

Residents oppose redevelopment of Centre Street home into four-plex

Residents in Aurora's Downtown Core have come together to oppose a redevelopment application which, if ultimately approved, would transform a single-family home on Centre Street into a four-plex.

Next-door neighbours Steve Armes and Rebekah Murdoch have started a petition on Change.org to underscore their concerns about the redevelopment.

“While we support the redevelopment of the property, this proposed redevelopment does not reflect the nature and the history of the historic Aurora North East Quadrant, nor does it reflect the ‘stable community/neighbourhood’ initiatives,” said proponents of the petition, asking for the Town's Committee of Adjustment to deny the variances and also for further public engagement on “a more suitable option which better reflects the style and nature of the community and street.”

Speaking to The Auroran, Mr. Armes added they hope to highlight their issues to Council this week.

“There has to be a happy medium,” he said. “Everyone in this neighbourhood we've talked to and responded to the petition [said] ‘How about a nice, appropriate duplex? Something that fits in?’ It needs to be appropriate in the amount of space it takes up, it needs to be appropriate to the environmental concerns around it – to heritage and historical.”

The present proposal, however, received the support of the Town's Heritage Advisory Committee, with the property owner/developer answering questions and concerns raised by members, and Council this week is facing a recommendation to approve the heritage application to make way for the double duplex.

“There is an existing 1.5 storey arts and crafts bungalow on the property constructed circa 1873,” said heritage planner Carlson Tsang in his report to Council. “The building has been subject to extensive renovations over the years, including a front addition and the replacement of siding. The original elements of the style may have been either removed or covered due to alterations. There is a significant tree located at the front of the existing building that is considered significant for the historical streetscape.”

The future of the property has been in question since 2014 when the then-owner applied to demolish the building, an application which was approved by Council the following year. The property, however, was sold and another demolition and redevelopment application came, was approved, and went.

The present owner has applied to build a two-storey double duplex and four parking spaces.

“The proposed double duplex represents a homestead-style building which is considered compatible with the character of the host neighbourhood,” said Mr. Tsang. “[It is] characterized by a steep gable roof, simple details, square-headed openings, sash windows and clapboard finishes. This type of architectural style is common on Centre Street and is considered compatible with the character of the host neighbourhood.”

The proposed building originally had a height of 10.5 metres, but following staff's request, the plan has been reduced by 1.5 metres and “staff are satisfied” with the massing. Additional changes to the plan include an additional verandah feature to be more in the style of the surrounding neighbourhood and the total depth of the proposal has been reduced.

“The application was presented to HAC [which] echoed staff's initial concerns with the proposed development respecting building depth and the number of windows on the front façade,” said Mr. Tsang. “HAC also suggested to the applicant that the front verandah, which initially was only present on the west half of the building, be extended across the entire façade to achieve a more compatible front elevation. The applicant was also asked to consider appropriate measures to mitigate the impact of the parking spaces on the adjacent property to the north. HAC requested the applicant to address all the concerns before bringing the heritage application to Council for a decision.

?The applicant reduced the overall depth of the building and the number of windows on the front elevation. The verandah has been extended across the entire front façade. The parking area has been adjusted to accommodate a landscape buffer with pyramidal cedars along the rear property line to help lessen the impact on the adjacent property to the north.?

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