

Media Release



Imagine that!

Stratford Creates Two New Zones in Core Area

For Immediate Release: April 12, 2023

At the March council meeting, Stratford Town Council held first reading of bylaw amendments to add two new zone classifications within the Zoning and Development Bylaw, Bylaw #45. Second reading and adoption was held at the April Stratford Town Council Meeting. These new zone classifications will be created in the core area and support the implementation of The Crossroads: Urban Core Area Plan. The Town of Stratford has had a Core Area Plan for many years, which is now able to be realized with a developer coming forward to implement this plan for a mix of residential and commercial units in the core area of Stratford.

“The addition of these two zone classifications are focused to an area of Stratford which has been long planned for future development,” said Councillor Jeff MacDonald, Chair of Planning, Development and Heritage. “These new zones will assist in the development process within these parcels by helping staff and council to streamline the process with the rezoning taking place up front and expectations laid out from the beginning of the project.”

The two new zone classifications are the Core Mixed Use (CMU) Zone and Urban Core (UC) Zone, both of which would change portions of the existing Town Centre Core Area (TCC) and Mason Road Core Area (MRC) zones. Within both new zones buildings with commercial uses on the first floor and residential units (rentals or condo’s) on the remaining floors will be permitted. The CMU Zone will permit buildings up 6 storeys and the UC Zone up to 12 storeys.

A change to the development application process is also included within these two new zones which will see the Town of Stratford using form based code. The form based code process sees standards built into the bylaw which removes the need for individual applications to go forward to council, streamlining the process for the developer, staff and council. These standards are set within the bylaw and become as-of-right. Any requested variances would still require a council process and approval but projects meeting the guidelines of the zones within the bylaw will be approved by staff from the planning department. If changes are required in the future to the bylaw, council retains the ability to do so.

“The Town of Stratford is in a very unique, almost unheard of situation,” added Councillor MacDonald. “Not many communities have an opportunity like we do to create a downtown core area with one developer and through one complete plan, especially at this time in the community’s existence. By adding density in this area of the community we will see significant changes over the coming years, but in an area of the community where our downtown will be established with businesses and residential properties, and where we will be attracting people to come live, work and explore.”

The new zones preserve commercial space by using a majority of mixed use building requirements, while also adding needed residential units to the market. Some other highlights of the proposed form based code requirements are:

- A move to more underground parking and lowering of the required total number of parking spaces. Over time this will encourage more active transportation, including use of transit by residents and visitors, more consideration for bicycle parking, and other greener transportation options.
- Required stepbacks start at 3 storeys depending on the zone and building location. Stepbacks serve a number of purposes including providing wind breaks, adding interest to the building design while also limiting the appearance of the height of the building from streetscape, and reducing shadowing.
- Building articulation is used in form based code to ensure that architectural style such as wall breaks, facade materials, recessed and projection areas, roof changes, distinct colour schemes and roof treatments, etc. are applied and uniform design of buildings is not used.
- A number of architectural materials will be prohibited in the CMU zone for multi-unit or mixed-use housing including the following exterior finishes: vinyl siding, plastic, plywood, unfinished concrete, exterior insulation and finish systems where stucco is applied to rigid insulation, and darkly tinted or mirrored glass, except for spandrel glass panels.
- All buildings with a flat roof will provide no less than 30% of the roof area as soft landscaping. These landscaped areas will not to be fully accessible by building tenants, but may be included as part of their required common spaces.
- Landscape requirements in the CMU zone included:
 - Any portion of a front, flanking, side, or rear yard that is not used for driveways, parking, off-street loading spaces, walkways, wheelchair ramps, stairs, or accessory structures shall be hard landscaped or soft landscaped. Invasive or highly toxic plant species are prohibited as soft landscaping material and native plants are preferred. Trees shall be planted at a rate of not less than 2.5 (60mm caliper) or greater per every 500 m2 of groundfloor area of the building and trees in parking lots shall include 1 tree per island if parking lot exceeds 24 cars.

On November 3, 2022, 280 letters were mailed to all property owners within 150 metres of the boundaries of the proposed properties to be rezoned and a subsequent public meeting held on November 23, 2022 which was open to all members of the general public to attend in person, watch live or view the recording. Through the public meeting and subsequent period for feedback, The Gray Group have worked to address many of the concerns received, altering their plan to address and make changes where they could.

“As with any bylaw, changes can be made in the future as they are identified,” added Councillor MacDonald. “I believe that as this area is developed, residents will be happy with the improved access to services and businesses in our community, as well as the overall look and feel to the developments and downtown area it will create. If we think back to how far Stratford has come in the past 20 years, this is an exercise of now looking forward another 20 years and building for the future. It is a great opportunity for us as a community to have a comprehensive plan for the future of this important downtown core area land and a single developer, who are also residents, and looking to deliver the best possible outcome.”

Planning board, Council and staff have held numerous meetings to review all materials in the lead up to the April council meeting to ensure that these changes are clearly understood by all parties, which has included meetings with fellow municipalities in Atlantic Canada who have implemented form based code successfully.

The Crossroads plan will be developed through phases, expected to occur over the next twenty years. The construction estimates are approximately \$1 billion, with an estimated 2,635 residential units and 300,000 sq. ft. of commercial and light industrial space. By increasing the density and constructing some buildings higher, the development requires only 2.9 kilometres of new roads to be constructed for this amount of residential and commercial development. This is a significant reduction in the amount of roadway needed based on a traditional build out of single family homes to accommodate the same units. The plan also includes a central urban park and multi-use trail development.

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