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Aurora?s Stable Neighbourhoods are ?Under Siege?

I am writing to express my deep concern at the inaction of the Aurora's Mayor and Council to revise the bylaws that are essential to protect Stable Neighbourhoods such as Regency Acres.

Aurora's provincially-approved Official Plan, enacted by Council in 2011, provides clear direction for redevelopment in Aurora. Reading this Plan, one would assume that the town is taking a respectful, rational approach to redevelopment in mature neighbourhoods. Our town's Plan emphasizes the importance of protecting Stable Neighbourhoods by: ensuring that redevelopment is compatible in building scale and design; and, respecting the existing physical character through attention to the building type, heights and scale of nearby homes.

The Citizens' Guide to Land-Use Planning, on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website, clearly states that: ?Once an Official Plan is in effect, it guides all of the municipality's planning decisions. It means that: the local council must follow the Plan; ?; all bylaws, including zoning and related bylaws, must conform with the Official Plan.? Official Plans provide the vision for a community's future; bylaws provide the means to ensure that this vision is achieved.

What is Regency Acres' current reality? There is a massive disconnect between the vision and policies for Stable Neighbourhoods that are spelled out in Aurora's Official Plan and the rapid redevelopment that is now underway. New builds are dwarfing neighbouring homes, incompatible in design, and drastically reducing the mix of affordability in the area. This type of redevelopment is allowed because Town bylaws are out of sync with the vision for protecting Stable Neighbourhoods that is clearly stated in Aurora's Official Plan.

An Official Plan is meaningless unless the bylaws are changed in a way that ensures that vision of the Plan is achieved ? to ensure compatibility in building scale and design and respect for the existing physical character of the local community.

Based on the latest Planning staff report presented at the June 27 Public meeting of Council, it is now clear the concerns of the majority of ratepayers in affected neighbourhoods have not been heard.

This report proposes that 40% lot coverage be allowed for a bungalow. Our closest neighbour, Newmarket, allows just 35% for a one storey home and 25% for a two storey. The Regency Acres Ratepayers Association has made its position clear - the maximum dwelling height should be lowered to no more than 9 metres measured to the peak of the roof and lot coverage should be reduced from its current level of 35%, especially for two storey homes.

This latest Planning staff bylaw proposal suggests that the Mayor and at least some members of Council are prepared to ignore the input received through public meetings over the past several months and want to allow redevelopment that favours developers and does nothing to protect Aurora's Stable Neighbourhoods. Sadly, it now appears that Aurora's Official Plan has become irrelevant.

Sandra Sangster, Secretary
Regency Acres Ratepayers Association