



# City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

**To:** Planning Committee **Date:** October 26, 2017  
**From:** Gavin Woo, P. Eng. **File:** 12-8375-01/2017-Vol 01  
 Senior Manager, Building Approvals  
 Wayne Craig  
 Director, Development  
**Re:** **Six Month Review: Amendment Bylaws Limiting Residential Development in the Agriculture (AG1) Zone**

### Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled "Six Month Review: Amendment Bylaws Limiting Residential Development in the Agriculture (AG1) Zone" dated October 26, 2017 from the Senior Manager, Building Approvals and Director, Development be received for information.

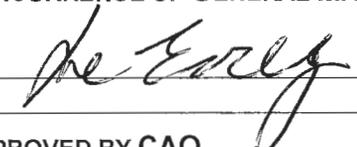


Gavin Woo, P. Eng.  
 Senior Manager, Building Approvals  
 (604-276-4113)



Wayne Craig  
 Director, Development  
 (604-247-4625)

Att. 1

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
<b>ROUTED TO:</b>	<b>CONCURRENCE</b>	<b>CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER</b>
Development Applications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE</b>	<b>INITIALS:</b> 	<b>APPROVED BY CAO</b> 

## Staff Report

### Origin

On April 24, 2017, Council resolved:

*That staff review and report back in six months on bylaws limiting residential development in the agriculture (AG1) zone.*

A series of bylaws amending the Official Community Plan (OCP) and Zoning Bylaw were adopted on May 17, 2017 which limited residential development in the Agriculture (AG1) zone, located within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). This report responds to Council's request for staff to report back six months after the bylaws were adopted.

This report supports Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #3 A Well-Planned Community:

*Adhere to effective planning and growth management practices to maintain and enhance the livability, sustainability and desirability of our City and its neighbourhoods, and to ensure the results match the intentions of our policies and bylaws.*

*3.1. Growth and development that reflects the OCP, and related policies and bylaws.*

### Background

On January 23, 2017, Council directed staff to conduct public consultation regarding potential limitations on house size, farm home plate size and setbacks, including residential accessory buildings, on agriculturally zoned land. Public and stakeholder consultation was conducted between February 27 and March 12, 2017.

On March 27, 2017, Council resolved to withhold building permits that conflict with bylaws in preparation. As per Section 463 of the *Local Government Act*, building permits could be withheld seven (7) days following the initial Council resolution. As a result, all building permit applications for residential development in the Agriculture (AG1) zone received after April 3, 2017 were placed on hold until the amending bylaws were adopted. Those building permit applications were then reviewed under the new regulations.

A series of bylaws amending the OCP and Zoning Bylaw that established limits on house size, farm home plate and setbacks were adopted by Council on May 17, 2017. This report responds to Council's request for staff to report back, six months after the bylaws were amended, and includes details on Building Permit applications received and observations on compliance.

### Findings of Fact

The set of bylaws that were adopted on May 17, 2017 established maximum limits on the floor area of residential buildings, and the amount of land that is used for all residential improvements (e.g., dwelling, garage, driveway, manicured lawn, septic tanks); an area of land known as a 'farm home plate'.

Maximum House Size

The maximum house size regulations in the AG1 zone incorporate all residential buildings, including the principal dwelling unit, garage area, and residential accessory buildings in excess of 10 m<sup>2</sup> (108 ft<sup>2</sup>).

For properties that are less than 0.2 ha (0.5 acres), the maximum floor area is calculated by using the City’s floor area ratio used for urban single family dwellings up to a maximum of 500 m<sup>2</sup> (5,382 ft<sup>2</sup>). A lot would have to be 0.128 ha (0.32 acres) in area in order to reach the maximum floor area of 500 m<sup>2</sup> (5,382 ft<sup>2</sup>).

For properties that are greater than 0.2 ha (0.5 acres), the maximum floor area is calculated by using the City’s floor area ratio for urban single family dwellings up to a maximum floor area of 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> (10,763 ft<sup>2</sup>). A lot would have to be 0.29 ha (0.73 acres) in area in order to reach the maximum floor area of 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> (10,763 ft<sup>2</sup>).

Farm Home Plate

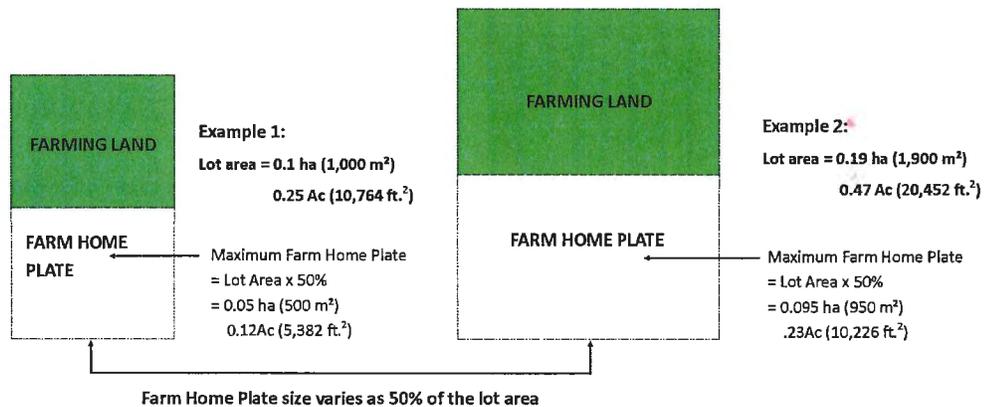
The term ‘farm home plate’ means the portion of the lot including the principal dwelling unit, any residential accessory buildings or residential accessory structures, including the driveway, decorative lawns and landscaping, artificial ponds and sewerage septic tanks, in one contiguous area. The septic field is not included in the farm home plate area. Attachment 1 includes an illustration of a typical farm home plate.

The regulations for farm home plate can be broken down into four lot area categories as follows:

1. On lots less than 0.2 ha (0.5 ac.) the farm home plate must not exceed 50% of the lot area as indicated in Figure 1. In this category, a minimum of 50% of the lot would be preserved for farming.

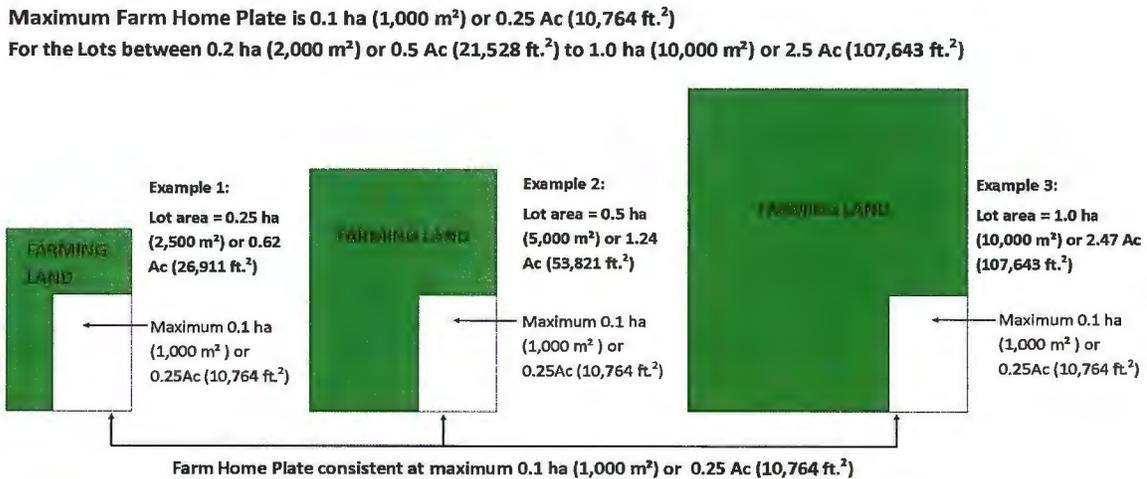
**Figure 1: Lots less than 0.2 ha**

Maximum Farm Home Plate is 50% of the lot area for the Lots less than 0.2 ha (2,000 m<sup>2</sup>) or 0.5 Ac (21,528 ft.<sup>2</sup>).



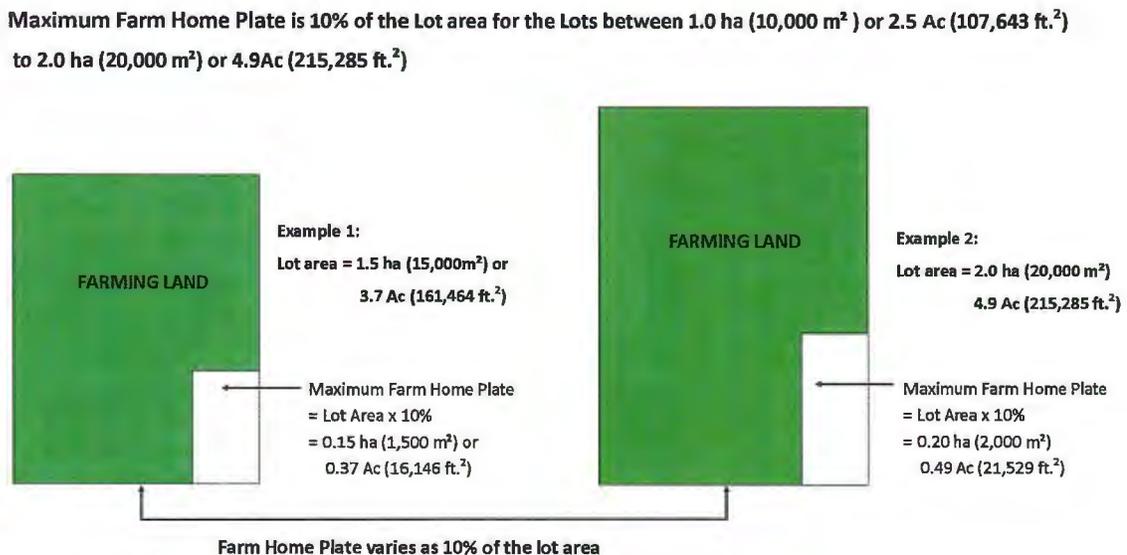
- On lots that are 0.2 ha (0.5 ac.) to 1.0 ha (2.5 ac.), the maximum farm home plate area is 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> (10,763 ft<sup>2</sup>) as indicated in Figure 2. In this category, the amount of land preserved for farming would range from 50% to 90% of the lot.

**Figure 2: Lots between 0.2 (0.5 ac.) to 1.0 ha (2.5 ac.)**



- On lots that are 1.0 ha (2.5 ac.) to 2.0 ha (4.9 ac.), the maximum farm home plate must not exceed 10% of the lot area as indicated in Figure 3. In this category, a minimum of 90% of the lot would be preserved for farming.

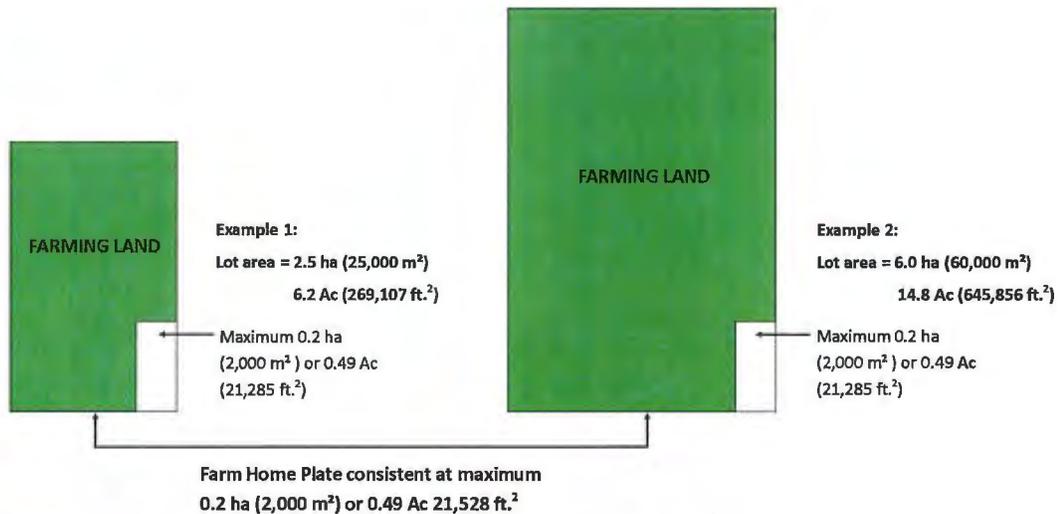
**Figure 3: Lots between 1.0 ha (2.5 ac.) to 2.0 ha (4.9 ac.)**



4. On lots that are 2.0 ha (4.9 ac.) or greater, the maximum farm home plate area is 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> (21,527 ft<sup>2</sup>) as indicated in Figure 4. In this category, the amount of land preserved for farming would be greater than 90% of the lot.

**Figure 4: Lots 2.0 ha (4.9 ac.) or Greater**

Maximum Farm Home Plate is 0.2 ha (2,000m<sup>2</sup>) or 0.49 Ac (21,285 ft.<sup>2</sup>) for all Lots greater than 2.0 ha (20,000 m<sup>2</sup>) or 4.9 Ac (215,285 ft.<sup>2</sup>)



A summary table of the maximum farm home plate and house size regulations can be found below. The number of lots affected include AG1 zoned lots that have road access.

Lot Size	No. of Lots Affected	Maximum Farm Home Plate (area of land used for residential improvements)	Maximum House Size (total floor area including garage and residential accessory buildings)
Less than 0.2ha (0.5 ac.)	263	50% of lot area (farm home plate would be less than 1,000m <sup>2</sup> [10,763 ft <sup>2</sup> ] of the lot)	*For lots less than 0.128ha (0.32 ac.): • less than 500m <sup>2</sup> (5,382 ft <sup>2</sup> )
			For lots 0.128ha (0.32 ac.) to 0.2ha (0.5 ac.): • 500m <sup>2</sup> (5,382 ft <sup>2</sup> )
0.2ha (0.5 ac.) to 1.0ha (2.5 ac.)	490	1,000m <sup>2</sup> (10,763 ft <sup>2</sup> ) of the lot	*For lots 0.2ha (0.5 ac.) to 0.29ha (0.73 ac.): • 716m <sup>2</sup> (7,708 ft <sup>2</sup> ) to 1,000m <sup>2</sup> (10,763 ft <sup>2</sup> )
			For lots 0.29ha (0.73 ac.) to 1.0ha (2.5 ac.): • 1,000m <sup>2</sup> (10,763 ft <sup>2</sup> )
1.0ha (2.5 ac.) to 2.0ha (4.9 ac.)	189	10% of lot size (farm home plate would be between 1,000m <sup>2</sup> [10,763 ft <sup>2</sup> ] to 2,000m <sup>2</sup> [21,527ft <sup>2</sup> ])	1,000m <sup>2</sup> (10,763 ft <sup>2</sup> )
2.0ha (4.9 ac.) or greater	332	2,000m <sup>2</sup> (21,527 ft <sup>2</sup> )	1,000m <sup>2</sup> (10,763 ft <sup>2</sup> )

\* Derived from the City's floor area ratio of 0.55 for first 464.5 m<sup>2</sup> (5,000ft<sup>2</sup>) of lot size, and 0.30 for the remainder of the lot.

The bylaws adopted on May 17, 2017 also established the following:

1. To limit the size of residential accessory buildings, the maximum floor area is 70m<sup>2</sup> (753 ft<sup>2</sup>). This floor area would apply to each residential accessory building and would be included in the overall maximum floor area for residential buildings.
2. To ensure that residential improvements are located close to the fronting road providing access to the lot, the farm home plate must not exceed a maximum depth of 75m from the front property line
3. To ensure that the house is located close to the fronting road, the back wall of the principal dwelling must not exceed 50 m (164 ft.) as measured from a constructed public road abutting the property.
4. To ensure farm access, the minimum residential side yard setback was increased to 4 m (13 ft.) for lots that are less than 0.8 ha (2 ac.). For lots that are greater than 0.8 ha (2 ac.), the minimum side yard setback of 6 m (19.7 ft.) would remain.
5. To limit the number of dwellings on a property, no more than 1 principal dwelling per lot.

### Analysis

Figure 5 illustrates the number of building permits received between 2010 and 2017.

