

**Exploring Opportunities for 4+
Units on Residential Lots in
Guelph:
Considerations for Gentle Density**

Prepared by
O2 for City of Guelph
(February 2024)

Table of Contents

- 1 | Executive Summary 4
- 2 | Introduction 5
- 3 | Key Takeaways 8
 - 3.1 Low Density Zones Offer Greatest Potential 8
 - 3.2 Opportunities to Further Align Guelph’s Policy Framework 9
- 4 | Conditions Analysis 10
 - 4.1 Lot Widths 14
 - 4.3 Regulations 20
- 5 | City of Guelph Policy Review 24
 - 5.1 Official Plan (2022) 25
 - 5.2 Minister-Approved New Official Plan (2023) 26
 - 5.3 Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw (2023) 27
 - 5.4 Council’s Future Guelph Strategic Plan (2024-2027) 28
 - 5.5 Water and Wastewater Servicing Master Plan (2023) 29
 - 5.6 Transportation Master Plan (2022) 30
 - 5.7 Stormwater Management Master Plan (2023) 31
 - 5.8 Housing Analysis Strategy (2021) 32
 - 5.9 Residential Intensification Analysis Discussion Guide (2020) 33
 - 5.10 Urban Design Manual (2017) 34
 - 5.11 Built Form Standards for Mid-Rise Building and Townhouses (2018) 36
 - 5.12 Development Engineering Manual (2023) 37
 - 5.13 Built Form Standards (2014) 38
 - 5.14 3- and 4-Unit Demonstration Plans (2023) 40
- 6 | Best Practice & Precedents 41
 - 6.1 City of Toronto Good Neighbour Guide for Residential Infill 42
 - 6.2 City of Kelowna Infill Challenge 2.0 43
 - 6.3 Government of British Columbia Zoning Reform 44
- 7 | Conclusion 45

List of Figures

Figure 1 Missing Middle Housing spans a broad range of housing types. (Source: Opticos Design).....	6
Figure 2 Examples of how gentle density can fit within existing residential lots.	7
Figure 3 RL lot distribution across the City of Guelph.	11
Figure 4 RL.1 lot distribution across the City of Guelph.	12
Figure 5 RL.2 lot distribution across the City of Guelph.	13
Figure 6 RL.3 & RL.4 lot distribution across the City of Guelph.	15
Figure 7 Lot Widths across all RL.1 and RL.2 zoned lands in the city.	16
Figure 8 Bar graph showing frequency of lot widths, split by zone.	17
Figure 9 RL.1 depth and width scatter plot showing the relationship between lot frontage and depth.	18
Figure 10 RL.2 depth and width scatter plot showing the relationship between lot frontage and depth.	19
Figure 11 The cover page for the Good Neighbour Guide for Residential Infill Construction used by the City of Toronto.	42
Figure 12 Renderings of RU-7 Developments in Kelowna.	43

List of Tables

Table 1 The main spatial Zoning Bylaw regulations for the RL.1 and RL.2 zones. ...	20
Table 2 Summarized Additional Dwelling Unit Regulations.	23

1 | Executive Summary

In response to the growing housing affordability crisis in Ontario, recent changes to Provincial planning legislation now permits three housing units on residential lots province-wide in urban areas that have municipal water and sewage servicing capacity. In Guelph, Council has directed city staff to investigate opportunities for supporting four-plus units on residential lots. This has resulted in the Gentle Density project that this document forms a part of.

Supported in part by Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s (CMHC) Housing Accelerator Fund, this document provides a detailed analysis of the opportunities in Guelph to enable four or more housing units on residential lots. Opportunities were identified through an analysis of the current Zoning framework in place, a review of the existing policy conditions in the City, and a scan of best gentle density practices across Canada.

The key takeaways from this exploratory document are:

a) Low Density Zones Offer Greatest Potential

The low-density zones that have the largest lots and cover the largest portion of Guelph (RL.1 and RL.2) have the greatest potential to support permissions of a 4-unit residential typology under the new Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw (under appeal) and also offer the greatest potential to accommodate 5+ units with modifications to the Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw. These modifications are to be explored further throughout the Gentle Density project.

b) Opportunities to Further Align Guelph’s Policy Framework

Guelph’s current key policy documents, including the Official Plan, Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw, Transportation Master Plan, and Urban Design Manual, support greater intensification and density. There are opportunities, throughout this project, to identify areas where further alignment could be introduced. Next steps in the Gentle Density project include conducting public engagement to gauge public sentiment on potential options and opportunities for supporting four-plus units on residential lots, as well as preparing architectural plans that demonstrate different gentle density built forms.

Following this public consultation and engagement, draft zoning recommendations will be written, and a recommended zoning bylaw will be brought to Council. In addition, the City will then continue exploring considerations for 5+ units on low density residential lots in Guelph.

2 | Introduction

Guelph and other municipalities across Canada are facing unprecedented growth pressures. Specifically in Ontario, economic growth and opportunity has led to record in-migration and a constrained housing supply. Coupled with high interest rates and inflationary pressure, housing in Ontario has become increasingly unaffordable and out of reach for many.

As the City seeks to address the growing housing affordability crisis through a range of tactics and approaches, it is important to understand how the future of the city will be influenced by not just the existing conditions in Guelph, but also the different policy frameworks, strategies, laws, and plans that exist across multiple levels of government. To address these challenges, Council directed staff to apply for the CMHC's Housing Accelerator Fund, and the City was successful in receiving funding support. As part of this funding agreement, this initiative focuses on encouraging the development of missing middle housing in existing neighbourhoods to increase housing supply and promote the development of affordable, inclusive, and diverse communities. Part of this funding commitment requires aligning with Federal government direction on legalizing four units where servicing capacity supports, and investigating opportunities for supporting five-plus units where appropriate.

At the same time, Guelph is not facing this challenge alone – there is much that can be learned from how other municipalities coast to coast that have tackled housing affordability head on.

Gentle density provides an opportunity to increase Guelph's housing supply across the city by maximizing the use of existing residential lots. By building gentle density, Guelph can increase housing supply within its existing urban boundary to improve housing affordability while protecting the natural areas surrounding Guelph from future development.

The City of Guelph and O2 developed this document to explore how various opportunities for gentle density could be further supported within Guelph. The document seeks to understand the local and provincial policies that will influence the implementation of any gentle density policy work, while simultaneously learning from best practices that already exist in Canada.

Missing Middle: Describes 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. [Figure 1](#) provides examples of missing middle housing typologies (More Homes Built Faster, 2022).

Gentle Density: Increasing the number of units in urban areas with minimal impact on existing neighbourhoods. (More Homes Built Faster, 2022). Gentle Density can take many forms, as shown in [Figure 2](#), and can be achieved through property redevelopment or through additional dwelling units (ADUs) that are added to a primary dwelling.

Figure 1 Missing Middle Housing spans a broad range of housing types. (Source: Opticos Design)



The Key Takeaways section summarizes the key trends and directions from this analysis into a clear and concise guidebook for this project’s next steps, ensuring they reflect the current context of Guelph today while introducing innovative and emerging best practices for consideration.

The following sections of the document will firstly analyze the existing lot conditions across Guelph to identify the suitability of gentle density. Second, the document will review statutory plans and policies, city plans, municipal studies and guidelines, precedent research, and provincial documents and how they impact gentle density. Third, the document will present three best practices and precedents related to gentle density from across Canada. Finally, the document will conclude the information presented to inform the next steps of the gentle density project.

**Figure 2 Examples of how gentle density can fit within existing residential lots.
(Source: Opticos Design)**

A Missing Middle Housing Sampler



1. COTTAGE COURT

2. SIDE-BY-SIDE DUPLEX

3. STACKED DUPLEX

4. FOURPLEX

5. SIXPLEX



6. EIGHTPLEX

7. COURTYARD

8. TOWNHOUSE

9. LIVE/WORK

3 | Key Takeaways

This Background Document highlights Guelph’s existing conditions, local and provincial policy contexts, and several precedent examples of gentle density work being done across the country. As this project is Council-directed and funded in part through CMHC’s Housing Accelerator Fund, specific focus through this review was given to increasing housing supply and promoting the development of affordable, inclusive, and diverse communities. With this lens, the review first looks at opportunities to support four-unit developments on single lots in Guelph, and then will explore the potential for five-plus units in later stages of the project. The following two key takeaways are framed as ideas that can spur conversations around how to best position Guelph for more gentle density that not only supports a greater range and mix of housing, but that also provides neighbourhood benefits.

3.1 Low Density Zones Offer Greatest Potential

Guelph recently developed a new Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw (2023, currently under appeal at the Ontario Land Tribunal) which created four new low density residential zones (RL.1, RL.2, RL.3, and RL.4). The RL.3 and RL.4 zones enable townhouse and small-scale apartment development, while the RL.1 and RL.2 zones are intended primarily for lowest density residential developments such as single detached houses. The RL.1 zone supports the largest lot sizes in the City.

