

Residents must have a voice on stable neighbourhoods

A presentation on October 24 and a motion by Councillor Wendy Gaertner reminded Council that in 2011, an Official Plan was passed.

This plan, in part, addressed stable neighbourhood designation and protection. Aurora Council agreed that staff would investigate what other municipalities were doing to protect their older communities from over-large houses in these sensitive areas.

It was suggested that a report would be made sometime in the first quarter of 2018. It seems like an unusually long delay for a bit of research that could be done in a matter of weeks.

It was agreed that the report would be discussed in an open session with Council and staff. However, there must be a process for the public to provide meaningful input.

Several zoning bylaws need to be revised and updated to protect the older sections of Town from blockbuster houses. Builders and developers must not continue to dictate the character of our own stable environments.

Residents must be heard!

It is important to remember that Aurora grew in stages with each new subdivision exhibiting distinct characteristics. We, in these older parts of Town, are not against development per se, but object to buildings which clearly are not appropriate.

Outrageously oversized houses do not fit in with our older neighbourhoods.

Zoning bylaws must be changed to reflect and protect our values. For example, in the Regency Acres subdivision, the average bungalow ranges from approximately 1,100 to 1,400 square feet with roof heights ranging from 17 to 20 feet ? measured from peak to ground level.

A new house in our area measures 3,400 square feet and reaches a height of 38 feet, measured to the peak of the roof ? not mid-point to the roof which the current zoning bylaw permits.

The difference is huge! The effect of this oversized structure will severely impact air flow, block sunlight and create privacy issues for the adjacent residents.

In fact, one elderly couple mentioned that their property value has probably decreased since, ?Who would want to look at that from a front window?? This mega house should have been rejected outright based on common sense alone, since it clearly does not fit in with the existing neighbourhood.

It is worth repeating that guidelines in the Official Plan were designed to protect these older areas when new building occurs. Almost seven years is far too long for these policies not to be incorporated into new bylaws!

Why the delay? Why were changes not made to the zoning bylaws to reflect these policies? This discrepancy needs to be addressed now. Positive changes must be made to reflect the values that residents place on their older communities. Building heights, distance, between adjacent buildings and not coverage are a few of the issues that need to be resolved with public input.

It must be noted that we are not against new builds, but need assurance that new constructions conform with the character of stable neighbourhoods.

Changes must be made now before the present Council ends for the fall election. If nothing is done in the next few months, we could see two or more building seasons with nothing being corrected to solve our important problems.

This leads us to the question, ?Who ultimately controls residential development in Aurora ? the elected members of Council? The various Town departments? Speculators and builders, lawyers, real estate agents, etc.??

As mentioned in a previous article, ?Is it all dollars and sense or nonsense??

In closing, we sincerely hope that the residents' concerns will be heard by members of Council before our stable neighbourhoods are destroyed forever!

Gloria Smith

Aurora