



31 October, 2013

INFILL STUDY Phase 2

The following are ASH's comments on the Infill Study Phase 2 proposals made by the City last week at three public information sessions.

Overall, we do believe that the proposed measures will contribute to a reduction in the bulk of infill housing, and find the proposed increases for rear and side yard setbacks and the proposed decreases in height encouraging.

1. 3D Modelling

We find it difficult to understand and visualize how the proposed zoning changes will work together to reduce the bulk of infill housing with only numerical values for height and setbacks at our disposal. We are asking the City to produce some 3D modeling that would demonstrate what the effects of the changes would be. We think that models would be useful for all four categories of lot depth established in the proposal.

2. Articulation through Floor Space Index (FSI)

Although increased setbacks and decreased height will succeed in making the envelope of new buildings smaller, developers (particularly in SH where their goal is often to maximize the square footage for profit) will continue to build boxes that take advantage of every allowable inch. These buildings are not interesting architecturally, do not contribute to the character of the neighbourhood and are imposing in shape. Articulated or modulated buildings are much more interesting in shape. One way to encourage more original shapes would be to establish the maximum allowable square footage with an F.S.I. in addition to fixed maximum heights and setbacks. The City should consider the option of implementing a new maximum F.S.I., as found in other higher zones in Ottawa. The chosen F.S.I. should allow a maximum floor area that is slightly less than the maximum volume permitted by the newly proposed setbacks and height. Setbacks and height limits would still be necessary to preserve backyards, privacy, etc, but the shape of the buildings could differ without lowering the allowable square footage significantly.

3. Height

- a) In the same manner as is recommended for side and rear projections, rooftop projections (including parapets, railings, enclosed staircases, pergolas, etc) should be required to fit within the allowable height for the structure. In other words, these structures should be removed from the list of permitted projections above the height limit. The perceived height of a building is much greater with these allowable projections
- b) The height should be reduced in the R4 subzones where the allowable height is currently of 14.5 and 15 metres. (The proposal reduces the height of 11 and 10 metre R4 subzones only). We recommend lowering the height to 11 metres in those subzones.
- c) The rules for determining height for flat roofs and peaked roofs require modification. Even though the rules are established to allow for equivalent volumes whether a developer chooses a flat roof or a peaked roof, peaked roofs still give a lower impression of height (lower perceived height). More importantly, this definition of height provides more useable area for a flat roof option, making it less economically desirable to build a sloped roof. These two options should be equitable. The rules should allow for a slightly higher height and volume for peaked roofs (as long as the peaks are at a certain angle - and not almost flat).

4. Projections and Roof Decks

- a) We agree with the proposal to only allow side and rear projections if they do not project into the minimum setbacks. However, we believe that such rules may push developers to place more of the amenity space on the roof. As a result, the rules on rooftop projections must be tightened. Not only should rooftop patios be setback, we submit that there should also be a maximum allowable square footage area for them). For example, for lots with a depth of 123', the permissible roof deck area would be roughly 900 sft, allowing an occupancy of over 100 people. Rooftop patios should be small, even on larger buildings, and should be geared towards meeting the needs of a small single dwelling or one unit in a multi-unit building. We suggest 225 square feet maximum.
- b) The required setback of 1.5 metres for roof top patios on all sides is visually effective for a railing height, but the setback needs to be larger (recommend 4.5 metres for front and rear) for enclosed staircases and pergolas, proportional to their height (if these structures are to be permitted as projections that go beyond the allowable height of the structure).
- c) Although we recognize that front yard setbacks were part of Infill 1, we feel that the proposed rule on projections should apply to the front of a house as well. Although exit stairs (larger than for a first floor front entrance) and escapes should not be permitted on the front of a house or building, if they are – the structures should not be allowed to project into the front yard setback.

5. Side Yard Setbacks

- a) As mentioned during the information sessions by many attendees, 0.6 metres is too narrow as a minimal side yard setback on one of the sides. This is particularly problematic in older neighbourhoods where many houses that could be next to new infill are built right on the property line, leaving only 60 centimeters for maintenance and access. Either the minimum side yard setback should be increased, or special rules with a larger minimum setback should apply if one wants to build infill next to a non-conforming building.
- b) Side yard setbacks should be increased at a certain depth of lot or building. For example, the side yard setbacks could be of 1.8 metres in total for the front 50% of the lot or building, and 3.8 metres for the remaining allowable depth. This would force developers to build articulated buildings, and would make the backs of buildings slightly smaller in bulk and provide a stepped down structures facing backyards.

6. Landscaping and Amenity Area

We fully approve of the landscaping proposal (i.e. not to exempt apartment buildings and low-rise four unit buildings from the 30% requirement), and the at-grade amenity requirement.

We find that the proposed zoning amendments as currently articulated will benefit established urban communities by controlling the size and height of infill housing. We believe that the proposals can go further, and ask the City to consider the above comments in improving the proposal.

ASH reserves its overall and final position on the proposal until after 3-D modeling has been made available, and until the final report is drafted for presentation to the Planning Committee.

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