InfoSheet
Planning for Intensification

Ontario

Did you know?

Some of the benefits associated with more compact and intensified built environments include:

- reducing carbon footprints
- improving access to public transit
- using resources such as lands, buildings and infrastructure more effectively
- protecting the natural environment and biodiversity by limiting urban expansion
- enhancing community identity
- incorporating green features that offset and support new development
- creating active streets that promote healthier patterns of human activity
- creating economic opportunities
- improving municipal fiscal performance

This InfoSheet provides an overview of key Planning Act tools that municipalities can use to facilitate and direct land use intensification through compact form, increased density, redevelopment and infill.

The Provincial Planning Framework

Ontario's Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 supports land use intensification by encouraging more optimal use of land, infrastructure, resources and services. Intensification is also a key policy of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006 and the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

Municipalities have been provided with several tools under the Planning Act that can be used to achieve more compact and intensified communities.

Intensification and Compact Form

Intensification means the development of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists, through development, redevelopment, infill and expansion or conversion of existing buildings. Each community's form and level of intensification will differ, based on their specific characteristics such as location, history, community strengths and preferences.

Planning and design features that support intensification may include:

- street-level awnings for shade
- wide sidewalks and street furniture for pedestrian comfort
- mobility-friendly curb cuts
- light coloured surfaces for pavement, roads and buildings
- energy-efficient lighting to increase safety
- human-scale designs that create active streets and promote physical activity
- adaptive reuse of heritage buildings
- transit stops and stations
- permeable pavement
- smaller lot sizes
- pedestrian and bicycle pathways.

Hypothetical Scenarios

Photo source: Ontario Growth Secretariat, Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure

Parkland Dedication - Subsection 42(6.2)
Where on-site parkland dedication cannot be accommodated, municipalities may provide for a reduction in cash-in-lieu requirements in exchange for sustainability features such as permeable surfaces, water-efficient landscaping, low-impact stormwater design and energy efficiency elements such as solar panels. This way, intensification efforts are complemented through green infrastructure and low impact development features.

Plan of Subdivision - Section 51
Approval authorities may review plans of subdivision to assess aspects of design and layout that support more sustainable, higher density proposals, including: smaller lot sizes, pedestrian and bicycling pathways and trails for increased non-motorized transportation options; optimized lot layout for energy efficiency; road connectivity to support efficient transit services; and green spaces to offset heat island effect and rainwater runoff.

Development Permit System (DPS) - Section 70.2 and O. Reg. 608/06
The DPS is a streamlining tool that combines zoning, site plan control and minor variance into a single-application process. More compact and denser forms of development are achievable through the establishment of minimum and maximum height, density and lot sizes, while conditions for a development permit may require sustainability elements to support development practices that produce lower carbon footprints (e.g., preserving trees and vegetation for carbon uptake, green building requirements to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and solar panels on building exteriors for clean energy).