

## Report to Planning and Environment Committee

**To:** Chair and Members  
Planning and Environment Committee  
**From:** Scott Mathers, MPA, P.Eng.  
Deputy City Manager, Planning and Economic Development  
**Subject:** ReThink Zoning – Progress Update  
**Date:** October 23, 2023

## Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Director, Planning and Development, the following report be **RECEIVED** for information.

## Executive Summary

ReThink Zoning is the process of delivering a new comprehensive zoning by-law that will implement *The London Plan* and replace the current *Zoning By-law No. Z.-1*. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on ReThink Zoning initiative following the recent Housing Accelerator Fund announcement.

This report highlights an innovative change to the typical approach to rolling out a new zoning bylaw. This new approach will implement the ReThink Zoning bylaw in a series of phases. The first of these phases will include the zoning changes with the highest impact on accelerating new housing as proposed in the City's Housing Accelerator Fund Application. This change will reduce the time required to roll-out the zoning bylaw amendments with the greatest impact on providing new housing in London.

## Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The preparation of the new comprehensive zoning by-law will contribute to the advancement of Municipal Council's *2023-2027 Strategic Plan* and the strategic areas of focus in several ways:

- **“Housing and Homelessness”** is supported by a new comprehensive zoning by-law that contemplates a diverse range of housing options in all neighbourhoods and through a balanced application of use, intensity and form regulations ensures new development is compatible with its context, including existing and future conditions. A new comprehensive zoning by-law will explore the use of regulations to incent certain forms of development with alternative standards to achieve municipal housing needs and commitments.
- **“Climate Action and Sustainable Growth”** is supported by a new comprehensive zoning by-law that will ensure growth and development is well planned, resilient to change and sustainable over the long-term. A new comprehensive zoning by-law will explore the use of regulations to incent the use of green technologies, infrastructure, facilities, and devices. A new comprehensive zoning by-law will also protect the natural environment and agricultural areas and avoid natural hazards when building new infrastructure or development for the needs of Londoners now and into the future.
- **“Economic Growth, Culture and Prosperity”** is supported by a new comprehensive zoning by-law that provides certainty and flexibility in regulations to create a supportive environment where businesses and development can thrive.
- **“Mobility and Transportation”** is supported by a new comprehensive zoning by-law that promotes compact patterns of growth and plans for greater population density in areas near transit and active mobility networks to make green and active forms of mobility more viable and attractive.
- **“Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion”** is supported by a new comprehensive zoning by-law that applies the City of London Equity Tool to City-

led policies and to promote equitable, inclusive, accessible and welcoming City of London spaces for intersectional identities.

- **“Wellbeing and Safety”** is supported by a new comprehensive zoning by-law that promotes neighbourhood planning and design that creates safe, accessible, diverse, walkable, healthy, and connected communities.
- **“Safe London for Women, Girls, and Gender-Diverse and Trans People”** is supported by a new comprehensive zoning by-law that applies the City of London Equity Tool to City-led planning, design and construction of public spaces and amenities, specifically considering the safety of women, girls, nonbinary and trans individuals and survivors.
- **“Well Run City”** is supported by a new comprehensive zoning by-law that continues to deliver municipal services that meet the needs of a growing and changing community, and provides as-of-right zoning to streamline approvals processes.

## Analysis

### 1.0 Background Information

#### 1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

**Planning and Environment Committee, ReThink Zoning – progress update, June 19, 2023.** This report provided an update on the progress of the ReThink Zoning project, including an update on the working draft zoning by-law document and the plan for future public consultation.

**Planning and Environment Committee, Update and Sample Place Type Zones, October 3, 2022.** This report introduced three (3) sample zones prepared by the project consultant. The purpose of the sample zones was to illustrate how policies in *The London Plan* could be translated into regulation. The sample zones included the project consultant’s proposed structure and organizational framework for the zone classes, mapping of zone boundaries and zone codes for sample geographic areas, and preliminary zone regulations. It was recommended that the sample zones be received by Municipal Council for information purposes. This report also provided an update on the next steps for ReThink Zoning.

The sample zones were the subject of consultation and review from October 2022 through to January 2023. Consultation included a staff workshop in November 2023, a meeting of a Rethink Zoning Working Group in November 2022, a virtual Public Information Meeting in December 2022 and meetings with individuals and groups that were requested through the project’s Get Involved webpage.

**Planning and Environment Committee, ReThink Zoning Update & Discussion Papers, June 20, 2022.** This report introduced seven (7) Discussion Papers prepared by the project consultant that explored opportunities and challenges for London’s new zoning by-law and identified possible zoning approaches to address those issues. It was recommended that the discussion papers be received by Municipal Council for information purposes. This report also provided an update on the next steps for ReThink Zoning.

**Planning and Environment Committee, RFP21-57 ReThink Zoning Consulting Services Contract Award, November 1, 2021.** This report recommended Municipal Council appoint Sajecki Planning Inc. (“Sajecki”) as project consultants to prepare the new comprehensive zoning by-law and that the financing for consulting services be approved. In accordance with the City’s *Procurement of Goods and Services Policy*, Sajecki was qualified to provide consulting services through a Request for Qualification (RFQUAL) and had the highest scoring submission through the subsequent Request for Proposal (RFP).