The RL.1 and RL.2 zones present the greatest opportunity to support gentle density in Guelph through minor wording revisions to these land use zones in the Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw (2023, under appeal). Comprising the majority of the City’s residential land base and the existing built form (single and semi-detached houses) most likely to be redeveloped into additional density, the lands designated RL.1 and RL.2 are best suited to provide a meaningful impact in expanding Guelph’s housing supply through gentle density.

Further work in the gentle density design project will result in clear recommendations for how minor amendments to the zones can enable more gentle density projects across the City. This document seeks to provide considerations for the zoning bylaw amendments that will be presented in later stages of the project.

3.2 Opportunities to Further Align Guelph's Policy Framework

While most of Guelph's existing plans, policies, and strategies are supportive of gentle density, there are still some areas of alignment that could be strengthened to better enable and support future gentle density development applications.

Examples of this include:

- a) Further support for more affordable housing choices in the new Official Plan.
- b) Modifications to the Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw could help improve the overall affordability and viability of gentle density projects;
- c) Improve alignment with the Transportation Master Plan goals by exploring the Transportation Master Plan goals to include reduced parking requirements in identified zones; and
- d) The Urban Design Manual currently provides examples of good urban design that respects existing neighbourhood character. There are opportunities to continue to add to the Urban Design Manual, including considerations around setback and parking reductions, such that it helps support future gentle density developments.

Conducting a comprehensive review of the City's current policy framework to ensure all documents clearly support and enable gentle density will provide several benefits:

- a) Clearly demonstrate to the market and to residents the City's commitment to enabling and supporting more gentle density throughout Guelph.
- b) Clarify the rules, requirements, and regulations around gentle density projects. Greater clarity supports the delivery of gentle density for homeowners, developers, and other actors in the housing market to invest in the delivery of gentle density projects.
- c) Provide approval authorities with clear and aligned policy against which to review gentle density applications. This will help streamline and make the approvals of desirable gentle density projects more efficient.

4 | Conditions Analysis

Introducing gentle density to Guelph requires an understanding of the current low density residential lot pattern conditions across the city. Factors including lot size, lot frontage, current zoning, and proximity to public transit all influence how viable redevelopment is on a particular site.

As part of the background review, O2 undertook a conditions analysis of the core factors that influence the ability of a site to be redeveloped. To begin this analysis, O2 isolated the lowest density lots (RL.1, RL.2, RL.3, and RL.4) from the rest of the city's parcel fabric. RL.1 and RL.2 are primarily single-detached lots, with RL.1 lots being the largest. RL.3 and RL.4 enable more housing options ranging from low density to townhouses and small-scale apartments on larger lots, and are primarily located on busier roads.

One of the immediately apparent findings from [Figure 3](#) is the prevalence of RL.1 and RL.2 zoned land compared to RL.3 and RL.4. All RL.1 and RL.2 parcels make up 25% of Guelph's total parcel land area, and 80% of residential parcel land area. [Figure 4](#) and [Figure 5](#) isolate RL.1 and RL.2 zoned lands to further emphasize their prevalence throughout Guelph.

Figure 3 RL lot distribution across the City of Guelph.

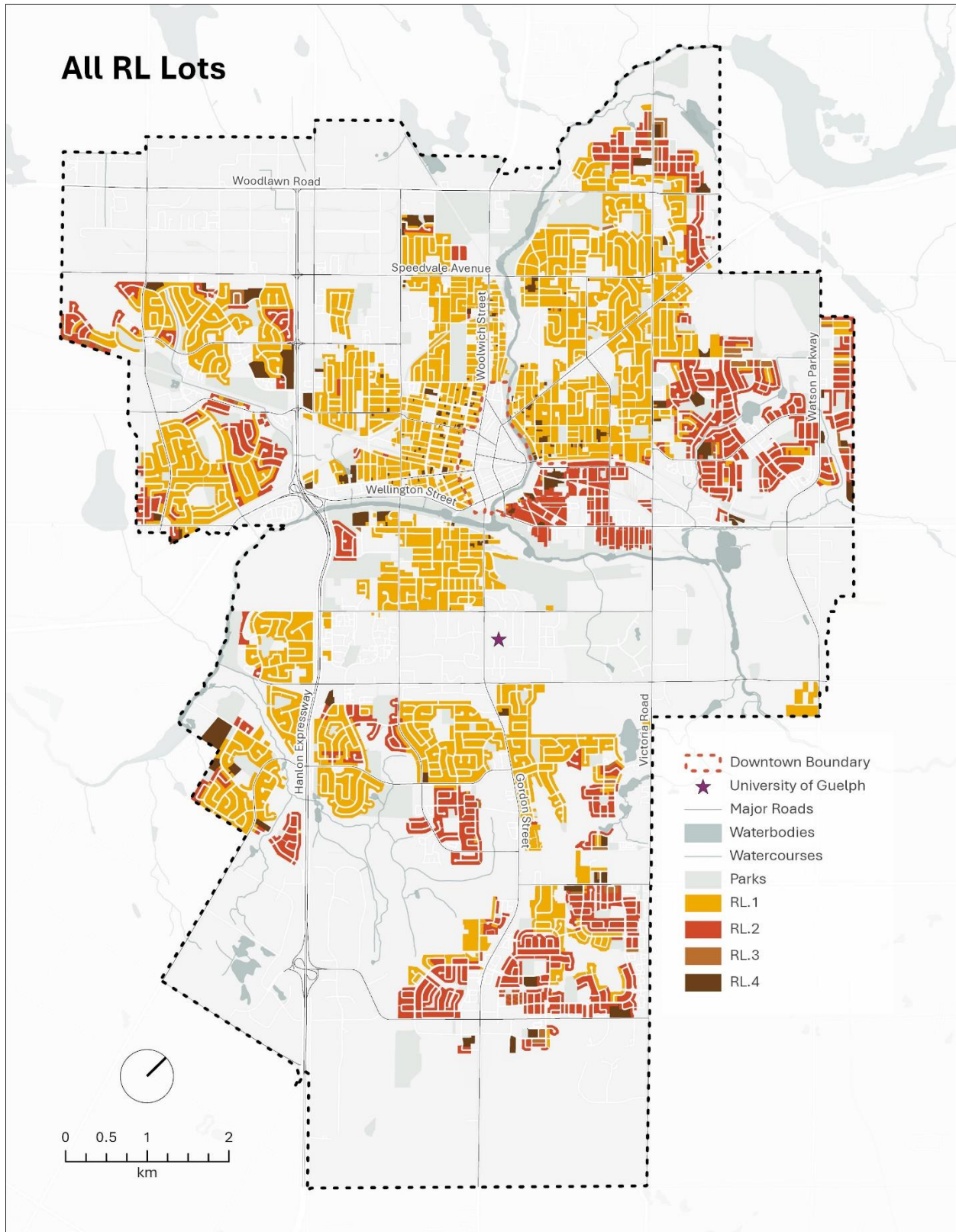


Figure 4 RL.1 lot distribution across the City of Guelph.

