

George Street neighbours want incoming housing to be compatible with area

Residents living near the site of the former George Street Public School are welcoming plans by the Town to transform the space into a community park, with residential development along the street front ? as long as it's compatible with the existing neighbourhood.

That was the general view of Aurorans who came to Town Hall last week to have their say on a plan that will transform their neighbourhood.

One resident, Susan Shaw, said the site was ?near and dear? to her heart as she and her husband bought their first home just a block away in 1977, a time she said was ?affordable? for many families.

?My concern right now in Aurora is the lack of affordable housing,? she said. ?Having read the Town of Aurora's draft Affordable Housing Plan, there is a dire need for affordable housing and this seemed like a pretty good opportunity to implement some of the objectives of that plan?. We need to put some dollar values on when we're talking about ?affordable' to ensure it does get built. I would urge Council to re-read (the draft plan) and see if this would be a good fit to try and put something in, because it is desperately needed.?

While her neighbours did not dispute the need for affordable housing across Aurora, the sentiment was that affordable housing could not be achieved without going down a condo or apartment route, which would be a first in the immediate vicinity.

?We're emulating the fabric of that neighbourhood,? said resident Stephen Hunt, stating his support for the seven housing units proposed for the site. ?I think there are more appropriate development sites for affordable housing, but the devil is in the details and we want to make sure there are certain control measures within the development standards for the properties.

?I would be concerned about matters of front yard setbacks to make sure they are compatible with the existing homes and that they're not just jutting forward, allowing more room for mature trees to be planted.?

Resident Tom Hashem was of a similar viewpoint, noting ?I am not sure how you can turn this into affordable housing without making condos here, which a lot of people strongly object to, including myself.?

?The layout for the location of the George Street School, I don't see how you can do anything affordable without it being high density,? he continued. ?I don't object to the idea of seven homes being there, I think it is a good idea, I think it fits in with the neighbourhood quite well. We are facing a huge number of condo-townhomes on Tyler Street, which will make traffic very difficult in the neighbourhood. I would like to see a set of full lights at the corner of George Street.?

Traffic questions were also voiced by resident Brian Carpenter, who said the proposed seven homes would likely bring in a minimum of 14 cars into the neighbourhood, plus the traffic from the Tyler Street site.

?It is very hard to get out onto Wellington and that is one of my concerns: the more you build in that area, the more traffic goes up and down Yonge Street and there is no buffer zone. I would like to know what the Town will do to help us get in and out of George Street onto Wellington.?

Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, said issues raised by the public would be taken into review, but noted traffic staff did not think the traffic generated by seven additional homes in the area would result in a significant rise from existing traffic and traffic rates from when the school was operational.

By Brock Weir