Residential Infill Strategy: Draft Guidelines

Public Engagement Summary – Round 2

December 2020

Background

Building on the priorities identified in the Residential Infill Strategy's Implementation Action Plan, the City of Winnipeg (City) asked for public input on draft residential infill design guidelines and location criteria to help ensure that new housing in Mature Communities is compatible in form, scale, and design, and to help determine when and where density changes should occur on residential streets.

Promotion

Public engagement opportunities were promoted using the following methods:

- City of Winnipeg webpage;
- News release (French and English) – Tuesday, September 18, 2020;
- Facebook and Twitter posts (10 English, 10 French) – September 18 to October 2, 2020;
- Facebook ads, (French and English) – September 13 – October 13, 2020;
- City of Winnipeg public engagement newsletter with over 2,300 recipients - September 18, October 1, and 15, 2020;
- Newspaper ads (Winnipeg Free Press, The Herald, Lance, Metro, Sou'wester, Times, and La Liberté), September 19-23, 2020.

Key Findings

- Most feedback received was general feedback on infill housing, rather than specific feedback on the other dwelling types addressed by the guidelines.
- Feedback was similar to what was received in the Round 1 engagement process. Predominant themes included:
    - Building size & scale (lot coverage, height, and building setbacks) should not be out of scale with neighbouring properties
    - The importance of protecting mature trees and private yards;
    - Concerns over the limitations of infrastructure capacity, most notably parking and traffic.
- Respondents expressed concerns over how their neighbourhoods are changing (e.g. lot splits) and opposed the addition of, and different types of housing.
- Those who noted their support for infill development wanted to see fewer restrictions on site and building design and location criteria, and more infill, generally.
- Respondents noted the need for improvements to infill development processes, including communications, resident engagement, and enforcement of existing by-laws.
- There were also concerns over construction site practices and impacts to neighbouring properties.

Engagement Activities

Date	Activity	Details
September 17 – October 22, 2020	Online survey	Feedback was collected on the guidelines and 778 responses were received. There was a significant level of participation in the survey by residents of St. Vital over other areas of the City. Survey responses can be found in Appendix B.
October 4, 7, 8, 14 & 15, 2020	Online webinars (5)	In light of COVID-19 restrictions, online webinar-style events replaced open houses as a method of gathering feedback and answering questions related to the proposed guidelines; 65 participants attended the events. Questions received and answers to them can be found on the project website, under the 'Documents' tab.
Summer/Fall 2020	Stakeholder discussions	Discussions were held with a variety of stakeholders, including residents, builders, neighbourhood associations, landscape architects, architects, and designers.

To learn more about the Residential Infill Strategy, please visit winnipeg.ca/infillstrategy

Winnipeg

What we heard

All qualitative feedback received was coded to identify the main themes and priorities expressed by survey respondents. Below is a summary of feedback received on the draft guidelines, as well as specific feedback on the various building types being considered.

Overall Feedback Themes

	What we heard	How this information was considered
	Trees, shrubs and other natural features are significant character defining elements in a neighbourhood. We should maintain the mature tree canopy, retain private yard/greenspace, and impose greater penalties for mature tree removal.	We are recommending that single and two-unit dwellings now require a minimum level of landscaping and that we will encourage and incentivize the preservation of mature trees on lots. We are also recommending increases to the amount of required landscaping for multi-unit dwellings. Further to the recommendations in the guidelines, additional work is underway as part of the Urban Forest Strategy.
	Building size (lot coverage, height, and building setbacks) should not be out of scale with neighbouring properties. Loss of privacy and shade for neighbours of infill was noted as a concern.	We are recommending reductions to permitted lot area coverage and greater rear and side yard setbacks. Less lot coverage and greater rear yard setbacks will reduce the length of dwellings and may reduce impacts concerned with privacy and loss of sun.
	Better enforcement of guidelines and compliance with plan approval is needed.	Improving enforcement of construction that follows approved plans was recommended as a longer-term priority (year five) in response to previous public feedback. However, this action has been bumped up in priority and an enforcement strategy is being worked on including having a senior Compliance Inspector as the lead for infill issues.
	Better regulation of construction site practices is needed, specifically related to cleanliness, safety, noise, and other impacts to adjacent properties.	Improving construction site standards was recommended in the Implementation Action Plan Summary as a medium term priority (year two) in response to previous public feedback. This issue is currently being worked on. An upcoming administrative report will highlight licensing and enforcement practices in other jurisdictions and recommend further consideration of a contractor licensing program in Winnipeg, as well as the requirement for a Building Location Certificate, which would confirm that the foundation being built reflects what was submitted in the approved plans.
	Opposition to splitting of lots of 50 feet or less, and concerns over the resultant size and scale of buildings on smaller lots.	New housing on narrow lots provides opportunities for people to get a modern home in a mature neighbourhood at a more affordable price point. To address concerns associated with the creation of narrow lots, we are recommending reductions in the

	What we heard	How this information was considered
		massing of buildings and increased standards for design. The smallest lot that can be subdivided is 50 feet wide.
	Opposition to renters and multi-unit buildings.	The City cannot mandate whether or not buildings are occupied by owners, or rented out. Not all Winnipeggers wish to live in a single-family dwelling or can afford to live in one. A variety of housing types are needed to provide all Winnipeggers with housing options that meet their needs.
	Better communication and engagement is needed with local area residents related to what is to be built in their neighbourhood.	Improved formats of communication and information about development was identified in the Implementation Action Plan as actions 2 and 9. The City is currently creating a new a new signage posting process for development and is considering other ways to better inform and communicate to residents in a neighbourhood.
	New infill puts strain on existing infrastructure, including traffic and parking, and sewer and water infrastructure.	'Identify servicing constraints' and 'Implement parking and transportation strategies' are recommended in the Implementation Action Plan as longer term priorities (3-5 years +) in response to previous public feedback. Greater densities will be encouraged in proximity to the Primary Transit Network, and aligned with the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan once it is approved. Limiting development potential for lots with gravel lanes were added to address neighbourhood concerns over lots splits.
	The rate of infill development is too high in some neighbourhoods and not enough in other neighbourhoods.	The Guidelines provide a clear set of expectations on what can be built and where. The same rules for how a lot can be subdivided will now be consistent across all mature neighbourhoods, which should help reduce the concentration of new infill in specific neighbourhoods. Additionally, pace of change considerations for how many homes resulting from lot splits can be built in a year were added.
	Ensure that new housing is barrier-free, possibly through incentives.	Changes have been made to the draft guidelines to encourage barrier-free access, specifically with respect to multi-unit buildings.
	Ensure that new housing is affordable, possibly through incentives.	Work related to affordable housing is ongoing, building on the Housing Needs Assessment that has been completed, as recommended in the Infill Strategy Implementation Action Plan.
	There should be fewer restrictions on what is built, and where.	The draft guidelines attempt to strike a balance between encouraging a diversity of housing types and creative building designs, while ensuring that new housing integrates well into the character of the neighbourhood where they are built.
	Building style and design should better fit with established neighbourhood character.	We are introducing requirements for building and site design, including architectural features, while not dictating what type of architectural style a building should take.

Survey respondents were also asked to provide feedback on how well they thought that the draft guidelines will address a number of community-building goals. Addressing these goals will require further implementation of the Infill Strategy Implementation Action Plan, and collaboration between City projects and departments. A summary of feedback received is shown in Figure 1 – Perspectives on how the draft guidelines will help to meet Community Building Goals, below.

