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Town of Aurora

General Committee Report

No. PDS20-068

Subject: **Stable Neighbourhood Policy Review – Urban Design Guidelines**

Prepared by: Edward Terry, RPP, Senior Policy Planner

Department: Planning and Development Services

Date: November 3, 2020

Recommendation

1. That Report No. PDS20-068 be received;
2. That the revised Urban Design Guidelines for Stable Neighbourhoods as attached to this report be approved; and,
3. That Staff present an annual report to Council on Minor Variance application activity within the Town's Four Stable Neighbourhood Study Areas.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the results of public consultation undertaken for the Urban Design Guidelines prepared for new builds and additions within the four Stable Neighbourhood Study Areas. These Design Guidelines are intended to provide direction for homeowners, designers, architects and landscape architects by outlining the framework and design principles for the physical layout, massing and relationships of new builds and additions.

- Urban Design Guidelines represent a planning tool that establishes clearer expectations for those designing and building new homes and additions within Stable Neighbourhoods.
- Public consultation was undertaken in the four Stable Neighbourhood Study Areas to receive feedback on the Design Guidelines.

Background

In June 2019, Council adopted a new zoning by-law to protect the Town's four Stable Neighbourhood Study Areas from incompatible new builds and additions. In addition, Council directed staff to finalize the Urban Design Guidelines and present them to a future Council meeting for consideration.

On July 7 2020, Council provided direction to Staff to undertake consultation with the residents of the four stable neighbourhoods before returning to Council to present the Design Guidelines for consideration. Council's Motion to defer stated:

"That Report No. PDS20-048 – Stable Neighbourhood Policy Review – Urban Design Guidelines be deferred to a September 2020 General Committee meeting and a notification letter be sent to the residents of the four stable neighbourhoods".

Due to the public consultation period ending on August 28 and the time required to consider and amend the design guidelines, additional time beyond September was needed for Staff and the Town's planning consultant to review and present revised guidelines to Council for consideration.

Analysis

Urban Design Guidelines represent a planning tool that establishes clearer expectations for those designing and building new homes and additions within Stable Neighbourhoods

Even though the Town's Official Plan includes general Urban Design principles in Section 4, those principles are not specific to neighbourhoods with single detached dwellings. However, Section 4.1(a) does specify that one of the Town's urban design objective is to "Adopt urban design guidelines that assist development, redevelopment and rehabilitation to provide diversity, amenity, comfort, safety and compatibility with the existing community."

The Stable Neighbourhoods urban design guidelines identify key attributes that contribute to the character of the host community and provide a framework to guide the design of new builds, additions and landscapes that:

- Reconciles compatibility with diversity, while avoiding both monotony and harsh contrasts;
- Respects and reinforces the existing character of the neighbourhood; and,
- Promotes a contextual design approach that considers the adjacent and surrounding development while fostering pedestrian scaled streetscapes while allowing for and encouraging appropriate flexibility, innovation, and diversity in design, essential to evolving communities.

Design Guidelines will help communicate clearer expectations for those designing and building projects within Stable Neighbourhoods. Moreover, the guidelines complement the policies of the Official Plan and provide additional direction on means to achieve the objective and vision through building design, orientation and materials.

Public consultation was undertaken in the four Stable Neighbourhood Study Areas to receive feedback on the Design Guidelines

In accordance with Council direction, the Town mailed approximately 3,600 letters to all homeowners located within the four Stable Neighbourhood Study Areas advising them of draft Urban Design Guidelines and inviting their feedback. A copy of the letter issued by the Town is attached hereto as Appendix 1.

The Urban Design Guidelines were made available for review on the Town's website, however, any resident that requested a paper version of the guidelines were mailed a copy for their review.

The Town received a written submission from the Regency Acres Ratepayer Association and five residents in the community. The comments received can be summarized as follows:

- Include references to Official Plan policies in their entirety.
- schematics, tables and figures are not always referenced in the adjacent text.
- Should address the loss of privacy for nearby homes that results from second storey balconies or rear/side decks.
- Council should be made aware of all infill building applications that are approved by planning staff which do not comply with specific recommendations in the Guidelines.
- Interest to read the design guidelines for our stable neighbourhood area.
- Growing number of homes being used as rentals and single family homes being turned into two family dwellings with basement apartments.

- Implementation of policies and regulations to protect our neighbourhoods and way of life
- Minor wordsmithing suggestions

The table in Appendix 2 provides lists the comments and the responses from staff and the Town's planning consultant. Where appropriate, revisions have been made to the guidelines to reflect resident feedback. Proposed revisions include:

- Adding related policies from the Official Plan in their entirety.
- Adding language that better describes the diagrams and their purpose.
- Adding the following text: "Minimizing the location of second floor balconies on rear and side elevations" and "Providing fencing that effectively screens the rear amenity and minimizes its exposure to/from adjacent properties."

In response to a resident comment about Council being made aware of all infill applications for new builds and additions that are approved by the Town which do not comply with the Guidelines, staff are proposing to present an annual report to Council summarizing approved Minor Variance applications within the Town's Four Stable Neighbourhood Study Areas. Should the findings identify areas that need addressing, Staff may recommend amendments to the zoning standards of the Stable Neighborhood Zoning By-law that would be subject to public consultation in accordance with the Planning Act.

Advisory Committee Review

Not applicable

Legal Considerations

Urban design guidelines are not policies within the Official Plan and do not fall under the Planning Act. Once Council approves the guidelines, they may not be appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising to the Town as a result of this report.

Communications Considerations

The Town of Aurora will use 'Inform' as the level of engagement for this project. There are five different levels of community engagement to consider, with each level providing the community more involvement in the decision-making process. These levels are: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower. Examples of each can be found in the Community Engagement Policy. These options are based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum and assist in establishing guidelines for clearly communicating with our public and managing community engagement. In order to inform, this report will be posted to the Town's website. The planning and development webpage will also be updated with the new guidelines.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. That Council provide direction.

Conclusions

The Urban Design Guidelines for Stable Neighbourhoods represent a planning tool for managing character and protecting the host community from incompatible new builds and additions. Public consultation undertaken by staff has resulted in a number of revisions to the Design Guidelines. The Guidelines are intended to work together with the Stable Neighborhood Zoning By-law to implement the policies of the Official Plan to ensure compatibility while permitting the host community to evolve and be enhanced over time with continued financial investment.

Implementing Design Guidelines will communicate clearer expectations for those designing and building projects within Stable Neighbourhoods. Moreover, it will complement the general policies of the Official Plan and provide addition detailed direction on means to achieve the objective and vision through building design, orientation and materials.

Attachments

Appendix 1 – Consultation Letter

Appendix 2 – Public Consultation Table

Appendix 3 – Revised Aurora Heights Urban Design Guidelines

Appendix 4 – Revised Regency Acres Urban Design Guidelines

Appendix 5 – Revised Temperance Street Urban Design Guidelines

Appendix 6 – Revised Town Park Urban Design Guidelines

Previous Reports

General Committee Report PDS18-007 dated January 23, 2018

Special Council Report PDS18-040 dated May 29, 2018

General Committee Report PDS18-084 dated June 27, 2018

General Committee Report PDS18-089 dated July 17, 2018

General Committee Report PDS19-010 dated January 30, 2019

Public Planning Report PDS19-025 dated March 27, 2019

General Committee Report PDS19-039 dated June 4, 2019

General Committee Report PDS20-048 dated July 7, 2020

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on October 15, 2020

Approvals

Approved by David Waters, Director, Planning and Development Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer