



Municipality of Brighton

Staff Report

Meeting Date: 14 Oct 2025

To: Mayor and Council

Prepared By: Rene Whiteman, Planner 1

Reviewed By: Paul Walsh, Director of Planning

Department: Planning and Development

Staff Report Number: PD2025-146

Subject/Title: Interim Streetscape Policy

Recommendation(s):

1. **That** Council adopt the following Motion:
The Interim policies for Streetscape and the Public Realm as presented in the staff report be given effect through all consultations with potential Applicants under the Planning Act, and all related Staff reports;
2. **That** these Interim Policies be referenced for integration into the forthcoming Brighton Secondary Plan and subsequent Official Plan update, to ensure consistency and long-term implementation.

Background/Purpose:

Executive Summary

This report recommends the adoption of an interim policy to address the need to give direction to development proponents regarding the preferred placement of buildings in relation to the public realm, particularly where they front onto collector and arterial roads within the Municipality of Brighton.

Background:

A number of recent developments have located buildings in a fashion that avoids a relationship to the public realm of the street. Buildings have either been separated from the street with a large parking lot (e.g. Brighton Retirement Living, OMNI Quality Care)) or have turned the back of the building to the street, i.e. no front door entry (e.g.

Brighton Active Living, Tru Value Hotel, OMNI Quality Living). The associated problems include the following:

- Rear-facing buildings with blank or service walls facing the street;
- Parking lots and private amenity areas dominating street frontages;
- Lack of pedestrian-scale landscaping or active street edges.
- Active transportation linkages are frustrated with pedestrians needing to circumvent the perimeter of buildings to gain access
- Pedestrian movements through parking lots pose a risk to health and safety
- Public transit is made much less efficient in not offering direct pedestrian connection to transit stops along main routes
- Private or communal amenity areas (back yards) normally located along the back of buildings (i.e. back yards) but now are placed along the public realm (sometimes a busy street). The impact is a deteriorated quiet area for personal use, and if use or keeping of personal accessories are in view, a poor impact onto the public realm is made.

Recently the province introduced regulatory changes that would no longer permit the requirement that as part of a complete application information materials be submitted concerning the urban design of a proposed development, including how a proposed development aligns with municipal urban design guidelines or policies. However, section 41 (4.1.1) continues to recognize that design elements may be reviewed and regulated pertaining to “matters of health, safety, accessibility, sustainable design or the protection of adjoining lands”.

The rear or back elevations, can be due to various factors, including the lack of a finished or aesthetically pleasing facade, the presence of utility equipment, storage areas, or trash receptacles, or simply a design that prioritizes function over form for those back areas.

Often, the rear of a building is not designed with the same level of detail as the front, leading to less attention being paid to its appearance. The rear may simply be a blank wall or a less elaborate structure compared to the street-facing facade, particularly in older buildings or those where budget constraints are a factor.

Essential services like air conditioning units, electrical panels, or plumbing vents are often located on the rear or side of buildings. These utilities can be unsightly and contribute to the perception of an "ugly side" if they are not well-integrated or hidden. Many buildings utilize their rear for storage, trash collection, or service entrances. These areas, by their nature, can be messy or less well-maintained, further contributing to the "ugly side" appearance.

Sometimes, the design of a building prioritizes functionality over aesthetics for the rear, especially in commercial or industrial settings. This can lead to a utilitarian design that may not be as visually appealing as the front. Over time, the rear of a building may be

neglected or receive less maintenance than the front, leading to a deteriorated appearance. This can include paint peeling, overgrown vegetation, or damage to materials.

These design outcomes contradict the Municipality's Official Plan and community vision, which emphasize walkability, vibrancy, and inclusivity in public spaces. While the Brighton Secondary Plan and supporting Streetscaping Guidelines are under development but pending County approval, an interim application of direction is appropriate.

