Urban Design Guidelines Townhouse and Apartment Built Form

Town of Wasaga Beach

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1. Introduction

Until recently, the predominant form of housing in Wasaga Beach has traditionally been single-detached dwellings. The pattern of development has shifted towards development of higher-densities, primarily in townhouse built form, as the housing market responds to higher land costs, consumer demand for broader housing variety, and Provincial policy directives for efficient intensification within serviced communities.

Low-rise multiple tenant dwellings, such as townhouses and apartments, represent a sustainable alternative to traditional single-detached residential development, and diversify housing options in the community. They maintain a compact and low building scale, while providing the option of increasing density and intensifying neighbourhoods through an efficient use of land.

1.1 Purpose

The Town's Official Plan provides policy direction for residential development, and urban design goals and core principles to ensure that development meets a high quality of urban design within the community. The relationship between proposed development, the public realm, and the surrounding built form must be carefully planned in order to create high-quality neighbourhoods. These guidelines represent the Town's vision for townhouse and low-rise apartment dwelling development, and provide a framework for the planning and functional design of built form on lands and supporting the public realm within Wasaga Beach. These guidelines do not supercede the Town's Zoning By-law nor do they have the same status as the Zoning By-law.

The overarching goal of these guidelines is to ensure that new development is compatible and sensitive to established neighbourhoods through design compatibility and the relationship with surrounding properties. Following these guidelines will increase the standard of design in Wasaga Beach and integrate new development with existing development patterns through effective streetscape, site and building design. The Town strives for excellence in community and urban design relating to built form and relationship with the public realm.

By successfully achieving the design principles while employing high-quality physical characteristics, new townhouse (low-rise) development can be a welcome addition to a neighbourhood by adding aesthetic beauty, compatible character and an increase in monetary value or economic benefit.

1.2 Urban Design Principles

The following principles provide the framework for the design guidelines:

- Develop healthy communities with character and identity;
- Design high quality neighbourhoods and individual development that support an attractive public realm;
- Maintain an appropriate scale and pattern of development within its context;
- Ensure compatibility with neighbours;
- Create a comfortable pedestrian-friendly public realm and streetscapes;
- Offer alternatives to automobile-reliant development and support transit;
- Balance parking and access requirements with pedestrian areas;
- Ensure access to light, reduction in shadows, limited overlook and protection of privacy is respected;
- Promote environmental sustainability;
- Preservation and enhancement of the natural environment; and
- Ensure safety for people of all ages and abilities.

1.3 Application of Guidelines

The guidelines implement Official Plan policy and shall apply to new and infill townhouse developments in Wasaga Beach where they are considered to be appropriate built form. Although focused on low-rise townhouse development, the guidelines shall also apply to and provide guidance in the development of low-rise apartment built form in the community.

These guidelines also complement the Town of Wasaga Beach Comprehensive Zoning By-law and are intended to communicate design expectations to the development community and professional architects/planners prior to the submission of pre-consultation and development applications, such as plans of subdivision/condominium, site plans, and zoning by-law amendments. Town staff will apply these guidelines in the review of development application submissions to uphold high-quality design principles in Wasaga Beach. Development proposals that do not meet the intent of the guidelines will likely require some redesign.

Low-rise townhouse and apartment development should generally be located along arterial and collector roads in established growth areas within the Town's community structure as identified in the Town's Official Plan. Where low-rise development is proposed adjacent to lower-density residential and commercial built form, these guidelines provide direction for streetscape, site and building design that maintain compatibility with and respect existing neighbourhoods.

2. Site Design, Compatibility, and Character

2.1 Building Orientation

1. Orient buildings towards the public realm to contribute to an active pedestrian environment and healthy streetscape. Garages and parking areas are encouraged to be located in the rear of a townhouse dwelling, where possible, to maintain a safe and attractive public realm.

2. Front yard paths should provide direct access to each unit or common entrance from the sidewalk.

3. Front entrances should be prominent, accessible, and incorporate a porch or veranda. Main entrances should be accessible, illuminated, and provide weather protection.

4. In the front yard, public and private space should be differentiated through the use of landscaping, terraces, visual barriers such as low decorative fencing, and/or minor grade separation (0.6 - 0.9 metres). Accessible townhouse design should be considered with universal level entrances or barrier-free access ramps, where feasible. Stairs should not dominate the entrance of a townhouse.

