

DRAFT REPORT - BYLAW 20775

Zoning Bylaw Text Amendment to Minimum Tree Requirements for Small Scale Residential Development

Purpose

To amend the minimum tree requirements for small scale residential developments.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the October 16 - 23, 2023 City Council Public Hearing, the following motion was passed:

That Administration prepare amendments to subsection 3.1.1 of section 5.6 of Charter Bylaw 20001 by deleting:

- "Where the Site Width is less than 8.0 metres - 1 tree and 4 shrubs"

And replacing it with:

- "Where the Site Width is less than 8.0 metres - 2 trees and 4 shrubs"

Report

Minimum Tree Requirements in Zoning Bylaw 12800

Prior to 2016, there were no minimum tree or shrub requirements in the Zoning Bylaw for small scale residential development in most residential zones.

Bylaw 17672 amended Zoning Bylaw 12800 by introducing minimum tree and shrub planting requirements for low density residential development. This included a minimum 2 tree and 4 shrub requirement for sites less than 10m in width, and 1 tree and 4 shrubs for sites 10m or greater in width. This was informed by public engagement findings and direction received at the February 23, 2016 Executive Committee meeting.

Tree Requirements in Zoning Bylaw 20001

Administration identified challenges in meeting the minimum plant requirements in Zoning Bylaw 12800 for sites less than 10 metres in width.

Under Zoning Bylaw 12800, the minimum tree and shrub planting requirements are based on site width and type of housing (single detached housing, semi-detached housing, duplex housing and row housing). The requirements are outlined below:

Measure	Table 55.2(1)(d) Tree and Shrub Planting Requirements		
Site Width	Single Detached Housing	Semi-Detached Housing and Duplex Housing (per Dwelling)	<i>Charter Bylaw 18967 August 26, 2019</i> Row Housing (per Dwelling)
Less than 10.0 m	One deciduous tree, one coniferous tree and four shrubs	One deciduous tree, one coniferous tree and four shrubs	One deciduous tree, one coniferous tree and four shrubs
10.0 m - 13.0 m	Two deciduous trees, one coniferous tree and six shrubs		
Greater than 13.0 m	Two deciduous trees, two coniferous trees and eight shrubs	One deciduous tree, one coniferous tree and six shrubs	

A review was conducted in 2023 during the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative. Development Permit Inspections for 138 low density residential infill properties identified challenges with meeting the minimum requirements and found that:

- 15 sites (11%) complied with the minimum number of trees required
- 41 sites (29%) complied with the minimum number of required deciduous trees
- 17 sites (12%) complied with the minimum number of required coniferous trees

Some reasons for the level of non-compliance include:

- Lack of understanding regarding the classification of large shrubs as trees
- Opinion that the small lot size limits the number of trees that are able to be planted
- Maintenance required for homeowners and renters
- Mixed opinions whether the responsibility to install landscaping is the homeowner or the builder
- Concerns about the expense to purchase, plant and maintain trees

Attachment 1 evaluates the viability of integrating trees within different small scale residential scenarios. The analysis generally indicates limited space for trees in the front yard where the site width is less than 8.0 m. Sites with front drive access present the most difficulty. While these sites may accommodate up to one tree with a maximum spread of 3.7 m, the remaining selection would be limited to species with smaller canopies with a maximum spread of 1.5 m.

The requirement for two trees on narrow lots may pose challenges. Depending on their species, they may not survive either full life span due to insufficient root space. It may also limit opportunities for how homeowners use their private amenity space, particularly if spatial constraints require at least one of the trees to be located in the rear yard. Homeowners may desire to incorporate various elements into their yard, such as planters, gardens, outdoor seating areas or play areas for children, while also needing to ensure there is enough space for the required number of shrubs. If there is a need to accommodate required trees in the rear yard, this may restrict the layout and usability of their yard space.

Based on the low compliance, and space constraints on smaller sites, it was recommended to lower the minimum tree requirements for sites less than 8.0 m in width. A simplified approach was also

recommended where the requirements would increase based on the width of the site for ease of implementation and enforcement.

Related Reports

Other work that is occurring that will help contribute to increasing the urban tree canopy include:

- UPE01925 - Trees on Public & Private Property - This report is intended to provide a full picture of what Administration is doing to maintain, retain, and expand Edmonton's urban tree canopy on public and private property in alignment with The City Plan's goal of planting two million new urban trees.

Attachments

1. Modelling for Minimum Tree Requirements
2. Mark-up of Proposed Text Amendment to Zoning Bylaw 20001

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