

June 6, 2012

To: **Chair and Members, Planning and Environment Committee**

Re: **Comments on the Near-Campus Neighbourhoods Planning Report**

As a resident of the "Near-Campus Neighbourhood" of Sherwood Forest/Orchard Park I would like to draw several items both in support and opposition to your Near-Campus Neighborhood Planning Amendments Report (OZ-7663).

The report recognizes many of the problems which have occurred as a result of poor planning and lack of controls on student rental (short term occupant) properties over the years. The report best summarizes this on page 15 and identifies two root problems of "Behaviour issues" and "Inappropriate and unsustainable forms of intensification in other more established Near Campus Neighbourhoods". Although I agree with this in general, I think the report fails to make the City accountable for the failures and complete loss of many Near Campus Neighbourhoods. Nearly all the areas referenced in the report have been allowed to increase the number of rental units to the point that the neighbourhood conversion to "Student Ghetto" has been fully realized.

As a resident living just west of the University, I think the City must take more aggressive action towards strict control of rental properties. The Western Road/Sarnia Road corridor already has a high intensification of rental properties. It is this fact combined with our neighbourhood's proximity to the University, which has led to the dramatic increase in single family dwellings being purchased for the purposes of student rental. Allowing further intensification in this area will only accelerate this phenomenon and make the Sherwood Forest/Orchard Park neighbourhood a "Not-So-Great Near-Campus Neighbourhood".

The City needs to take control of rental properties and consider the following:

- A 25% additional property tax levy on Near-Campus Neighborhood rental properties
- A limit set on the number of licences issued for rental properties (similar to the UK, as identified on page 4 of the report)
- A limit set on the allowable number of rental properties in each Near-Campus Neighborhood
- A limit on the number of bedrooms in homes sold as single family, i.e. a home sold as a 3 bedroom bungalow can only be licensed for rental as such (no additional bedrooms can be added)
- Establish a local governing body, including members of the affected community, to control and issue rental licences.

I support recommendations in the report that include changes/restrictions to parking area controls and coverage, cap on bedrooms, limit or highly controlled variance request for lot splits, building adjustments, zoning recommendations (pg. 36), and establishing a local City/Community body with community members sitting for the management of variances and appeals concerning rental properties.

I oppose the reference made throughout the report regarding "balance and mix". Student renters add no value to a neighbourhood, so it is difficult to accept the reference to students providing a balanced dynamic. This is supported in your report on page 15 where you identify behaviour issues and inappropriate and unsustainable forms of intensification in other more established Near Campus Neighborhoods as consequences associated with student rental housing (short term occupant). Any degree of "balance and mix" is a compromise to a neighborhood, not an enhancement!

Although the additional property tax on rentals would not be popular, the reality is these houses and their short term occupants are expensive for the City to manage with municipal enforcement and law enforcement complaints and erode neighbourhood property value. The fact remains, these are very profitable enterprises. The purpose of purchasing a single family home for student rental is done for one reason only "to make money". There is no pride of ownership, level of care or enhancement that allows the home to appreciate in the traditional residential sense. The City should consider specific controls and fees for such "enterprises" above and beyond those of a traditional owner occupied house.

In the end, the concern my family and neighbours share is the loss of residential amenity. Once the neighbourhood turns the "Ghetto" corner, it will not and cannot recover as a viable neighborhood.

My wife Julia and I are both Queens University graduates and know first-hand the impact of poor controls and loss of complete neighborhood communities. We both rented homes on streets that over the course of our time at school went from streets mostly comprised of owner occupied houses to student rental houses. In the timespan of four years an entire neighbourhood is lost!

Real problems call for real action. In the past, the City has reacted to problems, doing too little too late. It's time for some proactive leadership and the establishment of guidelines that are effective and enforced to preserve the quality of Near-Campus Neighbourhoods.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Therron D. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small circle above the 'o' in "Jones".

Therron D. Jones, P.Eng.
Resident and Homeowner

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