

Community information session to be held on Heathwood Heights proposal

An infill development proposal for a property in Aurora's Heathwood Heights will be the subject of a Community Information Session on Tuesday, September 30.

At issue is a plan to transform 161 Heathwood Heights Drive, currently the site of a single detached home, into a plot accommodating a total of five single detached dwellings.

The application has proved contentious and residents have been rallying to oppose the infill development, but what's proposed does have some supporters as well.

The September 30 meeting will be hosted by the applicant at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex from 7 ? 9 p.m.

Residents are encouraged to come out to have their questions answered, voice concerns, and share ideas.

The proposal will also be subject to a formal Public Planning meeting, hosted by Mayor and Council, this fall ? a date for which is yet to be announced.

A petition against the infill development was launched earlier this spring by area resident Johanna Francis.

By press time this week, it had garnered 516 verified signatures.

?Aurora's Official Plan is clear: low-density residential neighbourhoods ? like Heathwood Heights ? are not targeted for intensification or higher-density development,? reads the petition. ?The Town has designated specific areas (called Intensification Corridors) for responsible development. 161 Heathwood Heights is not located within one of these corridors.?

This matters, they say, because it would put a higher-use density within an existing low-density neighbourhood.

?It sets a dangerous precedent for future developments in similar areas across Aurora,? they say. ?The proposed plan does not address the need for affordable or missing-middle housing, and does not align with Aurora's overall growth strategy. It intensifies pressure around our unique trail system, disrupting natural wildlife habitats. This is a precedent-setting proposal. If approved, it could open the door to similar higher-density developments in established low-density neighbourhoods across all of Aurora.

?This isn't just a Heathwood Heights issue ? it affects the future of residential zoning throughout our Town. If this goes through, any quiet residential street could be next.?

While the Public Planning meeting will be the first time Council members will formally have a chance to weigh in on what is proposed, Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese has previously said he has received ?numerous calls and emails? on the plan and said residents are ?understandably concerned.?

?I know this application has caused alarm,? said Councillor Weese in a letter to constituents. ?This single lot is proposed to develop into five homes, demolishing the existing home, re-grading the site and altering the tree canopy. It will increase density in the area and has already raised concerns about traffic and construction. But the real issue here is whether this application is consistent with our Official Plan and the nature of the area and whether it constitutes 'good planning'. In my opinion, residents who have purchased/invested in their homes in this neighbourhood should expect that the character of that neighbourhood will be protected by our Official Plan. I agree with many who have concerns that this may be precedent setting.?

Residents also continue to voice their views on change.org with several residents saying the low-density character of the neighbourhood is what drew them there in the first place ? and that this should be preserved.

'We need to preserve the originality of the neighbourhood, and this is a large step in the wrong direction,' said Linda.

Another resident, Jim, added: 'I have lived in this area for 35 years and the large lot sizes and mature trees was the reason. If this development is allowed to happen then the environment and beauty of the area will be lost. This development does nothing to increase the level of affordable housing in the Town.'

Another resident, however, recently expressed an opposing view in a letter to The Auroran.

'I walk by the area regularly and I find the development reasonable, as we need more housing and the lot is large enough to facilitate five 'executive' homes,' said Julie.

To view the petition, visit www.change.org/p/proposed-rezoning-at-161-heathwood-heights-please-read-and-sign-the-petition.

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