

## **FCA comments on draft 1 Zoning bylaw**

On Sept. 7, Federation of Citizens' Associations (FCA) held an in-person half day workshop on the proposed first draft of the zoning bylaw, attended by 43 people from 30 member organisations. Discussion themes revolved around questions about liveability, communication challenges, concerns about density and growth, and community needs, transportation and parking issues, long-term planning vision, and community engagement and trust.

The participant's three top concerns were about inadequate social infrastructure to support higher density, traffic congestion from that density and insufficient consultations. The three top zoning reform benefits were hoped to be environmental sustainability, community character/vibrancy and infrastructure & public service efficiency. The major issues raised are shown below:

### **Main Themes and Issues Raised on Sept 7, 2024 FCA zoning workshop**

1. Communication and Understanding
  - Zoning concepts are complicated and hard for laypeople to understand.
  - Need for better communication from the city about zoning changes
  - Lack of clarity on density targets and how zoning relates to other city plans
2. Density and Growth Concerns
  - Questions about the rush to increase density given already existing housing approvals
  - Worries about the impact of increased density on neighbourhood character
  - Concerns about infrastructure keeping pace with density increases
3. Liveability and Community Needs
  - Lack of focus on social infrastructure (schools, parks, safety) in zoning plans
  - Questions about how zoning will support the goal of making Ottawa the most liveable mid-sized city
  - Concerns about weak zoning ordinances to regulate and enhance green space, tree canopy, and tackle environmental issues
4. Transportation and Parking
  - Worries about increased traffic and parking issues with higher density
  - Questions about transit plans aligning with zoning changes
  - Desire for better active transportation options
5. Long-term Planning and Vision
  - Scepticism about planning 25 years ahead
  - Need for a more coherent city strategy with clear outcomes and performance indicators

- Questions about the overall vision for the city
- 6. Community Engagement and Trust
  - Desire for more community involvement in the zoning process
  - Lack of trust in the city's decision-making process

While each community must express their own concerns and views, FCA wishes to share the views of our members who provided input during our workshop, with the City planners. After the workshop the results were discussed by FCA's Board, Planning & Zoning committee, and finally at the General Membership meeting Oct 16, 2024. The following seven zoning assumption statements have been identified as some of the major premises underlying the draft zoning proposals. They were discussed by the General Membership, and participating associations were asked about the extent of their agreement or disagreement on these major premises.

Based on review of the City zoning bylaw information, five premise statements gained **majorities, either for or against:**

- **Disagreement:** 76% of respondents disagree that zoning reforms which increase housing density would improve community traffic flow. In mid-size cities, total traffic decreases with higher density, though the decrease is nominal, but in larger cities such as ours, the reduction effect is random (Q6).
- **Agreement:** 62% agreed (but one-third disagree) that higher density resulting from new zoning regulations will lead to more efficient use of infrastructure services (Q3).
- **Agreement:** 56% of respondents agree (but 16% disagree) that reforming zoning to allow for higher density and more diverse housing types in traditionally single-family neighbourhoods will improve housing affordability and supply (Q5).
- **Agreement:** 50% agreed (but 38% disagree) that allowing a greater density, mix of housing types and mixed-use developments would enhance its overall character and vibrancy (Q7).
- **Disagreement:** 50% disagree (but 37% agree) that zoning reforms which increase density generate tax revenue for investments in social infrastructure to maintain or improve neighbourhood liveability (Q1).

The remaining premise statements were supported by less than half of respondents, with considerable divergence of views:

- **Divergent opinion:** 42% agree but 38% disagree that simplifying zoning regulations to accelerate development will contribute to local economic growth (Q4).
- **Divergent opinion:** 38% of respondents agree, but 38% disagree that increasing urban density through zoning reforms will support climate goals by reducing car dependency and promoting efficient land use (Q2).

And lastly, 50% of respondents agreed that FCA should advocate to **revise the methodology and assumptions used by the City for the calculation of permitted densities in Neighbourhood zones.** The methodology produces excessive lot level densities for developed

lots, much higher than the target transect densities in the OP, in order to compensate for apprehended low densities of undeveloped lots elsewhere in the neighbourhood. This is based on an untested hypothesis that the city overall will continue to average less than 1% of lots redeveloped per year. However, no neighbourhood is average so all will either have lower or higher rates of development than average, leading to over or under densifying communities. An alternative position could be to start with lower maximum densities, evaluating after the first 5-year period and adjusting as required.

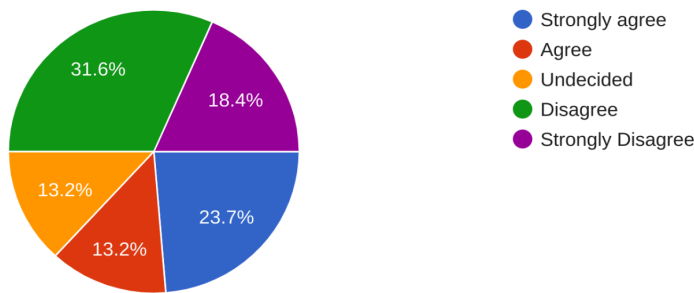
The following show results for each question asked during our Oct 16, 2024, General Meeting.

### Question 1 – Liveability & Density

Zoning reforms that increase density generate tax revenue for investments in social infrastructure (such as parks, schools, and community centres) to maintain or improve neighbourhood liveability in your community.

