



Legislation Text

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13.3

Revision to Podium Requirement in Downtown District

Notice given by: Councillor Watkins

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is (a) to bring forward a Motion that on May 31, 2021 Council Watkins gave notice of his intention to make; and (b) to provide background information and Administration's position on the Motion.

PROPOSED MOTION:

That the three-storey podium requirement for buildings in the Downtown (DT) District be reduced to two storeys.

ALIGNMENT TO PRIORITIES IN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority #2: Economic Development: Enhance business/commercial growth.

St. Albert will work towards an innovative, investment-positive environment that will support and encourage the development of new, existing, and emerging sectors.

ALIGNMENT TO LEVELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

N/A

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL DIRECTION OR MANDATORY STATUTORY PROVISION

N/A

BACKGROUND:

Section 11.1 (6)(a) Building Height of the Land Use Bylaw 9/2005 (the "LUB") currently reads as follows:

buildings shall have a minimum of three (3) storeys from grade before front stepbacks are introduced. Front stepbacks shall be a minimum of 3 m measured from the building frontage of the lower storeys. Additional front stepbacks may be required at higher storeys if, in the opinion of the Development Officer, it is necessary to enhance the pedestrian scale of the streetscape or to mitigate wind, sun or shadow impacts.

The building podium, or base, is that area three storeys and below. The intent of the regulation is to frame the street view for pedestrians, and keep taller buildings from possibly overwhelming the pedestrian by allowing the additional height to be visible.

Administration has received complaints from potential downtown developers that regulations like the building podium height requirement in 11.1 (6)(a) of the LUB make development in the downtown more difficult. Preliminary research indicates that podium requirements are not out of the norm in a downtown environment, but that they can vary significantly from community to community: some communities apply podium requirements to high-rise (~12+ storey) buildings only, some apply podium requirements to mid-rise (~4+ storey) and taller buildings, and the definitions of those building types can vary by 1-3 storeys. Some communities apply a "storey" requirement for building podiums (e.g. 3 storeys), while some apply an angle of view from the property line on the opposing street. Some communities have minimum podium requirements, and some have both minimum and maximum podium height requirements. While it is unlikely that the podium requirement by itself is prohibiting development or redevelopment of the downtown, it could be seen as a potential development hurdle for some. Administration, therefore is not opposed to reducing the podium requirement to two storeys, if Council so chooses.

If the Motion passes, Administration will bring forward a proposed Land Use Amending Bylaw to effect the proposed change.

Report Date: June 21, 2021
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