**Figure 5: Number of Building Permits Received in the AG1 Zone (2010-2017)**

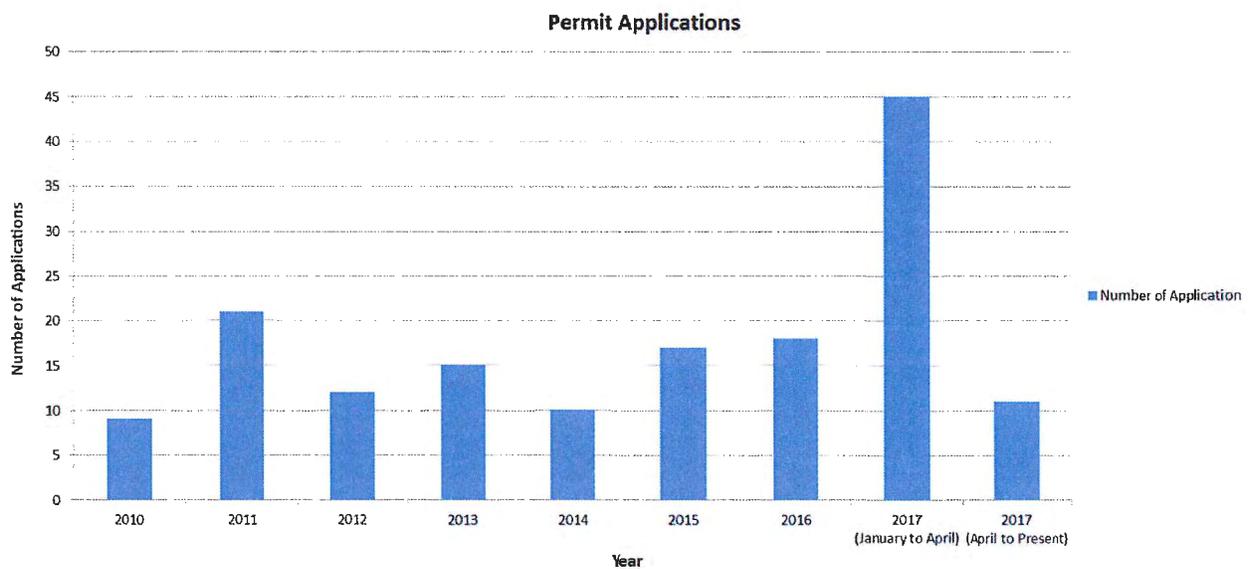
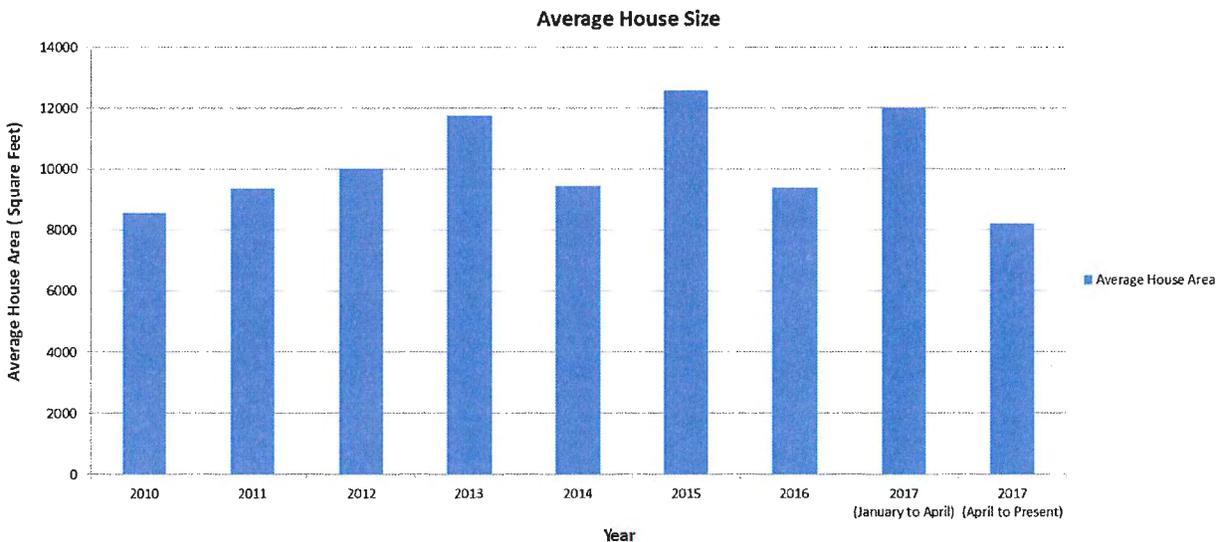


Figure 6 illustrates the average size of proposed residential construction in each year between 2010 and 2017.

**Figure 6: Average Size of Proposed Residential Construction in the AG1 Zone (2010-2017)**



Staff Observations

Based on these statistics, the following are the salient observations:

- Average number of building permit applications for single family dwellings between 2010 and 2016 is approximately 13 per year.
- 45 building permit applications were received during the first 3 months of 2017 prior to Council’s resolution to withhold building permits.
- After Council’s resolution on withholding building permit applications and after adoption of the bylaw amendments the City received 11 building permit applications for residential construction on farmland.
- Between 2010 and 2016, the average size of houses that received a building permit was 966 m<sup>2</sup> (10,408 ft<sup>2</sup>).
- In 2017 prior to Council’s resolution to withhold building permit applications, the average size for house construction was 1,114 m<sup>2</sup> (12,000 ft<sup>2</sup>) for building permits received.
- After Council’s resolution on withholding building permit applications, and after adoption of the bylaw amendments, the average building permit application for house construction was 761 m<sup>2</sup> (8,192 ft<sup>2</sup>).
- Between 2010 and 2016, 46% of all applications during this time were for houses exceeding 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> (10,764 ft<sup>2</sup>).
- In 2017 prior to Council’s resolution to withhold building permit applications, 33 of the 45 applications or 73% of proposed houses were over 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> (10,764 ft<sup>2</sup>) of habitable space.

- After Council's resolution to withhold building permit applications, and after adoption of the bylaw amendments, no applications exceeded 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> (10,764 ft<sup>2</sup>), including garage floor area.

### Effect of the Farm Home Plate

The enacted farm home plate regulations conserve land for farming by requiring current applications to limit the residential development including the house and all its accessory buildings, driveways, patios, and ornamental landscaping to a limited, contiguous area that leaves the remainder of the lot practicable for farming. The size of the farm home plate varies according to the size of the lot as illustrated in Figures 1 to 4, with an absolute maximum capped at 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> (21,527 ft<sup>2</sup>) irrespective of lot size.

Richmond's farm home plate regulations are more stringent than the Ministry of Agriculture's Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas published in 2015 as those guidelines suggest a maximum of 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> (21,527 ft<sup>2</sup>) for the farm home plate area regardless of lot size. This would mean that some lots that are 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> (21,527 ft<sup>2</sup>) in area, which is 0.2 ha (0.5 acre), could be completely covered in residential improvements. Richmond's farm home plate directly limits the extent of residential development onto arable land throughout the entire range of lot sizes in the agriculture zone.

For example, previously lots less than 0.2 ha (0.5 ac.) that may have been developed entirely or almost entirely to facilitate a house and associated structures are now required to maintain 50% of the land for farming use as seen in the case of 3 of the 11 applications received since the bylaws were adopted. Under current Richmond regulations, as lot sizes increase, the farm home plate area increases, but at a decreasing rate from 50% to 10% of lot area until it is capped at the 0.2 ha maximum. This is seen in three recent applications on lots larger than 2 ha (4.9 ac.) where land used for residential development is confined to 0.2 ha (0.5 ac.) despite an average lot size of 2.18 ha (5.4 ac.).

### Effect of the Floor Area Ratio and absolute Area Maximums

The amendments made to the Richmond Zoning Bylaw recently, regulate the size of residential construction on farmland according to a floor area ratio identical to the one used in the City's residential zones with the addition of absolute maximums according to lot size. For lots smaller than 0.2 ha, the maximum house size is 500 m<sup>2</sup> (5,382 ft<sup>2</sup>). For lots larger than 0.2ha (0.5 ac.), the maximum house size is 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> (10,763ft<sup>2</sup>). It is also important to note that all buildings for residential usage, (but not agricultural buildings), including parking garage are included in these area limits.

Under these regulations since April 4, 2017:

- No applications proposed construction beyond the 500 m<sup>2</sup> (5,382 ft<sup>2</sup>) and 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> (10,763 ft<sup>2</sup>) permissible maximums.
- The average proposed house size (including garage floor area) is 761 m<sup>2</sup> (8,192 ft<sup>2</sup>). This is less than the lowest yearly average 790 m<sup>2</sup> (8,500 ft<sup>2</sup>) within the previous seven years.
- Furthermore, the floor area of proposed houses in the past six months (April 3 to October 18, 2017) is on average 37% less than those one year earlier.

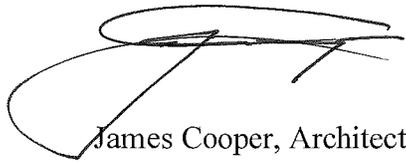
- The percentage of houses less than 697 m<sup>2</sup> (7,500 ft<sup>2</sup>) during this time have increased from 29% to 36% showing a trend toward the smaller size range.

**Financial Impact**

None.

**Conclusion**

The adopted bylaw amendments providing measures to regulate single family construction in the Agricultural (AG1) zone have reduced the size of residential development. This is evidenced in the above comparisons between the size of houses and associated developed areas proposed and built under the previous zoning criteria with those approved or reviewed under the current amended Zoning Bylaw. All Building Permit applications received since the bylaw amendment enactment have been in general compliance with no implementation issues identified.



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JC:sn

Att. 1: Farm Home Plate Illustration

### Farm Home Plate Illustration

