

GETTING THINGS DONE: Protecting Stable Neighbourhoods

By Mayor Tom MrakasAt the Public Planning meeting this past Wednesday, Council discussed, once again, the issue of how best to protect stable neighbourhoods through potential amendments to zoning bylaws.

Residents have raised concerns for well over a decade about inappropriate infill development and the impacts it has on their neighbourhoods.

They are concerned about the ?? growing trend of dwellings being significantly renovated, enlarged, or replaced by new dwellings, which are often quite large and very different from the existing surrounding built form.?

Past Councils have considered how to address this issue. In 2006, a working group was struck to make recommendations to Council. In 2008, staff took those recommendations and developed an amended zoning bylaw that specifically addressed height, setbacks and lot coverage in three stable neighbourhoods ? Town Park area, Hillview and Temperance street. Unfortunately, the Council of the day voted against this amended bylaw protecting stable neighbourhoods.

So, here we are 10 years later discussing literally the same thing.

This Council is moving forward, taking steps to listen to residents and take action. At the Public Planning Meeting, Council heard from many residents who made their views known; ranging from there should be no restrictions on what can be built to recommending extreme restrictions limiting the size of homes to what currently exists.

Council listened to the views expressed and considered the staff report and consultant's report that sought to address concerns raised over the past decade.

As residents know, zoning bylaws exist to set out the requirements as determined by our Official Plan regarding how, where and what can be built. They set criteria about setbacks, and height, and lot coverage, numbers of units etc. These restrictions are reviewed periodically to ensure that they meet the needs of our community as we grow and evolve. And that?s what this Council is doing. Revising and refining the zoning bylaw to address specific issues as they relate to infill development in existing stable neighbourhoods. Though our current Official Plan does afford some protections for identified Stable Neighbourhoods, Council identified that more is needed to manage the change in four specific neighbourhoods ? Aurora Heights, Regency Acres, Temperance Street and Town Park.

Any proposed changes, however, must be forward looking to ensure that we enact infill zoning bylaws that make sense for our Town.

I believe the recommendations presented by the consultant are fair and balanced. They meet the stated objective of achieving a balance between development control, and the flexibility to allow innovation and ongoing investment.

Council in the majority agreed with the recommendations and taking the next step towards final approval. Council will be meeting in General Committee to review the draft amended Bylaw and design guidelines and to, finally, put in place the tools we need to better manage infill development in our community.

That is all for this week. As always if you would like to get into contact with me please feel free to contact me anytime by phone 905-727-3123 ext. 4746 or by email tmrakas@aurora.ca and if you would like to sign up for more newsletters and council updates then please visit Mrakas.ca/contact to join the growing list of Aurorans that are staying informed.