

Saskatoon Infill Residential Development: Recommendations Summary

October 23 2025 DRAFT

Overview

In partnership with mddl and Small Housing, the City of Saskatoon has coordinated a technical review of its zoning standards, infill housing regulations, and related policies to understand how possible amendments could help to:

- Maintain and support compatibility of new infill housing projects with existing housing in neighbourhoods.
- Improve the flexibility and feasibility with new development to help achieve City housing targets and meet needs for housing access and affordability in the community.

This project has been developed to support the City's Housing Action Plan and relates to recent Zoning Bylaw changes that allow up to four dwelling units on a site citywide.

What is Infill Development?

"Infill development" refers to new homes built within established neighbourhoods. This can be on vacant sites within areas that have been otherwise built out, but can also include new housing built next to existing housing on the same lot, or even new housing built to replace existing homes.

Redevelopment will take place in many neighbourhoods over time as existing homes get older. However, infill provides opportunities to include more housing within neighbourhoods to increase housing density and renew neighbourhoods. This type of development is also designed to be more compatible with surrounding housing with respect to height, setbacks, and massing requirements.

New infill development can help to meet a community's housing needs and can give potential new residents more opportunities to live in the area. It can also support additional investment into older communities, increase the customer base of neighbourhood businesses, and provide more cost-effective and sustainable long-term examples of urban growth.

Project Scope

This project is a **technical review** to understand how infill projects can be built within older neighbourhoods in the city and whether there is a need to make changes to the Zoning Bylaw to address obstacles to building infill development. This has been focused on recommendations which:

- Address inconsistencies in the Zoning Bylaw after recent changes in regulation.
- Adjust development regulations that can make infill more difficult while not achieving other clear policy goals for a neighbourhood.
- Highlight areas of future action by the City in encouraging infill that respects neighbourhoods while providing good housing opportunities for city residents.

There are several elements that are not included in this project:

- This study does **not** reexamine whether infill of four units per lot should be allowed in neighbourhoods.
- This does **not** review larger types of development (more than 4 dwelling units on a site), including multi-unit apartment and condo buildings with five or more units. These are distinctly different types of projects and are outside of the types of infill covered under the relevant City bylaws.
- This does **not** discuss changes made to on-site parking requirements or explore requirements that are managed under separate policies or bylaws, such as curb cuts.

Note that this work focuses on established neighbourhoods in the city where infill is most likely but includes provisions that can also impact other neighbourhoods.