5. Position buildings to face one another with a front-to-front and back-to-back relationship. Avoid back-to-front facing relationships and rear yards fronting a public street, where possible.

2.2 Height and Massing

1. Design buildings with height and massing that create and reinforce pedestrian-scaled environments through appropriate street proportion. The height of the building should be appropriately scaled to the width of the public/private street on which it fronts.

2. Street Proportion - Provide a public/private street right-of-way width-to-building height ratio between 1 : 0.3 and 1 : 0.75, to be consistent with the existing street character (Figure 1).

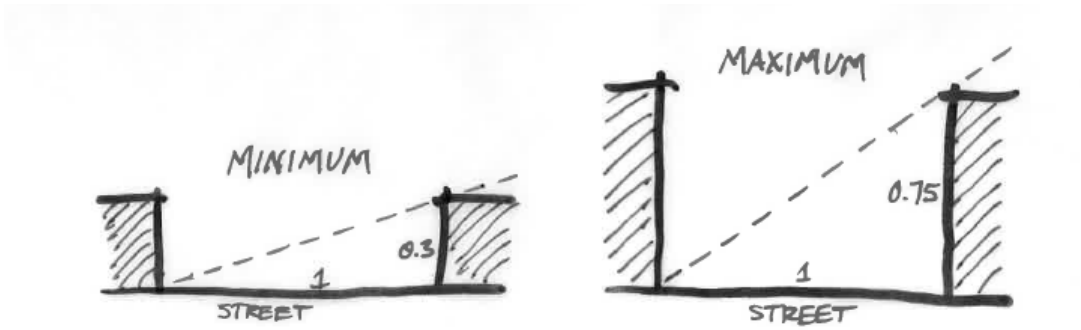

Figure 1 – Street Width to Building Height Ratios

3. Design buildings located adjacent to low-density residential areas that incorporate façade setbacks, modulation and/or height reductions on portions of the building to achieve greater compatibility by reducing the appearance of height and massing. Dividing building mass into smaller vertical sections can reflect the scale of neighbouring buildings.

4. Emphasize building entrances and architectural features to create visual cues for site orientation. This can be achieved by increasing the height of portions of the building on prominent sites, such as gateways, intersections, view terminus and abutting open space areas.

5. Blocks of townhouses shall consist of no more than eight (8) units.

2.3 Setbacks and Separation Distances

1. Front yard setbacks for townhouse units should be a minimum of 4.5 metres or context. Where front integral garage parking is provided, the garage portion of the building should be setback 6.0 metres. Front setbacks should be consistent across the site, unless step-back is needed to transition to adjacent building setbacks.

2. Interior side yard setbacks should be a minimum of 1.5 metres where there are no side-yard drainage infrastructure easements. End units flanking a public street should be setback a minimum of 4.5 metres from the street (with a 6.0 metre setback to a private garage).

3. Provide separation between townhouse block end walls with a minimum of 3 metres to allow for drainage and landscaping. Where the separation will provide

pedestrian circulation, the separation between townhouse blocks on the same site should generally be 6 metres.

4. Provide a minimum of 15 metres separation distance between facing buildings (front to front and rear to rear) at lower floors to provide adequately sized amenity areas, light into main living areas, views to the public realm, and privacy (Figure 2).

5. Limit building element projections, such as balconies, into setback areas, streets, mews, and amenity areas to protect access to light and sky view.

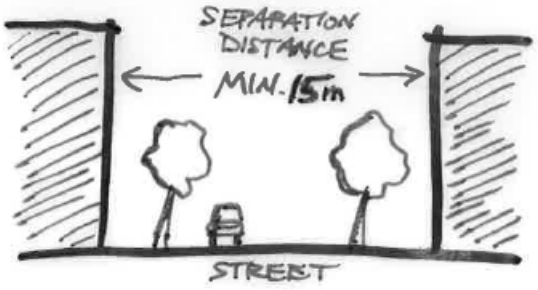

Figure 2 – Separation Distance between Facing Buildings

2.4 Transition and Compatibility

1. Building scale, mass, and proportion should contribute to the quality of the streetscape, and promote visual integration into the surrounding neighbourhood.

2. Building design should incorporate a gradual transition to existing buildings of a different density, height, or setback, respecting the height, scale and massing of neighbouring buildings.

