Site Plan Requirements and Urban Design Guidelines

Low Density Residential Zones and North Aldershot



City of Burlington
Planning and
Building Department

Burlington

Approved
by Council
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The City of Burlington has grown to its urban boundary, as defined in the City of Burlington Official Plan. There is less vacant urban land in the City and residential trends have shifted from suburban growth to urban infill and redevelopment.

While change is inevitable as a City grows and evolves, urban infill and redevelopment has the capability of seriously disrupting stable neighbourhoods. A Site Plan approval process is the best way to manage change in existing residential neighbourhoods.

In the **R1, R2, R3, R4, and DRL Zones** and in the specified areas in the **North Aldershot Planning Area**, as referenced in Schedules D-C1 to D-C11 inclusive of the Burlington Official Plan, **new detached and semi-detached dwellings and additions greater than 75 m^2 to existing detached and semi-detached dwellings** are subject to Site Plan approval.

The primary objective of the Site Plan approval process is to ensure that the design and site layout of new dwellings and additions to existing dwellings retain and complement the overall character of the community's existing housing stock and natural areas, and contribute to the unique qualities of the neighbourhood.

The transparency and integration of the Site Plan review process allows the City to provide greater assurances to communities that development in residential areas will occur sensibly and be respectful of the built character of Burlington's older established neighbourhoods and that it will not compromise existing servicing needs such as grading and drainage patterns.

Site Plan approval is the first step for development in low density residential zones and North Aldershot, and must be issued before a Building Permit can be applied for. Applicants are encouraged to consult with their neighbours and the Planning Division to review concept plans and discuss any questions or issues before the Site Plan application is formally submitted.

The purpose of this document is to assist homeowners, builders, architects, and designers by outlining the process framework and design principles on which Site Plan approvals for new dwellings and additions to existing dwellings are based.

While the Site Plan process may appear complex and intimidating, most applications are approved within 15 business days. Where plans contemplate a relatively large building footprint, have a noticeable effect on a neighbourhood, deviate from the requirements of the Zoning By-law, or involve the removal of boundary trees, the process may take longer.

Please be sure to read this document before initiating the site plan approval process. For more information about Site Plan approval, please contact the Planning Division at 905-335-7642.

2.0 DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following design guidelines are intended to ensure that new residential development is compatible with and enhances existing neighbourhoods by promoting development that considers and complements the streetscape and architecture of neighbouring buildings.

It is not the intent of these guidelines to restrict design flexibility or creativity, but to encourage architects and designers to avoid the potential conflicts that may arise with urban infill and redevelopment.

The guidelines deal with a variety of general design considerations such as: Site Layout; Character and Context; Materials; Height, Mass, and Scale; Garages and Driveways, Site Grading; Boundary Vegetation and City Tree Preservation; and North Aldershot Planning Area.

For each design consideration, appropriate design guideline(s) are provided.

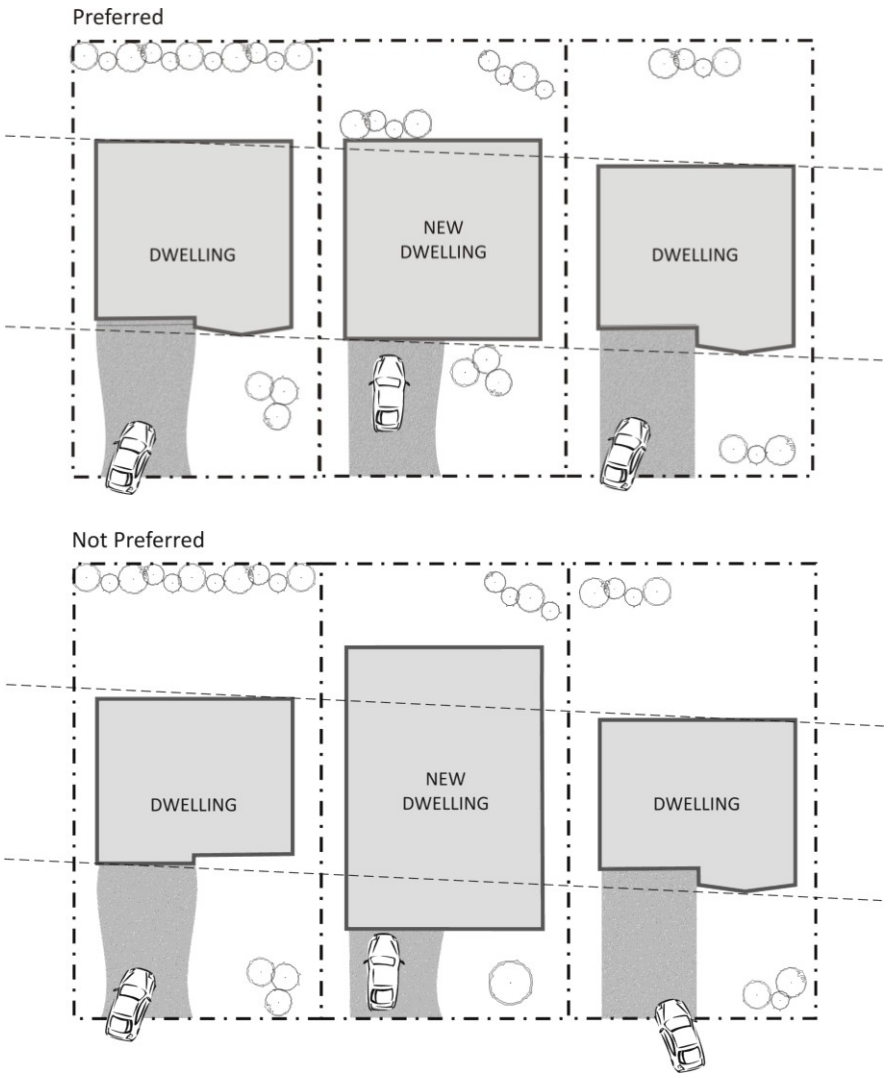
Applicants must also refer to the City Official Plan and Zoning By-law 2020 to ensure that the applicable policies and requirements under these documents are met.

2.1 Site Layout

The front, rear, and side yards of new dwellings and additions to existing dwellings should respect and relate to those of the adjacent lots. New dwellings and additions to existing dwellings should not have a detrimental impact on the immediate neighbours in terms of loss of privacy or sunlight.

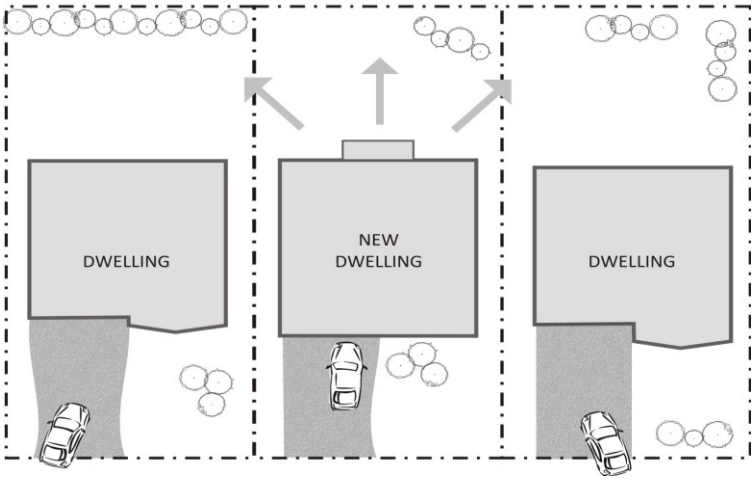
2.1.1 Guideline:

The site layout and setbacks of a proposed dwelling or addition to an existing dwelling should be consistent with the adjacent homes.



2.1.2 Guideline:

Second storey balconies or windows overlooking adjacent properties are discouraged.



2.2 Character and Context

The character of a community is defined by the relationships between its buildings, streetscapes, landscapes and vistas. Individual buildings contribute to the overall character of the community. Architectural elements contribute to the perception of whether or not an individual building fits its context. Designs that respect the character of the local area and take advantage of the context for a particular site are encouraged.

2.2.1 Guideline:

New development shall complement the qualities established by existing neighbouring buildings and the overall character of the setting through the use of common architectural elements and design cues such as rooflines, dormers, porches, fenestration, etc.


Preferred


Not Preferred

2.2.2 Guideline:

Elevations of dwellings shall not be the same as adjacent dwellings. Repeating patterns are strongly discouraged.


Preferred


Not Preferred

2.3 Materials

Modern buildings often feature primary cladding materials such as stucco that are out of keeping with the local vernacular. Materials for new dwellings and additions to existing dwellings shall complement the existing materials in the neighbourhood.

2.3.1 Guideline

Primary cladding materials that are compatible with the existing community and surrounding structures shall be used.


