

Wellington Street West Condominium project moves to next step amid resident pushback

On January 21, 2025, Council voted to advance a proposed condominium development that sparked considerable debate among residents and Council members at last week's Public Planning meeting.

The project, which seeks to construct 116 back-to-back, stacked townhouse units across four properties along Wellington Street West, will now proceed to the next stage of review at a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

The development, proposed by the development company Armis Glen, would occupy properties located at 511, 521, 531, and 543 Wellington Street West. Each of the 116 units is expected to be between 800 and 900 square feet, with two bedrooms, one underground parking space, and access to either a patio or rooftop terrace, depending on the unit.

However, the project faced strong opposition from residents at the Public Planning meeting.

Resident Janice Ryan, who lives near the site on Dinsmore Terrace, expressed particular concern about the impact of the development on the neighbouring communities. She raised the issue of an anticipated increase in traffic in the area.

The developer requested Regional approval for a temporary right-turn-in/right-turn-out access point from the development site onto Wellington Street West until a new internal road connecting the site to a neighbouring development at 497 Wellington Street West can be completed.

This road would provide a more direct route to the neighbourhood for residents of the new townhouses, but it is contingent on the completion of the 497 Wellington Street West project, which has faced significant delays.

The project at 497 Wellington Street West, approved in 2016, finally received sewage and other essential servicing in the summer of 2024. The lots have been for sale ever since and are still awaiting construction.

Ryan warned that, if there continues to be a delay in the building of the homes on 497, the temporary road entrance would likely continue for an extended period, leading to a severe increase in traffic in nearby areas, including her court at Dinsmore Terrace, as residents of the townhouses would be forced to go through the area any time they needed to head west.

?It is likely that 116 cars would [turn onto Timpson Road then Dinsmore Terrace] every time their owners wish to head west. For those working west of Aurora, this would be almost daily.?

She further added that the high volume of traffic passing through the private road connecting the townhouse development to the 497 Wellington Street West lots could cause the site's property value to decrease.

?The impact of 497?having 116 units next to them, and having all vehicle traffic going through their development is, without question, onerous and a concern for people with children. It would no doubt affect property values and make it less attractive for a developer to purchase property and build said homes.?

Parking was another major concern voiced by both residents and Council members.

The developer has stated that there will be 146 parking spaces, with 116 reserved for the unit owners and 23 designated for visitors. All parking spaces will be located in the underground parking garage beneath the site, while a limited number of additional spaces will be available for short-term use at the front of the units.

However, many residents and Councillors expressed skepticism about whether this amount of parking would be sufficient, especially

given the high density of the development.

?I know for myself in Ward 4, we have a condominium development in the Woodhaven property and we've had lots of concerns from residents with regards to the lack of available parking there, at Del Manor, and elsewhere,? said Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson. ?And those are the realities; As much as the developers may be able to put it into the contract, and as much as those looking to purchase the property may be aware of it, inevitably, these things come up.?

Other issues raised in the meeting included affordability and the site's location encroaching on nearby protected land. The townhouses were estimated by the developer's lead planner to eventually cost around \$800,000 to \$900,000, which, while more affordable than some of the larger townhouses in Aurora, fails to meet the conditions outlined in the newly enacted Affordable Housing Action Plan or York Region's requirements.

Further study is being conducted by Planning Department staff to determine whether the lot encroaches on protected land.

Despite the concerns raised in the meeting, the majority of Council members acknowledged the importance of the project in meeting Aurora's housing goals.

Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland emphasized the Town's 10-year target of 8,000 new units by 2034.

?We only built 147 units in 2024,? she said. ?If we're going to be serious about building some houses in this Town, we have to actually be bold and make some choices.?

The project will return to the Council for further discussion at a future Committee of the Whole meeting, where the developer is expected to present an updated plan that addresses the concerns raised by residents and Council.

By Selena Loureiro