

"Residential-style" architecture should be incorporated into AUC home: Council

By Brock Weir

Council members are expected to call for 'residential-style' architecture to be incorporated into the Temperance Street façade of a new seven-storey retirement complex set to be built in conjunction with the new Aurora United Church.

Local lawmakers made the provision last week while, at the same time, approving the delisting of five Victorian homes on Temperance and Tyler Streets which will ultimately lead to their demolition, making way for the new construction.

The decision came after lengthy discussion at last Tuesday's Council meeting which included two delegations from concerned citizens, both members of the Aurora Village Ratepayers Association.

Appearing before Council, Troy Hourie called for any delisting of the homes be put off until official plan amendments concerning the Aurora United Church (AUC) and the Amica retirement residence are fully approved.

'It would be a shame to take these homes down if the development approval was held up, if there are any referrals to the OMB (Ontario Municipal Board) and similarly it may also impact any hearings if the homes are demolished,' said Mr. Hourie.

He went a step further and called on Council to look at the development in the context of the entire block. The Development of a Community Cultural Precinct Plan, he said, would help stakeholders look at it from a bird's eye view, including traffic impacts, parking solutions, and making existing heritage amenities work for the residents.

Holding off on approving the demolition was supported by Councillor Wendy Gaertner, who also threw her support behind having the developer incorporate 'residential style' architecture into the Temperance Street façade. The five homes in question were 'part and parcel' of the application as a whole and to allow them to be demolished before the development application itself is approved 'just doesn't sit well with me.'

'I don't think it is the right way to go,' she said. 'I just don't want to see five properties demolished before we approve the application. We know the United Church is going to rebuild, and we want it to be wonderful and get the congregation back in there, and we want them to be viable financially, but I just don't want to see five homes demolished before we actually approve, as a Council, the application.'

Councillor John Abel expressed some misgivings as well, suggesting further comment on both the delisting and the proposed church and retirement home development from the Heritage Advisory Committee would be beneficial.

'My concern is if we delist them without any comment, the message we're sort of sending is we're moving ahead with this project and we have to hear from our residents and comments from Council. I don't want to be handcuffed. I want to slow it down.'

These views, however, were not shared by the majority of Council members who said they did not want to 'waste time.'

'It is our duty as Council (once applications come in) whether the home or the property should be designated or delisted,' said Councillor Tom Mrakas. 'To defer it, we're just wasting time at the end of the day and I don't think moving ahead with this means we're moving ahead with the project. It is a separate issue.'

'We shouldn't hold an applicant hostage because we don't like an application right now of what they are looking to do. We will deal with that when it comes to public planning. I am not in favour of deferring this. If someone wanted to look at designating this, I would say that is a different story, but to defer it? No.'

Added Councillor Michael Thompson: 'I do see these as two separate things. The property owner has asked us to delist the property, we're making a decision based on that solely. The site plan proposal will be dealt with at the end of this month at public planning. I will be supporting the Committee's recommendation.'