Brick


Wood



Siding



Stone



Combination of materials



Combination of materials

2.4 Height, Mass, and Scale

The design of a dwelling should de-emphasize height and mass and be designed as a composition of smaller architectural elements such as roof dormers, bay windows, porches, and varied wall projections. An appropriately scaled building does not overpower its neighbours.

2.4.1 Guideline:

Each site is unique, however new dwellings and additions to existing dwellings shall be designed to fit with the scale of the particular site and its context. The design of a dwelling shall not appear to be significantly higher than existing dwellings and its mass should not dominate a streetscape.



2.4.2 Guideline:

Roof height and mass shall have a proportional relationship to the height of the first storey of the dwelling and should include dormers and gables when possible.


Preferred


Not Preferred

2.4.3 Guideline:

The use of two-storey architectural elements is strongly discouraged.


Not Preferred

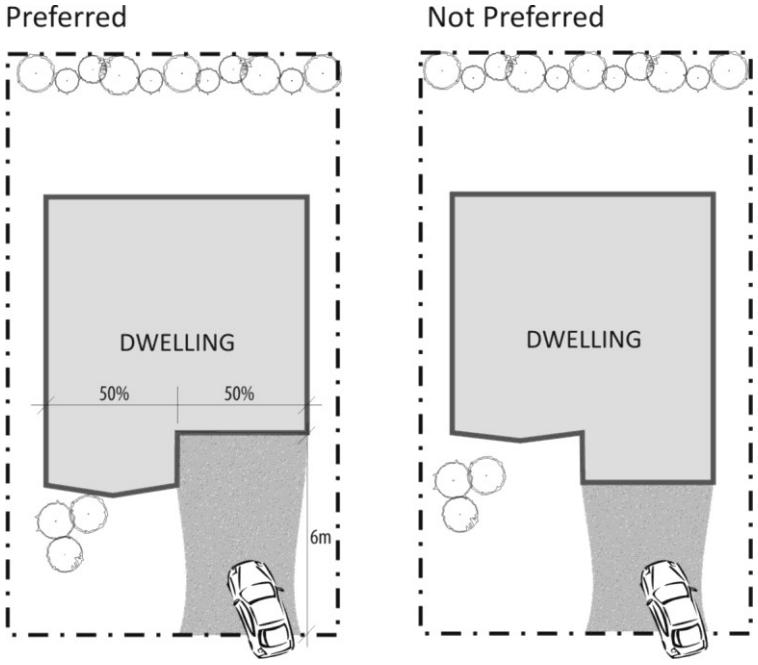

Not Preferred

2.5 Garages and Driveways

Garages should not be the dominant feature of a dwelling and their visual impact on streetscape should be minimized.

2.5.1 Guideline:

Garages shall be recessed or located behind the main face of the dwelling. Projecting garages will be strongly discouraged.



2.5.2 Guideline:

The width of a garage shall not exceed 50% of the corresponding façade of the dwelling.

2.5.3 Guideline:

Driveways shall be a minimum of 6m in length from the property line.

2.6 Site Grading

Finished grades associated with any development must be compatible with the finished grades of the neighbouring properties.

2.6.1 Guideline:

Existing grades and drainage patterns should be maintained.

2.6.2 Guideline:

Existing grades within the site should be maintained adjacent to boundary trees.

2.7 Boundary Vegetation and City Tree Preservation

Equal in importance to compatible architecture, is the preservation and protection of boundary vegetation and City trees. Vegetation and trees are vital in maintaining the character and health of existing neighbourhoods. As much as possible, the destruction of existing mature trees should be avoided.

2.7.1 Guideline:

Boundary vegetation shall consist of all existing vegetation within 3m of both sides of the subject property lines.

2.7.2 Guideline:

Where boundary vegetation is identified to be affected by the proposed development there are two options:

2.7.2.1 The adjacent property owner shall be consulted and made aware of the proposed development and requested to submit in writing that there are no concerns with the proposed treatment of existing vegetation (See Section 3.4.1) or,

2.7.2.2 A certified arborist shall be retained to address the potential impact on the existing boundary vegetation and provide a letter or report to that effect, confirming in their opinion that the vegetation will survive. (See Section 3.4.2)

2.7.3 Guideline:

In situations where existing boundary vegetation is removed to accommodate development, replacement planting may be required to ensure the privacy of adjacent properties and that the natural character of the site is maintained.

2.7.4 Guideline:

Any tree proposed to be removed from a City Boulevard requires City Forester support and Council approval.

