Development Services Staff Report

Report Number:	DS14-2002
Report Title:	Environmental Registry of Ontario - 019-5286, Opportunities to increase missing middle housing and gentle density, including supports for multigenerational housing
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Reviewed By:	Deanne Friess, Director of Development Services
Final Review:	Senior Management Team

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report DS14-2002 respecting Environmental Registry of Ontario - 019-5286, Opportunities to increase missing middle housing and gentle density, including supports for multigenerational housing:

1. Direct Staff to submit this report prior to the April 29, 2022, deadline to advise the Province of Ontario of the following comments in regard to addressing the missing middle and multigenerational housing:

    Barriers

    a. Barriers to seeing missing middle in the Province are not the same in all locations. Barriers that exist in the Township of Woolwich include land values, demand and lack of individuals willing to be landlords or operation such units.

    b. Barriers to municipalities are items like ensuring adequate municipal servicing (i.e., water and sanitary) is available.

    c. Barriers include the need for studies, like noise studies for road traffic noise and transportation studies.

    Changes

d. That increasing any ‘as of right’ zoning to allow up to four units or more is not recommended, especially on agricultural parcels.

e. Municipalities should be required or encouraged to permit as of right to areas where the missing middle can be provided in the community, close to a core area, along transit routes and where services are adequate.

f. It is recommended that that Province help reduce the need for common studies like noise and transportation, with a standardized implementation to reduce the need for the studies and delays from review of the same.

g. If units are to be permitted as of right a set of standard form and scale-based design guidelines should also be provided.

h. Consideration be given to requiring new housing developments to provide a percentage of missing middle housing, or that new housing be designed in a manner to allow for creation/adaption of the unit into additional units

Background:

The Province of Ontario has released on the Environmental Registry (ERO) a document for comment entitled “Opportunities to increase missing middle housing and gentle density, including supports for multigenerational housing” seeking input on some discussion questions for providing for the Missing Middle Housing. *“Missing middle” is a term used to describe a wide range of multi-unit housing types compatible in scale with single-detached neighborhoods, and that have gone ‘missing’ from many of our cities. For example, laneway housing, garden suites, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, rowhouses, townhouses, and low and mid-rise apartments.*

During recent consultations the Province heard comments that “support for allowing missing middle type housing to be built as-of-right, eliminating appeals for this type of modest infill development, and that further support is needed for housing for multi-generational families.” In this regard the Province is asking:

Question 1:

What are the biggest barriers and delays to diversifying the types of housing built in existing neighbourhoods?

Question 2:

What further changes to the planning and development process would you suggest to make it easier to support gentle density and build missing middle housing and multigenerational housing, in Ontario?

Question 3:

Are you aware of innovative approaches to land use planning and community building from other jurisdictions that would help increase the supply of missing middle and multigenerational housing?

Question 4:

Are there any other changes that would help support opportunities for missing middle and multigenerational housing?

The full background is provided in Appendix 1. Comments to the proposed changes are due by April 29, 2022.

Comments:

Staff have reviewed the four questions noted above and provide the following comments and suggestions.

Question 1: What are the biggest barriers and delays to diversifying the types of housing built in existing neighbourhoods?

i. Cost/Benefit (proforma)
    a. That not all areas of the province are the same, in that not all areas see the desire and demand for rental properties. Due to land values and demand it may not be cost effective to redevelop properties to create new missing middle opportunities.
    b. In the older areas of the community, which are generally closer to the core areas and transit (Elmira and St Jacobs), some of the existing zoning allows for dwelling conversions to create multiple units out of an existing dwelling. These lots are also larger and have greater flexibility to redevelop and obtain the zoning approvals. However, based on past discussions with developers it does not seem cost effective to purchase such properties and to redevelop them into multiple units.

ii. The Township has seen a significant number of properties create one accessory dwelling unit, but little to no demand for two units even though it is permitted. The challenges are that most new housing is not constructed in a manner to easily create two more units.

iii. Municipalities need to ensure that adequate servicing (water and sanitary) is available to support intensification.

iv. Barriers to redevelopment can include the need for additional studies like noise and transportation studies. Redevelopment along regional and higher traffic roads often lead to the need for these studies. These studies delay finalization of plans and in terms of noise studies often require standard noise warning clauses and standard building design features. Consideration should be given to creating standard requirements, especially for items related to road noise, which can be implemented with no need for additional study.

v. Parking can be a barrier, in terms of finding ways to provide adequate parking on site and then costs to install and maintain. In areas that have limited transit and services, the demand for parking still exists and cannot be eliminated. Until other forms of transportation are in place and people choose to live in the community they work, parking will remain an issue.

vi. Not In My Back Yard – (NIMBY-ism) – public concerns against intensification within built up areas can create delays and lead to OLT hearings.

Question 2: What further changes to the planning and development process would you suggest tomake it easier to support gentle density and build missing middle housing and multigenerational housing, in Ontario?

i. As of right zoning to allow for missing middle development does not necessarily lead to actual development of the same. Although it may reduce some barriers, other barriers may still exist (i.e., economics').
ii. It is not recommended that the Province require or allow up to four units on any parcel, especially agricultural parcels. Municipalities should be encouraged to provide/allow as of right such missing middle developments in proximity to a core area, along transit routes to encourage active transportation and allow for potential parking reductions, but also where servicing is available.
iii. That where any such missing middle or multi-generational housing is proposed, especially if it was to be an as of right permissions, that to be successful housing for the community and supportive of complete and walkable community it must also address the form and scale. If units are to be permitted as of right a set of standard form and scale-based design guidelines should also be provided.
iv. As noted above, consideration to address or resolve common studies like noise, and transportation, with a standardized implementation to reduce the need for the studies and delays from review of the same.

