

New strategies coming to help Aurora deal with infill developments in existing neighbourhoods

Intensification is the order of the day when it comes to future residential builds in Aurora, and as the community looks ahead to what that will mean, new strategies are coming forward to "minimize" the negative impacts of residential construction.

Last week, Council approved a report from the Town's Building Department outlining a number of new measures that will help achieve that goal which will be enacted by Council at a future meeting.

"The overall objective is to minimize the impact of residential infill construction activity by implementing new procedures and policies. The goal is to improve communication with residents," said Building Manager Wm. Jean in the report. "Research was done by reviewing best practices of other municipalities and it should be noted that the procedures [that would] be implemented are the same as currently being used by the City of Toronto."

Among the new measures are:

- A Pre-Screening Questionnaire "To ensure that permit holders who may wish to use the Town's right of way" obtain the necessary improvements. This was implemented in 2021 and, since then, "the number of incidents regarding damaged Town lands have significantly decreased."
- The creation of a Residential Infill Website "To provide information and to further communicate with the public, an online source for residential infill will be created on the Building Division website [where residents can get details of the proposed construction as well as providing information on the infill property."]
- Improved communication with residents with the implementation of a Residential Infill Construction Site Public Notice
- Further enforcement of fines and penalties

"Currently, the building permit placard is the only on-site communications tool to provide the public with basic information about a residential infill project," said Jean. "Builders often post their company name and information on site. However, there is nothing to provide the public with guidance on how they can obtain further information on the construction project, information on Town approvals related to the project (such as the permit search website) or how to resolve issues, should they arise."

"The Building Code requires only that the permit be posted on site. It does not authorize the inclusion of additional information on the permit placard. There is a positive obligation on the Chief Building Official to issue the permit if all applicable laws as defined by the Building Code, have been met. A municipal bylaw cannot interfere with this process, or conflict with the requirements of the Building Code Act or the Building Code."

"That being said, in keeping with the first principles of the infill initiative, the proposed requirements for the Infill Public Notice to be posted at a construction site are intended to run parallel with the permit process as a separate and distinct municipal requirement. The proposed Infill Public Notice will not regulate construction, but will provide key information regarding the project to the public."

While the changes were received positively by Council, Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner sought assurance the new measures will address the concerns of residents impacted by the redevelopment of Highland Gate.

"Residents are seeing a lot of washing of the construction vehicles and tires into the sewer system and there is lots of muck on them and there may be bits of concrete. That is going into our sewer system and our sewer system wasn't meant for that," she said. "What does a resident do if they see that and think, 'That can't be right,' and they call the Town? You don't have enough staff to really have someone to go over and tell them to stop."

Mr. Jean agreed that that ?type of activity? is ?difficult to police and enforce? as it would happen at a very specific moment of time.

?I guess they can call the Bylaw enforcement officer and he will go out there ? unfortunately, it is done in a very short period of time [and] you might not be able to catch them,? he said, before assuring the Councillor that there will be a fine for this.

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