

George Street School redevelopment reduced to six houses, park

Plans to redevelop the site of the now-demolished George Street Public School site into a community park and seven residential properties are set to be reduced by one home.

Council this week is expected to approve an amendment given the thumbs-up at last week's Committee of the Whole meeting that will reduce the scope to include six rather than seven residential units.

The reduction in lot numbers was based in part on resident feedback, said Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland, and, according to Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, a slight reduction in the available frontage along George Street following a formal survey carried out after the demolition of the school building this past spring.

"The Town made a rather big investment with the purpose of having control over the type of development that we want to have there versus having this parcel of land be sold off to the highest bidder and putting in some high-density type of development that may not be suited to the area," said Councillor Gilliland. "I know I have received quite a bit of feedback from people in the community about what's being presented today, and I know while everything's not set in stone and this is a zoning change, I do want to see a little bit of reduction in those lot sizes, just in keeping with the actual area in the neighbourhood."

Ramunno noted the survey resulted in a loss of 10 feet in frontage and while the seven proposed lots would be exactly 60-feet each, he didn't have an issue with six lots each with a minimum of 70-feet.

Each lot would be approximately 200 feet deep, resulting in developments that would complement the character of the existing neighbourhood.

While Council accepted the amendment to reduce the number of lots at the Committee level, they did so after seeking assurances that reducing the number of homes wouldn't result in a loss of projected revenue to the Town as Council hoped the sale of the lots would offset the costs paid to the York Region District School Board to secure the parkland for community use.

"I'm pretty confident at this point," said Ramunno, responding to questions from Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson. "It's always tough to try and project what the prices would be a year from now or two years from now. Ever since we started this process, I've heard from a number of small builders who are interested in these lots. I don't think we're going to have a problem selling these lots, but I think there's definitely an interest and I don't think we're going to be losing much, if any, if we go from seven to six."

Should Council approve the lot reduction this week, the next steps in the process will be a public consultation on how the parkland will be accessed.

"As for amenity space, we are somewhat limited in the space needs there, but we've done a conceptual plan, which looks at our Parks and Recreation Master Plan and draws from it where there's some deficiencies within the area," said Sara Tienkamp, Director of Operations for the Town of Aurora. "Based on that, public playgrounds are deficient in that zone, so we're proposing a playground, maybe some courts of mixed use, potentially, and some open space ? a gazebo, some shade structure, etc."

"We're not moving too quickly on that immediately right now, only because we're working on site servicing and we don't know where exactly it's going to run. It may impact some of the park design and the public consultation process timing."

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