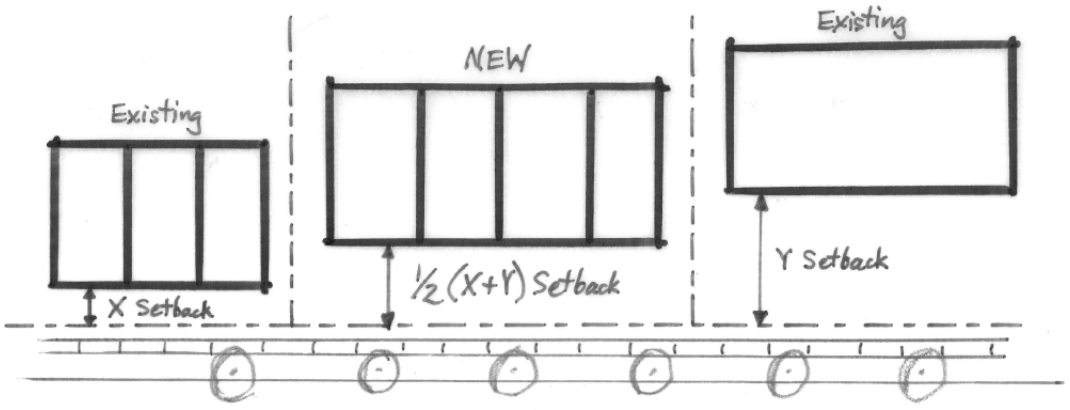

Figure 3 – Building Setbacks: Align to Average Setback

3. Create a transition in building heights if a new development is lower or higher than existing buildings. Step the building down (or up) in height near adjoining properties to relate to the scale of neighbouring buildings. Add architectural features, such as porches, verandas, and bays, to visually reduce the mass of new buildings.

4. Incorporate building setbacks to achieve a gradual transition to the immediate context of adjacent low-density residential and commercial buildings. When desirable setbacks exist on adjacent lands, reflect that condition in the siting and building setbacks. Where setbacks vary, mediate between the two setbacks. Where setbacks are undesirable - i.e. parking is located in front of adjacent buildings - then site new building closer to the street edge in order to set a positive precedent (Figure 3).

5. Offer views while minimizing shadowing and overlook into neighbouring properties. Buildings should be contained within a 45 degree angular plane measured from the rear property line, when abutting low-density residential buildings to preserve light, views, and privacy (Figure 4).

6. Position decks and balconies to minimize overlook onto neighbouring properties and private amenity spaces. Where overlook occurs, screen views with landscaping, decorative walls, or fencing.

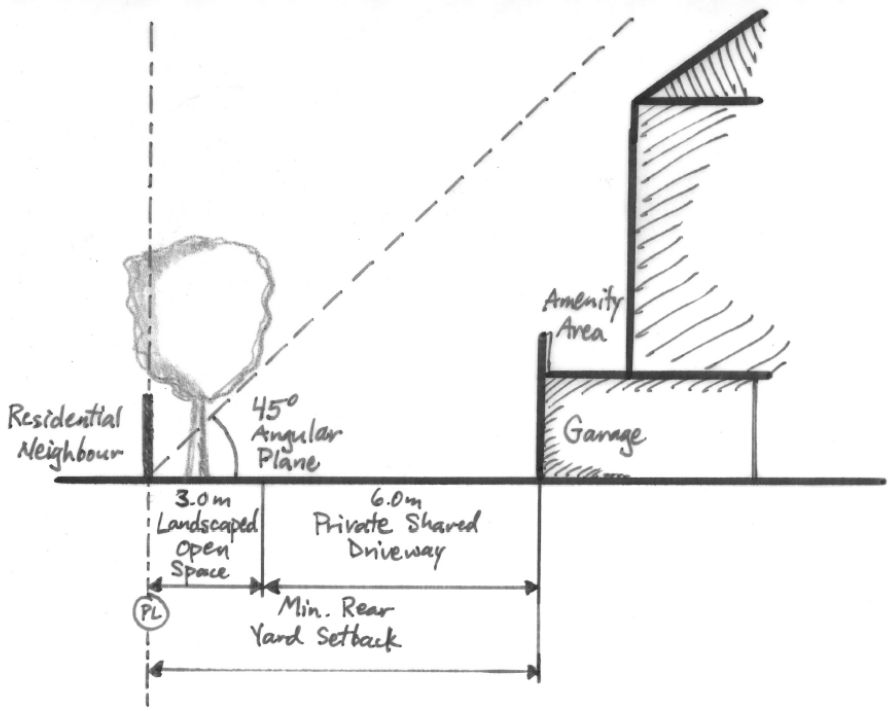

Figure 4 – Rear setback, Buffering, and Angular Plane

7. Architecture and materials should respect and be compatible with the surrounding residential area.

2.5 Architectural Design

1. Incorporate a high level of architectural treatment that contributes to the pedestrian environment and reinforces the community character for façades visible from the public realm. Design facades with variety in architectural elements, such as varied wall planes and roof lines, human scale proportions, large windows, and porches/entranceways.