Analysis/Comments:

Benefits of Buildings Facing the Street:

- Urban streets are not just thoroughfares, but community interactive spaces. Persons are invited to interact with the homes, businesses and civic places through the streetscape.
- Increased Physical Activity: Buildings on the street encourage walking and biking due to the proximity of amenities, which in turn promotes physical activity.
- Reduced Crime "Eyes on the street" design, where buildings face the street and have clear lines of sight, can deter crime and create a safer environment for residents.
- Enhanced Social Interaction: Well-designed streets provide opportunities for informal social interaction and community building, fostering a sense of belonging.
- Reduced Air Pollution: When designed with walkability and transit in mind, buildings facing the street can help reduce reliance on private vehicles, leading to lower air pollution.

Impact on Public Health:

- Increased Social Connectedness and Interactivity: Well-designed streets can foster a sense of community and social connection, which is important for overall well-being.
- Reduced Chronic Diseases: Increased physical activity and improved access to healthy foods and green spaces can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.
- Improved Mental Health: Social interaction within the street environment can improve social interaction and contribute to better mental health outcomes, including reduced anxiety and depression.
- Reduced Traffic Injuries: Complete streets with dedicated bike lanes and sidewalks can improve traffic safety and reduce the risk of pedestrian and cyclist injuries.
- Improved Air Quality: Reduced reliance on private vehicles can lead to cleaner air, which is important for respiratory health and overall well-being.
- Pedestrian Safety: Improved segregation between pedestrians and vehicles through the offer of access from a main thoroughfare to a building entry without the need for crossing a large parking lot.

In summary, buildings facing the street and well-designed streets can have a profound impact on public health by promoting physical activity, reducing crime, improving mental well-being, and enhancing social interaction. By prioritizing these design elements, cities can create healthier and more livable communities.

The proposed Interim Policy for Public Realm and Streetscaping will apply to all development applications involving lands fronting onto designated collector or arterial roads within the Urban designation.

Key Policy Provisions:

1. Building Orientation

- Primary façades and main entrances will face the street.
- Primary pedestrian entryways will be located facing the street
- No rear or service functions (e.g., garbage, loading) are permitted to locate in the front yard of the street.
- No private or shared residential amenity areas at grade level or less than 1.5metres above grade level shall locate in the front yard or between the building and a collector or arterial roadway.
- Parking lots serving commercial, institutional or community facilities will primarily be located to the side or rear of a building

2. Setbacks & Façade Design

- Buildings will primarily locate along an established or planned building line or build in accordance with minimal setback from the minimum front yard depth of the zone
- For commercial uses, a majority of all ground floor facades of a building facing a collector or arterial road shall be comprised of openings and unencumbered transparent material (completely transparent glass or similar transparent material that does not include spandrel glazed windows)
- Buildings must define the street edge with active frontages.
- Direct pedestrian access from the sidewalk is required.

3. Landscaping and Streetscape Treatment

- A minimum 3.0 m landscaped buffer must be provided between parking and the public sidewalk.
- Street trees and benches shall be integrated, with pedestrian-scale lighting.

4. Parking and Loading

- Parking must be placed at the side or rear of buildings.
- Service areas must be screened using landscaping or fencing.
- Waste containers will be kept within garages.

5. Accessibility and Public Realm

- All streetscape elements must comply with AODA standards.
- Developments are encouraged to include public art, street furniture, and weather protection.
- Sidewalks will be constructed to slopes and elevations that facilitate connections with on-site accessibility ramps

Next Steps:

1. Circulate adopted Interim Policy to all applicants submitting Site Plan applications.
2. Incorporate key policy provisions into the Secondary Plan as part of its final review.
3. Develop an illustrated Streetscaping Toolkit to accompany the policy.

Legal/Legislative:

Although Urban Design Guidelines are no longer enforceable under the Planning Act, municipalities retain the authority to regulate:

- Site layout;
- Accessibility;
- Landscaping and buffer areas;
- Safety, waste management, and exterior pedestrian circulation.

These matters fall within the scope of Site Plan Control and are explicitly addressed in this policy.

Communications:

The persons conferred with in the preparation of this report include the Director of Planning and Development and CEO.