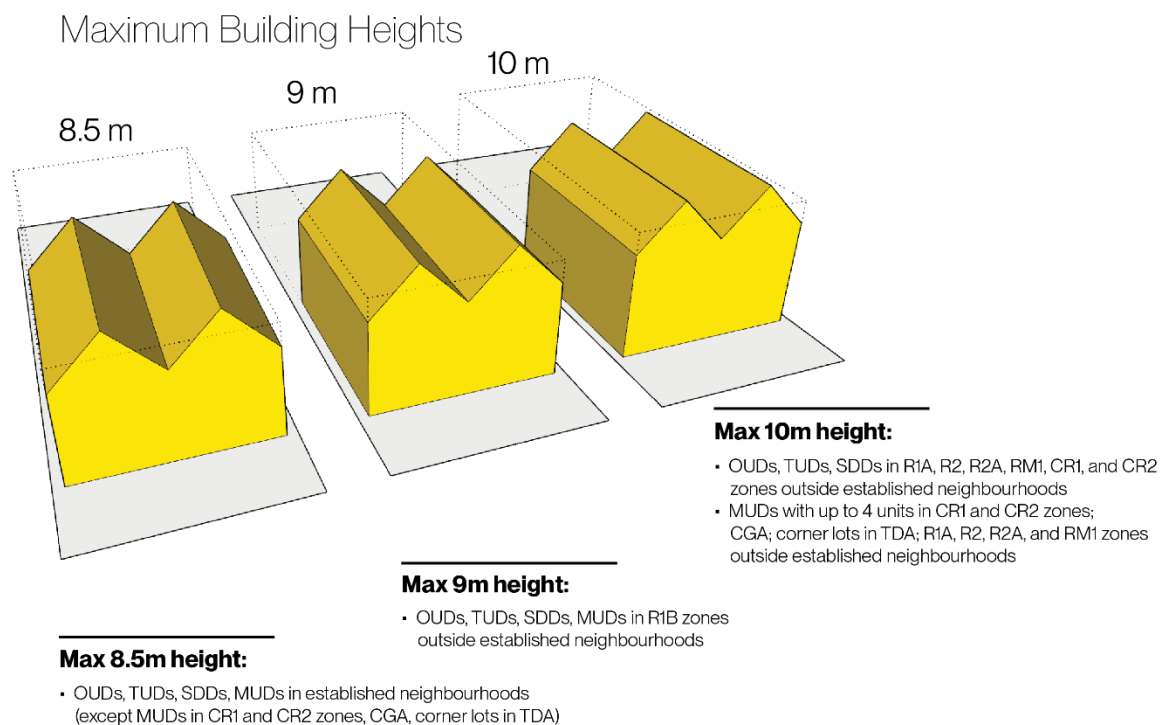
Recommendations

The recommendations from the study include the following:

1. **Make maximum building heights in R districts consistent.** Maximum heights for residential buildings have different heights between different zoning districts and contexts. The City should explore making height requirements more consistent across the different districts, while retaining the 8.5-metre maximum heights for housing in established neighbourhoods for the time being.

Figure 1 indicates some of the variation between maximum building height in different situations in lower-density R zoning districts:

Figure 1. Maximum Building Height Comparisons.



- 2. Sidewall area regulations that manage building massing should be adjusted to address its effects.** Sidewall area regulations are calculations that manage the bulk and massing of homes in lower-density residential districts. They provide a trade-off between height and length and generally manage the scale of residential development. However, these regulations often penalize desirable features in a dwelling, such as larger side setbacks, gable ends, and articulation. Replacement regulations such as stepped height requirements or maximum building lengths can help to address these issues while maintaining the intent of keeping bulky development from overwhelming neighbourhood character.

The following graphics highlight certain considerations with sidewall area calculations:

- Figure 2 presents an example of what counts as “sidewall area” for the regulatory calculations.
- Figure 3 shows how sidewall area regulations impact the length of residential buildings if building height and width are kept constant.
- **Figure 4** shows how these regulations mean that increasing building heights will reduce the length of the building that you can construct.
- Figure 5 shows that building a house with a side-facing gable end that counts as sidewall will require reducing the length of a house.

Figure 2. Examples of Sidewall Area Calculations.

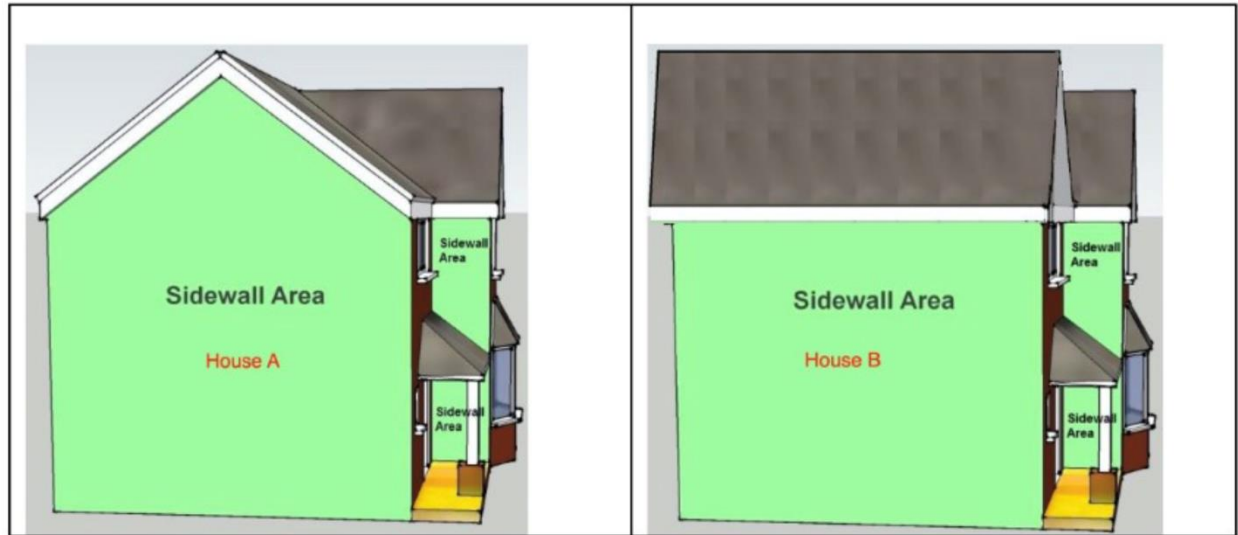


Figure 3. Effects of Sidewall Area Calculations on Building Bulk.