2. Incorporate architectural variety between adjacent blocks along a streetscape. For building facades greater than 30 metres in length, divide the horizontal dimension of the building and create a more human-scaled environment by incorporating breaks and significant modulation in the massing (wall projections/recesses), and variety in roof design.

3. Design corner units to incorporate architectural features that address both streets with a side elevation that includes windows and details consistent with the front elevation. Wrap-around porches, corner bays, gables, bay windows, and architectural features should carry architectural design treatments along both building frontages.

4. Articulate elevations that face public spaces, including parks and open space, by incorporating building projections, such as porches, bay windows, and entry doors to maximize opportunities for overview and safety.

5. Incorporate cladding materials that include brick, stone, metal, glass, wood, and in-situ concrete of high architectural quality. Incorporate high quality stucco only as an accent material. Vinyl siding, plastic, plywood, concrete block, tinted and mirrored glass, and metal siding are discouraged.

2.6 Landscaping

1. Create a transition space/landscape element between the public street and private dwelling. Front-yard landscaping should include deciduous trees and drought-tolerant groundcover/shrub species to create a visual distinction between public and private realm.

2. A minimum of 50% of the front yard should consist of soft landscaping. Landscaping plans for front yards should include tree-planting with one tree planted per unit, ensuring a minimum soil volume of 30 cubic metres to maintain the long-term health of new trees,

3. Retain and protect existing healthy mature trees, where possible. To ensure their survival, trenching for services and foundations should avoid the critical root zone of existing trees, generally defined by the tree's drip line. If the removal of any mature and healthy tree(s) is justified and accepted by the Town, they should be replaced with new trees.

4. Provide a minimum of 3 metres landscaped buffer area from the rear property line to a rear laneway where it abuts a residential use (Figure 4).

2.7 Amenity Space

1. Provide common or shared amenity spaces such as parkettes or other open spaces where appropriate. The common space should be in a prominent location, visible and easily accessed from all units, and with plenty of exposure to sunlight.

2. Provide private amenity areas such as a backyard, balcony, deck or roof space for each townhouse dwelling which is fenced or screened with landscaping for privacy.

2.8 Grading

1. Maintain the existing or natural grade at property lines. Avoid artificially raising or lowering grades that would require the use of retaining walls, which would adversely affect water run-off and/or connectivity to adjacent properties.

2. If there is a significant grade difference across a site, townhouse blocks should be stepped to maintain an appropriate relationship to grade.

3. Avoid the use of retaining walls along street frontages, parks and other open spaces areas, and abutting adjacent properties. Where a retaining wall cannot be

avoided and the grade change is greater than one metre, the wall should be set back from the property line and terraced to provide an appropriate transition.

4. Pedestrian routes across grade changes should be universally accessible and in compliance with Provincial accessibility legislation.

5. Stormwater run-off and drainage should have no adverse impacts on adjacent properties or the public realm.

6. Manage rainwater and snowmelt on-site with Low Impact Development (LID) Standards that encourage infiltration, evapo-transpiration and water re-use.

7. Minimize impermeable surfaces. Where hard surfaces are planned, the use of permeable materials are encouraged to manage stormwater run-off, promote groundwater recharge and infiltration, and reduce heat build-up.

3. Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

3.1 Pedestrian Movements and Safety

1. Promote public safety on sidewalks by minimizing the potential for pedestrian and vehicle conflicts.

2. Provide safe, comfortable and easily accessible pedestrian linkages to destinations within the new development including schools, trails, parks, transit, and community facilities. Connect pedestrian routes to adjacent developments.

3. Pedestrian circulation areas should be barrier free and landscaped, have pedestrian-scale lighting, and have access to sunlight.

4. Create habitable rooms and windows that face the streets, sidewalks, and open spaces to promote informal surveillance.

