

Remaining traffic calming measures to stay put

By Brock Weir

Remaining traffic calming measures in Aurora's downtown northeast quadrant are here to stay, following a Council decision last week.

Council opted to leave the measures, including traffic diverters and one-way streets, in place after a change of heart from their direction the previous week. They came into last Tuesday's meeting set to go back to the residents and the neighbourhood at large to determine the future of what is left, after the removal of the contentious traffic chicanes last fall, but ultimately decided to leave things as they were.

The chicanes were removed last year following extensive consultation in the area. Residents in the neighbourhood in question, and those polled in Aurora at large, identified the chicanes as the chief traffic irritant that should go. After a week to sleep on it, Council decided the results of the surveys were enough to chart the way forward.

"We have all heard from the residents and we all know what the issues are, and I agree with the residents," said Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

For Councillor Michael Thompson, residents made it "abundantly clear" that the chicanes had to go, but that consensus was not there as far as the other traffic calming measures were concerned.

"Certainly in the case of the chicanes the information was abundantly clear that it was not effective and the majority of those both within the area and outside the area thought the chicanes should be removed and we took that action," he said. "At this point, I see no reason to go back to the residents. We have enough information before us."

Since Council's decision at the committee level the previous week, very few people had come forward to express their opinion one way or another, Councillors said. Approximately 20 emails were received arguing in favour of the status quo, but no one saying that the diverters needed to be removed.

"This has been studied to death and what I have always heard from residents is while they had trouble with the chicanes, other people have talked about the diversion of traffic giving them back their neighbourhood," said Councillor Chris Ballard on the previous staff recommendation to do nothing.

Councillor Evelyn Buck, however, was of a different opinion. Last Tuesday, she reiterated her previous stance that the traffic calming measures shouldn't have been installed in the first place as anything that would hinder the flow of drivers in traffic is a hindrance to the very people who have paid for the roads. She said diverting and "obstructing" traffic flow was a "complete contradiction" to the planning of roads.

"The whole community paid for the construction and reconstruction of the roads and we added a quarter of a million to deter people who had paid for the roads from using them," said Councillor Buck. "All of the emails you have received are from people who are really revelling in the transformation of their neighbourhood and some of them have said that if you take away the diverters they will have to go and live somewhere else. Yes, we had to make a choice. We had to find a quiet street where it was safe for our children to play in the streets if they wanted to."

These arguments were just that and did not offer a constructive solution, however, argued Councillor John Gallo. The argument was on the table that money shouldn't have been spent to install the traffic calming measures in the first place, but further money would have to be spent to remove them, he argued.

"If the point is to trash on what has happened in the past and what decisions that were made, I find that a complete waste of time,"

he said.

For Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, the traffic calming measures were a reflection of the evolving nature of the community over the past century when the neighbourhood was previously laid out.

'There was no such thing as people trying to blast their way to Yonge Street,' he said. 'The usage has changed. We need to recognize these usage changes. One person who lives directly in the area wants the one-way at Centre Street gone because, 'Why can't I go down my own street?'

'My comment was I didn't have a good answer. There are two other people who aren't happy with the diverter, but those are the only ones I have heard from.'