

Pro-development label of Council is ?unfair?

We have had the opportunity to be directly involved in a development dispute within the town of Aurora. For the last 18 months, neighbours and we have been faced with the all too topical issue of having adjacent property purchased by a developer for the purpose of higher density development.

In our case, the Councillors and Mayor gave their personal time, visited our properties, heard our concerns and informed us of the various constraints and possible outcomes that may lie ahead. Ultimately, we garnered a majority support from Council to deny a developer's rezoning request and for that we were most appreciative.

Council's decision was based on upholding the planning principles incorporated into Aurora's Official Plan. The Aurora Official plan accommodates municipal parameters for densification as outlined in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Implementation of the Greater Golden Horseshoe densification targets is the reason why we see so much intense residential development taking place across this province. The build out is in the hands of the provincial political parties.

Our local Aurora Council is not the driver for the magnitude or density of changes we are experiencing. The process that followed was the right of a developer to launch an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board.

At this stage, OMB representatives are assigned and with predisposed preferences for development and obvious disinterest in residential and official municipal plan decisions, almost always award the legal decision in favour of the developer. What our Council did do was direct town staff to acquire OMB expert legal assistance to work with our planning department staff to negotiate a resolution with the developer and his lawyers.

The resulting compromise was a much improved scenario over the original request of the developer. Without the support of our Council and the direction they provided to Town Planning staff, we would have had a much less satisfactory outcome in our situation.

We are writing this to let the residents of Aurora know that, in our experience, the Town Council has actively supported the issues of residents and faced the OMB mandated authority with genuine aggressiveness and due diligence. They should be congratulated and recognized for their efforts to manage mandated growth targets within a framework that often runs contrary to local requirements and goals.

In addition, two of our Councillors, with the support of the entire Council, have spearheaded the dialogue with numerous other Ontario Provincial municipalities to demand a formal change in the legislative power and scope of the OMB to combat this very issue.

We would like to thank and compliment our Councillors for their role in navigating the issues regarding the rezoning of an adjacent property. While the resulting rezoning is a disappointment to us, we believe, it is the optimal outcome in this current legislative landscape. We would like to express our appreciation for the impact their support has had on the final outcome.

Ron & Marilee Harris
Aurora