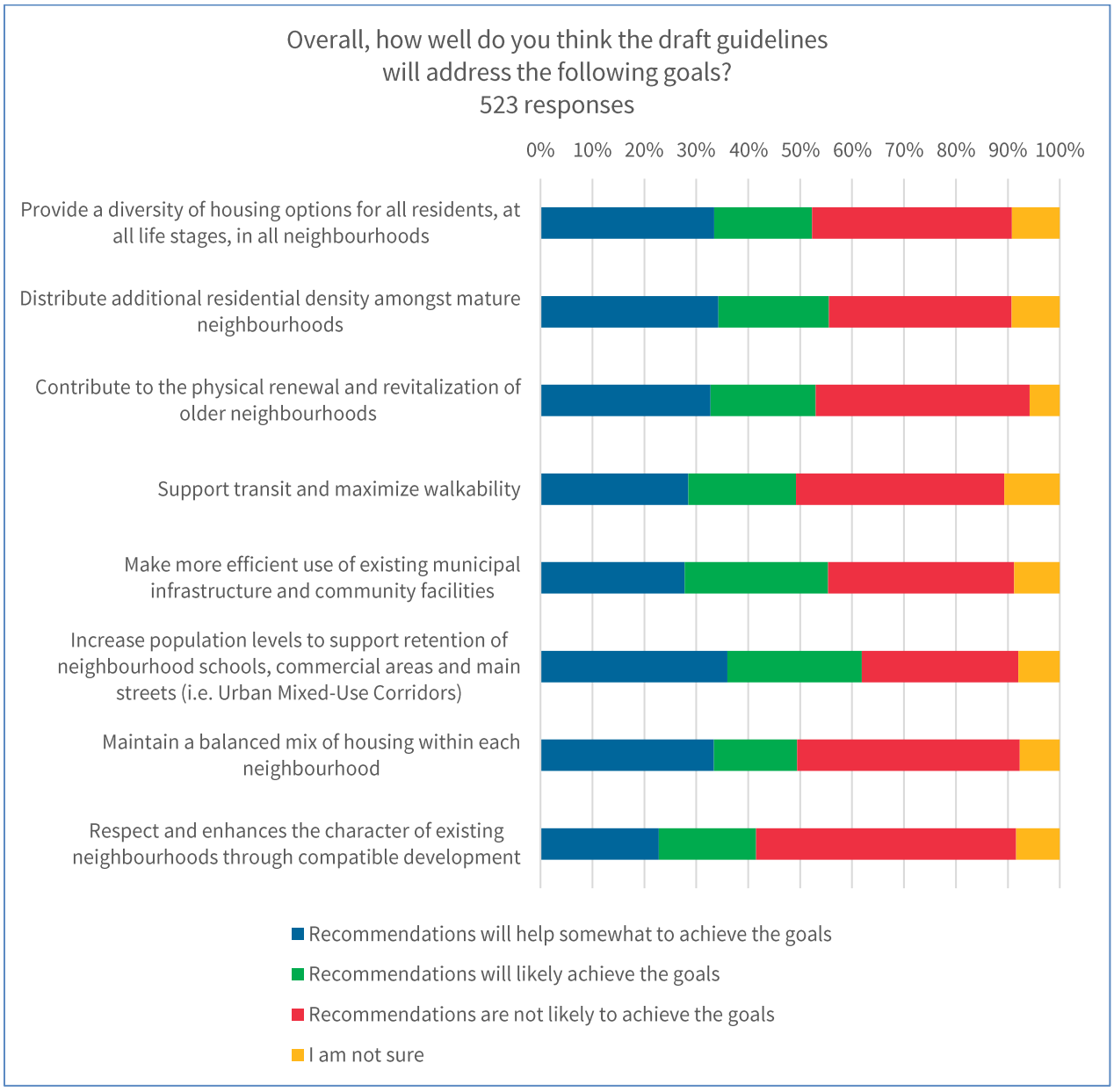
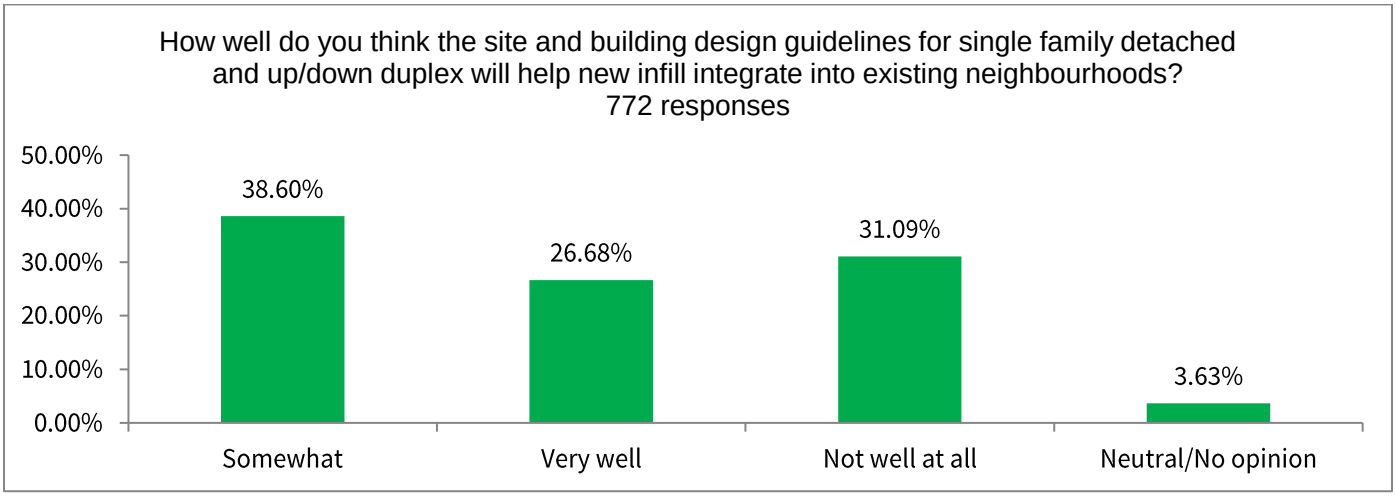


Figure 1 – Perspectives on how the draft guidelines will help to meet Community Building Goals

Feedback on Housing Types

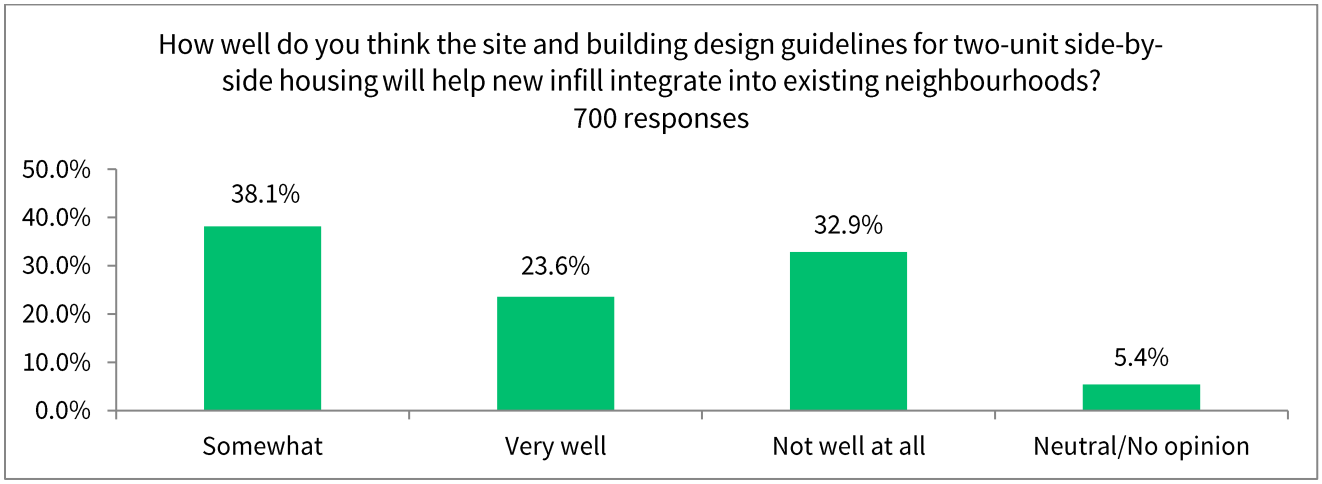
In addition to the general themes highlighted above, feedback themes related to the different dwelling types considered in the draft guidelines are presented below.

Single-family Detached and Up-down Duplex Dwellings



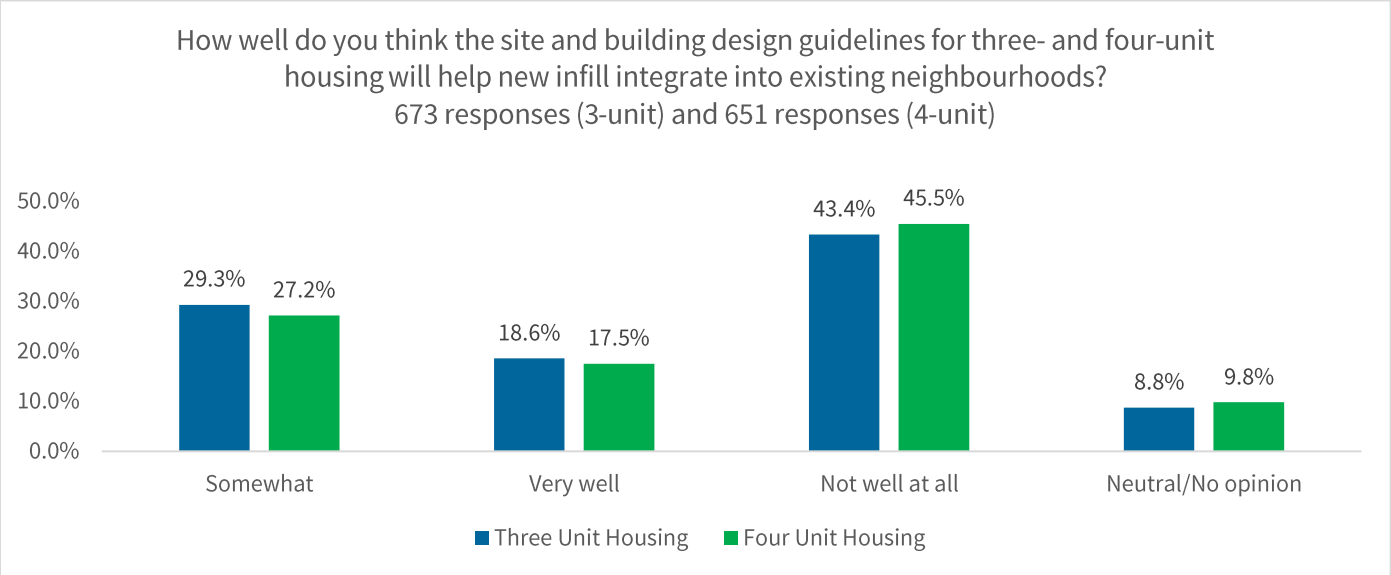
What we heard	How this information is being considered
Concerns over building size – lot coverage, building height, and setbacks.	Draft guidelines include: - reductions to permitted lot area coverage of the new building - greater rear side yard setbacks.
Opposition to lot splitting was strongest for this housing type.	We are recommending that this building type can continue by mitigating concerns that we have heard through the public engagement process. This includes smaller building sizes (height, lot coverage, yard setback increases), privacy, building design, in order for it to better fit the context of the street. Changes were made to the draft Complete Communities Direction Strategy 2.0 to discourage the creation of new infill lots within flood fringe areas.
Concerns over new infill being incompatible with existing neighbourhood building styles was most pronounced for this housing type.	Updates to the Zoning Bylaw were recommended in the Implementation Action Plan as a medium-term priority (2 years) in response to previous public feedback.
Frustration with frequent variances and lack of enforcement of the guidelines were most frequent for single family detached, up/down duplexes, and two-unit side-by-side dwellings.	Improving enforcement of construction that follows approved plans was recommended as a longer-term priority (year five) in response to previous public feedback. However, this action has been bumped up in priority and an enforcement strategy is being worked on including having a senior Compliance Inspector as the lead for infill issues.

Two-Unit Side-by-Side Dwellings



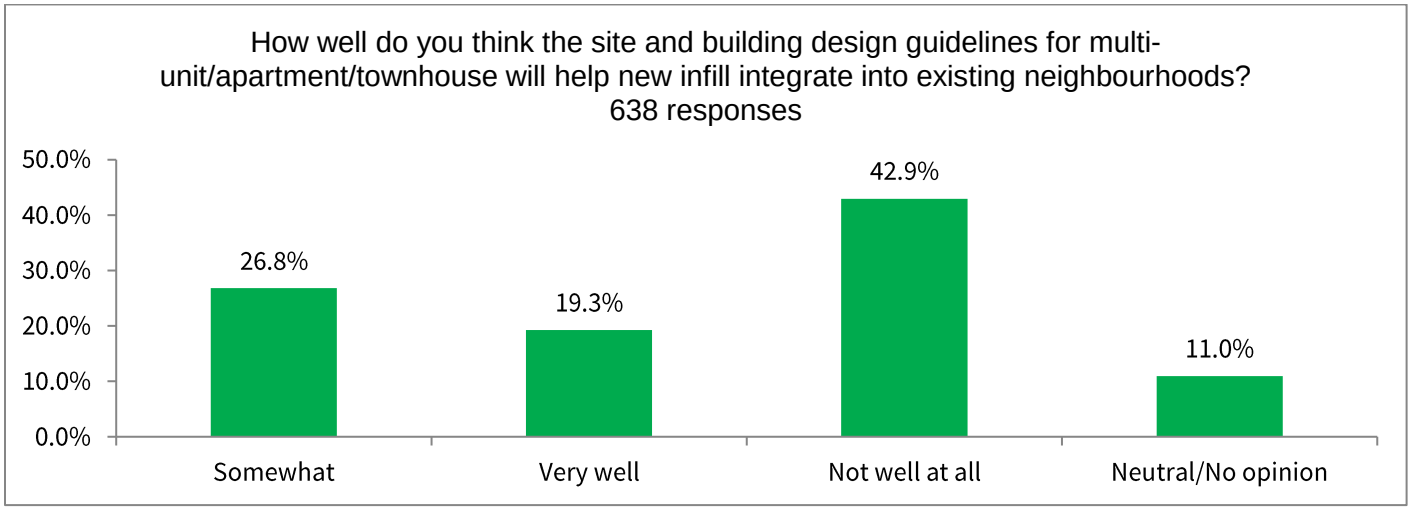
What we heard	How this information is being considered
Concerns over building size – lot coverage, building height, setbacks.	Draft guidelines include: - reductions to permitted lot area coverage - greater rear side yard setbacks The design intent is to allow for a two-family home to be the same size of a large single-family home. No further changes are being considered at this time.
Opposition to renters and multi-family buildings in neighbourhoods comprised of predominantly single-family detached homes was strongest for this housing type.	The City cannot mandate whether or not buildings are occupied by owners, or rented out. Not all Winnipeggers wish to live in a single-family dwelling or can afford to live in one. A variety of housing types are needed to provide all Winnipeggers with housing options that meet their needs.
Frustration with frequent variances and lack of enforcement of the guidelines were most frequent for single family detached, up/down duplexes, and two-unit side-by-side dwellings.	Improving enforcement of construction that follows approved plans was recommended as a longer-term priority (year five) in response to previous public feedback. However, this action has been bumped up in priority and an enforcement strategy is being worked on including having a senior Compliance Inspector as the lead for infill issues.

Three and Four-Unit Dwellings



What we heard	How this information is being considered
Concerns over building size – lot coverage, building height, setbacks.	The design intent is to allow for a three- and four-unit building to be the same size as a large single-family home. We have recommended the introduction of lot area coverage, reductions of building height and have proposed greater rear yard setbacks to address impacts associated with the size of infill dwellings. Four-unit dwellings may require more lot coverage than three-unit dwellings, because all the units cannot be stacked on top of each other in the same way as a three-unit building. As such, we have provided the option for builders of four-unit dwellings to re-allocate lot coverage from the garage to the principal building. No further changes are being considered to the size of three- and four-unit dwellings at this time.
Three and four-unit dwellings should be restricted to certain areas (either Area 1 or Area 2) and on corners, or near commercial, or busier streets.	The draft guidelines include criteria used to consider where these types of housing can be established in Area 1 and Area 2 neighbourhoods. Area 2 neighbourhoods will be more permissive. Area 1 neighbourhoods will be limited in terms of where they might be established on the block in order to reflect the differences in neighbourhood context between Areas 1 and 2. We believe we have responded to the concerns raised about location criteria and are not considering any further changes to the document at this time.
Traffic and parking concerns were a frequent concern for three- and four-unit dwellings.	Implementing parking and transportation strategies was recommended as a long term priority (3-5 years) in the Implementation Action Plan. Greater densities will be encouraged in proximity to the Primary Transit Network, and aligned with the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan once it is approved.

Multi-Unit/Apartment/Townhouse Dwellings



What we heard	How this information was considered
Multi-unit/Apartment/Townhouse dwellings should be restricted to certain areas (either Area 1 or Area 2) and on corners, or near commercial, or busier streets.	The draft guidelines include criteria used to consider where these types of housing can be established in Area 1 and Area 2 neighbourhoods. Area 2 neighbourhoods will be more permissive and Area 1 neighbourhoods will be limited in terms of where they might be established on the block in order to reflect the differences in neighbourhood context between Areas 1 and 2. We believe we have responded to the concerns raised about location criteria and are not considering any further changes to the document at this time.
Parking and traffic issues are a concern when adding density to a street.	Implementing parking and transportation strategies was recommended in the Implementation Action Plan as a long-term priority (3-5 years) in response to previous public feedback. Greater densities will be encouraged in proximity to the Primary Transit Network, and aligned with the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan once it is approved.
Concerns over building size – lot coverage, building height, setbacks.	We are recommending rear yard setbacks that are more responsive to various lot dimensions and depths as well as the immediate context. Lot coverage requirements for multi-unit dwellings are identified where previously, they have not been and will help to get better contextual fit. Maximum building heights will be dependent on the type of street the development is to be built. Building setbacks are proposed to reduce building massing impacts as the building gets taller.