**Planning and Environment Committee, ReThink Zoning Phase One Update and Background Papers, June 21, 2021.** This report introduced for information purposes a series of Background Papers. The first Background Paper provided an overview of the

relevance and role of zoning and the importance of engagement in the ReThink Zoning project. The second, third and fourth Background Papers addressed the role of use, intensity, and form in zoning, respectively, to achieve the city building objectives described in *The London Plan*. The fifth Background Paper undertook a review of zoning by-laws for several comparable municipalities in Ontario to identify best practices and capture innovative approaches to zoning. This report also provided an update on the next steps for ReThink Zoning.

**Planning and Environment Committee, ReThink Zoning Phase One Update, November 30, 2020.** This report introduced for information purposes, areas of focus for future public and stakeholder engagement. Areas of focus including education about how zoning works, and conversations about the types of uses and buildings that should be permitted (use), how much activity or building should be permitted (intensity), and where and how buildings should be situated or designed (form). The above noted areas of focus were discussed in the context of *The London Plan's* policy direction and place types, and how *The London Plan's* vision can be implemented through zoning. The report was initially scheduled for June 2020 and was postponed and adapted to address limitations with public and stakeholder engagement as influenced by COVID-19.

**Planning and Environment Committee, ReThink Zoning Terms of Reference, May 13, 2019.** Based on public and stakeholder comments on the draft Terms of Reference (TOR), this report introduced for approval an updated TOR for ReThink Zoning. The updated TOR included a detailed overview of the project goals, work plan and deliverables, and identified opportunities for meaningful public and industry stakeholder engagement.

**Planning and Environment Committee, ReThink Zoning Terms of Reference, August 13, 2018.** This report introduced for information purposes a draft TOR for ReThink Zoning and directed that the draft be circulated for comments.

## **2.0 Discussion and Considerations**

### **2.2 Summer Public Consultation**

Portions of the working draft of the zoning by-law were shared over the summer months with interested parties through posted materials and updates on the project's Get Involved webpage (<https://getinvolved.london.ca/rethink-zoning>) as a series of factsheets. The intent of these factsheets was to provide a preliminary outline of the new zoning by-law structure, including permitted uses and permitted building types for the Downtown, Neighbourhoods, Commercial Industrial, Light Industrial, and Heavy Industrial Zones.

In addition, a community workshop was held on September 28, 2023 seeking feedback on the sample zone factsheets, as well as general feedback, to be incorporated into the working draft zoning by-law. Additional consultation with the public and interested parties, including the development industry will be held over Q4-2023. This consultation will be designed to accommodate general feedback as well as targeted feedback from community groups, equity deserving groups, and the development industry.

### **2.1 Updated Project Approach**

London's successful Housing Accelerator Fund application was announced by Prime Minister Trudeau on September 13, 2023. One of the most important initiatives included in London's application was to quickly bring to Council various zoning changes to accelerate new housing. A new and innovative approach was developed to ensure that these zoning amendments can be made quickly and at the same time align with the spirit and direction of the ReThink Zoning initiative.

### **2.2 Moving Directly to Implementation**

The revised approach will bring forward a series of zoning amendments in phases without completely replacing the current zoning by-law. These amendments will be structured to reflect the form of the new ReThink Zoning by-law and include portions of

the content shared during public engagements sessions. Over a series of zoning by-law amendments, sections of the current zoning bylaw will be replaced until it is finally fully replaced with the complete Rethink Zoning By-law. This innovative approach will allow the high-priority zoning changes that are needed to accelerate housing to move forward quickly. In parallel, the public engagement and the further development of the next phase of by-law amendments can be completed. Several elements of Rethink Zoning that will be accelerated and implemented through transformation of the current zoning By-law include:

- Zoning changes to promote additional residential units and other forms of gentle intensification within neighbourhoods by identifying and removing obstacles within the current zoning regulations.
- Preparing new zones for key intensification areas along the planned rapid transit corridors that incentivise redevelopment through as-of-right zoning for high-density development.
- Identifying common issues with the current zoning by-law that result in the need for minor variance or zoning by-law amendment applications and removing unnecessary regulations where possible.

The work to bring the first phase of zoning amendments forward is already underway and is expected to be completed by Q2-2024.

It is anticipated that this new approach will extend the overall time to fully complete the ReThink Zoning by-law but has the benefit of allowing the zoning changes with the highest impact on creating new housing to be made quickly. These amendments will continue throughout the year with the final phase anticipated by the end of 2024.

## **Conclusion**

Planning and Development staff have begun work on the first phase of zoning amendments. Additional consultation will commence over the following months and will be incorporated into the first phase and subsequent phases of the implementation of the ReThink Zoning bylaw. The innovative approach highlighted in this report will reduce the time required to roll-out key zoning bylaw changes and accelerate new housing in London.

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