Question 3: Are you aware of innovative approaches to land use planning and community building from other jurisdictions that would help increase the supply of missing middle and multigenerational housing?

i. Staff is not aware of any other innovative approaches.

Question 4: Are there any other changes that would help support opportunities for missing middle and multigenerational housing?

i. Consideration could be given to requiring new housing developments to provide a percentage of missing middle housing,
ii. Require new housing to be designed in a manner to allow for creation/adaption of the unit into additional units.

Interdepartmental Impacts:

None

Financial Impacts:

None.

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Planning for the missing middle align with the Township strategic plan objectives of planning for growth and exploring economic development opportunities and maintain a community which is fiscally responsible and sustainable.

Conclusion:

That Council, in consideration of the questions posed by the Province in regards to addressing the missing middle and multi-generation housing, provide the comments as noted in the recommendation and forward report DS14-2022 to the Province in response to the ERO posting.

Attachments:

1. Ontario, ERO notice, re Amendments to the Planning Act, More Homes for Everyone.

Ontario is the best place to live, start a business and raise a family – but we can only build on our success if all Ontarians and their families are able to find a home that's right for them. The province's housing policies are working to get more homes built faster, but too many Ontarians still struggle to find a home. We are introducing **More Homes for Everyone**, that proposes targeted policies for the immediate term that make housing fairer for hard-working Ontarians and make it faster to build the homes that families need and deserve.

Addressing the housing supply crisis is a long-term strategy that requires long-term commitment and co-ordination from all levels of government.

The Task Force report is our long-term housing roadmap. Similar to Ontario's approach with regular Red Tape Reduction bills, the province is committed to implementing the Task Force's recommendations with a housing supply action plan every year over four years, starting in 2022-2023, with policies and tools that support multi-generational homes and missing middle housing.

Missing middle and multigenerational housing

"Missing middle" is a term used to describe a wide range of multi-unit housing types compatible in scale with single-detached neighbourhoods, and that have gone 'missing' from many of our cities. For example, laneway housing, garden suites, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, rowhouses, townhouses, and low and mid-rise apartments. This gentle density would have minimal impact on existing neighbourhoods while providing additional housing options. Neighbourhoods that offer a variety of housing choices can accommodate people of all ages and abilities, for example:

- Young adults can stay in the neighbourhoods they grew up in (close to parents)
- Older people can age-in-place and stay in their preferred community
- Multigenerational families including people with disabilities and/or other care needs can live together to offset the high costs of housing, childcare and/or long-term care.

This type of intensification of existing neighbourhoods provides people of all ages and abilities with opportunities to live in complete communities, close to a range of transportation options and amenities, and in a community that meets people's needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime. Multigenerational housing can also support the cultural needs and cultural safety of racialized communities and Indigenous people living in urban areas.

As municipalities plan for future population growth, infill and intensification provides an opportunity to accommodate that growth while making efficient use of existing infrastructure and services.

During recent consultations, the government heard support for allowing missing middle type housing to be built as-of-right, eliminating appeals for this type of modest infill development, and that further support is needed for housing for multi-generational families.

The government has also heard that zoning by-laws are often out-of-date and/or not "forward-looking". Zoning by-laws that provide clear direction in areas where development is anticipated can help reduce delays by avoiding the need for zoning amendments.

The Planning Act provides for a variety of tools that can help facilitate housing development. For example, as part of the Housing Supply Action Plan in 2019, Planning Act changes were made to require municipalities to establish official plan policies and amend their zoning by-laws to allow additional residential units for detached, semi-detached and row houses in both the primary dwelling and ancillary building or structure. The Planning Act also restricts appeals of both these required additional residential unit official plan policies and zoning by-laws to the Ontario Land Tribunal except by the Minister. Complementary changes were also made to the Building Code and Development Charges Act to further encourage the development of additional residential units. The establishment of an additional residential unit is at the discretion of individual homeowners and may take place in existing or new residences.

Further, the community planning permit system is a tool available to all local municipalities in Ontario. It combines zoning, minor variance and site plan processes into one streamlined permitting system. The community planning permit system has in the past been identified as a potential solution for various planning issues, including forward-looking zoning and the provision of a range and mix of housing.

The Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force also made recommendations that could support opportunities for the creation of missing middle housing, for example:

- Allow "as of right" residential housing up to four units and up to four storeys on a single residential lot, and
- Permit "as of right" secondary suites, garden suites, and laneway houses province-wide.

We want to hear best practices and examples of how we can support the creation of more missing middle housing, including multigenerational housing, in Ontario. Solving the housing crisis will require new ways of thinking and everyone coming together to do what it takes.

Any specific policy proposals to address these housing matters would be consulted on prior to the government making any changes.

Discussion Questions

Question 1:

- What are the biggest barriers and delays to diversifying the types of housing built in existing neighbourhoods?

Question 2:

- What further changes to the planning and development process would you suggest to make it easier to support gentle density and build missing middle housing and multigenerational housing, in Ontario?

Question 3:

- Are you aware of innovative approaches to land use planning and community building from other jurisdictions that would help increase the supply of missing middle and multigenerational housing?

Question 4:

- Are there any other changes that would help support opportunities for missing middle and multigenerational housing?