

Rogers tower gets go-ahead despite prominent location in new development

By Brock Weir

A replaced and relocated cell tower for St. John's Sideroad between Bayview and Leslie will go ahead, following Council's sign-off last week.

The new, modern-designed tower will replace the lattice tower currently in place and will move further east to allow for a proposed road in the new 2C development. It will be a Rogers tower but will also be used by Bell and Telus.

Mayor Geoffrey Dawe and other members of Council had previously questioned whether the proposed location, which would be near the entrance of a new subdivision, would be the best place for the tower, suggesting an alternate location closer to Leslie Street, but at last week's Council meeting, Tatyana Moro of Rogers Communications said moving it further was a no go.

“While the current site is in an optimal location for achieving the coverage objectives of the network, Rogers has been approached by the landlord for the proposed redevelopment of the property,” said Ms. Moro. “This is one of the rare circumstances in which we can actually accommodate relocation. It will allow the three carriers to provide continuous coverage for the residents of Aurora as well as the new community that will be moving in through the new development while improving the aesthetics of the current design.

“We're honouring our legal obligation to the landlord and working together to provide a viable solution that will address our network requirements while providing connectivity to our customers with a lesser impact to the community being proposed.”

Although Rogers threw cold water on the idea of moving it closer to Leslie, Councillor Michael Thompson, who voiced his opinion against the site the previous week, continued his opposition. While the need was “obvious”, he opposed the location as it would become a “focal point” for the whole subdivision.

“The cell tower is the gateway tower to that subdivision, almost,” he said. “You're going to come down St. John's and it is going to be there” and we all know what it looks like on Bathurst. I know they have made arguments that it can't be in the valley and it doesn't provide as good a coverage as they would like, but I don't think this site is the best site for Aurora. I am trying to imagine people living on that street and that towering above them.”

While he said he wasn't convinced all options had been explored, other Councillors were equally unconvinced that there was anything they could do about it.

“You have to have these towers,” said Councillor John Abel. “There is a protocol here and the advantage is it is in a new subdivision and no one is going to be saying, ‘I had no idea.’”

Added Councillor Chris Ballard: “I don't think we have much of a choice. That is one lesson I learned from the King Township placement that we can stomp our feet and yell and scream all we want and it is very difficult to tell a company where to move the Tower. The director tells us they are really presenting us with two options: take this new one, or they will just stay where they are with that ugly design and we'll have to arrange with the developer a new road design so it can stay there.”

Whichever side of the fence Councillors came down on, one bonus was Rogers would open up the white siding at the top of the new tower for branding by the Town free of charge. This could include stamping it with the municipal logo or whatever Aurora ultimately decides.

“I think that will really assist [residents with] the acceptance of this larger, higher tower,” said Councillor Sandra Humfries.