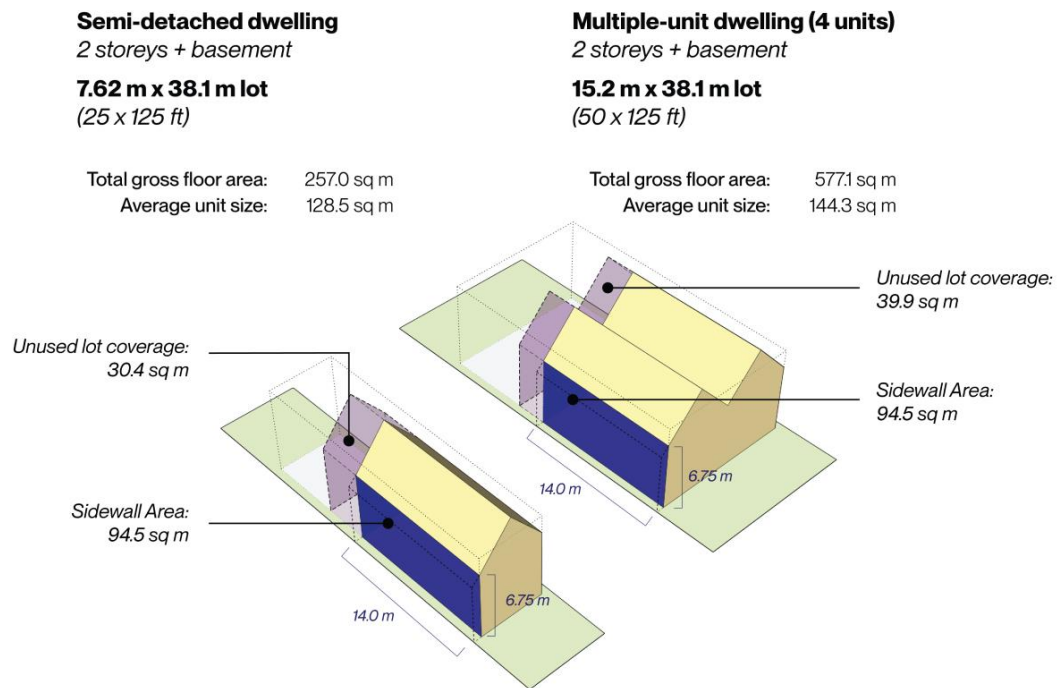


Figure 4. Relationships Between Sidewall Area and Height.

