

Housing Form Diversification Report

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SHALLOW-WIDE LOTS

Opportunity

To accommodate alternative lot configurations where a standard lot depth might be difficult to achieve. Positively, some wide lots create the space to have a visible prominent entry, where you can clearly see the front door.

Municipal Examples

When researching this form, Administration looked at examples of shallow-wide lots that have been built in the Windsong neighbourhood in Airdrie, the Cityscape neighbourhood in Calgary, and the Evergreen and Timberlands neighbourhoods in Red Deer, and some locations in Ontario.

Implementation Considerations

- Integration with the existing 60 meter block depth.
- There are concerns that these will be slightly less efficient use of land.
- With the wider frontage, there are less lots serviced by an equivalent length of utility lines. More utility lines will eventually mean more maintenance costs, which is not ideal for the City.
- Concerns as to whether the City can utilize a 6.0 meter front yard setback to maintain street face continuity on shallow lots, to continue to allow parking on driveways of front access product.

Industry Feedback

- Shallow-wide lots can be an efficient use of land that helps to meet density targets when planned at Area Structure Plan stage.
- Lots can be built with front to back drainage, without concrete swales that could be expensive to maintain.
- Shallow-wide lots can also be utilized for fee-simple townhome product, not just single-detached dwellings.
- This type is best for new neighbourhoods, so the streets can be planned properly and land efficiency maintained.
- This addition to the Land Use Bylaw would be a welcome opportunity to look at incorporating in future developments.

SUITES IN MULTI-FAMILY

Opportunity

To gently increase density in new and existing neighbourhoods, provide a mortgage helper to homeowners, and expand the rental offering.

Municipal Examples

When researching this form, Administration looked at examples of Edmonton and Calgary.

Implementation Considerations

- Administration is hesitant to permit suites in product that is under condominium ownership and has an additional set of bylaws.
- Concerns have been identified that suites would essentially turn duplexes into fourplexes, doubling the density of the neighbourhoods.
- Additional parking requirements and transit service.
- Neighbourhoods might require more amperage if they have many suites.
- Suites could increase the availability of rental housing supply.
- Might require enforcement to ensure all regulations are being met.

Industry Feedback

- Buyers want the flexibility to suite out their home in the future, and many are asking for semi-detached product designed with side door for a suite.
- Edmonton is not requiring a parking stall for the suite, St. Albert should consider following that lead.
- A basement suite is the most cost effective suite to install, and owners like it because they can work on the suite over time.
- Home buyers want to know the zoning works for a suite – it gives a level of certainty about the investment.
- Having the option to have a tenant and supplement the mortgage might make buying a home more affordable.

TINY HOMES

Opportunity

To accommodate very compact, fully serviced homes on permanent foundations that facilitates independent living in a small space. Tiny homes on permanent foundations can currently be incorporated as a garden suite on a single family dwelling lot, if regulatory requirements are met.

Municipal Examples

When researching this form, Administration looked at examples of tiny home regulations from Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge. In those three examples, a tiny home placed on a permanent foundation can be treated the same way as any other single family dwelling.

Implementation Considerations

- This form of development might not integrate well in existing neighbourhoods with much larger dwellings.
- Options for tiny home clusters or villages.
- Parking impacts.
- Servicing and foundation requirements., as well as conformance with building and fire codes.
- Sizes and floor area requirements.

Industry Feedback

- The City should be open to this product, but members are not actively pursuing it at this time.
- There could be an opportunity to allow seniors or people close to retirement to 'downsize' but still have their own property.
- This could allow independent living option for seniors or special needs individuals.

ZERO LOT LINE

Opportunity

To increase density in greenfield neighbourhoods while still maintaining a single-detached home product.

Municipal Examples

When researching this form, Administration looked at examples of zero lot line lots that have been built in Edmonton. Currently, Edmonton allows for a 1.5 m (4.9 ft) setback on one side yard, and a zero meter setback on the other side yard. Permitting a 1.5 m (4.9 ft) total setback represents a 1.0 m (3.3 ft) to 2.1 m (6.9 ft) reduction from our current single family dwelling requirements.

Implementation Considerations

- Lot Coverage will have to increase to accommodate this product, which brings up concerns about stormwater management.
- On blocks with front attached garage products there is concern about the potential lack of on-street parking, as fewer side yards will mean driveway cuts are closer together.
- Easements that are put in place seem to vary by company.
- Some municipalities allow cross lot drainage, St. Albert doesn't.
- Need to ensure 1 m minimum width is maintained for access to garbage and recycling bins, that is not blocked by parked vehicles.
- Amenity space and landscaping considerations.

Industry Feedback

- Increasing amounts of sales in Edmonton are zero lot line (estimate: 70%), so St. Albert does need this product. Many other municipalities have also included it in their Bylaws as well.
- Zero lot line homes compete at the same price point as semi-detached product, while still allowing detached styles that are preferable to the end user as there is no shared wall.
- Buyers see the value as being in the house, not the side yard. The side yard costs money that could go into the home instead.

BACK TO BACK FEE-SIMPLE TOWNHOMES

Opportunity

The opportunity here is to allow for back-to-back fee simple units (as the Land Use Bylaw already allows condo units).

Municipal Examples

When we were researching this form, we looked at examples in the Windsong neighbourhood in Airdrie, and the Stillwater neighbourhood in Edmonton.

Implementation Considerations

- Administration predicts that lot coverage would need to increase to accommodate the units.
- Close proximity of accesses, which decreases on street parking.
- Minimum parking requirements must still be met.
- St. Albert's Complete Streets guide requires an 18.0 m right of way width. The road in front of existing built out product is approximately 16.0 m.

Industry Feedback

- This product can help to hit density targets. Best to plan for it at the time of ASP.
- Questions as to why engineering requires a 2.5 m space between lots.
- Road cross sections have been narrowed to get increased density, there are hybrid lane-road at end of block. Why is the city requiring an 18 m cross section - is it an operational issue?