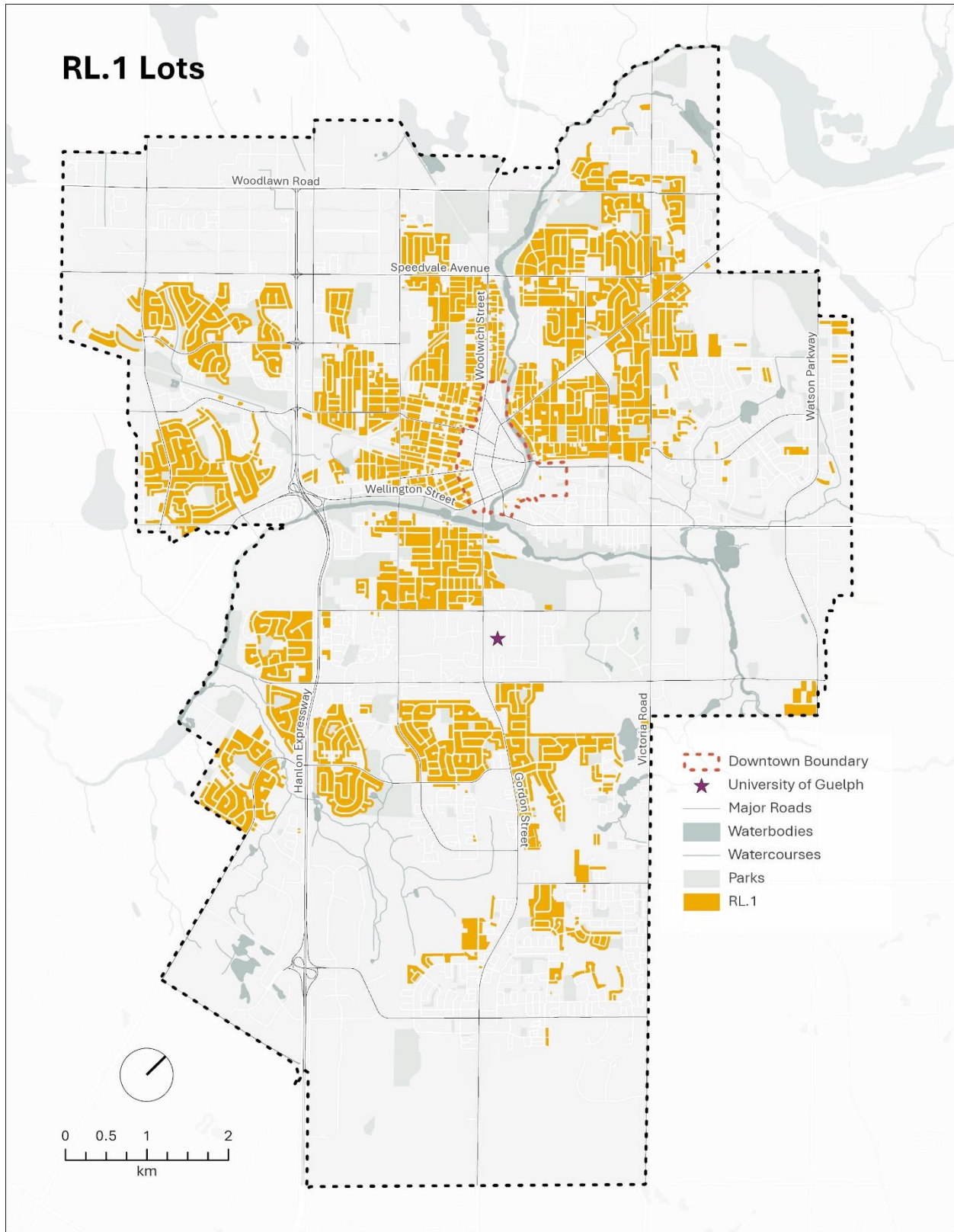
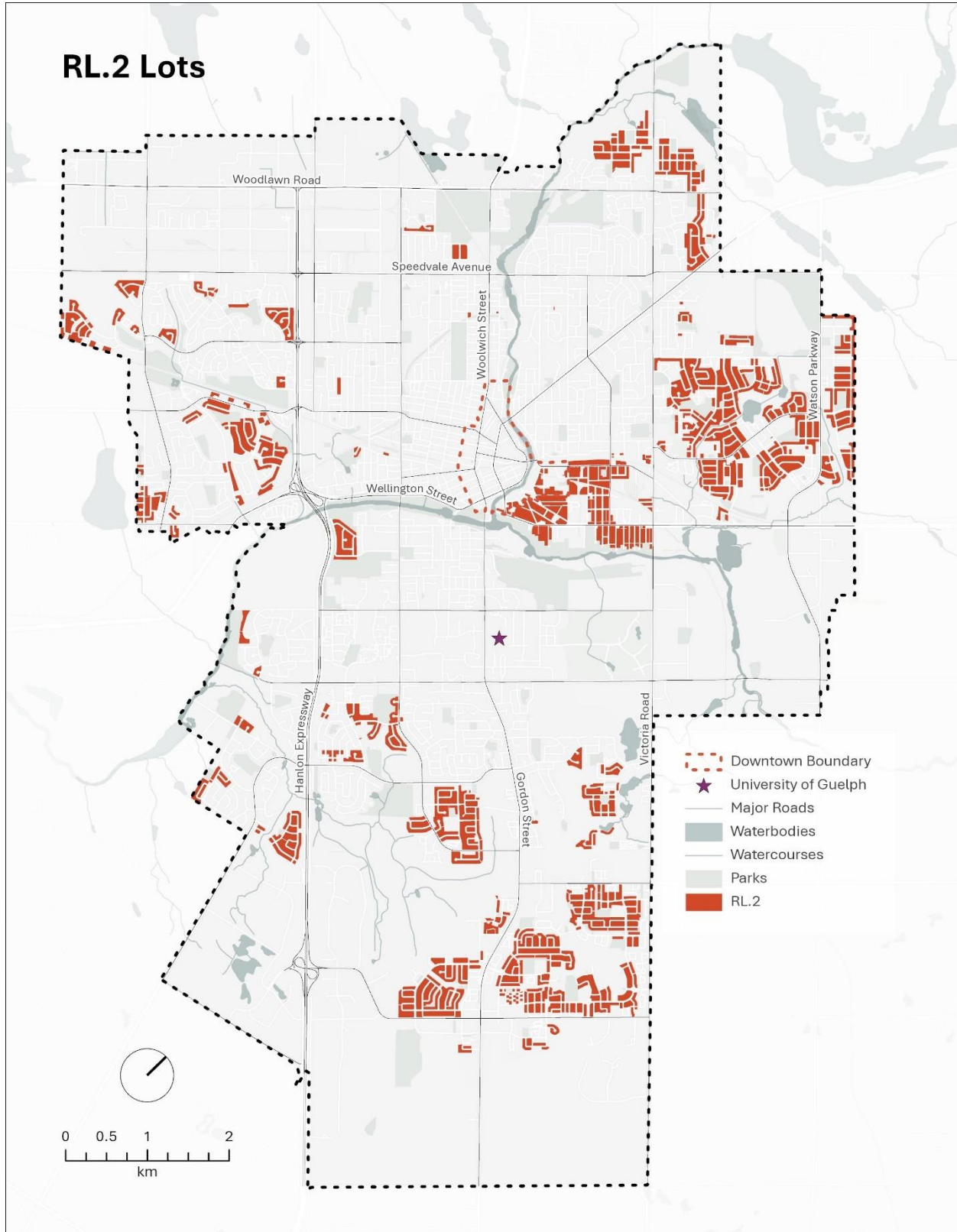


Figure 5 RL.2 lot distribution across the City of Guelph.



As seen in [Figure 6](#), there are significantly fewer RL.3 and RL.4 zoned lands across Guelph.

Understanding the spatial distribution of these lands helps make it clear that the greatest impact from a policy change would occur with RL.1 and RL.2 lots.

Importantly, while the RL.3 and RL.4 lots (intended to accommodate townhomes and small scale apartments respectively) can accommodate slightly higher unit counts than the lower density districts, changes to their regulations would impact substantially less parcels throughout the city overall. In contrast, RL.1 and RL.2 zones hold the highest potential for enabling gentle density. This is because they are primarily developed with single detached dwellings, cover the most residential-designated lands in the City, and can accommodate up to three units under current Provincial legislation and the new Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw (2023). By focusing on the RL.1 and RL.2 zones, the background analysis focuses on specific lot characteristics, such as lot width, depth, frontage, regulations, and proximity to transit.

4.1 Lot Widths

One of the most important lot characteristics to consider is lot width. There are several core elements required in infill developments that all compete for space. These include the driveway, parking, setbacks, pedestrian access, and the building itself.

The most important determining factor in whether a lot can support infill development is the lot width. Wider lots are more capable of accommodating all of these core elements, compared to narrower lots. [Figure 7](#) shows the widths of every RL.1 and RL.2 lot in the city – the darker the lot, the wider it is.

Figure 6 RL.3 & RL.4 lot distribution across the City of Guelph.