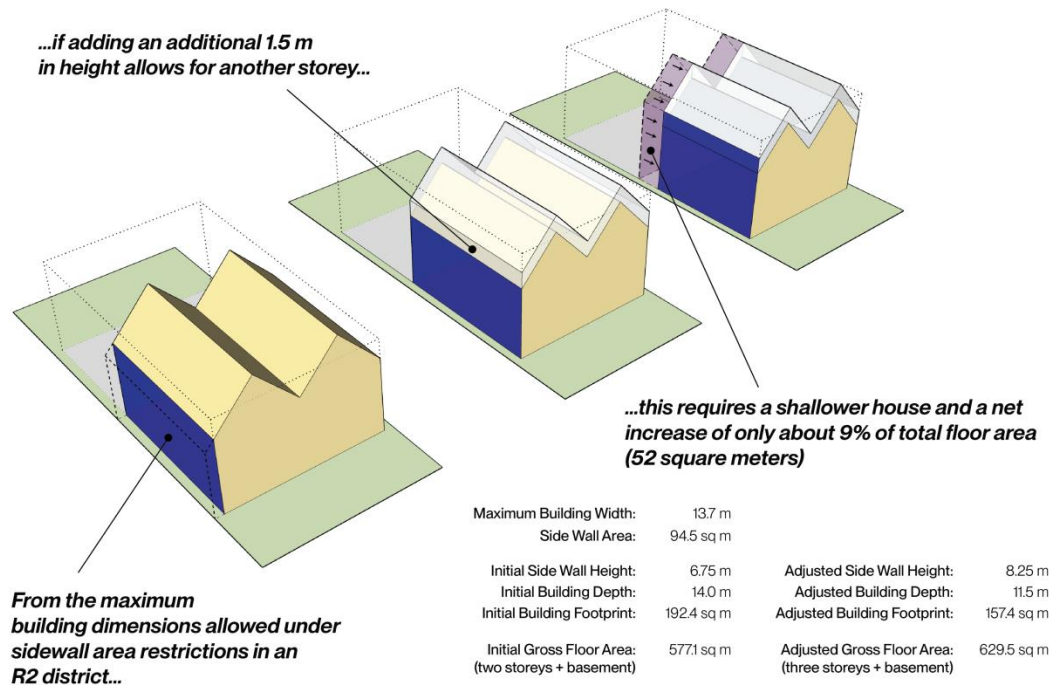
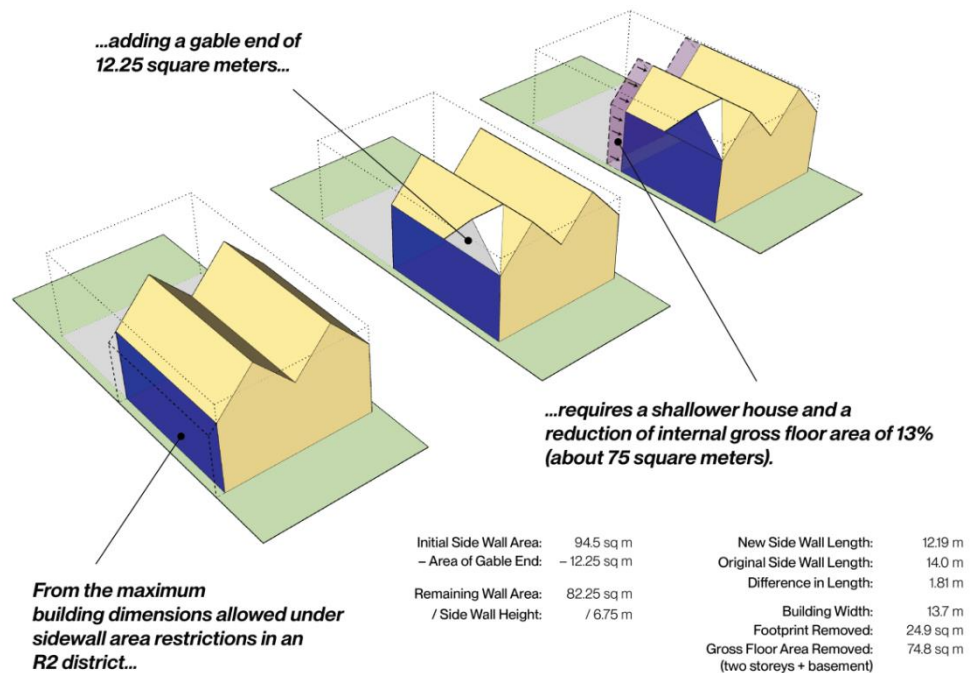


