

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Comprehensive Zoning By-law with Form Based Residential Zones – Phase One

1. What is the Planning Act?

The Planning Act is provincial legislation that sets out the rules for land use planning in Ontario.

2. What is a Zoning By-law?

The legal and enforceable tool used to implement Official Plan policies, which is a requirement by the *Planning Act*. A zoning by-law regulates:

- how land may be used,
- where buildings and other structures can be located,
- the types of buildings that are permitted and how they may be used,
- the lot sizes and dimensions, parking requirements, building heights and densities (the number of people, jobs, and building floor area per hectare), setbacks from the street, and landscaping.

However, a zoning by-law cannot regulate the type and quality of landscaping, tree protection, grading, architectural style and features, building materials and colour, and roof pitches.

3. What is HAF?

The Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) is a federal government program designed to help increase the number of houses across Canada. HAF provides funding to help municipalities remove barriers and fast track approvals to increase the number of houses being built and see shovels in the ground faster. The HAF program includes a funding agreement between the City of Cambridge and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), in which the City is required to complete nine local initiatives/projects aimed to boost housing supply. The new Comprehensive Zoning By-law with form-based residential zones is one of nine initiatives.

4. Why is the Zoning By-law being reviewed?

The existing City of Cambridge Zoning By-law 150-85 was approved in 1987. The City retained Meridian Planning to assist in the review of the existing by-law to update regulations, implement Official Plan policies and address current economic and development conditions.

5. What is form based zoning and how will it work here in Cambridge?

Form based zoning is a method used to regulate development that focuses on the physical form (e.g., building placement and height) of development through regulations such as height restrictions, setbacks and parking requirements. In comparison,

traditional zoning focuses on the separation of housing types from one another (i.e., separate zones and regulations for detached vs semi-detached dwellings). Traditional zoning is more restrictive and is a barrier to changing needs in the provision of housing.

Zoning By-law 150-85 currently has 16 unique residential zones each with their own individual standards such as dwelling type, maximum density, frontage, lot area and setbacks. Staff are recommending a form-based zoning approach to the City's residential areas to reduce redundancy and simplify the number of residential zones from 16 to 4. A full range of housing types will be allowed in the R1, R2 and R3 zones subject to height, parking, landscaping and setback regulations. A RR zone is proposed for rural areas which will limit the form of housing due to private servicing constraints.

6. How does form based zoning affect my property?

Every property in the City is regulated through the Zoning By-law and if you own, lease or rent property within the City, the new Zoning By-law could affect you and the zoning permissions of your property. To review the latest changes, refer to the final draft of the [Zoning By-law Phase One](#).

7. How will landscaping be preserved?

There are landscaped open space and planting strip requirements to ensure sufficient stormwater management, tree canopy cover, biodiversity, and appropriate screening and separation within residential areas. There are also maximum driveway requirements to prevent front yard areas from being paved over for parking.

8. How will parking concerns be addressed?

Residential parking rates range from 1-2 spaces per unit depending on the housing type. The total required amount of parking must be accommodated on the lot. Lot size and the ability to accommodate the parking requirements will limit the number of dwelling units that may be permitted on a property.

9. Will there be height restrictions?

The City's current by-law does not have height regulations for residential areas. The proposed new by-law includes a maximum height of 11 metres which is generally 3 storeys for most residential streets. 14 metres (4 storeys) is permitted on collector road and arterial roads which have public transit and access to other uses like commercial plazas and schools as shown on Schedule 2 of the final draft of the [Zoning By-law Phase One](#).

10. Why is there no unit cap?

Although there is no unit cap proposed in the new zoning by-law, the number of units that can be developed on any given property will be determined by regulations such as setbacks, landscaping requirements and parking requirements along with the size and shape of properties.

11. Will the public be informed about new developments happening in their neighbourhoods?

If a development meets the zoning standards of its applicable zone, there is no public consultation process, since only a building permit is required. Building permits can be viewed online at <https://permits.cambridge.ca/>

Developments that do not meet the zoning standards would go through the appropriate planning application process with the associated public consultation, as is the case today.

12. What is happening to other land use zones (employment, industrial, commercial, etc.)?

Other land use zones will be brought forward in a future phase of the zoning review. Those lands will remain under By-law 150-85.

13. How will heritage properties and Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs) be affected?

Designated properties under the *Ontario Heritage Act* have additional policies in place to ensure protection of cultural heritage when new developments are proposed on or adjacent to existing designated properties.

14. How will new houses be serviced (e.g., garbage collection, hydro, utilities)?

Garbage collection will continue to be provided by the Region of Waterloo or private service for larger developments. New development is required to connect to the electrical system and municipal water and sanitary system.

15. What opportunities are there for public consultation in development?

There are many opportunities for public feedback to shape development in the City. This includes:

- Official Plan reviews (2026-2028)
- Secondary Planning (e.g. ongoing Preston Secondary Plan)
- Future Comprehensive Zoning Reviews (every 5 years on a go forward basis)
- Property specific development applications, such as:
 - Subdivision applications
 - Zoning By-law amendments

- Minor Variance applications
- Land division/severance applications