

Redevelopment plan for Bayview and Vandorf has residents worried

A proposal to redevelop 14 residential lots near Bayview Avenue and Vandorf Sideroad into a new community of 145 single-detached homes has left some residents in Aurora's southeast quadrant seeing red.

Several neighbours came together in Council Chambers last week to speak out against the proposal at Council's June Public Planning meeting.

Up for consideration was a plan to redevelop 5 ? 70 Archerhill Court, and replace the homes and street that are on-site with 145 detached homes, a new ring road, and open spaces.

Previously, as noted in the report before Council, residents have spoken out against the number of proposed homes, the increased traffic this might bring to the surrounding community, the preservation of existing trees, noise pollution, and the development's overall impact on the environment.

The June 14 meeting was no exception with neighbours reiterating these concerns in person to their elected officials.

One of the residents speaking out against the proposal was former mayor Tim Jones who said not only was the density too high, but that the developments on the other three corners of the intersection should be given the same consideration as Aurora's so-called Stable Neighbourhoods.

?It's a rack'em pack ?em proposal that just doesn't fit in with the neighbourhood,? said Mr. Jones. ?With respect to the homes to the north, the developers' report states redevelopment represents a minor or modest increase within the area that has similar densities and built form. I suggest that [this] is not minor, nor is it modest. 145 homes is not a minor intensification on this site or in comparison to the four corners. The whole site has just a few houses less than all the three corners combined. The developer indicates this development contains an adequate provision of full range of housing, including affordable housing. What's affordable? \$1 million is not affordable. Show me a house that is not going to go there for less than \$1 million.?

Another resident voiced concerns over the traffic flow, including ?one to two years of major disruption, noise, and inconvenience,? questioning how existing residents will be compensated.

?This is like trying to squeeze a quart into a pint pot,? added resident John Green. ?With 145 houses, we'll say a family usually has two cars, maybe three. Where are they all going to park? On the street? On the driveway? It is going to be a parking lot that's the view. As has been said by many people, trying to exit or enter that subdivision, especially through one entrance, is going to be absolute chaos and is just an accident waiting to happen.?

Still others questioned the environmental impacts this development would have, including on water quality, ecology, and the Oak Ridges Moraine, which one delegate described as previously being seen as ?the holy of holies.?

?I really do think we need to have a hard look at some of the things they have suggested: the traffic, the density, the natural trees, and come to a solution that is going to continue to make this such a wonderful place to live and that is a compromise, not just something that is imposed on the residents and the community at large,? said another resident.

While some delegates said they felt the proposal was a ?done deal,? Mayor Tom Mrakas told residents that all public feedback is appreciated at Planning meetings.

?It's not a done deal until this Council says it is a done deal,? he said. ?We look at what is appropriate for our community and those are the decisions we make to ensure that whatever gets done is appropriate and it is what the community wants and what we deserve to have in our communities.?

Councillor Michael Thompson agreed, adding "the residents have done a great job in voicing their concerns" and he echoed them as well. Citing the redevelopment of the former Timberlane tennis club into a residential community, Councillor Thompson said it started with "general opposition" but the applicant worked with "a lot of the residents in the area" and in the end came up with a proposal that most, not all, but most supported."

"I have always viewed that as a bit of a success story and I urge the applicant to sit down with the residents in the area to try and come to a compromise whereby they can be supportive of your application and we have a win-win situation."

Stronger criticism came from Councillor Wendy Gartner who said, when put simply, the development proposal just was not compatible with the surrounding area.

"It's no wonder the residents are upset and they're upset for many reasons," she said. "All the questions need to be answered, including the one about water. I find it so hard to believe this is actually before us. This is so outside of what we planned. This is giving us a lot of unnecessary trouble and frustration."

Councillor John Gallo went one step further and questioned, given the timing of this year's municipal election, whether the applicants will take their proposal to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) for appeal.

"It is my understanding we will continue to work with residents," said Angela Sciberras on behalf of the applicant. The community information meeting, which was hosted by Treasure Hill was not required, so that was something that the owners had initiated for that specific reason to hear their comments. Without having spoken to my client, I would believe that they would like to continue working with residents.

"It is disappointing, obviously, that we would have to wait until 2023 but we certainly understand the circumstances with the elections."

"I think we can all agree everyone who spoke [tonight was looking] for a middle ground," replied Councillor Gallo.

The application will be subject to another report at a future Public Planning meeting.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter