

Long-term care facility, retirement home planned for south Aurora

By Brock Weir

A new retirement home and long term care facility will be built in the south end of Aurora, pending Council's approval this week.

Councillors gave the tentative green light at the committee level last week to the four-storey 250 unit facility earmarked for 14314 and 14338 Yonge Street, signing off on a zoning amendment standing in its way.

Currently zoned for a school, and sitting on land on the Oak Ridges Moraine, a zoning bylaw amendment is set to be presented for final approval at a future Council meeting.

“The Official Plan always contemplated this land for institutional-type uses and the underlying designation was for residential, so they have achieved their 195 maximum units under the plan,” said Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, at last week's General Committee meeting. “Minor institutional uses are permitted within this residential designation in the Official Plan [such as] small scale public service uses, places of worship, private schools, day care, and residential facilities for children, nursing homes, etc., so it is considered an institutional use.”

For many Councillors, the proposed long term care facility fulfils a need in Aurora.

“I think we all talk about affordable housing as something we need in the community [and] this is something I see as very similar to affordable housing,” said Councillor Paul Pirri. “A lot of seniors are unable to stay in their homes, they become too difficult to maintain, and this is a way we can keep people who are aging in place and keep them in Aurora where they have been for the last number of years.”

Councillor Sandra Humfries offered a similar viewpoint, underscoring Aurora's aging population.

“A long-term care facility is something that is dearly needed in that area, which is really lovely,” she said. “I am really looking forward to seeing this come to fruition and I support the plan. This is not necessarily condos with living quarters, but basically a long-term care facility [we need]. We have lots of assisted living, but they absolutely don't do this type of service.”

Also supporting the plan was Councillor Michael Thompson who said the south end was a “good location” for such a facility. Councillor Wendy Gaertner, on the other hand, was opposed to the plan and said there will be concerns she will reiterate at this week's Council meeting.

“If you look at the official plan, even though it has institutional zoning, it was envisioned to be an elementary school park with the underlay of cluster residential, and that is how the density transfer occurred,” she said. “Minor institutional includes nursing homes and senior citizen homes, but it does not include that use here.”

“I have been interested in affordable housing in Aurora since I started on Council and it is something Councillor Buck and I tried to join forces on. There is certainly no mention of this being affordable. [Also], this land was never envisioned for this kind of intensive use. [We spent \$600,000 at the OMB to] protect the integrity of the [Oak Ridges] Moraine, the functioning of the Moraine, and I do not believe that this is in keeping with that, or any of the planning that took place, and is in place, for these lands.”