

Traffic concerns addressed in new plan for Ridge Road area

By Brock Weir

A revised plan for a long-gestating subdivision plan in southwest Aurora was approved last week, which could ultimately lead to the closure of Ridge Road from Yonge Street.

The new subdivision is planned for the south end of Town, stemming just off of Yonge Street near Ridge Road. The plan has been a bone of contention for residents of the street for well over a year, concerned that through access of the subdivision to Ridge Road would adversely affect the community.

The new homes will be built adjacent to the existing neighbourhood and, moving forward this week, the new plan will see a full intersection at Yonge Street to the new area.

The Region of York, however, is pushing for allowances to be made within the new development for future access to Ridge Road. A barricaded road connection between the two developments should be put in place as after 2020, full Yonge Street access to Ridge Road could become tricky.

A full move intersection at Yonge Street can be supported by York Region, however, as a result of the Bus Rapid Transitway (BRT), which is proposed to be constructed along Yonge Street at an approximate date of post 2020, an unbroken centre line meridian will be constructed which will limit access from Ridge Road to Yonge Street to right-in right-out only at the time of the BRT implementation to the satisfaction of York Region, said Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning. At the Committee level, he said the Region was adamant that a road connection be protected to Ridge Road.

They are thinking in the long term that when the bus and the rapid way is constructed, the existing Ridge Road access out to Yonge Street will either be closed, or restricted to right in and right out movements only, and this proposal would provide residents of Ridge Road access out to Yonge Street through this new proposed road.

Speaking before Councillors last week, Ridge Road resident Richard Berman said he and his neighbours are largely satisfied with how the development has progressed, but said there remained some traffic concerns in the area, particularly towards access.

From Councillor Evelyn Buck's perspective, however, Council was put between a rock and a hard place over how to satisfy everyone in this case.

There was a solution offered by the Region which would resolve the problem here and now at this very moment, and that would be the closing of Ridge Road at Yonge Street, but apparently the residents didn't want that, she said. They apparently wanted protection from the traffic coming in and they also want to continue having access.

Asking Mr. Berman why neighbours would ultimately object to closing Ridge Road at Yonge Street and allowing access through the new subdivision, he replied that it is as simple as that is the way people know it.

It is something long-appreciated, he said.

People don't like change and neither do I, but sometimes you have to swallow it, replied Councillor Buck. I am at a loss as to why the residents would not welcome the opportunity to have their road closed at both ends. This is the perfect residential enclave that only the people living on the street are using. They want it always, so who am I to question them?

Although he said he had concerns that the future Yonge Street median would revive many of the concerns initially brought forward at a number of public planning meetings stemming back to February 2013, Councillor John Gallo said he commended developers for their patience in getting this far.

?It was clearly not an easy site to develop,? he said. ?They have been here many times and it looks like we have finally come to a site plan and a development that may very well work on that site. I look forward [to hearing] if there are any concerns from the public [before this week]. If there aren't any, that road connecting to Ridge Road provides me with a little bit of concern [from the discussions] but if it has to be there, it has to be there.?