



Legislation Text

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Bylaw 21/2020 - Residential Front Back (RFB) District Text Amendment (1st Reading)

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RECOMMENDED MOTIONS

1. That Bylaw 21/2020, being amendment 170 to the Land Use Bylaw, be read a first time.
2. That the Public Hearing on Bylaw 21/2020 be scheduled for November 30, 2020.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report responds to Council's request for proposed amendments to the Land Use Bylaw (LUB) to allow front-to-back residential combined-access units. This report highlights the required changes to the Land Use Bylaw to enable this product. This report is a follow-up on Council motion CM-19-014:

That by the June 2020, Governance, Priorities and Finance Committee Meeting, Administration present changes to the Land Use Bylaw to allow front-back combined residential units.

ALIGNMENT TO PRIORITIES IN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN

City of St. Albert Council Strategic Plan 2018-2021

Strategic Priority #5: Housing: Enhance housing options

Facilitate an increase in the variety of housing types in St. Albert to respond to market demands and accommodate the diverse needs of residents.

Corporate Business Plan 2018-2021

Administration Activity 5.1

Modify Land Use Bylaw to encourage diversity in residential built forms.

Administration Activity 5.3

Work with regional partners to explore the creation of additional housing options to address issues of affordability and accessibility.

ALIGNMENT TO LEVELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

N/A.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL DIRECTION OR MANDATORY STATUTORY PROVISION

On April 1, 2019 Council passed the following motion (CM-10-014):

That by the June 2020, Governance, Priorities and Finance Committee Meeting, Administration present changes to the Land Use Bylaw to allow front-back combined residential units.

The Governance, Priorities and Finance Committee was replaced in 2020 with the Community Growth and Infrastructure Standing Committee.

On June 9, 2020 the Community Growth & Infrastructure Standing Committee made the following motion (AR-20-126):

That Bylaw 21/2020, being amendment 170 to the Land Use Bylaw, be brought forward to the first Council meeting in December, 2020.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Council enacted amendments to the Land Use Bylaw in February 2018 to accommodate a number of changes related to the built form of residential districts. Those amendments did not include provisions for front/back housing options, and specifically did not include front-back *semi-detached* housing product regulations. The addition of lane-serviced housing product in the 2018 LUB update was a large step for the community. Lanes were deemed as necessary due to continued demand for narrower lots. Incorporating lanes into subdivision design increases the cost of development but provides the following benefits to the public-facing streetscape: uninterrupted street parking, room for boulevard trees, snow storage, and needed street utilities (e.g. power junction boxes, fire hydrants).

The lane housing approved by Council in 2018 was proposed in order to provide greater opportunities for boulevard trees, utilities, and on-street parking; an improved pedestrian environment by removing curb cuts and driveways from the front of lots; and, moving vehicle access to lanes accessing the rear of the lots. Front/back housing was determined by Administration to cause issues that did not align with the intent of other proposed districts (namely the improved and unfettered streetscape associated with newly approved lane housing), and in addition, would add to the capital and operating costs of new lane development, while actually negating the improvements to the streetscape associated with lane housing product. Issues previously raised with front/back housing off of lanes include (see previously distributed attachment for more details):

1. Reduction of on-street parking by increasing curb cuts / driveways;
2. Reduction of opportunity for boulevard trees;
3. Reduction of opportunity for needed street utilities (e.g. power boxes, hydrants);
4. Decrease in pedestrian safety by increasing collision opportunities by introducing driveways to an area that would otherwise not have them;

5. Increase in long-term operational costs for the City, while negating the benefits of the infrastructure (examples include garbage collection and additional assets to maintain); and
6. Achieving the look/design of a single detached house (for a semi-detached product) can occur without having a driveway in the front.

A benefit of adding the option for front/back access lane housing product would be the ability for the higher-density developer to offer some variety by way of slightly different building forms of duplex or semi-detached housing product within the same block.

Following Council's motion, Administration attempted to mitigate some of the issues previously raised, while developing the requested regulations. Administration specifically attempted to mitigate concerns related to items (1), and (4). As such, a new district regulation has been drafted, entitled Residential Front Back (RFB) District, for Council's consideration. The district allows the original intent of the Residential Lane (RXL) District to be preserved, retaining uninterrupted boulevards with maximum street parking and no disruption to the pedestrian environment. The new district also allows Administration to compare the Residential Front Back (RFB) District and Residential Lane (RXL) Districts upon their implementation, to evaluate the costs and benefits associated with each.

Policy Development

To evaluate and inform the proposed regulations for the requested housing product, the city worked with developers, including hosting a workshop on the draft regulations; and used examples from Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan, which are two areas where the product has been built out.

The resulting product requires both a street and a lane. As such, the proposed Residential Front Back (RFB) District is limited to greenfield developments. Regulations regarding lot widths, lot depths, lot coverage, and setbacks are in keeping with the existing RXL District. For the product to be successfully implemented, this new District will need clauses to permit mixed vehicular access. Developers have the option of allowing traffic to access from the lane, or alternating coming off the public road and lane.

Based upon examples of constructed product found where garages and curb cuts were not grouped (in Edmonton on Evans Wynd, as shown on Figure 1), Administration recommends that the garages be grouped if this housing type is approved. Grouping the garages will reduce the impact of the curb cuts on parking, boulevard trees, and the pedestrian environment. This regulation builds upon existing regulations within the Land Use Bylaw for lots less than 12.2 metres wide. This helps to consolidate areas for on-street parking. Through discussions with Industry, rationale for both ends of the block to be rear-detached garage product, with a transition in the middle of the block is necessary to ensure adequate driveway setbacks from the intersection. As such, Administration has included provisions within the proposed regulation for these transitions to happen.

Administration does not believe that this product is suitable for infill areas. It is not recommended to change the existing character of a mature neighbourhood and existing street by removing trees or adding new curb cuts where they did not previously exist.

Figure 1: Garage Grouping



There is also the issue of garage size. Rohit Communities has used lot widths for an 18 foot (5.49 meter) wide building in Edmonton. Administration has identified that the narrower lots are not possible to implement due to a regulation that requires a minimum size for a double car garage. Administration is asking for direction on reviewing garage size and minimum parking regulations at an upcoming meeting of the Community Growth & Infrastructure Standing Committee. This review would be a significant undertaking that affects all housing products in St. Albert, and therefore has not been specifically addressed in Bylaw 21/2020.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS OR ENGAGEMENT

Feedback from industry was given at the April 1, 2019 Council meeting by the Chair of the Urban Development Institute (UDI) regarding the front/back combined access product. Additional information was also provided as a letter and handout by Rohit Communities.

An online workshop was held on March 27, 2020 via Zoom meeting with members of UDI of St. Albert. Opportunities and concerns of dual access units were presented by the City and followed up with a discussion session between all parties. The video of the presentation was posted on the City website and remains available for public viewing at

<https://stalbert.ca/dev/planning/initiatives/residential-forms/>. Comment cards were emailed out so that industry could provide any further feedback. One piece of industry feedback regarding the front/back units was providing regulations from Strathcona County for how they have implemented the units. Some of the feedback for the front/back combined access units was incorporated into the proposed draft of the regulations attached with this report

The item was presented at the Community Growth and Infrastructure Committee meeting on June 9, 2020.

On September 17, 2020 a second online workshop was held with UDI, focusing on the changes to the LUB through adding the Residential Front Back (RFB) District, and modification to Residential (RX) and Residential Lane (RXL) to accommodate zero lot line single-detached dwellings. This was to ensure each developer had an opportunity to give City Administration feedback on the proposal. The feedback received on this proposal asked for a narrowing of the lot width, so that an 18 foot (5.5 m) wide building was possible. Since that is not an option due to garage size regulations as discussed above, a minimum lot width based on a 20 foot (6.1 m) wide building is being proposed.

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

Financial:

Adoption of the proposed regulations enabling front/back access lane housing will result in increased municipal development and servicing costs over either front-only access or rear-only access housing. The requested product will require both a street and a lane to service it, resulting in more road/lane being built to accommodate a housing type (duplex/semi-detached) that is already accommodated within the LUB. The City must take over the roads and lanes, and this will result in additional assets to maintain over the long term.

With respect to solid waste and recycling collection, there are two options:

1. Collection from both the lane and the front street, assuming residents will store the carts by the garage of each dwelling unit. This is more time consuming, and therefore the more expensive option.
2. Collection from either the lane or the front street but not both. In this scenario, some households will be inconvenienced. This option would not increase solid waste removal costs to the City and would be a standard level of service as compared to other neighbourhoods.

The City of Edmonton uses Option 1 for these dual access units.

Legal / Risk:

None at this time.

Program or Service:

None at this time.

Organizational:

None at this time.

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

If Council does not wish to support this amendment to the LUB, the following alternative could be considered:

1. Defeat first reading of Bylaw 21-2020. Should this occur, Administration would cease further work regarding front/back housing.

Report Date: November 2, 2020

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