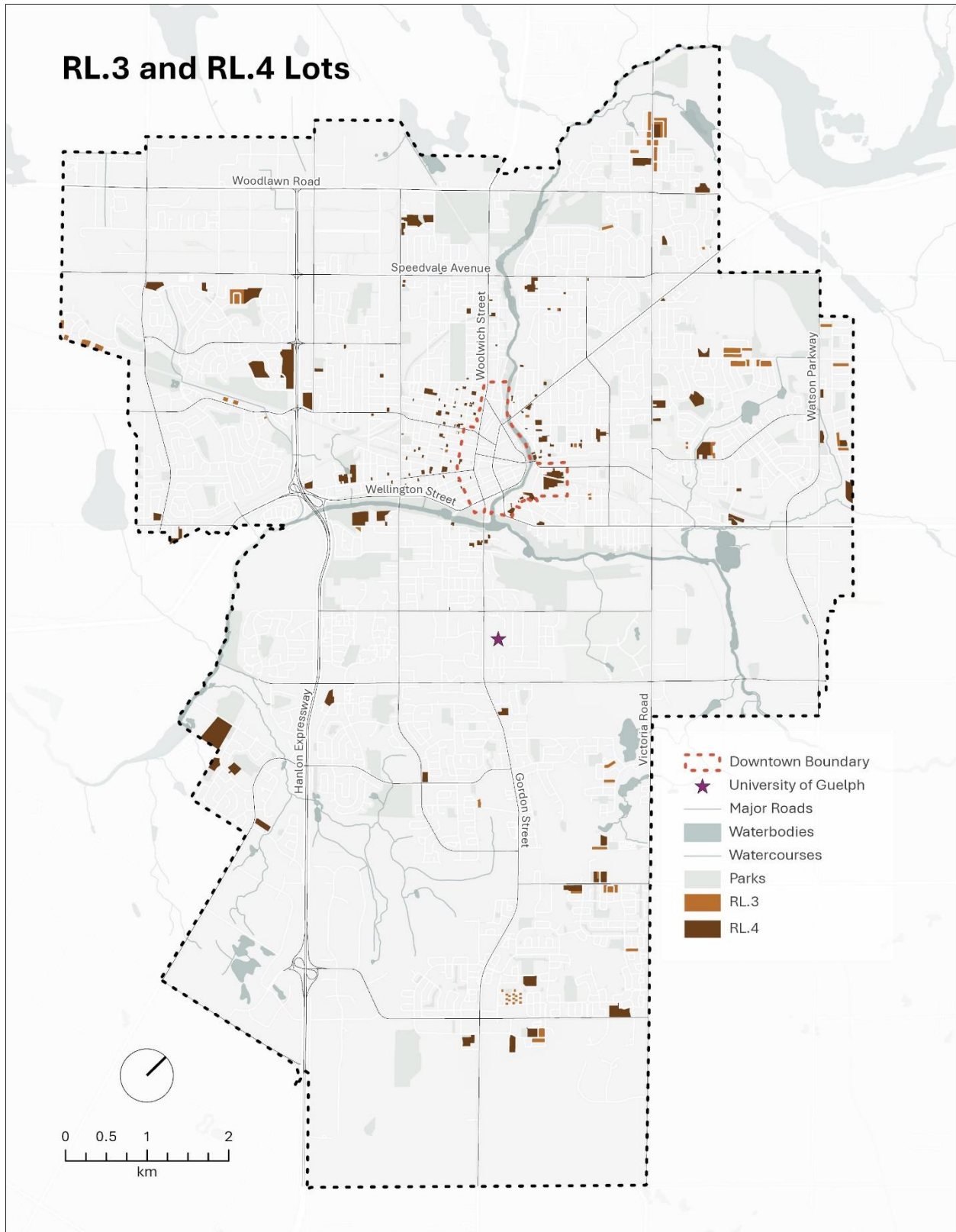
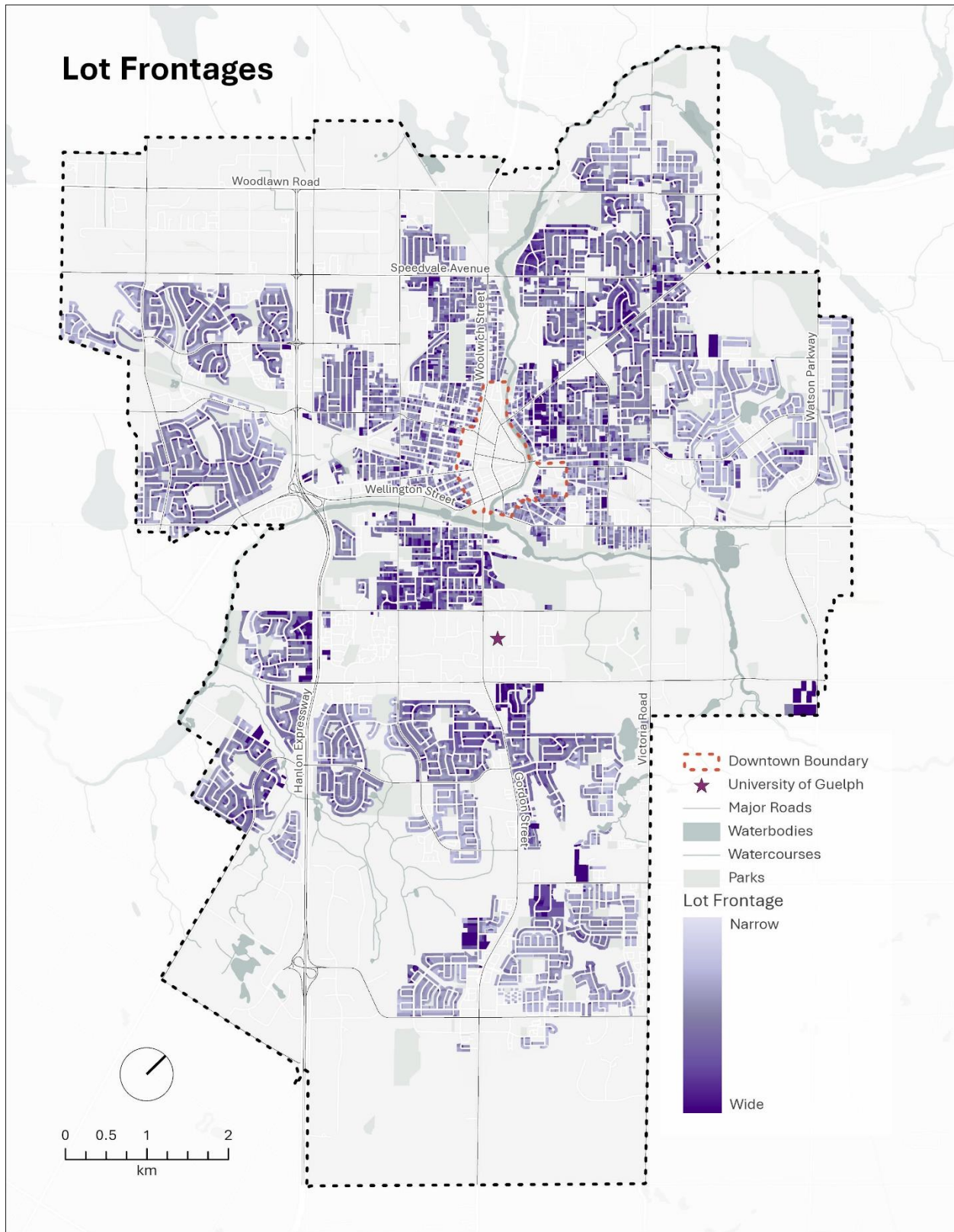


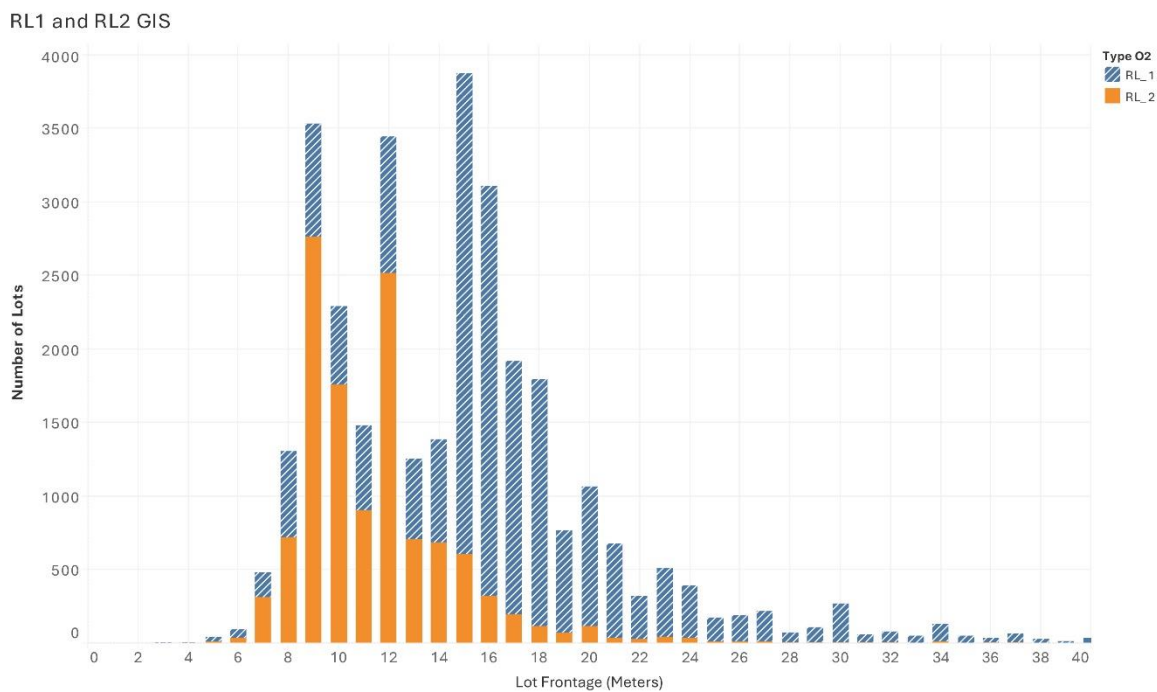
Figure 7 Lot Widths across all RL.1 and RL.2 zoned lands in the city



When viewed as a bar graph, trends in average lot width trends emerge across both zones. [Figure 8](#), shown below, highlights the number of lots sorted by lot width in feet. Blue represents RL.1 lots, and orange represents RL.2 lots.

This chart shows clear clusters of standard lot widths found throughout the City, and establishes clear drop-off points. 25-foot-wide lots (~7.5 metres) represent the smallest standard lot found in Guelph. Similar spikes are found at the 40-foot width (~12 metres) and 50-foot width (~15 metres). The overwhelming majority of lots are found within the 25-to-80-foot widths (7.5 to 24 metres).

