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# Neighbourhood Level Infill Development Strategy – Review of Regulations for Primary Dwellings

## Recommendation

That the report of the General Manager, Community Services Department, dated May 29, 2017, be forwarded to City Council for information.

## Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the outcome of a review of regulations for infill development for primary dwellings in established neighbourhoods, as contained in Zoning Bylaw No. 8770 and adopted by City Council in March 2015.

## Report Highlights

1. A review of the regulations for primary dwellings in established neighbourhoods, as contained in Zoning Bylaw No. 8770 (Zoning Bylaw), has been completed by the Administration.
2. The Administration consulted with design professionals and the Saskatoon & Region Homebuilders' Association regarding the regulations for primary dwellings in established neighbourhoods.
3. The Administration is not proposing any changes to the Zoning Bylaw regulations for primary dwellings in established neighbourhoods.

## Strategic Goal

This report supports the City of Saskatoon's (City) Strategic Goal of Sustainable Growth by ensuring that infill development is compatible with the existing built form.

## Background

The Neighbourhood Level Infill Development Strategy (Strategy) was endorsed by City Council on December 16, 2013. The Strategy outlined best practices, design guidelines, and regulations, which provide design flexibility and minimize the impact of infill residential dwellings on neighbouring property owners.

On March 23, 2015, City Council adopted amendments to the Zoning Bylaw to implement new development standards for primary dwellings (one- and two-unit dwellings and semi-detached dwellings) in established neighbourhoods. The amendments, in particular those that regulate building height and massing, ensure that new infill development does not detract from the character of an existing neighbourhood. The regulations were implemented with the goal of balancing demand for contemporary housing with the existing built form in established neighbourhoods.

The adopted Zoning Bylaw regulations for primary dwellings include the following (see Attachment 1 for details on these regulations):

- a) allowable sidewall area, which is determined by a calculation of building wall height and building wall length;
- b) regulations specific to flat-roofed structures;
- c) revisions to site width requirements for one-unit dwellings;
- d) regulations specific to height to the bottom of the front door;
- e) permitting porches to extend into the required front yard.

The Administration indicated that a report would be prepared for City Council after the adopted regulations were in effect for approximately two years, providing information on the effectiveness of the regulations, staff time required to review permits, and permit fees to process applications.

### **Report**

The Planning and Development Division reviewed the Zoning Bylaw amendments for primary dwellings, including:

- feedback from civic staff on the effectiveness of the regulations, the support required to administer the regulations, and the administrative time required to process applications;
- consultation with the Saskatoon & Region Homebuilders' Association and professionals experienced in designing infill primary dwellings; and
- compilation of building permit data for primary dwellings city-wide and within established neighbourhoods from 2010 to 2017.

### Administrative Review

The Development Review Section reviews all development proposals for primary dwellings in established neighbourhoods to ensure compliance with the Zoning Bylaw. Primary dwellings in established neighbourhoods are subject to a development permit fee, in addition to the building permit fee. The development permit fee is intended to cover the cost of the review for compliance with the Zoning Bylaw. The applicable fee is \$135 plus \$0.45 cents per \$1,000 value of construction. This fee is set at 100% cost recovery standard. The "turn-around" time for an infill development permit review averages four days. Delays typically occur when additional information is required from the design professional. Increasing this fee is not proposed at this time.

Since the implementation of the Zoning Bylaw regulations, no major issues have been identified by civic staff reviewing the applications. Staff continue to assist design professionals with the regulations.

### Summary of Consultation

The Planning and Development Division met with the Builder Industry Liaison Committee within the Saskatoon & Region Homebuilders' Association. The Association did not have concerns with the regulations.

The Planning and Development Division also met with several professionals experienced in designing infill dwellings. Their comments are summarized as follows:

- a. The allowable sidewall regulation limits the size and massing of the dwelling. At times, it can be difficult to design infill dwellings to accommodate requests of new homeowners.
- b. The regulation that allows front porches to extend into the front yard has been used in a limited capacity.
- c. Allowing for one-unit dwellings on sites with a width of 7.5 metres (25 feet) is a positive change; however, designing dwellings on these sites can be challenging.
- d. The regulation requiring the height of the bottom of the front door to be located no more than 1.0 metre above the finished grade limits the above-grade portion of the foundation. Basement windows require window wells. Window wells may not be desirable for homeowners when a secondary suite is located in the basement. This regulation was reviewed and discussed during the development of the regulations and is appropriate to maintain the pedestrian-scaled relationship with the street.

The issues identified by designers indicate that infill dwellings may be more challenging to design. However, as the intent of the regulations is to ensure that infill dwelling is compatible with existing residential area, it is the Administration's opinion that the regulations are appropriate.

#### Building Permit Data for Primary Dwellings

Attachment 2 provides building permit data for primary dwellings city-wide and in established neighbourhoods from 2010 to 2017. Based on the data, the following observations can be made:

- Construction of primary dwellings within established neighbourhoods remains steady; since 2013, there has been a minimum of 100 primary dwellings constructed annually. The number of primary dwellings constructed in 2016 was 106. This accounts for 14.8% of all city-wide primary dwelling construction.
- While the overall number of primary dwellings remains consistent, the number of two-unit dwellings has decreased since the regulations were implemented in March 2015. The amendment made to the site width regulation in areas defined as Category 1 neighbourhoods in the Zoning Bylaw allows for the development of a one-unit dwelling on a site with a width of 7.5 metres. The amendment accommodates the development of two one-unit dwellings rather than two-unit or semi-detached dwellings. It was identified in the Strategy that one-unit dwellings better fit the character of these areas. In addition, secondary suites can be legally developed in one-unit dwellings.

#### Conclusion

The amendments to the Zoning Bylaw for primary dwellings were implemented to ensure that infill development is compatible with the existing built form and that development enhances neighbourhood character. In observing construction that has occurred in the last two years, the Zoning Bylaw regulations for primary dwellings

attained the objective of ensuring that infill development is compatible with the character of established neighbourhoods. Civic staff will continue to monitor the regulations. The Administration is not proposing any changes to the Zoning Bylaw regulations at this time but will bring forward amendments if required.

### **Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement**

Significant community engagement occurred during the development of the Strategy. The Administration met with design professionals and the Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association during this review.

Interaction between civic staff and the general public over the past two years indicates that the regulations are acceptable. The Administration continues to receive comments regarding infill development, in particular, during construction. The Administration will continue to monitor comments received.

### **Communication Plan**

The Planning and Development Division prepared a brochure (Regulations and Design Guidelines for Primary Dwellings) to provide information on infill development, including building and site design guidelines, Zoning Bylaw requirements, regulations for accessory uses and structure, permits, and other information pertinent to residential construction. The brochure is available in pdf format on the City website.

In preparation for the spring construction season, a link to the brochure was advertised on Facebook in March 2017. The post reached 24,542 people, was liked 134 times, and had 16 shares. Comments received were not related to the Zoning Bylaw regulations, rather infill development in general. An advertisement promoting the brochure was also placed in the Saskatoon HOME magazine.

### **Other Considerations/Implications**

There are no options, policy, financial, environmental, privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations.

### **Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion**

Follow-up is not required at this time.

### **Public Notice**

Public notice, pursuant to Section 3 of Public Notice Policy No. C01-021, is not required.

### **Attachments**

1. Zoning Bylaw Amendments for Primary Dwellings in Established Neighbourhoods
2. Building Permit Data for Primary Dwellings - 2010 to 2017

### **Report Approval**

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