3.2 Vehicle Access

1. Extend and connect new streets, lanes, and pedestrian walkways to the neighbourhood street/pedestrian network and provide links to schools, community facilities, and retail areas, where possible. Consider and protect opportunities to extend the street or street network across adjoining sites in the future.

2. Provide through streets and lanes to minimize vehicle turnaround, where possible.

3. Provide a single point of access onto the arterial or collector roads where townhouses front an arterial or collector road. Access to the townhouse units will be provided by a shared driveway or alternative access arrangements should be investigated, such as suitable local street access and through interconnected properties.

4. Design rear private laneways to connect with potential future laneways on adjoining properties and consider opportunities for shared access agreements and public easements.

5. Separate private laneways and driveways from side property lines with a landscaped buffer area with a minimum width of 1.5 metres, and from rear property lines by a landscaped buffer area with a minimum width of 3 metres, to soften and improve the transition between adjacent properties.

6. Rear private laneways should be lighted for safety and security, but no spillover of such lighting on adjacent properties should occur.

7. Site design shall:

    a. consider snow clearing, storage and/or removal, and should provide for dedicated areas for snow storage;
    b. accommodate for Emergency Vehicle access and turning movements;
    c. consider waste-removal operations and be in accordance with the County of Simcoe's Multi-Residential and Private Road Waste Collection Policy.

3.3 Parking

1. Avoid front driveways and garages in street-related townhouses. Parking and servicing areas for townhouses should be located at the rear of the units or underground, accessed from a laneway or driveway. Front integral garages should only be considered when no other option is technically feasible and each unit is 6.0 metres or wider.

2. Where townhouse units are less than 6.0 metres in width, garages and parking areas shall be located and accessed at the rear of the building to deliver a high-quality streetscape that minimizes the visual impact of vehicle storage, and provides a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment.

3. Where it is not technically feasible or practical to accommodate parking at the rear of the units, single front garages may be considered provided the townhouses have a minimum width of 6.0 metres. Garage entrances should be set back a minimum of 6.0 metres from the property line to accommodate a parked car in the driveway. Driveways should be paired with an adjoining dwelling unit to reduce the number of access points to the street.

4. Where the garage and parking area are located in the front yard, garage entrances should be flush with or recessed behind the building face and architecturally integrated into the main building massing so that it does not dominate the façade. Garages that project from the face of the building are discouraged.

5. On corner sites, access to parking and servicing areas should be from the flanking street.

6. Conceal views of parking areas from the street and adjacent properties by means of building placement, landscaping, fencing and other site features. Accesses to underground parking should be integrated into the design of the building and should be sited to prevent negative impacts to neighbouring properties.

7. Provide sufficient visitor parking that is centrally located and accessible for pedestrians from sidewalks and pathways.

8. Parking access, servicing areas and utility boxes should be consolidated for efficiency and to minimize adverse impacts on neighbouring properties and the public realm. Waste storage areas, utility boxes, and hydro meters should be screened from public views, located below or under the front steps or behind free-standing utility meter walls, where feasible, so they are not visible from the street.

4. Glossary of Terms

Apartment dwelling – a residential building containing more than four (4) dwelling units, each unit having access from a corridor system.

Articulation – the layout or pattern of building elements including walls, doors, roofs, windows, cornices, and belt courses.

Built Form – buildings and structures.

Compatible/Compatibility – when the density, form, bulk, height, setbacks and/or materials of buildings are able to co-exist in harmony with their surroundings.

Façade – the principle face of a building visible to the public.

Low-rise multiple tenant dwelling – residential buildings, including townhouses and apartments with a height not generally exceeding four storeys.

Massing – the size and shape of a building.

Overlook – condition in which above-grade apartments, balconies, or rooftop patios have a view of private or public amenity spaces below them.

Pedestrian Scale – the use of human proportioned site design elements, buildings and space that is clearly oriented to pedestrian activity and which contributes to a person's perception of buildings and/or other features in the built environment.

Public Realm – streets, walkways, parks and open spaces and the accessible parts of public buildings.

Townhouse dwelling – grade-related, low-rise, attached residential dwelling units constructed in rows or blocks.

Scale – the size of a building, architectural feature or landscape elements in relation to its surroundings and the size of a person.

Separation Distance – distance between the face of a building and the face of another building or property line.

Soil Volume – the amount of soil provided to facilitate the growth of landscape features, measured in cubic metres.

Street Proportion -the ratio of the width of the street right-of-way to the height of buildings along the edges of the street, designed to create an appropriate sense of street enclosure.