on a lot, permeable pavers for driveways and parking spaces are preferred.
- **17.** Where the coverage for surface parking is greater than the Zoning By-law requirements, permeable pavers must be used for all driveways and parking spaces.
- **18.** Where the lot width is wide enough to accommodate access to the rear yard through the side yard, parking should be provided in the rear.
- **19.** Where a rear laneway exists, parking should be provided at the rear of the site with access from the rear laneway.



- **20.** Minimize the number and width of curb cuts in the municipal sidewalks by consolidating access points for parking to maintain opportunities for on-street parking.
- 21. The width of front driveways should not exceed two cars in width to reduce the impacts of surface parking on the streetscape.
- **22.** Cars should not be parked in tandem on any driveways.



- **23.** Surface parking and side yard driveways should be set back from the side and rear lot lines and screened to reduce impacts on neighbouring properties.
- 24. If required, locate accessible parking spaces close to the building/unit entrance.
- **25.** An attached or detached garage should be recessed from the front façade of the building or flankage façade of a building situated on a corner lot.
- **26.** Bike parking should be provided and located away from public view at the rear of the building with enclosed storage preferred.







2.1 Site Design - Guideline 27 Example 1



<sup>2.1</sup> Site Design - Guideline 27 Example 2





2.1 Site Design - Guideline 30



#### UTILITIES

- 27. Consolidate/group unitary equipment (e.g. utility meters and air conditioning units) away from the front entrance and prominent portion of the front building elevation; locate them in a niche or recess to make them less visible.
- **28.** Screen above ground utility boxes with architectural screens and/or planting.
- **29.** Locate unitary equipment (e.g. utility meters and air conditioning units) away from public view by concealing them and/or screening them with architectural elements or with planting.

#### WASTE

- **30.** Provide space within garages or enclosures for garbage and recycling storage; waste enclosures should be located away from public view by concealing them and/or screening them with architectural elements or with planting.
- **31.** Waste enclosures should be constructed of renewable, durable material and compliment the building and neighbourhood character.
- **32.** Hamilton's Waste Requirements for Design of New Developments and Collection for Buildings with Two to Five Dwelling Units should be followed regarding waste enclosures and set out areas in terms of design, size and location.

#### LIGHTING

- **33.** Minimize outdoor lighting impacts on neighbouring properties by:
- a. Avoiding poorly placed lights directed at abutting residential properties that result in light trespass over the property lines.
- Avoiding overly bright security lighting and follow Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles for lighting design.
- **c.** Use shielded or cut-off luminaires to control glare and follow International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) recommendations for avoiding light pollution.



### **2.2 BUILT FORM**

#### MASSING

Well-proportioned built form will be achieved through a thoughtful composition of building elements which correspond with the massing of the surrounding homes.

- Design buildings to reflect/resemble the massing and height of existing built form along the street. Additional massing may be contemplated away from the streetscape/ public realm.
- 2. Design large roofs as composition of smaller roof forms. Functional dormers are also desirable.
- 3. Where the lot width is wide enough to accommodate access to the rear yard through the side yard, parking should be provided in the rear.

- Use techniques to reduce the impact of massing such as additional articulation of the façade (projection and recesses), smaller architectural components and detailing.
- Highly visible buildings at corner/gateway locations may be appropriate for greater massing to emphasize the priority location and to provide visual cues within the neighborhood (e.g. wrap around porches/ balconies/box-out windows).











2.2 Built Form - Guideline 6







#### **HEIGHT/TRANSITION**

All effort should be made to achieve a height which complements the heights of the existing surrounding homes.

- 6. Design buildings to respect the height of existing built form along the street.
- **7.** Propose the ground floor at grade, or no higher than the finished first floor elevation of the surrounding dwellings.
- 8. When proposing a structure more than one storey taller in height than surrounding homes, transition the height away from the lower buildings by:
  - a. stepping down the side of the proposed building;
  - providing additional step-back of the upper storey(s) along the street;
  - **c.** providing step-back of the upper storey(s) at the rear (proportionate depth to height); and
  - **d.** incorporating the upper storey within the roof structure.



2.2 Built Form - Guideline 8a and 10



2.2 Built Form - Guideline 8b and c



2.2 Built Form - Guideline 8d

- 9. Provide varied height in the rooflines to de-emphasize the overall height.
- **10.** If flat roofs are proposed, they should transition to the lower homes through stepped levels and increased side yard setbacks.
- **11.** Additional height may be considered on corner/gateway properties to emphasize the priority location and to provide visual cues within the neighborhood.



#### **SETBACKS**

Setbacks with generous landscape buffers which follow the established patterns in the neighbourhood help mitigate negative visual impacts of larger infill developments.

- **12.** Site layout shall achieve the following objectives, in order of priority:
- a. Streetscape appearance, which shall be achieved by designing front and side yard setbacks that are consistent with the established setbacks along the street;
- b. A landscaped area that:
  - i) Incorporates soft landscaping;
  - ii) Maximizes the pervious area of the lot; and,
  - iii) Maintains or expands the urban tree canopy coverage.
- **c.** Consistency in the established rear yard setback. If a reduction in rear yard setback is proposed, the building should not interfere with a 45 degree angular plane projected from the rear property line.
- **13.** Setbacks should maximize natural light access into the units and minimize shadow impacts on adjacent properties.
- 14. Variations to setbacks should be accommodated to protect mature trees.
- **15.** Minimize overlook conditions and ensure adequate privacy for the adjacent lots.
- **16.** A reduction in the minimum setback from the side lot line may be considered when no windows to habitable spaces are proposed on the side elevation.

<sup>1</sup> Landscaped Area: landscaped area of the lot which doesn't contain buildings, structures, parking spaces or access to parking spaces.



#### **FAÇADE TREATMENT**

Façades should be designed to enhance a pedestrian-friendly environment and contribute to the sociability of the street.

- **17.** Avoid blank walls visible from the public realm.
- **18.** Elevations visible to the public realm such as public streets and parks should be highly articulated and incorporate enhanced fenestration.







- **19.** Main entrances should be located at the front of buildings, facing the public realm. On corner lots, incorporate additional entrances on the flanking elevation. Entrances should be highly visible and connected to the municipal sidewalk.
- **20.** The internal design of buildings should prioritize habitable spaces behind the facades facing public streets.
- **21.** Provide wall articulation through recesses/projections to break larger wall areas in one plane. Consider appropriate variation of materials for different planes and massing elements.







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