Who we heard from

The highest survey response rates were from the following postal code areas:

- R2M (36.8%) – St. Vital
- R3M (7.4% - Fort Rouge/River Heights
- R3N (6.7%) – River Heights
- R3G (5.9%) – West End/Wolseley
- R3L (4.6%) – Lord Roberts/Riverview/Osborne Village

See Appendix A for the full postal code area map.

Of the 521 survey respondents who identified whether they owned or rented their homes, 91.4% identified as home owners (Figure 2 - Respondent Tenancy Type). Of those who described the type of housing they live in, 89% live in single family detached homes (Figure 3 - Respondent Housing Type). For Winnipeg as a whole, 59.4% of occupied dwellings are single-detached homes[1], so those who live in multi-family housing were under-represented in the survey results.

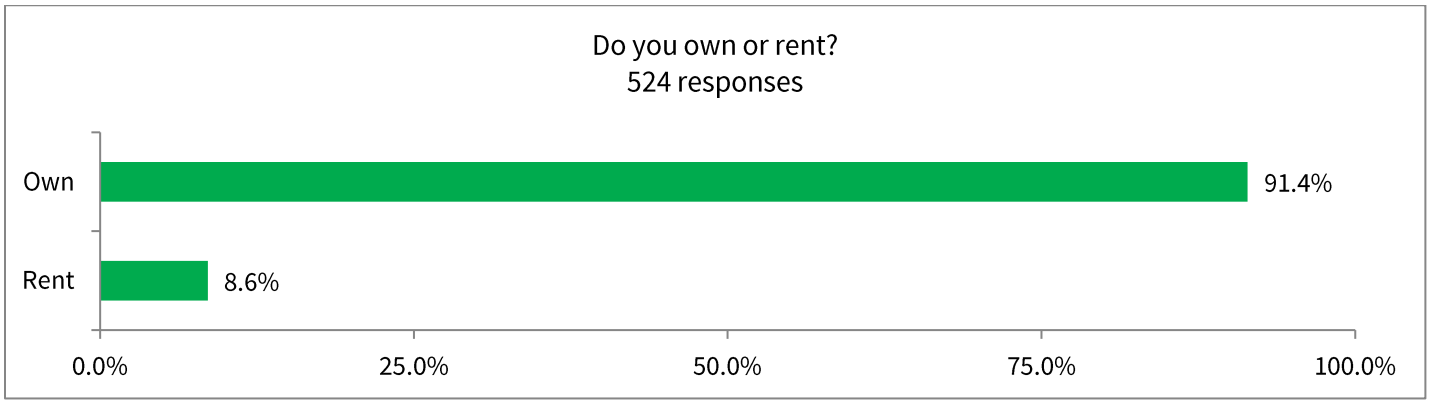


Figure 2 - Respondent Tenancy Type

[1] Source: Winnipeg 2016 Census Profile