Figure 8 Bar graph showing frequency of lot widths, split by zone.



The plot of CountSize for Frontage M CoG. Color shows details about Type O2. The view is filtered on Type O2, which keeps RL_1 and RL_2.

Adding lot depth as a variable shows an even clearer picture of the most standard lot sizes found throughout Guelph. Each point in [Figure 9](#) and [Figure 10](#) represents a single lot in Guelph. The x-axis shows lot width while the y-axis shows lot depth, all shown in metres.

Figure 9 RL.1 depth and width scatter plot showing the relationship between lot frontage and depth.

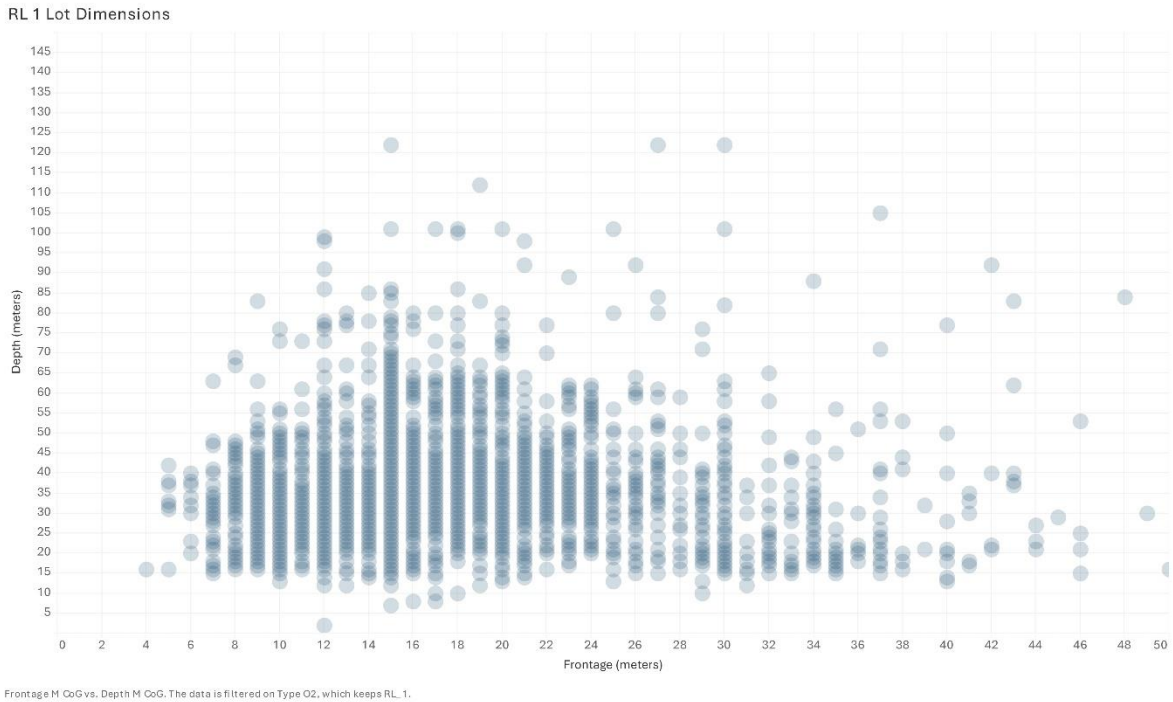
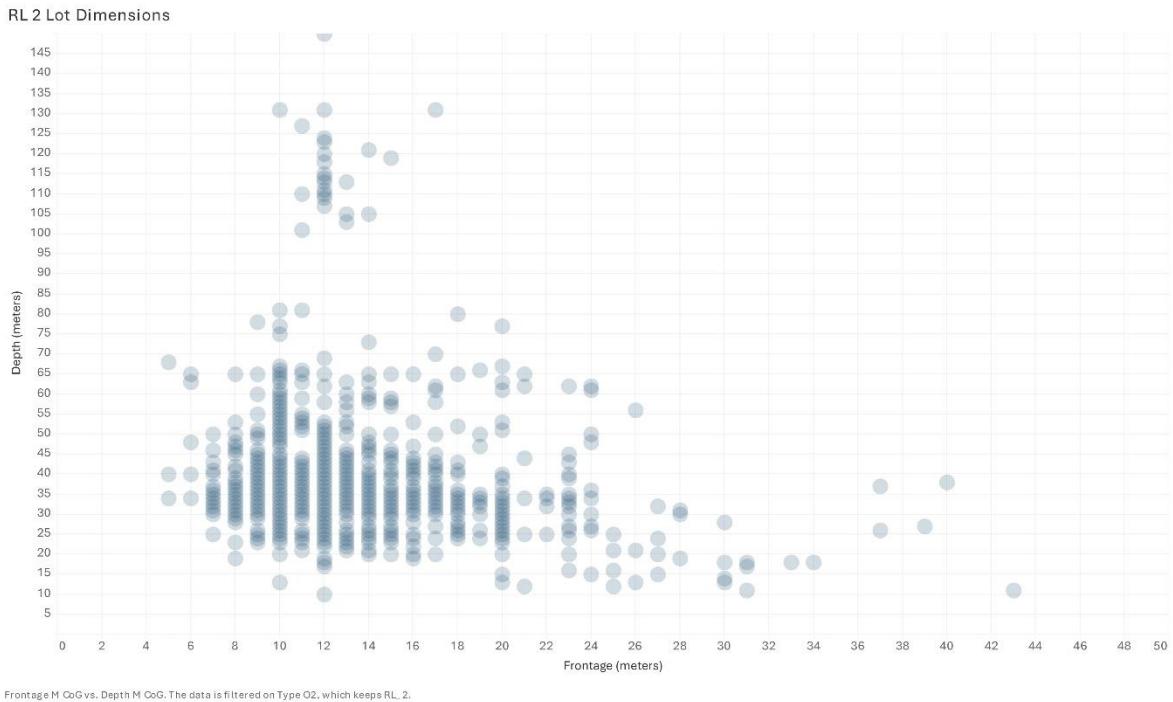


Figure 9 highlights clear clusters of common lot dimensions in Guelph. The overwhelming majority of lots are at least 30 metres deep, while a significant number of lots are 15 to 18 metres wide, however there are lots going down to 10 meters in width.

Figure 10 RL.2 depth and width scatter plot showing the relationship between lot frontage and depth.



[Figure 10](#) demonstrates slightly less striking cluster effect, but a clear trend still emerges – the minimum standard lot goes down to 20 metres, while most lots have between a 10 to 15 metre frontage width.

It is more important to focus on the minimum sizes for both scatter plots in terms of understanding the development potential of individual lots. For example, because the majority of RL.2 lots are 30 metres or deeper, the regulations around gentle density simply need to be able to support this minimum depth. Similarly, with the majority of RL.2 lots 8 metres or wider, the zoning regulations need to accommodate this width as a minimum.

4.3 Regulations

With an understanding of the standard lot dimensions found throughout Guelph, the regulations for the RL.1 and RL.2 zones were reviewed in addition to the City’s regulations for Additional Dwelling Units (ADU). ADUs are self-contained dwelling units that are subordinate to and located within the same building or on the same lot as a primary dwelling unit. They are commonly called “accessory apartments”, “basement apartments” or “in-law suites”.

To understand how these prevailing lot sizes fit within the regulations Table 1 The main spatial Zoning Bylaw regulations for the RL.1 and RL.2 zones. [Table 1](#) highlights the primary land use regulations for the RL.1 and RL.2 zones from the Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw (2023). [Table 2](#) then summarized the regulations surrounding ADUs.

Table 1 The main spatial Zoning Bylaw regulations for the RL.1 and RL.2 zones.

Regulation	RL.1	RL.2
Minimum Lot Frontage	15.0m	9.0m
Minimum Lot Area	460m ²	275m ²
Minimum Front Yard Setback	6m	6m
Minimum Exterior Yard Setback	4.5m	4.5m
Minimum Interior Side Yard Setback	1.5m	1.2m
Minimum Rear Yard Setback	7.5m or 20% of lot depth – whichever is less	7.5m or 20% of lot depth – whichever is less
Minimum Landscaped Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.5m between driveway and nearest lot line. • Front yard except driveway shall be landscaped. • Minimum 35% Landscaped Open Space. • Minimum 50% of Front Yard should consist of soft landscaping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.5m between driveway and nearest lot line. • Front yard except driveway shall be landscaped. • Minimum 35% Landscaped Open Space.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum 50% of Front Yard should consist of soft landscaping.
Parking Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 parking space per dwelling unit • No visitor parking required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 parking space per dwelling unit • No visitor parking required
Parking Dimensions	Interior: 3m x 6m Exterior: 2.5m x 5.5m	Interior: 3m x 6m Exterior: 2.5m x 5.5m
Accessible Parking	Type A: 1 Accessible Parking Space	Type A: 1 Accessible Parking Space 3.4m X 5.5m Access Aisle: 2m
Driveway Width	3m Min. 6m Max. (for 12m lot)	3m Min. 6m Max. (for 12m lot) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If located in the Rear Yard, the parking area shall be set back a min. 0.5m from any lot line. • 1.5m high solid fence required. • No stacked parking. • Only 1 driveway per lot

Importantly, the minimum lot widths and frontages both support the majority of lots zoned RL.1 and RL.2 in the city. This means that gentle density is supportable on most lots in Guelph by pure dimensions. Instead, the limiting factors for gentle densification are found in other remaining regulations.