Financial Implications:

N/A

Strategic Plan Alignment:

- Health and Health Services
- Park and Parklands
- Economic Development
- Transit and Transportation
- Public Safety
- Housing and Supply
- Environment and Sustainability

Additional Strategic Plan Information:

This interim policy aligns with the following Strategic Plan priorities:

- Community Vitality: Supports the creation of attractive, pedestrian-friendly public spaces that foster social interaction and a sense of community.
- Sustainable Growth: Promotes thoughtful site design and streetscaping that supports long-term livability and accessibility.
- Environmental Stewardship: Encourages street tree planting and green buffers that contribute to urban cooling and stormwater management.

- Good Governance: Provides a proactive, transparent, and enforceable framework to guide development while awaiting County-approved Secondary Plan policies.
- Economic Development: Enhances curb appeal and attractiveness of main roads, supporting tourism, business attraction, and resident satisfaction.

Reference List

1. **Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13**
Government of Ontario. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p13>
▶ Authorizes municipalities to regulate site design elements under Site Plan Control (Section 41).
2. **More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 (Bill 23)**
Government of Ontario. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/s22021c21>
▶ Removed municipalities' authority to enforce architectural design under Site Plan Control.
3. **Provincial Planning Statement, 2024**
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.
<https://www.ontario.ca/document/provincial-planning-statement-2024>
▶ Emphasizes compact, walkable communities and efficient land use while reducing regulatory burdens on developers.
4. **Municipality of Brighton Official Plan (2020)**
County of Northumberland & Municipality of Brighton
▶ Provides foundational land use policies and identifies collector and arterial roads subject to design oversight.
5. **Brighton Transportation Master Plan (2025 Draft)**
WSP Canada Group Ltd., Municipality of Brighton
▶ Establishes functional street classifications, right-of-way standards, and active transportation infrastructure planning.
▶ <https://www.brighton.ca/en/resourcesGeneral/20250424-237042-Brighton-Transportation-Master-Plan-Final-Draft.pdf>
6. **Brighton Secondary Plan (Draft, June 2025)**
Municipality of Brighton, Planning & Development Department
▶ Provides policies on mixed-use design, gateway areas, and active frontages (Section 4.3.1 and 2.9.x).
7. **Municipal Streetscape Guidelines – Selected Best Practices**
 - City of Guelph Urban Design Manual (2018)
 - City of Burlington Streetscape Guidelines (2015)
 - City of Ottawa Streetscape Design Manual (2021)
▶ Benchmarks used for landscape buffers, tree spacing, and public realm hierarchy
8. **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Ontario Guidelines**
CPTED Ontario. <https://cptedontario.ca>
▶ Used to support justification of active frontages, lighting, and “eyes on the street” design principles.

9. Healthy Streets Approach

Transport for London (UK), adopted internationally

- ▶ Framework used to link streetscape design with public health, safety, and mental well-being.

Attachments:

Attachment #1: Draft Interim Policy for Public Realm and Streetscaping Design

Approved by:

Paul Walsh, Director of Planning

Status:

Approved - 08 Oct 2025



67 Sharp Road, Brighton, ON, K0K 1H0

613-475-1162

The Municipality of Brighton

Interim Streetscape Policy

1. Policy Intent

The intent of this Interim Streetscape Policy is to provide immediate guidance for the review and design of development applications along collector and arterial roads in the Municipality of Brighton. The goal is to ensure that new developments contribute to a vibrant, cohesive, safe, and inclusive streetscape that reflects the Municipality's long-term planning vision for complete, walkable, and people-focused communities.

This policy acts as a placeholder pending the finalization and adoption of the Brighton Secondary Plan and associated Public Realm Design Guidelines. It aims to prevent development that would be inconsistent with the Municipality's evolving planning objectives and to ensure that the public realm is not compromised in the interim.

2. Policy Scope

This interim policy applies to all development applications subject to Site Plan Control under Section 41 of the *Planning Act*, where the subject lands front onto collector or arterial roads as identified in the Brighton Official Plan and the Brighton Transportation Master Plan.