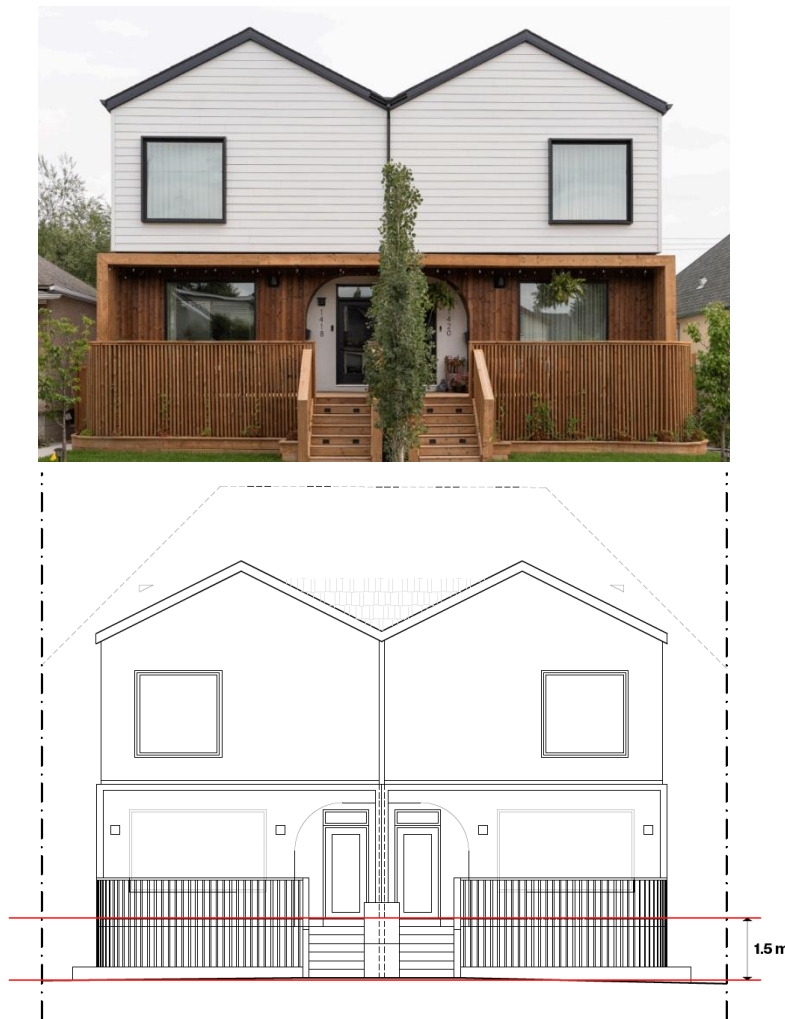
Figure 5. Relationships Between Sidewall Area and Gable Ends.



3. **Front door sill height requirements should be shifted to design guidelines.** Regulations now require that the sill of an entrance to a home is not located more than 1 metre above the finished grade. This is intended to ensure that designs of new residential development engage with the streetscape and present active frontages. However, this can be prescriptive and does not necessarily guarantee good design, while complicating the use of basement space as a living area and potentially increasing costs. These requirements should be moved from the Zoning Bylaw into design guidelines.

Figure 6 shows an example of a residential design for a fourplex that includes sill heights at 1.5 metres, higher than the current allowable sill heights under zoning requirements.

Figure 6. Example of Residential Design with Higher Sill Heights.

