

Heathwood Heights proposal headed for Public Planning meeting in fall

A significant infill development proposed for the Heathwood Heights neighbourhood will come before Council at a Public Planning meeting this fall as concerned neighbours organize their opposition.

At issue is an application to transform the property located at 161 Heathwood Heights Drive. Currently the site of a single detached home, the applicants have proposed five single detached dwellings on the site.

The application was made public by Mayor Tom Mrakas earlier this month, noting that as the application is now deemed as complete, the next step is for a formal presentation at an upcoming Public Planning meeting.

Neighbours, however, are using the intervening weeks to come together to oppose the idea.

A change.org petition urging Council to reject it outright had amassed nearly 330 verified signatures by press time this week.

Those behind the petition argue that the proposal goes against the Town's Official Plan.

They describe the infill plan as trying to 'sandwich' additional homes onto the property and doing so 'threatens both the ecological balance and the character of the area.'

'Aurora's Official Plan is clear: low-density residential neighbourhoods like Heathwood Heights are not targeted for intensification or higher-density development,' say the petitioners, notably petition-starter Johanna Francis. '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 a time for lawmakers to formally weigh in on the proposal, Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, in a communication to residents, said neighbours were 'understandably concerned.'

'I thank the Hill Ratepayers Association and leadership for being on top of this from the start and for communicating within the area, as is their mandate,' he said. 'I also have received numerous calls and emails about the application, all of them in opposition. I have tried to respond to all. A month ago, before the application became public, I met with the developer and reviewed the application. At that time, I voiced strong reservations about the application and suggested, because I have been working with the Ratepayers Group closely, that this would be opposed.'

'I know this application has caused alarm. 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.

?I will of course listen objectively to the application details and the case made by the applicant, listen to our staff and to the resident's feedback who this affects directly. But I represent you in this regard.?

Heathwood Heights is located in the southwest quadrant of Yonge Street and St. John's Sideroad.

Those wishing to view the petition can do so at:

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

By Brock Weir