

Make Your Voice Heard ? it WILL count

This letter is similar to one I just sent to our Mayor and Councillors.

I've been following the issue around protecting Aurora's older stable neighbourhoods from the negative impacts of incompatible development with great interest.

When I lived in Oak Ridges from 1994-2005, I saw clearly the kind of devastation that happens when the town does not meet its obligation in this area.

Just like Aurora, the new Official Plan of 1996 called for all new infill development in Oak Ridges to be compatible and in character with the existing neighbourhoods. But the kinds of monstrosities that began going up suggested that the town was either not interested in meeting this obligation, or they were unaware of it.

To see what I'm talking about, just take a drive around Lake Wilcox. It's heartbreaking to see how the character of these older neighbourhoods is being destroyed.

It's now happening in Aurora:

Recently, the same thing began happening here in Aurora. So, I was pretty happy when Councillor Gaertner ? in response to many requests from angry, dismayed residents - began to actively advocate for a way to stop it ? and then Councillor Mrakas also became involved.

Councillors - at this time I urge you to do everything in your power to ensure the protections to stable neighbourhoods dictated in the 2011 Official Plan: ?that the stability and vibrancy of these existing neighbourhoods is protected from the negative impacts of potential incompatible development and growth pressures? [OP 2.1 vi.]; are put in place by reviewing and then changing Aurora's ancient 1968 zoning bylaws to reflect the specific requirements of that new 2011 Official Plan. This action is long overdue, and needs to be handled now as quickly as possible.

Aurora's new Official Plan was passed in 2011. Seven years ago.

At that time it would have been in the public's best interest to examine and update the existing zoning bylaws for our older stable neighbourhoods, with new zoning bylaws compatible with and guided by that new Official Plan. We've all come to understand the existing zoning bylaws pertaining to Aurora's older stable neighbourhoods ? which are now 50 years old ? were never reviewed to assess their compliance with that new official plan. How did that get missed? At 50 years old, those 1968 bylaws are dramatically out of date.

Having been missed, the building/planning department has been approving new builds in older neighbourhoods based on 1968 zoning bylaws, and NOT guided by the 2011 Official Plan. And these new builds are having the exact negative impact on older neighbourhoods ? and residents ?that the 2011 Official Plan specifically sought to avoid. [OP 2.1 vi.].

Clearly these bylaws need to be changed as soon as possible to ensure ALL building/development decisions evaluate the appropriateness of change, and the degree to which the proposed changes are considered compatible development and in the public interest. (OP 1.1c)

The phrase ?Public Interest? in this case means ? unquestionably ? what is in the best interests of Aurora residents, homeowners and tax payers ? not the best interest of developers.

Councillors and Mr. Mayor: You know it's an election year. I truly believe how you respond to this issue will demonstrate clearly to voters how well you understand this situation, and which side of the fence you sit on. Are you working for the best interests of Aurora residents? Or the best interests of developers.

If you cannot come to the February 28 public meeting on the matter, you may provide written and verbal comments ? by email, and social media. Make sure our Councilors know how you feel. Because this is an election year, you need to know your concerns will be heard and taken seriously.

Your voice counts. Let's all work together to make sure our stable older neighbourhoods are protected, and continue to be the nurturing, safe, friendly communities we know and love.

Janet Matthews

Aurora