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Export date: Thu Apr 25 4:21:01 2024 / +0000 GMT

Stable Neighbourhood Study underway with passage of Interim Control Bylaw

By Brock Weir

A study into what can be done to protect Aurora's ?stable neighbourhoods? is now underway, along with a one-year moratorium on new residential builds that currently exceed development standards.

After a week of contentious discussion around the table, Council approved both the study and the Interim Control Bylaw last Tuesday with very little discussion on an 8 ? 1 vote.

Mayor Geoff Dawe was the lone dissenting vote.

The Interim Control Bylaw, which received a divisive reception from residents of Aurora's long-established communities, or ?stable neighbourhoods?, will prohibit new residential dwellings or additions to an existing house or residential dwelling for up to one year if the proposed changes exceed existing residential zoning conditions.

The moratorium will be in place while municipal staff carry out a study on what can be done to ensure any infill development is in keeping with the character of the surrounding community.

The review was spurred by a growing chorus of residents speaking about on what they say are the number of ?monster? homes being built in older neighbourhoods, neighbourhoods which are largely characterised by smaller homes, often bungalows.

While those speaking against ?monster homes? spoke largely in favour of the interim control bylaw, although they argued it does not go far enough, other residents opposed the measure as they said such a bylaw, albeit temporary, would prevent them from realising the full sale value of their properties.

By the time this reached Council for final approval last week, discussion focused on what sort of property changes would be left in staff's hands once the interim control bylaw was put in place.

?If Council agrees, those variances that were required for minor additions such as a deck, an expansion of an accessory shed, or a small expansion or addition to the structure, staff could continue to deal with those types of variance applications,? said Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, in response to questions from Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

?The interim control bylaw is structured in such a way that provided that they are in keeping with the existing zoning provisions they would be okay to proceed,? he continued. ?In some instances, they may need a variance to a setback for a deck or shed. Considering the intent of the Interim Control Bylaw, if they need a variance for height to the main building with a new addition, that is not in keeping with the Interim Control Bylaw and they would not be considered.

?The intent is not to stop homeowners from doing whatever they might do, within reason.?