Within these regulations there are many requirements that must be balanced. For example, parking requirements can limit landscaped open space, while front yard, side yard, and rear yard setbacks all constrain the building envelope within which development can occur. In addition, the regulations surrounding ADUs set restrictions on height, size, and access for these units, limiting how much housing they can provide and how challenging they are to implement. These factors all must be tested as part of the gentle density design project to determine which are

constraining development of gentle density and which, if amended, could result in better, simpler to deliver infill.

Table 2 Summarized Additional Dwelling Unit Regulations.

ADU Regulation	Regulation
ADUs within the main building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot exceed 45% of the gross floor area of the building (all floor levels included) • Interior access is required between floor levels and between the additional residential dwelling unit and the host dwelling unit • Can have a maximum of two bedrooms (three bedrooms for basement units) • Can occupy the whole of the basement
ADUs in a separate building	<p>Size</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot exceed 80 square metres (861 square feet) and cannot exceed 45% of the gross floor area of the main building • Can have a maximum of two bedrooms • Cannot occupy more than 30% of the yard, including all other accessory buildings and structures <p>Height</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The maximum building height is 5 metres and cannot exceed the overall building height of the main dwelling • When an additional residential dwelling unit is located above a detached garage, the maximum total building height is 6.1 metres, and cannot exceed the overall building height of the main dwelling <p>Setbacks & Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.2m pedestrian access to unit required if unit is not directly off a street or lane • 1.2m interior side yard setback on the side with access • Not located in front yard or exterior side yard (unless located on through lot) • Side and rear setback equal to side yard setback of primary dwelling • 3m setback required where 2nd story window adjacent to lot line • 3m required between primary and additional unit

5 | City of Guelph Policy Review

Over the years, Guelph has taken intentional strides towards enabling infill and intensification throughout the City. Some opportunities exist to strengthen or reframe the policy regime in place in Guelph. This document's review of the policy regime highlights where these opportunities exist and provides an overview of how the collective body of Guelph documents informs gentle density.

Despite working on different scales and influencing different parts of the planning and development process, each of the reviewed documents contains relevant context that should be considered as part of this project.

These documents are:

- Statutory Plans & Policy
 - [Official Plan \(2022\)](#)
 - [Minister-Approved New Official Plan \(2023\)](#)
 - [Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw \(2023\)](#)
- Other City Plans
 - [Council's Future Guelph Strategic Plan \(2024-2027\)](#)
 - [Water and Wastewater Servicing Master Plan \(2023\)](#)
 - [Transportation Master Plan \(2022\)](#)
 - [Stormwater Management Master Plan \(2023\)](#)
- Studies & Guidelines
 - [Housing Analysis Strategy \(2011\)](#)
 - [Residential Intensification Analysis Discussion Guide \(2020\)](#)
 - [Urban Design Manual \(2017\)](#)
 - [Built Form Standards for Mid-Rise Buildings and Townhouses \(2018\)](#)
 - [Development Engineering Manual \(2023\)](#)
 - [Built Form Standards \(2014\)](#)
 - [3-Unit Demonstration Plans \(2023\)](#)
 - [4-Unit Demonstration Plans \(2023\)](#)

5.1 Official Plan (2022)

Guelph's Official Plan was originally adopted in 1994 but has been comprehensively updated on several occasions. The current office consolidation is from February 2022, and reflects a modern and progressive City of Guelph that is generally supportive of sensitive infill and intensification.

The Official Plan prioritizes new development that respects the existing character of Guelph, specifically with a focus on retaining the qualities that set Guelph apart from its neighbours. This includes prioritizing development that supports a compact, connected, distinctive, and diverse city. This means a culturally diverse city with a rich mix of housing, a commitment to mixed-use and higher density development, and a conveniently connected community for walkers, cyclists, public transit users, and motorists.

To support these objectives the Official Plan contains policy that seeks to establish a clear framework and set of expectations for where infill development is expected to occur, and how it should look, feel, and behave.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

- The core principles of the Official Plan are aligned with the Gentle Density project and there are potential opportunities to further strengthen them, particularly with regard to how and why it is important to support infill, intensification, and gentle density.
- The Official Plan does support built forms that encourages sensitive intensification and the provision of a diverse mix of housing options.
- This is further reinforced through the plan's Urban Design strategic goals that, while cognizant of protecting and preserving distinct neighbourhood character, also reflects an understanding that there is a need for Guelph to support compact, mixed-use, and transit-supportive communities.
- Growth should be directed to locations within the built-up area where the capacity exists to best accommodate the expected population and employment growth.

How does this affect gentle density?

- As the overarching plan governing Guelph's municipal planning policy, the Official Plan is in support of residential intensification.

5.2 Minister-Approved New Official Plan (2023)

The most recent Official Plan review and update took place from 2020 to 2022 and resulted in OPA 80. Revised by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, this amendment introduces several policies that strengthen the planning framework's support for infill development and providing a broad range of housing options within previously developed areas. One of the most important changes in relation to gentle density is the introduction of Strategic Growth Areas, identified in Schedule 1A of the update. These areas are the intended focus locations for future intensification. The update also increases the percentage of development in the City that should be intensified within the built-up area from 40% to 46%.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

- The broad policy direction of the Official Plan remains the same, while updates to improve alignment with Provincial policy and planning direction have resulted in an overall general increase in support for infill and intensification city-wide.
- There are opportunities, though future OP updates, to strengthen the connection between housing affordability and intensification.

How does this affect gentle density?

- OPA 80 encourages higher levels of density in certain areas of the built-up area, which further support the case for gentle density.

5.3 Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw (2023)

The City of Guelph's lowest density zones, RL.1 and RL.2, in the Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw (2023, currently under appeal at the Ontario Land Tribunal) allow triplexes, additional dwelling units (ADUs), and the development of multi-unit buildings up to 3-units as-of-right in most contexts throughout the City. This update reflects both the City's policy framework and the Province's emerging regulations around supporting greater infill and intensification.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

- Sensitive densification up to three dwelling units, including ADUs, per residential lot is permitted throughout most of the City. One parking space minimum per dwelling unit for ADUs, single detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, townhouses, and triplexes.

How does this affect gentle density?

- The RL.1 and RL.2 zones demonstrate how 3-unit configurations can be successfully applied to neighbourhood residential lots.
- A 3-unit maximum in the lowest zones still limits the full spectrum of housing opportunities that could exist on traditional lot sizes across Guelph.
- These zones can be amended to accommodate an additional unit and identify where gentle density would be best suited in the city.

5.4 Council's Future Guelph Strategic Plan (2024-2027)

The 2024-2027 Council Strategic Plan list the priorities of Guelph's Council over the next four years. The three main priorities for Council are city building, the environment, and people and the economy. Throughout the strategy, the document lists specific tasks and actions that it will pursue to achieve its vision, mission, and values. Three relevant topics identified this Strategic Plan are housing affordability, population growth, and creating a sustainable city. As such, several policies in the strategy aim to address these topics, leading to a general support for the gentle density project's efforts.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

- Goals are broken down into three categories: City Building; Environment; and People and Economy.
- Actions related to increasing housing supply include partnerships and advocacy to improve housing affordability, responding to Bill 23's effects, conserving cultural heritage resources, and improving transit, walking and cycling network to meet the growth demand.

How does this affect gentle density?

- Policies generally support housing intensification to increase housing supply and affordability while protecting the environment and supporting existing businesses.

5.5 Water and Wastewater Servicing Master Plan (2023)

The Water and Wastewater Servicing Master Plan (WWSMP) was initiated to identify municipal servicing requirements for existing and growth areas to 2051 and beyond, while considering the impact of potential intensification and greenfield growth. A focus of the WWSMP is to maintain the City's efforts of developing a Smart City with the innovative use of technologies for improved water and wastewater level of service.

The WWSMP includes recommended infrastructure upgrades to satisfy the City's targeted level of service and growth projections. These recommendations are based on the results of calibrated hydraulic models which consider the existing and projected growth needs and build on the WWSMP.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

Recommendations include:

- The WWSMP, through model calibration and analysis, identifies capacity constraints in our sanitary sewer system.
- Policies have been developed for new development (infill and greenfield) along with Zoning direction to ensure that adequate and available servicing exists prior to permitting development.
- Other recommendations include regularly updating the hydraulic models, continuing sewer flow monitoring, further refining leak detection systems, various system upgrades, and providing better performance metrics.

How does this affect gentle density?

