

An Open Letter to Mayor & Council from Town Park Ratepayers member

Firstly, I am writing
to thank Councillors Gaertner and Gallo for their integrity in voting against
the flawed and biased consultant report on Protecting Stable Neighbourhoods
(SN).

I feel extreme
disappointment and frustration with regard to the position of the mayor and all
the other Councillors who supported this report. The report would be
better named 'Destabilizing older neighbourhoods' or 'Selling out older neighbourhoods
to the highest bidder' or 'Supporting the contractors' and businesses' bottom
line' reports.

Although I am aware
that some compromise is necessary to appease the developers, I can't believe
that anyone would agree that a 4,000 square foot home is compatible with homes
that are 1,000-1,500 square feet and meet with the intent of the Official Plan
(OP) with regard to protecting older neighbourhoods from incompatible and
inappropriate building.

One of the largest
original homes on my block has a footprint of 1,100 square feet, so that would
mean, using the consultant recommendations, if a home is built in the
neighbourhood its footprint would be almost 2 ½ times the footprint of the
adjacent homes. Trying to tell people that this is protecting Stable
Neighbourhoods is an insult and an attempt to make fools of those who expected
support from the Council and Mayor.

I have heard and
witnessed many stories about new development contractors and developers and
their treatment of the existing neighbours.

Based on the stories,
they are only interested in how fast and how much money they can make. The
stories range from demolishing the interior of a home and burning the
debris in the discarded bathtub in the backyard, to using a chain saw to saw
off the roots of 6-8 50-year-old trees in a neighbour's yard and thereby
killing the trees.

These are not stories
of caring contractors and it appears that the council and mayor think these
people deserve more respect and consideration than the hundreds of existing residents
in the SNs.

In spite of many of
the present Council and Mayor running their campaign on protecting SNs, when
they started investigating the Stable Neighbourhoods after the last election,
it has become obvious that they have an agenda and want this settled as soon as

possible and not in favour of the people who live in the SNs.

There seems to be the ability of the council and mayor to ignore the OP and their responsibility to ensure that they follow the policies within the OP with regard to SNs. It is the same way we were treated in Old SE Aurora when we tried to make it a heritage district.

Wellington Street was added to the Old SE area map knowing that those same business owners on Wellington, who had fought against the NE Heritage district would do whatever it took to stop being part of the SE Heritage District, including lying to residents and fear mongering to get the people in the community to fight tooth and nail to stop any plan to make the SE a Heritage District.

And then when the Heritage Advisory Committee took my recommendation to Council that Wellington Street be removed from the map to appease those who were most against the Heritage District, Council totally ignored this as a compromise and stopped the process.

This is a different issue, but our present mayor and council have used the same plan. Make it the responsibility of the neighbours to fight for something that was/is the council's responsibility to follow the OP.

I think it might be called bait and switch. It would have been fairer for the council and mayor to be honest and let people know up front that they are only going to support the developers and contractors so don't bother with fighting for what was evidently promised to those of us in the old SNs. If you aren't going to follow the OP why have it or why not just change it so you can do whatever you want?

Some flaws
in the Consultant Report

The problem/bias towards this larger footprint max recommendation seems to be a result several steps in the calculation methodology:

Taking the existing average footprints of the four neighborhoods, (Town Park actually has the smallest), and coming up with a single average to be applied to all;

It appears they included all the footprints and GFA of the recent large homes in the averaging. Why would you include in establishing the existing averaging oversized footprints of recent houses the problem you are trying to address.

But of most significance, they then come up with two types of 50% increases in existing to

determine future maximum.

Again I don't see how creating a maximum footprint by adding 50% increases over averages of four neighbourhoods fits with the intent of the Design Policies in the Official Plan with focus on compatibility with: the size and configuration of nearby lots; the building type of nearby residential properties; the heights and scale of nearby residential properties.

If there are a hundred houses my size in a neighbourhood and all of the 100 houses have a 1,000 Gross Floor Area (GFA) but one house is 5,000 square feet then the existing average GFA of all 101 houses in the neighbourhood would be 1,040 sq. feet.

That's fine but ?...To establish the ?50% of range? maximum GFA and Building Footprint for new dwellings, the midway point between the ?average' GFA and building footprint and the highest values was identified...? Therefore, in the 101 home neighbourhood even though the average is 1,040 sq. ft. they would take the midpoint to the highest value, the single 5,000 sq. ft. house, (again probably a recent build the problem being addressed) and end up with a recommendation for a Maximum GFA for new houses in the neighbourhood of 3,000 sq. ft. allowing new homes to be three times the size of any of the other 100 homes in the neighbourhood which doesn't seem right.

The three Ratepayers Associations have asked planning for the actual numbers with regard to building sizes to try to better understand how the consultant determined his figures because the ratepayers did not have access to the consultant at any time during his consultation.

The original motion to protect the stable neighbourhoods made by Wendy Gaertner October 24, 2017, was ?Be it resolved that Council and Staff do a study of the By-laws governing development of stable neighbourhoods to ensure that the intent of our planning policy is being realized and reflected through these By-laws.?

Since the purpose of the Official Plan is to promote responsible growth management Section 3.0 and the fundamental principle related to protecting stable neighbourhoods is to ensure that the stability and vibrancy of these existing homes in the stable neighbourhoods are protected from the negative impacts of potential incompatible development and growth pressures, then any infill that occurs must be compatible with the established community character (OP Section 2.1 vi). That refers to the original homes and not the new builds that occurred as a result of Council not doing timely due diligence with regard to the directions in the Official Plan.

Under the Development

Policies (OP 8.3.1), it states that 'new development and site alteration abutting existing residential development shall be sympathetic to the form and character of the existing development and shall be compatible with regard to building scale and urban design.'

What part of this doesn't Council understand? Why are we having to fight for what has already been stated in the official plan?

We know that in order to do what the OP states that the zoning requirements have to be changed as they presently don't reflect the OP directions. Since the zoning of older neighbourhoods has been amalgamated with other newer areas where homes have been larger, the intent was to put the stable neighbourhoods in a different zoning area with different zoning rules.

That said we know the present zoning by laws for stable neighbourhoods go against the intent and spirit of OP clause 2.1a vi and OP 8.1.3.

The consultant indicates that the new builds were included in the data to make the study 'inclusive' but this is not the objective of the study and the purpose of the consultation was to look at keeping the study areas separate and unique. He also indicated that he did not do studies on each distinct area as he was told that budget limitations given by council did not allow him to do that. So, if he did study each area I'm sure he would have ended up with completely different results.

Therefore, council should not have accepted his report as his GFA decision is based on flawed methodology and totally opposed to the purpose and intent of the OP policies for SNs. Recommendations of GFA, max building footprint and 35% all contravene the OP and should not be ratified by council in its current form.

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