

Highland Gate development impacts whole town

Opinions have recently been expressed in your paper suggesting that the proposed redevelopment of the former Aurora Highlands Golf Course by Highland Gate Developments Inc. (HGDI) is an issue of importance primarily for the adjacent homeowners, with little impact on the town as a whole.

We believe that a number of negative outcomes will affect all parts of Aurora, should the (HGDI) proposal receive approval. HGDI has requested numerous amendments to the Town's Official Plan. Many of these amendments, if approved, will establish new standards for all future builds within the Town, as follows:

? An increase to the height restriction of high-density buildings in the downtown core from 7 to 10 stories. If approved, this will be the new standard for all future high-density buildings in Aurora. Is this what Aurora wants over the next 5 years?

? The creation of a significant number of one-sided roads within a 'stable neighbourhood'. If approved and built, the property tax inflow from these roads will be 50% of that received for a traditional two-sided road, while long-term servicing costs will be essentially unchanged from the norm. Who will bear the long-term costs of maintaining and servicing these roads and their related residential infrastructure and servicing (water & sewer mains, drain clearing, snow-ploughing, garbage collection, etc.)? It's highly doubtful that the Town will double the taxes for the residents of these one-sided roads, leaving the town-wide tax base to subsidize all maintenance and servicing costs.

? Changes to the current bylaws that address front and side yard setbacks. Again, if these reduced setbacks are approved, are these the new norms that we want for future residential development in all infill and intensification projects in our town?

? The elimination of the current restriction in Aurora's Official Plan for 35% coverage on residential lots. This proposed change will pave the way for large homes on smaller lots (especially in light of the request to reduce side and front yard setbacks). Again ? is this the new norm that we want to set for all future infilling over the next 5-10 years?

? The complete elimination of a green open space corridor between Murray Drive and Yonge Street, which has been a 'heritage' feature of our Town for over 200 years. If the HGDI development proposal is approved, this opportunity to maintain part of this green corridor as an off-road right of way for the Oak Ridges Trail will be gone forever. What a loss for all residents of Aurora.

? Increased traffic density in the vicinity of Golf Links Drive, Fairway Drive and Yonge Street.

? This development proposal is not required for the achievement of Aurora's population growth targets for infill in stable neighbourhoods. While some portions of the development could fit into the existing stable neighbourhood, the developer's desire to squeeze in the maximum number of large homes will necessitate many changes to the Town's Official Plan and Bylaws, thereby setting dangerous precedents for future infill development in all other parts of our town.

The most frustrating issue around this redevelopment proposal is the contrast between the developer's short-sighted goals for a dense in-fill development and the approved long-term goals for measured growth as defined in the Town's Official Plan (OP).

The Town of Aurora developed its OP over a long period of time, giving it a great deal of thought, with input from consultants, planners, residents and community group.

This piecemeal approach to municipal planning is neither rational nor sustainable, and all residents and members of our Town Council should be mounting a strong defence of the Town's Official Plan at the upcoming hearings before the OMB.

Respectfully,

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Bruce & Sharon Corbett

Jane & Rob Salhani

Susan & Frank Shaw

(Editor's Note: The signatories to this letter do not live in the plan area and are not members of the Highland Gate Ratepayers Association)