- While recommended amendments to RL.1 and RL.2 zones will be applicable City-wide, it will become important for the City to review infrastructure capacity and identify constraint areas to ensure the viability of gentle density.
- Strategies may need to be developed to identify and monitor servicing capacity constraints in areas likely to see additional density. Infill and intensification may be viable in these locations with additional technical review or planned infrastructure updates prior to approvals.
- The WWSMP provides several recommendations to improve the municipal water and wastewater systems to accommodate future population and employment growth. Its recommendations are primarily for the city to undertake on large-scale projects.

5.6 Transportation Master Plan (2022)

Moving Guelph Forward, Guelph's Transportation Master Plan (TMP) details how residents and visitors will move through the city over the next thirty years. The TMP is a long-range strategic plan that directs how Guelph's future transportation system will be built and operated, and establishes policies and programs to guide the delivery of transportation infrastructure and services.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

- People of all ages and physical ability will be able to travel safely using any transportation mode that they choose.
- Guelph's transportation system will be easy-to-use, reliable and give people and businesses the options they want when they need them.
- Transit service will provide travel times and traveler convenience at levels that are competitive with travel by car.
- The carbon footprint from the transportation sector will aim for net zero by 2050.
- Guelph's streets, trails and rail networks will align with the City's land use objectives.
- Investment decisions will be made considering the asset life cycle costs.
- Guelph's transportation system will plan for the changes of tomorrow, while delivering great service today.
- Shift mode shares from 79% driving to 58%, while increased walking, cycling, and transit to 15%, 10% and 17% respectively.

How does this affect gentle density?

- The TMP supports gentle density priorities by tying transportation planning to growth areas. As areas increase in population and employment, the TMP advocates for improving transportation connections to these areas.
- The TMP's mode share goals are also supported by the gentle density priorities as increasing density in existing urban areas enables more people to use active and shared transportation modes to reach their destinations, instead of driving. The TMP will support these active and shared transportation modes by making them safer and more user-friendly.

5.7 Stormwater Management Master Plan (2023)

The Stormwater Management Master Plan identifies practices for flood control, erosion control, groundwater and surface water quality and quantity, and seeks to protect the natural environment. The plan explores management practices and provides a suite of solutions.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

- The appendices provide infiltration policy recommendations, stormwater design criteria and targets, and low impact development implementation strategies.
- The Stormwater Design Criteria and Targets appendix recommends that stormwater runoff volumes should be controlled for redevelopment, infill development, intensification, or adaptive re-use projects.

How does this affect gentle density?

- Developments with four or more units will increase the amount of impervious surface in existing residential areas which will affect the levels of stormwater infiltration and run-off. As neighbourhoods are intensified over time, it may be important to implement stormwater retention systems and track stormwater run-off.
- While recommended amendments to RL.1 and RL.2 zones will be applicable City-wide, strategies may need to be developed to identify and monitor stormwater servicing capacity constraints and infiltration targets in areas likely to see additional density. Infill and intensification may be viable in these locations with additional technical review or planned infrastructure updates prior to approvals.
- Water balance and other stormwater policies may need to be implemented for sites developing under gentle density if this project recommends permitting increased imperviousness.

5.8 Housing Analysis Strategy (2021)

The Housing Analysis Strategy (HAS) is one technical background study that is required as part of the City's work to conform to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (the Growth Plan). The purpose of the HAS is to confirm Guelph's population and housing needs to 2051 and outline an appropriate housing mix and density targets that conforms to the Growth Plan and aligns with the City's draft vision for growth.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

- That Guelph has a sufficient supply of land to accommodate its forecast population of 208,000 people to 2051.
- That Guelph has a sufficient supply of land within its built-up area (BUA) to accommodate 50% of its growth within this area to 2051.
- Over the past two decades, the residential market in the City of Guelph has been transitioning towards high-density development. It now accommodates for 49% of total housing growth. This is largely because of diminishing supply of land in the built-up area and a strengthening market demand for high-density.
- The rate of intensification has been meeting or exceeding the amended OP's minimum annual housing intensification target of 46% for the majority of years between 2006 and 2019. Since 2011, the intensification rate has been trending at or close to the 50% target, and the City achieved an intensification rate of 56% in 2022.
- Estimates that 3,870 low-density households, 8,480 medium-density households, 17,840 high-density households, and 3,400 accessory apartments will be built between 2022-2051.
- Recent trend shows approximately 200-300 ADU building permits issued per year, comprising approximately 25 percent of annual dwelling units created.

How does this affect gentle density?

- Gentle density will assist Guelph in accommodating its population growth projections in the built-up area by providing a range of housing types and supporting complete communities.

5.9 Residential Intensification Analysis Discussion Guide (2020)

The Residential Intensification Analysis Discussion Guide was developed as a part of the Official Plan update in 2022 to help guide public engagement and conversations surrounding intensification and growth management.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

- The guide aligns with the Official Plan's goals and primarily provides basic information for members of the public to better contribute towards the Official Plan engagement activities by explaining urban planning concepts.

How does this affect gentle density?

- While this guide does not address gentle density specifically, it can be updated to assist with engagement efforts when proposing the policy changes under the gentle density project. The guide has also helped educate the public on the purpose behind intensification which will support the gentle density public engagement efforts.

5.10 Urban Design Manual (2017)

The Urban Design Manual was created to inform Guelph's Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw and is split into three parts: The Urban Design Vision, the Urban Design Action Plan, and Community Nodes. The design manual recognizes the importance of intensification as the city grows and provides guidance on the use of urban design in the creation of complete communities that enhance the sense of place enjoyed by Guelph citizens.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

- The UDM's principles are based on the Official Plan's objectives. These include:
- Creating neighbourhoods with diverse opportunities for living, working, learning and playing.
- Building compact neighbourhoods that use land, energy, water and infrastructure efficiently and encourage alternative modes of transportation.
- Showcasing natural attributes as designing features of the City's character by making them highly visible and accessible, especially lands along the Speed and Eramosa rivers.
- Engaging in "placemaking" —developing infrastructure, spaces and buildings that are permanent and enduring, memorable and beautiful, adaptable and flexible, and valued.
- Conserving and celebrating the City's cultural heritage resources through the reuse of built heritage and cultural heritage landscape assets and ensuring that adjacent development responds to and respects these assets.
- Creating a diversity of inviting and accessible gathering places that promote a full range of social, cultural and economic interaction.
- Designing for a choice of mobility including walking, cycling, transit and driving.
- Establishing a pattern of interconnected streets and pedestrian networks in which buildings frame and address public spaces.
- Allowing for a range of architectural styles and promote expressions that bring interest and diversity in urban form and architectural design while responding appropriately to the local context and achieving compatibility.
- Ensuring that the design of the built environment respects the character of the existing distinctive areas and neighbourhoods of the City.
- Designing space that is accessible to all, regardless of abilities.
- Improving conditions for greater personal security within publicly accessible spaces by designing them to be attractive and comfortable to the public, increasing the potential for informal surveillance and reducing opportunities for crime.

- Preserving and enhancing protected public views and public vistas of built and natural features.

How does this affect gentle density?

- The manual’s action plan breaks down the City of Guelph into five opportunity areas and provides specific actions for the city to take to improve the urban design for each of these areas.
- The manual encourages a mix of housing types and higher density in these areas to support the priorities of the Official Plan.
- The manual also advocates for low impact development and the integration of existing natural features into the design of new development.

5.11 Built Form Standards for Mid-Rise Building and Townhouses (2018)

The Built Form Standards for Mid-Rise Building and Townhouses have been developed to guide the design of Mid-Rise Buildings and Townhouse forms in Guelph as it continues to grow in population. The Standards apply to the entire City of Guelph, with the exception of the downtown, and is informed by the City's Official Plan to support compact growth, while achieving high quality, sustainable development, and a strong pedestrian realm. The standards seek to provide guidance on protecting natural heritage and protecting and enhancing the city's tree canopy.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

- The standards provide design guidelines for mid-rise and townhouse developments as Guelph intensifies. The standards relate to building design (setbacks, length, separation distances, angular plane, etc.), site access and circulation, parking, common amenity area, and landscaped open space.
- The document also provides recommendations for the Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw definition updates, including definitions for landscaped open space, green roofs, stacked townhouses, stacked back-to-back townhouse, and mixed-use zones.

How does this affect gentle density?

- The standards for townhouses can help direct the gentle density standards as they are similar scales and contain a similar number of units/bedrooms. Relevant townhouse standards that could be used as the basis to analyze gentle density viability and constructibility include:
 - Front yard setbacks of 6 metres or existing front yard setbacks.
 - Consideration for existing trees and grades. Such features should be embraced on the site as assets.
 - Sills that are no higher than 1.2 metres.
 - A range of building materials and variation in building articulation for facade design.
 - Townhouses located on corner sites should be designed to have 2 primary facades with an equal level of articulation on each street-oriented façade
 - Mechanical equipment such as air conditioner units are strongly discouraged within balconies.
 - These standards should be considered throughout the development of zoning and design regulations for gentle density.

