

Resident angered by Stable Neighbourhoods presentation

(Re: Council looks for area-specific restrictions in Aurora's Stable Neighbourhoods, April 4)

As a concerned resident of the Aurora Heights neighbourhood, I attended the March 27 meeting at Aurora Town Hall concerning the ZBA-Stable Neighbourhood study ? three neighbourhoods including the Aurora Heights Subdivision.

Here are my impressions of what transpired:

A spokesman for the Town gave an extensive speech outlining the criteria for future development and renovations of dwellings within the three study areas. This was not criteria for stability, but a more onerous position to destabilize our neighbourhoods. It included changes allowing huge footprints and square footages nearing 4,000 square feet; building heights topping 29 feet; sloping third-storey rooflines creating knoblike appearance to the final level; architectural control of exterior building materials (brick), and garages set back from the building frontage.

The controls were dictated without a proposal for a residents vote.

I felt angry as a 50-year owner in the subdivision.

There was no masking the elitist intent with no concern shown for the elderly, widows or widowers, first-time homeowners to be, new family formation groups, and our children who will not be able to afford to buy homes in the community where they were raised, attended schools, and made their friends.

Many of us love our 1,100 to 1,200 square foot bungalows while the Town seems intent on redevelopment, producing large, showy homes in order, I suspect, to raise the tax base.

I am not against individuals improving their own homes, but 3,900-plus square feet is too drastic a change when most of us are quite content with our 1,100 square feet.

Why not 2,200 to 2,500 square feet? That's another arbitrary number just like 3,900 square feet. In fact, the larger allowable building size will attract developers who gain greater profit per square foot by producing larger homes.

Builders have already entered our subdivision and have produced several monstrous-looking houses. I can envision the next phase of this drama where real estate agents from all over the GTA start calling and door-knocking, bugging us to list our houses.

They will say, 'We think we can get you \$\$\$\$\$\$.? Another agent in their office may be working with builders. Who will these out-of-town agents really be working for?

Once this evolution begins and huge homes are created, we who love our low-rise subdivision will be pushed out by a new unfriendly, alien-looking neighbourhood plus a higher per lineal front footage tax base imposed on our property frontages.

Following the presentation by the Town, residents were given the opportunity to address their concerns. Nearly all the speakers were opposed to the Town's proposal. Most of us applauded the speakers, although the Mayor announced that we should discontinue this practice since, he said, the atmosphere was becoming hostile.

He was right; the Town's covert strategy of dictating a major imposition on our lives was too much to bear.

A resident speaker from an upscale fringe area attached to the Aurora Heights subdivision said our homes had approached the age of economic obsolescence, and that they were beginning to crumble and insulation and mechanical systems were obsolete.

I wish I had been able to tell him about the houses in Europe that are a couple of hundred years old and are still well-maintained. As I implied, there are a variety of attitudes amongst people of different economic circumstance. These opinions and biases suit their reality which some will try to impose on others.

Some of the speakers said they had collected names of residents who are opposed to the Town's supposed 'stability study.'

If the Town Council intends to impose their regulations on our community without allowing residents to vote, I suggest we band together; dividing the neighbourhood into canvassing grids; and poll owners who are both for and against the Town's proposal; and having each sign their names and, if need be, the petitions could be submitted to the ombudsman's office.

After all, we live in a democratic country and expect fairness by those who govern us.

I volunteer myself as one of the canvassers.

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