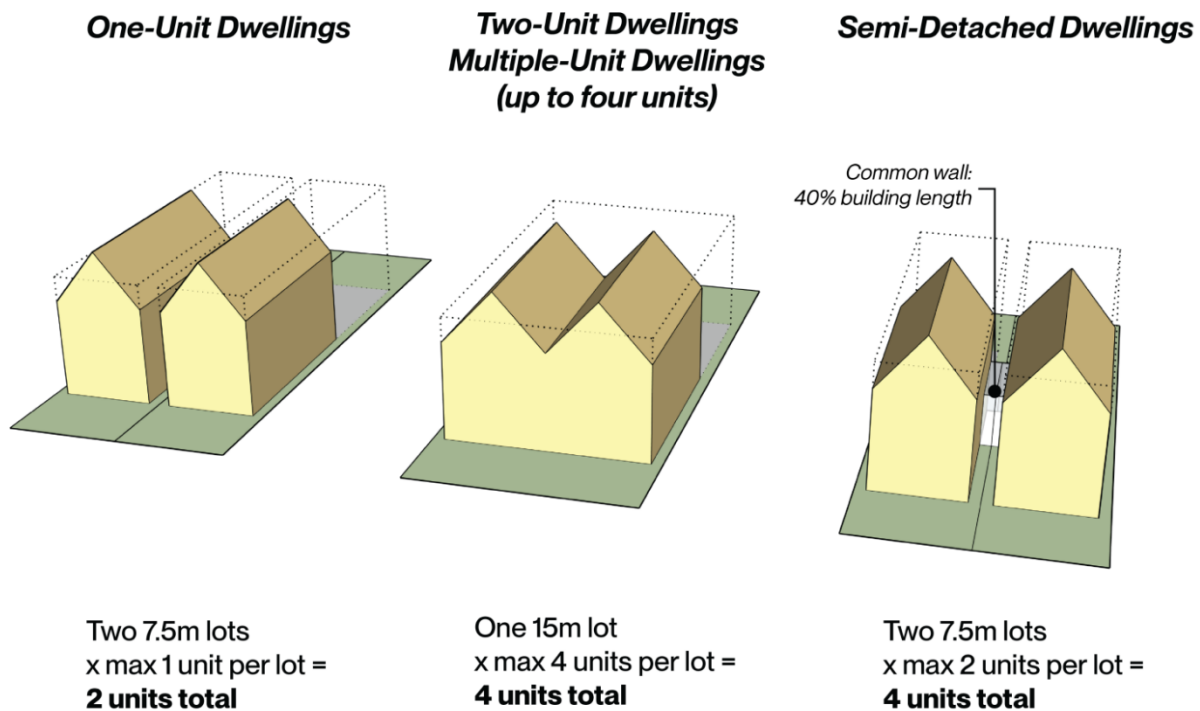


4. **Allowable lot widths under the Zoning Bylaw should consistently reflect densities of four units per lot in R zones.** Under recent changes, lower-density R districts have been

allowed to include four units for each lot with a 15-metre frontage. However, this density is not always consistent with other configurations: two-unit dwellings (TUD) are only permitted on 15-metre lots but a semi-detached dwelling (SDD) on a 7.5-metre lot can include two units, for example. The frontage requirements in zoning should be adjusted for smaller lots to make sure the same densities are possible on these sites as well.

This is highlighted in the graphic in Figure 7 below:

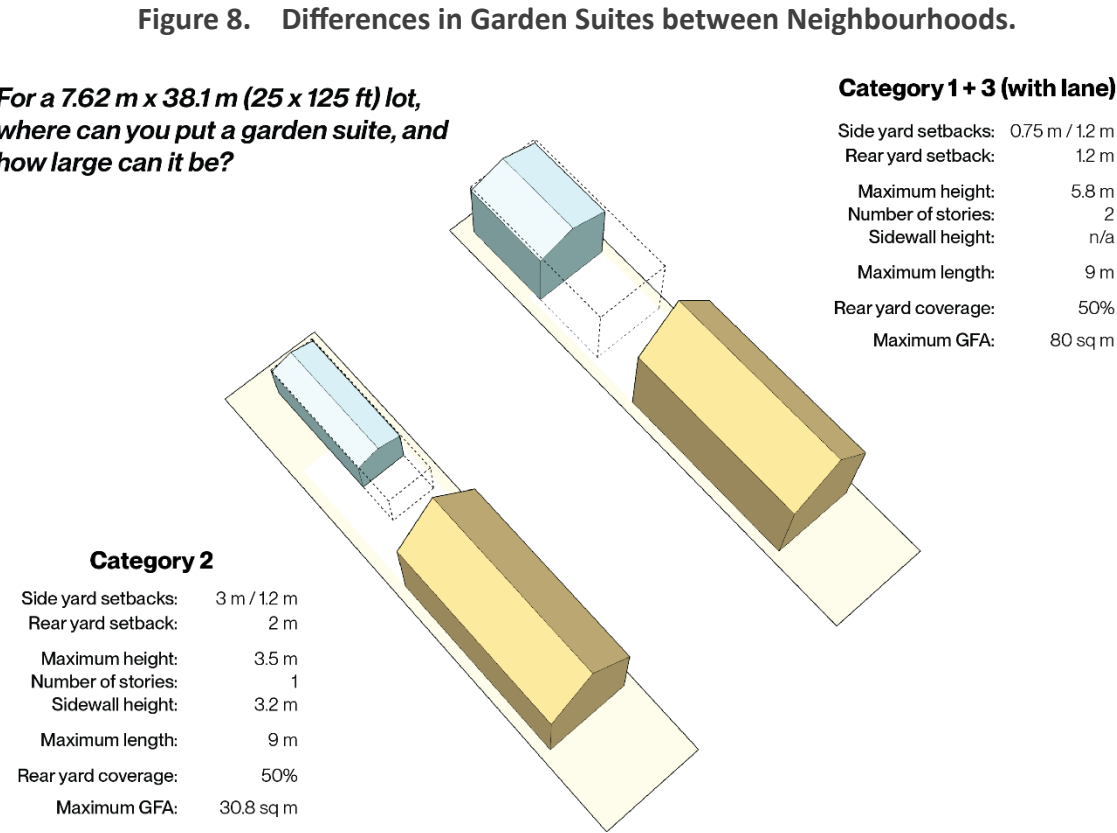
Figure 7. Comparisons of Different Housing Types and Densities in R Zones.



