

Speed limit reduction coming to John West Way

By
Brock Weir

A speed reduction will be coming soon to John West Way.

Council last week approved a motion from Councillor Rachel Gilliland which will see speeds on the busy thoroughfare near Town Hall reduced by 10km/hour to a speed limit of 40km an hour, aligned with other area residential streets.

Additional traffic calming measures will also be investigated by municipal staff, including a possible three-way stop at Amberhill Way, just across the street from Town Hall and the Aurora Seniors' Centre.

When John West Way was built, there were no condos, parks, schools, or community events [in the area], said Councillor Gilliland, speaking to her motion. Even the Aurora Seniors' Centre wasn't there. Over the years, there has been a tremendous increase in pedestrians, events and new builds. In addition, we have also received notice of new rezoning of even more residential housing (a proposed apartment building) at the northeast corner of John West Way - even more traffic and more pedestrians.

Councillor Gilliland told Council she has heard from many residents regarding speeds and sightline issues in the area, complaints, she said, were corroborated by municipal staff who have heard similar concerns, particularly when it comes to the safety of kids trying to cross the street.

I believe this issue needs to have a two-prong approach solution, one to reduce speed to 40 km an hour to meet all other residential streets and, two, to address the sight line issues, she said. Local residents and visitors have shared their concerns with sight line issues around the bend, not only by driving north and south but also exiting Town Hall, Amber Hill Way and the Tim Hortons plaza. It simply is an accident waiting to happen. The safety in our neighbourhood is a priority and there is a high concentration of secondary school students walking or driving to schools, seniors and residents with accessibility requirements, residents in general and tourists. The fact we have a sign posted saying 'Seniors' is an indication we need to be more aware. I say we can do better to keep our community safe and I hope that I can have the support from Council to move this motion forward.

Council duly supported the motion, but some were left to question why John West Way was an anomaly among

local residential streets that have a 40 km/hour speed limit instead of a 50.

?My understanding is it was considered a thru-way at the time it was built and it wasn't considered a residential street at the time,? said Mayor Tom Mrakas, responding to questions from Councillor Michael Thompson. ?The speed limit was never changed.?

?When I first saw the motion, I thought [of Mavrinac], Conover and certainly some of those major thoroughfares on that part of Town,? replied Councillor Thompson. ?They are all 40 km/hour, so I certainly support the motion.?

Councillor John Gallo, who lives with his family just a few steps from John West Way, was also supportive.

?Being a resident of the area for 23 years, I couldn't agree more,? he said. ?I am not sure what the solution is [on sight line issues]

I think we still need to put our heads together, but there are definitely sight line issues and speed issues up and down the street. I challenge any other street in the Town of Aurora that has that amount of density of residents in that strip from Wellington all the way up to [Hollidge Boulevard].?

A further report on potential traffic calming measures, including that potential three-way stop, is expected to be before Council in the next few months.