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38 responses

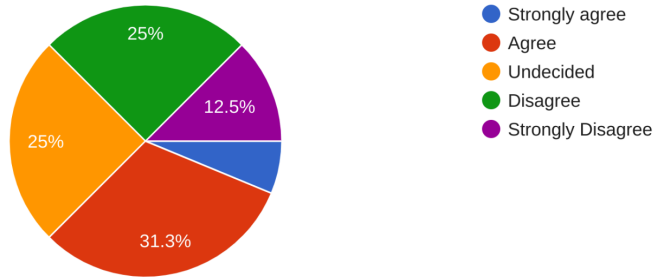


### Question 2 - Environmental Sustainability

Increasing urban density through zoning reforms will support climate goals by reducing car dependency and promoting efficient land use in your community.

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32 responses

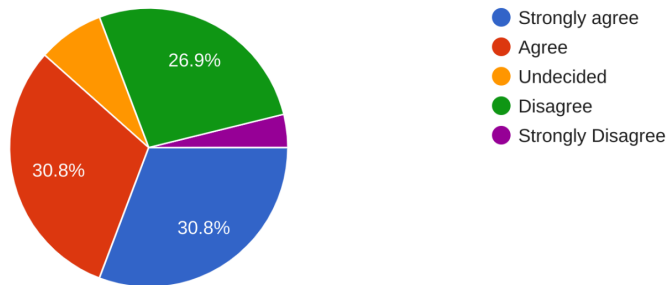


### Question 3 – Infrastructure Efficiency

Higher density resulting from new zoning regulations will lead to more efficient use of infrastructure services (such as water, sewers, and roads) in your community.

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26 responses

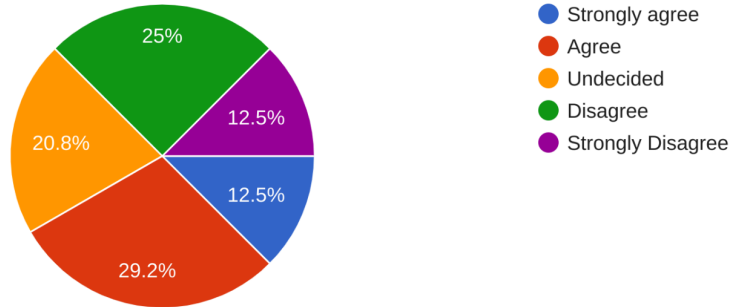


### Question 4 - Economic Growth

Simplifying zoning regulations to accelerate development will contribute to local economic growth in your community.

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24 responses

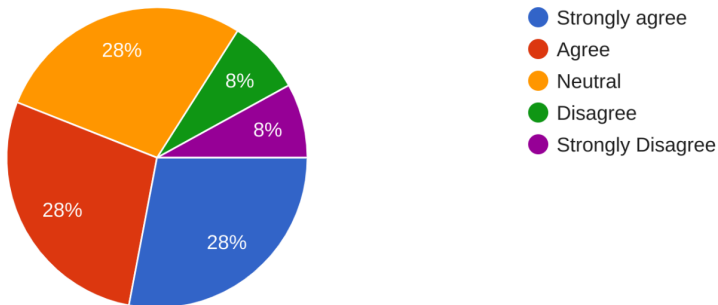


#### Question 5 - Housing supply and affordability

Reforming zoning to allow for higher density and more diverse housing types (such as duplexes, townhomes, and low-rise apartments) in traditionally single-family neighbourhoods will improve housing affordability and supply in your community.

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25 responses

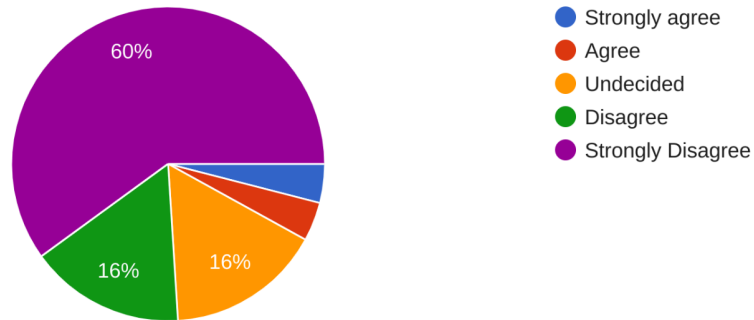


#### *Question 6 - Traffic*

Zoning reforms that increase housing density would improve your community's traffic flow.

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25 responses

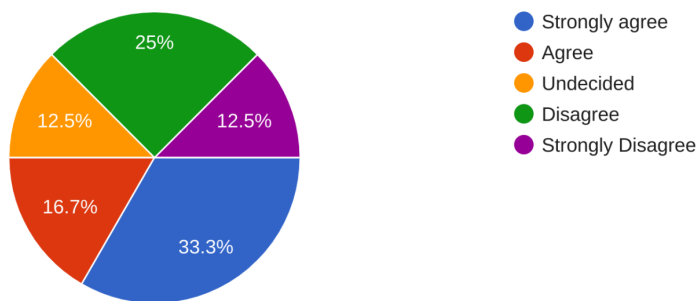


Question 7 – Community Character

Allowing a greater density, mix of housing types and mixed-use developments in your community would enhance its overall character and vibrancy.

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24 responses



Question 8 – FCA Action

Should the FCA push back on the methodology and assumptions used by the City for the calculation of permitted densities in Neighbourhood zones? The methodology produces excessive lot level densities to compensate for apprehended low densities elsewhere in the neighbourhood. This is not really a tested hypothesis. An alternative position might be to start lower (for example by right 3 or 4 units per lot), evaluate after the first 5 year period and adjust as required.'

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26 responses