5. **The 60% limit on residential lot widths should be removed as it is inconsistent with allowable density provisions.** Requirements under the Zoning Bylaw restrict lots to be a minimum of 60% of the average width of one-unit (and in some cases two-unit) dwelling lots in most lower-density R zoning districts. As with the previous recommendation, this means that smaller lots cannot achieve the same densities as larger lots, even if almost the same development is allowed. Removing the 60% rule can help to ensure consistency the densities allowed, regardless of lot configuration or housing type.

6. Regulations for garden and garage suites should be dependent on rear lane access and not on location. Under the current City regulations for garden and garage suites, category 2 neighbourhoods have several dimensional requirements that can prevent them from being located on an existing property. For example, large side setbacks can restrict their size and location on narrower lots, and one-storey height limits on garage suites make them impractical to build. Additionally, unlike in category 1 and 3 neighbourhoods, category 2 neighbourhoods do not have different requirements when there is rear lane access. These regulations should be made consistent throughout the city, with regulations for garden and garage suites that differ based on rear lane access only.

Figure 8 shows how the massing of garden suites differs between neighbourhoods for lots which are serviced by a lane. For category 2 neighbourhoods.



- 7. Greater densities should be explored for corner lots.** Corner lots can be ideal locations for accommodating additional density as they can minimize the impacts of more units on a block. Under current zoning, corner lots in the Transit Development Area (TDA) can accommodate higher lot coverage, and can be built to greater heights without sidewall area limits in established neighbourhoods. However, most of these lots are still limited to four homes even if larger developments are permitted. Changes in allowable densities would permit up to six units to be accommodated on these sites but would not result in increases in the bulk and massing of these developments.

Figure 9 provides an example of an eight-unit townhouse development located on a corner lot. This would be one example of the type of development that could be accommodated on a site at a higher density than what is currently allowed in R zoning districts.

Figure 9. Example of an Eight-Unit Townhouse Development (Calgary, AB).



- 8. Consolidation of zoning districts could streamline and simplify zoning regulations.** As at least four units per lot are now allowed across all low-density R districts, the lower-density districts may now have only minor differences with one another. Combining similar R districts can help to streamline the zoning bylaw, simplify requirements, and reduce redundancy. This may require addressing different allowable uses, minimum frontages, and front setback requirements, and neighbourhood-specific dimensional requirements in particular could remain in certain locations.
- 9. Public resources for homeowners and builders should be expanded to encourage infill development.** The City's [Regulations and Design Guidelines for Primary Dwellings](#) provides guidance for planning, designing, and constructing infill dwellings, and includes important building and site design considerations for projects in established neighbourhoods. This document should be expanded to give more information to homeowners and developers about neighbourhood considerations and the steps of the broader development process. This can help to encourage new infill projects that align with the design of established neighbourhoods.
- 10. Additional review is necessary to confirm alignment between the Zoning Bylaw and Building Code.** While out of scope for this analysis, the research and engagement conducted suggested that components of the Zoning Bylaw may need to be reviewed in the context of the Building Bylaw to make sure that there is full alignment. Components such as minimum side setback regulations and requirements for access/egress and side windows, should be assessed to determine if the types of development described in the Zoning Bylaw are allowed or feasible under building code requirements. If there is a mismatch, it may be necessary to adjust these bylaws to align the Zoning Bylaw to reflect development designs that would be allowed on a site overall.