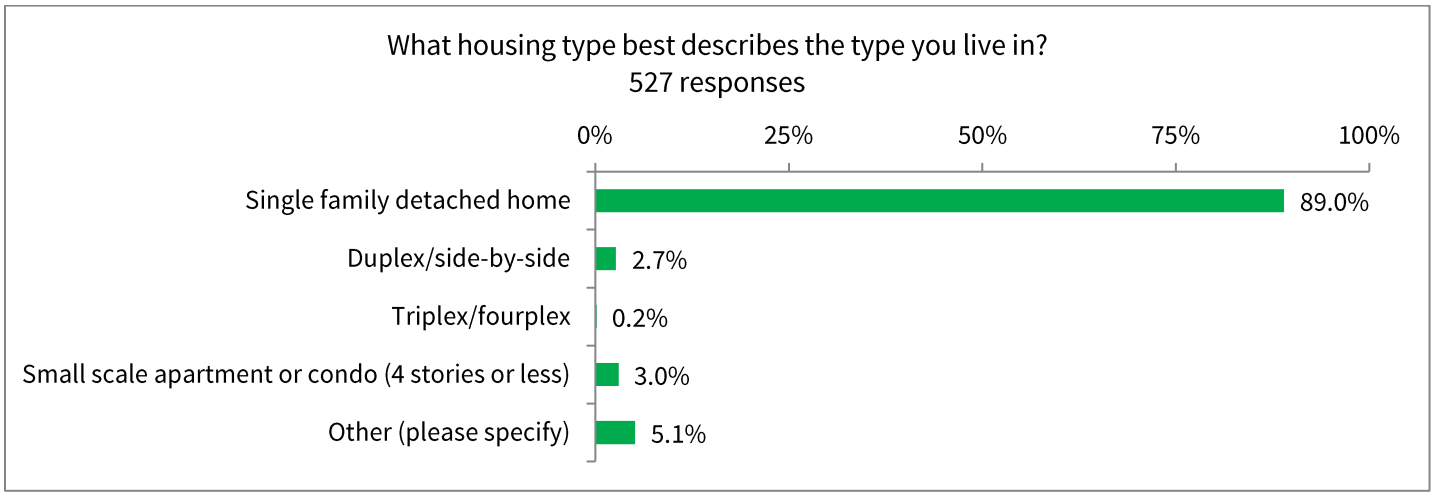


Figure 3 - Respondent Housing Type

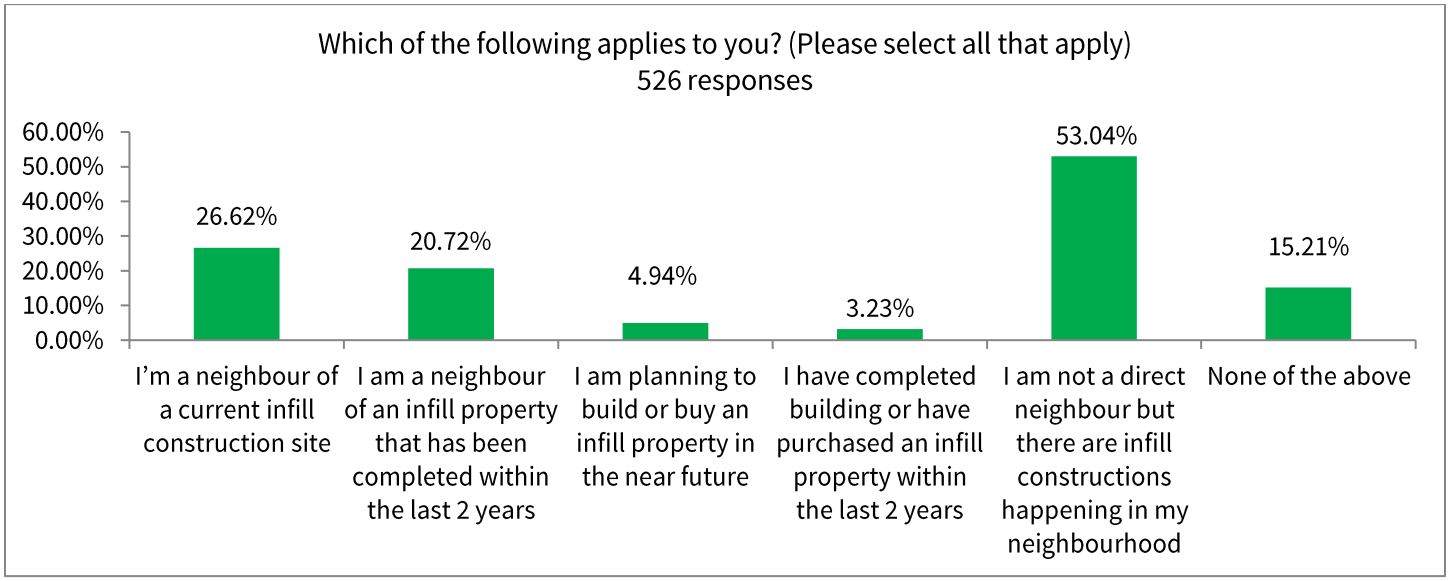


Figure 4 – Respondent relationship to Infill

Next steps

Feedback from this phase of engagement will be presented at a meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Property Development, Heritage, and Downtown Development (SPC-PD) on March 15, 2021. As indicated in this summary, potential revisions to the Small-Scale Residential Development Guidelines for Mature Communities to be considered will be presented at this time.

Further work on the infill strategy will continue based on the priorities outlined in the Residential Infill Strategy Implementation Action Plan.

Appendices

Appendix A – Survey Respondent Postal Code Map

Appendix B – Verbatim survey responses

Appendix C – News Releases (French and English)

Appendix D – Print Ads