



May 15, 2025

RE: Zoning changes to accommodate infill housing

Greetings Councillors,

At Green Action Centre, we promote sustainable practices in the home, workplace, and beyond. In order to achieve a more sustainable future, we must change how we have been building in our largest city, Winnipeg. We want to stress how important it is that the City of Winnipeg end Exclusionary Zoning by allowing fourplexes on residential lots and four-storey apartments within 800 metres of high frequency transit.

We want a Winnipeg where all residents can find suitable, affordable homes and age in place. Winnipeg's current exclusionary zoning practices undermine this by blocking affordable homes in vast residential areas of our city.

These practices have made low-density sprawl on the edge of the city the most profitable way to do business for builders. This leads to a burdensome infrastructure bill for Winnipeg residents, strained city services, and enormous carbon pollution through vehicle trips for everything.

Transportation

In Manitoba, our leading source of GHG emissions is transportation. Here in Winnipeg, almost 80% of trips are made in a personal vehicle, often single occupancy vehicles. This is unsurprising when we look at how the city has expanded over the past four decades. We have prioritized car-oriented infrastructure over transit, walking, and biking. Not only have we built a sprawling network of roads, but we have required acres and acres of land for free parking, further pushing apart destinations and contributing to the environmental crisis.

Rest assured, the answer to this problem is not electric vehicles. Car-oriented sprawl is incredibly energy intensive and inefficient, whether the vehicles on the road are gas, electric, or hybrids. A shift to electric vehicles is dependent on the development of private markets, many of which have negative supply chains associated with the harmful mining of lithium-ion batteries for longer-range vehicles.

With our over-reliance on personal vehicles, our transportation system is fragile and leaves behind those who cannot drive due to age, disability, poverty, or simply the desire to not drive. It also ignores the fact that young people have had a reduced desire to drive over the past decade, and the fact that personal vehicles are now much more expensive (the last Stats Can data estimated the cost of owning a vehicle in Canada [at \\$1,300 a month](#)). Winnipeg is losing young people every year to cities that have better public transport and walkable neighbourhoods, like Edmonton. Winnipeg must ensure we are building with future generations in mind, where families do not need to own multiple vehicles per household to live their lives.

Future Focused

The re-elected federal government is serious on housing and wants cities to move on allowing more homes. Some might say that these requirements should not have been imposed for cities to receive this money, believing that a “made in Winnipeg” solution would be better. At Green Action Centre, we have been part of countless advisory groups over the years that all pointed to these changes being necessary (Our Winnipeg, Complete Communities, Transportation Master Plan, Pedestrian and Cycling Strategies, Manitoba’s Climate Action Plan), but no action was ever taken to update our by-laws until now.

Winnipeg needed this push in order to move forward, as even the housing crisis and rise in encampments wasn’t enough to spur meaningful change. By acting now, we can access hundreds of millions of dollars to make these changes that we know should have happened decades ago.

Greenspace and Trees

At Green Action Centre, we of course support maintaining our tree canopy and natural spaces. We know there is tension between our need for housing and our need for green space. The gentle infill allowed through these by-law updates is a positive climate action, as we cannot rely on the carbon-heavy sprawl of the past. These by-law changes will allow:

- more people to live in our established neighbourhoods, within comfortable walking and biking trips to destinations,
- more people able to access reliable, frequent transit,
- the housing seniors need to age in place,
- the opportunity for young people to live independently from their parents, and
- for the gentle density needed to create a city “built for neighbourliness”, as opposed to the “tall and sprawl” that results from restrictive R1 zoning.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development released a report this month called [Cities In Transition](#). This report is all about the role of urban planning in energy policy. We have sent the report to all city councillors ahead of this hearing, and have included it with this submission, along with an infographic that IISD created summarizing the report.

At Green Action Centre, we encourage you to support ending Exclusionary Zoning in Winnipeg by allowing fourplexes on residential lots and four-storeys within 800 metres of high frequency transit.

The proposal is good, but could be BETTER if off-street parking requirements were lowered from the current proposed one-to-one ratio. We encourage the city to let homebuyers and homebuilders decide how much valuable urban land should be dedicated to storage space for personal vehicles.

The best time to have done something about this was decades ago, the next best time is right now. We are happy to answer any questions you have regarding our support for these by-law changes to help Winnipeg become a more environmentally and financially sustainable city.

Sincerely,

Mel Marginet
Sustainable Transportation Team
Green Action Centre