2.8 North Aldershot Planning Area

In addition to the above guidelines, new dwelling units and additions in the North Aldershot Planning Area are subject to specific design policies outlined in the Burlington Official Plan. These policies deal with site design, building and road location, vegetation, slopes and significant views. There are also site specific development policies for infill buildings along existing roads, and for various Planning Sub-Areas within the North Aldershot Central Sector. These Official Plan policies will be considered during the review of site plans within North Aldershot and should be taken into consideration during the design of your proposed new dwelling or building addition.

3.0 SITE PLAN PROCESS

Council has delegated its approval authority for site plan applications to the Director of Planning and Building. Notwithstanding this, Council may at its own discretion "undelegate" the approval authority for a site plan application from the Director of Planning and Building back to Council. This action usually occurs if an application is controversial or if it generates a high level of public input and concern. A site plan application may also be brought before Council if the Planning Division and the applicant are not in agreement over the proposal.

There are three critical milestones that occur during the processing of a site plan application. They are as follows:

- Submission of a complete application.
- Issuance of Draft Site Plan Approval.
- Granting Final Site Plan Approval.

While each point is important, the issuance of Draft Site Plan Approval signals the end of the technical review and establishes the parameters (conditions) under which Final Site Plan Approval will be granted.

A Building Permit cannot be applied for until Final Site Plan Approval has been granted.

The following is a more detailed sequential overview of the site plan review process:

- Applicant pre-consults with Planning Division to discuss preliminary development plan.

- Planning Division provides feedback on development plan and applicant makes changes to plans as needed.

- Applicant submits complete site plan application (required application form, fee, and plans) to Planning Division.

- Planning Division circulates the application and plans to relevant City departments and outside agencies with a request for comments and conditions within **two weeks**.
  - Ward Councillor is notified of application and in unusual or exceptional cases, a public meeting may be required.
  - Ward Councillor decides if the site plan approval will remain delegated to the Director of Planning and Building or undelegated to Council.
  - Decisions for refusal of a site plan application cannot be delegated to staff and must be undelegated to Council.

- Comments and conditions from City departments and outside agencies are received by the Planning Division.

- If necessary, revised plans are submitted by the Applicant to the Planning Division and re-circulated to all relevant City departments and outside agencies for review. Comments and conditions are requested within **two weeks**.

- If an application is **undelegated** to Council, Planning prepares report with a recommendation to Council for **Draft Site Plan Approval** (with conditions) or **Refusal**.

- If application remains **delegated** to the Director of Planning and Building, Planning staff assembles conditions of approval and issues **Draft Site Plan Approval**.

- Applicant satisfies conditions of **Draft Site Plan Approval**.

- Planning Division issues **Final Site Plan Approval** with **Zoning Clearance Certificate**.

- Applicant attaches **Final Site Plan Approval** to the Building Permit application and submits to Building Division.

- All site works are completed by Applicant and inspected by City staff.

- Securities are returned to the Applicant if site works are satisfactory.

3.1 Circulation

Standard Site Plan applications are circulated to the following:

Planning: Responsible for reviewing the overall site layout and urban design; processing the site plan application; co-ordination between City departments and outside agencies; and issuing site plan approval.

Zoning: Responsible for reviewing the proposed development and conformity with the Zoning By-law; issuance of Zoning Clearance Certificate; and calculation of development charges.

Site Engineering: Responsible for reviewing the site grading, drainage and servicing of the proposed development; driveways; site inspections after completion; and collection and release of securities.

City Forester: Responsible for reviewing the development with regard to the preservation of City trees in the public boulevard and shared private trees along property lines.

Ward Councillor: Responsible for determining if public consultation is required and if approval process remains delegated to staff or undelegated to Council.

And as needed:

Conservation Authority: Responsible for reviewing the proposed development if the subject property falls within the regulated area of the Conservation Authority.

Heritage Burlington: Responsible for reviewing the proposed development if the subject property is listed in the City's Inventory of Heritage Resources or listed on the Municipal Register.

3.2 Site Plan Application Requirements

It is highly recommended that applicants set up a preliminary meeting with the Planning Division to ensure that a proposed development meets these guidelines.

A complete site plan application is circulated to Planning, Zoning, Site Engineering, and City Forester, and consists of the following:

- Application Fee.
- Five copies of the Application Form, Site Plan/Survey (stamped by an OLS showing: boundary vegetation and City street trees; proposed height of the dwelling, setbacks, and lot coverage; existing and proposed grades; and driveway location and details), Floor Plans, and Architectural Elevations assembled into sets.
- Additional sets and related information will be required if additional outside agencies such as Conservation Halton and Heritage Burlington require circulation.

A Site Plan Application form can be picked up at the Planning Division or found on the City's web site at www.burlington.ca.

3.2.1 Site Plan Drawing Requirements

- Plans must:
  - Use a scale of 1:200, 1:250, or 1:300.
  - Be in metric and include a north arrow.
  - Be folded to 8 ½ x 11 size. (Rolled drawings will not be accepted).
  - Include a Key Plan indicating the location of the subject property in relation to the closest major intersection.
  - Indicate all bearings and dimensions of the property including land to be dedicated for road widenings.
  - Clearly indicate the project name and municipal address in title block.
  - Show all changes that are being proposed to the site.
  - Show existing/proposed fencing, retaining walls, and freestanding walls.
  - Show all building setbacks (shortest distance) to all lot lines (including overhangs and building awnings).
  - Include site statistics such as lot area, lot coverage (proposed and permitted), gross floor area (proposed and permitted), and building height (measured from fixed grade).
  - Show existing and proposed grading information. Indicate if the grading is to remain the same or whether it will be modified (include existing and proposed spot elevations within the site boundaries, at the property lines, at corners of the proposed building, at top and bottom of retaining walls, and at the base of trees to be preserved). Also indicate the finished floor elevations.
  - Show existing drainage patterns and any proposed changes such as swales and roof drain locations.
  - Show location of adjacent buildings/structures.
  - Include the names of abutting streets. Show the City Boulevard and sidewalks in front of the subject property.
  - Show any easements on the property.
  - Show the location of all shared boundary trees along the perimeter of the site and trees within the municipal boulevard. Include details such as the canopy size and calliper.
  - Show trees to be removed and protected.
  - Show the location of tree protection hoarding (fencing).
  - Show the location of any existing and proposed underground and above ground utilities.
  - Show the dimensions and location of the existing and proposed driveway and walkways.

3.2.2 Building Elevation Plan Requirements

- Plans must include building elevations for all 4 sides of the building.
- Plans must indicate existing and proposed materials and colours for the walls and roof.

3.2.3 Floor Plan Requirements

- Show the proposed and existing uses for the spaces (i.e., kitchen, laundry, bedroom, etc.).
- Indicate building dimensions.

3.3 Securities

As a condition of Draft Site Plan approval, the City may request financial securities to ensure that tree protection and site works comply with the approved plans. The amount of securities will vary depending on the extent of the proposed development and site works and it will be at staff's discretion to determine the appropriate amount of securities for the site.

Additional securities may be required by the City to deal with land dedications for road widenings.

When all site works have been completed, the homeowner should contact the City to arrange for an inspection and initiate the release of the securities.

Securities may be drawn upon by the City if the proposed site works and any required tree preservation measures are not completed satisfactorily.

3.4 Trees and Vegetation

3.4.1 Letter from Adjacent Land Owner

When boundary vegetation is identified to be impacted by a proposed development, the adjacent property owner shall be consulted by the applicant and required to submit a letter containing the following:

- Name and signature of the adjacent property owner.
- Municipal property address of adjacent property.
- Date.
- Acknowledgement that they have reviewed the proposed development, that it will have an impact on existing boundary vegetation, and that they have no concerns.

3.4.2 Arborist Report

A Certified Arborist is a person who has a diploma or degree in Urban Forestry, Arboriculture or equivalent and is certified by the International Society of Arboriculture.

In cases where an adjacent property owner has concerns with a proposed development and its impact on boundary trees and vegetation, the applicant shall have a Certified Arborist confirm that the boundary trees and vegetation will survive and submit a letter or report containing the following:

1. Property owner(s) name and applicant name, address, phone number and email
2. Arborist's name, address, phone and email
3. Indicate supporting development application number
4. Background information: the purpose and assignment of the arborist report
5. Tree(s) information:
    - Latin and common name of the tree(s) that are impacted by the proposed construction
    - Diameter of the tree(s) in centimeters measured at 1.4m above ground level, height and canopy spread
    - Tree condition rating using standard arboriculture procedures (ISA) such as crown structure and health characteristics, etc.
    - Structural hazard rating following the methodology in the ISA's "Evaluation of hazard Trees in Urban Areas", Second Edition, including photographic records
6. Tree protection and preservation measures:
    - Discussion of the proposed construction methods and arboricultural mitigation measures to ensure the survivability of the affected trees (eg. Methods or combination of products/materials to be used for construction, etc)
    - Pre-construction phase (e.g. tree protection zone barrier as per municipal standards)
    - Construction & Excavation Phase (monitoring of the excavation activity by the project forester/arborist and documentation of all mitigation measures to ensure the survivability of the affected trees)

Note: Arborist reports which are unsatisfactory due to lack of information will not be reviewed and returned as INCOMPLETE.