The policy is applicable to:

- New commercial, institutional, and mixed-use buildings
- Medium- and high-density residential developments
- Major additions or façade renovations to existing buildings that impact the public realm
- Parking lot reconfigurations and major landscape upgrades

3. Guiding Principles

All development shall be designed in accordance with the following principles, which aim to elevate the quality of the public realm and pedestrian environment:



- **Public-Facing Development:** Buildings must frame the public street to create an active and engaging edge.
- **Human-Scaled Design:** Architectural features, setbacks, and elements such as lighting and signage must reflect pedestrian scale and promote comfort.
- **Green and Resilient:** Streetscapes should include landscaping that supports urban tree canopy, stormwater management, and climate resiliency.
- **Inclusive and Safe:** The public realm must be designed to be accessible to people of all ages and abilities and support social inclusion.
- **Community-Oriented:** Visual connections between the building and public space should foster interaction and support informal gathering.

4. Design Requirements

A. Building Orientation & Façade Treatment

- Buildings shall orient primary entrances and architecturally treated façades toward the public street.
- At-grade residential or commercial uses shall include windows and entries that enhance surveillance and engagement with the street.
- Blank walls, utility equipment, loading zones, and refuse storage shall not be located along the street-facing façade or prominently visible from the public realm.

B. Setbacks and Built Form

- Front yard setbacks shall reflect the predominant pattern along the street and contribute to a consistent street wall.
- Where applicable, reduced front yard parking or front-loaded driveways should be minimized or avoided.
- Corner lots must include prominent architectural treatments and active frontages on both street-facing elevations.

C. Landscaping and Buffering

- A minimum 3.0-metre-wide landscaped buffer is required between surface parking areas and the public sidewalk.
- A minimum of one deciduous canopy tree every 8–10 metres shall be provided along the public frontage, with appropriate spacing to avoid conflicts with utilities.



- Low plantings and decorative hardscaping are encouraged to enhance visibility, character, and safety.

D. Pedestrian and Public Realm Features

Site plan applications shall incorporate a coordinated and high-quality public realm that includes:

- Barrier-free sidewalks and crosswalks that connect entrances to the municipal sidewalk network.
- Pedestrian-scale lighting, compatible with local streetscape standards.
- Street furniture, including benches, bike racks, and waste receptacles.
- Optional but encouraged features may include public art, rain gardens/stormwater planters, or interpretive signage that enhances community identity and environmental sustainability.

E. Parking, Loading, and Servicing

- Surface parking must be located at the side or rear of the building, and not between the building and the public street.
- Shared access driveways and service areas are encouraged, particularly for infill sites and developments on constrained lots.
- Loading areas must be screened and located away from prominent public views or pedestrian areas.

F. Private Amenity Standards in Back-to Back Townhouses

Back-to-back townhouse developments should provide usable and well-designed private outdoor amenity spaces for each dwelling unit. These spaces contribute to livability, privacy, and the overall quality of the streetscape and community design.

- Each dwelling unit should include a minimum of approximately 15 m² of private outdoor amenity space, which may take the form of a patio, balcony, or rooftop terrace.
- Amenity areas should have a minimum clear dimension of 2.5 metres in any direction to allow for functional outdoor use (e.g., seating, planting, or play space).
- Private amenity areas should be directly accessible from the main living area of the dwelling.



- Design treatments such as landscaping, screening, planters, or pergolas are encouraged to enhance privacy and visual appeal.
- Where site conditions limit the feasibility of individual private spaces, shared common outdoor amenity areas should be provided and designed to complement the private spaces.

5. Implementation and Review

- This policy shall be implemented through Site Plan Control Agreements, as authorized under Section 41 of the *Planning Act*.
- All applicants will be required to demonstrate how their proposals comply with the provisions of this interim policy as a condition of Site Plan Approval.
- Planning Staff will monitor the effectiveness of this policy, including feedback from Council, development proponents, and the public.

The policy shall remain in effect until it is replaced by the adoption of the Brighton Secondary Plan and associated Public Realm Design Guidelines, or until such time as Council deems the policy no longer necessary.

6. Policy Administration

- **Administered by:** Planning and Development Services Department
- **Legislative Authority:** Section 41 *Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13
- **Effective Date:** Upon Council approval
- **Review Timeline:** Concurrent with County approval and Council adoption of the Brighton Secondary Plan

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