5.12 Development Engineering Manual (2023)

The City of Guelph Development Engineering Manual (DEM) was prepared to provide guidance related to the engineering aspects of development work. This DEM outlines the City's current engineering requirements, guidelines, specifications, and standards that form the basis for obtaining engineering approvals related to development applications ranging from plans of subdivision and site plans to infill developments for 10 units or less.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

The key objectives of this DEM are to:

- Document existing process information related to the engineering submission of a development application.
- Outline requirements and standards for the engineering design of new developments within the City.
- Provide guidance and framework for applicants submitting engineering designs and documents in support of development applications.
- Provide guidance to City staff when reviewing and commenting on engineering aspects of a development application. Aspects include environmental engineering, source water protection, development agreements, noise control, construction temporary dewatering, infrastructure in existing right of ways, servicing capacity, stormwater management criteria, and on-site and excess soils management.
- Identify the role and involvement of City departments and external agencies as part of the development engineering review and approval process.

How does this affect gentle density?

- The DEM provides details and requirements for development applications of varying scales.

5.13 Built Form Standards (2014)

The Built Form Standards were developed in response to the adoption of the Downtown Secondary Plan (2012), and the advancement of best urban design practices over the last decade. The Built Form Standards identify six distinct Character Areas in the downtown area, each with unique location-based conditions, site and building design characteristics, land use and built form policy considerations, and economic potential. They also include a series of performance standards and specific attention for built heritage resources. The standards are broken down into three categories ranging from low-rise to high-rise buildings.

The six identified character areas are:

1. Historic street-based character areas.
2. Historic house-based character areas.
3. Renewal lands.
4. Mill lands.
5. Ward west.
6. Neighbourhood fringe.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

In general, the standards encourage greater design flexibility for areas without built heritage resources while continuing to respect the existing architectural context of downtown Guelph. The standards provide guidance on the design of all buildings in the downtown secondary plan on the following topics:

- Height Performance Standards.
- Massing and Floor Plates.
- Stepbacks.
- Angular Planes Articulation and Detailing.
- Ground Floor and Building Entrances.
- Materials.
- Roofs, Cornices and Parapets.
- Lighting, Awnings, Canopies and Signage.
- Sustainable Building Design.

How does this affect gentle density?

Much of the standards relate to building designs for larger and taller downtown mixed-use developments, such as stepbacks, angular planes, building entrances, and facade articulation. However, the standards for building materials, sustainable design, and built heritage resources, should be considered when planning and building gentle density in the downtown area.

Standards include the following:

- Durable and energy-efficient building materials such as stone, brick, or glass. Stucco, vinyl, and EIFS is strongly discouraged.
- LEED building design.
- Passive solar design, natural cooling, light recovery.
- Green roofs and water runoff prevention.
- Water-efficient appliances.
- Locally-sources and sustainably produced building materials.
- Reuse or improvement of existing building materials for development near heritage properties.

5.14 3- and 4-Unit Demonstration Plans (2023)

In response to the provinces' More Homes Built Faster Act (Bill 23), Guelph's Official Plan promoting an appropriate range and mix of housing options, and community feedback through Guelph's Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw Review (2023), the City developed 3- and 4-unit demonstration plans released on April 2023. The 3-unit demonstration plans provide feasible architectural plans incorporating the zoning regulations permitted in RL.1 and RL.2 zones, existing neighbourhood compatibility, and technical site planning requirements.

What Are the Key Trends or Directions?

The plans promote sustainable, economical and accessible designs to guide the landscaping, architecture, parking, and planning of the development site. They seek to direct the outcome and design of gentle intensification to align them with the policies in the Official Plan while making them an enjoyable place to live for future residents. Part 2 of the document provides the floor plans with site plan details for the following unit-types:

- Horizontal triplexes
- Vertical triplexes
- On-street townhouses
- 3-storey apartments

How does this affect gentle density?

- All site plans feature a building with a 6-metre setback and a driveway on the side of the property connecting the 3 rear parking spaces to the street. The gentle density designs are proposed for properties with 15-metre width and 33-metre depth at minimum. These proposed site plans can help guide the proposed zoning bylaws for the gentle density project so that they align with the updated Official Plan and provincial legislation.
- Appendix C of the plans also contain proposed zoning bylaw recommendations, including new definitions for apartment buildings and triplexes, general provisions for parking, land use amendments, and recommendations for reducing parking requirements and promoting landscaping designs to reduce stormwater runoff. These recommendations were integrated into the Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw and are now under appeal.

6 | Best Practice & Precedents

There is much to be learned from the work other municipalities in Canada have already undertaken to support gentle density. The housing affordability crisis is not unique to Ontario or Guelph, and discussions around better and more efficiently utilizing space in our municipalities are occurring coast to coast.

To support the gentle density design project, a series of best practices and precedents from across Canada were reviewed to provide insight into what is happening in other jurisdictions, and to highlight key ideas that Guelph can use to help support its own gentle density initiative. The most relevant best practices and precedents are:

- City of Toronto Good Neighbour Guide for Residential Infill
- City of Kelowna Infill Challenge 2.0
- Government of British Columbia Zoning Reform

6.1 City of Toronto Good Neighbour Guide for Residential Infill

In 2017, the City of Toronto released a guide to provide property owners, contractors, developers, and neighbours with communication tips for infill construction projects. The guide outlines the municipal requirements and best practices for communicating residential infill construction projects. The intention of the guide is to help developers and contractors adhere to municipal standards while improving understanding among neighbours. Guides such as these can help create trust between developers, contractors, and neighbours which can lead to less community opposition to infill projects and better development and construction practices.

Figure 11 The cover page for the **Good Neighbour Guide for Residential Infill Construction** used by the City of Toronto.



The guide recommends that property owners speak with their neighbours early in the development process to explain the proposed plans, expected timelines, and how it will affect them. Once construction has started, the guide recommends that the property owner provides the neighbours with their contact information in case any issues arise. Finally, the guide recommends that the property owner posts their building permit in a prominent and visible area.

6.2 City of Kelowna Infill Challenge 2.0

In 2016, the City of Kelowna hosted an Infill Challenge Design Competition to promote housing diversity and encourage new forms of infill development. The competition invited architects and designers to submit an infill housing design for a typical lot with lane access in neighbourhoods close to Kelowna's downtown. Through the first competition, two winning designs were selected and formed the basis for a new sensitive infill zone (RU-7) that allows up to 4 units per lot.

Following the competition, over 800 parcels in Kelowna's central neighbourhoods were pre-zoned to RU-7. Since early 2017, roughly 300 infill units on RU-7 lots have received building permits, making the initiative an overwhelming success.

Figure 12 Renderings of RU-7 Developments in Kelowna.



6.3 Government of British Columbia Zoning Reform

In November 2023, The Province of British Columbia introduced new housing legislation intended to deliver small-scale multi-unit (SSMU) housing. The purpose of this legislation was to help build more homes faster as housing affordability continues to deteriorate in BC. These changes take inspiration from New Zealand's upzoning practices throughout the 2010's which have led to an increase in housing supply and improvement in affordability for that country.

The legislation requires municipalities to amend their zoning bylaws to permit 3 or 4 dwelling units on traditional single-family lots, depending on their size. The legislation also seeks to improve the planning process by reducing the requirement for public meetings and making zoning bylaws more proactive rather than reactive by upzoning neighbourhoods preemptively.

The BC government released a SSMU provincial policy manual along with the policy announcement which provides municipalities with more information on the changes and recommendations for zoning bylaws. Select proposed zoning standards for lots smaller than 1,215 square metres include:

- Minimum front yard setback of 2 metres.
- Maximum height of 11m or 3 storeys.
- Maximum site coverage of 50%
- Maximum 0.5 parking space/unit if property is within 800m of a high frequency transit stop, then. Otherwise, maximum of 1 space/unit.

The guide also states that local governments can no longer negotiate for amenities, capital investments, or rights-of-way through rezoning processes for SSMU projects. The guide explains how municipalities should ensure that sufficient revenues are collected to upgrade infrastructure through development cost charges, latecomer agreements, subdivision servicing bylaw requirements, and municipal development works agreements.

7 | Conclusion

Guelph's Gentle Density project is an exciting initiative with real potential to help address the housing affordability crisis. By providing opportunities to increase housing supply and promote the development of affordable, inclusive, and diverse communities, Guelph will create the conditions necessary for gentle density to occur throughout the city.

To support the project, this Background Document has highlighted Guelph's existing conditions, local and provincial policy contexts, and several precedent examples of gentle density work being done across the country.

Key takeaways from this document are that low density zones offer the greatest potential, and that there are opportunities to further align Guelph's policy framework. These two takeaways will be actioned through the next phases of this project, with particular focus on how the City can best work with the existing RL.1 and RL.2 zones to improve their utility for supporting gentle density.

In the next phase of this project the City will begin public engagement on proposed scenarios for supporting gentle density, and sharing additional findings from the work completed to date. Input from the public will help inform the final recommendations that will be brought forward to Council for their consideration.