3.4.3 Tree and Vegetation Protection Standards

In general, when trees are to be saved in a construction area, the following recommendations shall be followed to ensure the longevity of those trees:

- Where possible, no excavation should be carried out within the drip lines of the trees to be saved, root loss must be minimal.
- No heavy equipment should be driven over the tree lawn area, to alleviate soil compaction around the tree roots.
- No equipment or materials should be allowed to hit, abrade or otherwise damage any limbs or branch of a tree hanging over the immediate construction area.
- No soil or construction materials should be piled over the tree lawn area or around the trunk.
- A snow fence or other barrier should be erected around the tree to at least the drip line. The small fibrous roots, which feed the tree are in most cases located primarily at the extremities of the root system and therefore, must be protected.
- Do not burn waste or flush concrete trucks or cement mixers over or near any root system.
- Any and all damaged trees must be immediately repaired at the contractor's expense.
- Consult with the City Forester for Pre-construction pruning and fertilization management.

- One year following construction, the contractor will prune out all dead, dying or unsafe wood. Only qualified experienced personnel under the direction of an accredited arborist will perform this work.
- If a situation arises where services must be located in line with the root system of a tree or trees, and the trees are to be saved, the following methods of installation must be followed if the trees are to remain viable after construction:

    - Trees 200 mm to 300 mm in diameter may only be trenched by machine to within three metres (3 m) of the tree trunk, from here on, boring or trenching must be by hand.
    - Trees over 300 mm in diameter may only be trenched by machine to within 4.5 metres of the tree trunk from here on, boring or trenching must be by hand and no roots over 2.5 cm in diameter be cut if avoidable.
    - Where possible, to tunnel the distance required by the above criteria, it is suggested that tunnelling begin at the specified distance within sufficient surface openings to make work feasible.
    - Within the specified distances from the tree trunk, no roots over 2.5 cm in diameter are to be cut if avoidable. Any that are cut should be cleanly cut and will have to be painted with braco or other wound treatment.
    - Where tunnelling has been used, extreme care must be taken with backfilling that no air pockets remain to further injure the tree.
    - It is further directed that when backfilling the tunnelling, especially where under trees, a good soil mixture must be used. It should consist of two-thirds genuine top soil and one-third peat moss. Such soil should help greatly in promoting the growth of new roots.

3.5 Site Plan Undertaking

A Site Plan Undertaking is an agreement between the property owner and the City to ensure that the proposed house or addition is built in conformity with the plans approved by the Planning Division. A copy of the Agreement can be found on the City's web site at www.burlington.ca or can be obtained from the Planning Division.

This agreement must be signed and the original copy must be submitted prior to Final Site Plan approval.

At the City's discretion, a Site Plan Agreement under Section 41 of the *Planning Act* may be required and registered on the title of the subject property with all legal costs to be assumed by the applicant.

3.6 Site Plan Approval

Draft Site Plan approval is valid for two (2) years from the date of approval by the Planning Division. If all conditions of the Draft Site Plan approval have not been cleared during this time, the Draft Site Plan approval is void.

Final Site Plan approval is valid for one (1) year from the date of approval by the Planning Division. If a building permit is not applied for during this time, the Final Site Plan approval is void.

Prior to the expiry of a Site Plan Approval, the Planning Division may consider a request to extend the Site Plan Approval. If an extension is not issued, a new application will be required.

4.0 KEEP YOUR NEIGHBOURS INFORMED

The construction of new dwellings and additions can impact neighbours. Immediate neighbours feel the impact of new larger homes or additions being constructed closer to their property lines. Construction immediately adjacent to their homes may not only negatively impact them visually, but may also physically impact them through noise and dirt from the construction site. Other residents throughout the neighbourhood may be impacted by the changes in the streetscape, the removal of well established trees, as well as by the noise and dirt from the construction.

Take the time to keep your neighbours properly informed about your plans, and when possible, provide them with a contact number so that they can ask questions or discuss any concerns they may have. Keep the construction site clean and safe.