

From: Arthur Thompson

Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 5:15 PM

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Subject: [EXTERNAL] 135 Villagewalk Boulevard

Dear Members of the Planning and Environment Committee, please include this letter on the meeting agenda and update me on any further changes to this application:

I am glad to see that the shopping area at Upper Richmond Village is finally being completed. We moved into the area in 2005, and for as long as I can remember, 135 Villagewalk Boulevard has been nothing but a field with an ever-changing array of advertisements encouraging would-be residents to “Shop, Live, Play” at Upper Richmond Village. Now, 15 years since the Sunningdale North Area Plan, it seems that the area is on its way to completion. Unfortunately, I do not believe that this proposal by York developments is true to the initial idea put forward by the original owners, Auburn Developments.

Looking at the original website for Upper Richmond Village (by Auburn Developments - it can be found at http://www.terracorp.ca/upperichmondvillage.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11&Itemid=8), it is easy to get an idea of the spirit or feeling that the designers had in mind when they planned this community. The website says, “Imagine a place where you can stroll along the creek behind your house, where the homes are not dominated by garages but **heritage facades**; where you can go to work, get a hair cut, or buy a new dress all on the same street and not leave your neighbourhood; where you can walk your children to get an ice cream or a movie, or retreat to a central park for a picnic or to play ball; where you can meet friends for dinner at your favourite restaurant or pub and interact with others on **vibrant streets** at all times of the day; a place where you can stay even when you get older.” It sounds lovely, and I know that I am not the only one who was excited about the development, as many of our neighbours and friends talked about the new “**village**.” Auburn goes on to say that their aim is, “**to promote a heritage feeling in the community**... The homes will be positioned closer to the street and garages will be minimized. The designs of the front elevations will be varied to add visual effect.” Another website (<http://domusdev.com/rentals/upper-richmond-village/>) encourages residents to, “Sit at a sidewalk terrace, meet friends for dinner, take the kids to the movies, or simply stroll the vibrant streets of the Village’s commercial district while exploring the many **main-street shops**.” A final website (<https://www.stantec.com/en/projects/canada-projects/u/upper-richmond-village-project>) states, “Upper Richmond Village is a development focused on creating a **sense of community** integrating mixed land uses and a variety of urban style living. Boasting distinctive **architecture steeped in the history of Old North** London... The development is further enhanced by the introduction of **community gateways**, with highlighted crosswalks, plantings, and landscape markers.”

From these descriptions, some things stand out. The developers wanted to “**promote a heritage feeling in the community**,” have small, independent, boutique shops, not big box stores, have shops that are primarily pedestrian oriented (“**Main Street shops**”), have a community that was walkable with store fronts facing Villagewalk Boulevard (this is why on-street parking cut-outs are currently provided on Villagewalk Boulevard), and create a shopping area that used **classical/traditional architecture** to create a **Village** feeling. The photos provided by Auburn Developments provide an excellent idea of what the goal for the neighbourhood was.

The following photos were taken from Auburn Development's original website for the development:





These photos confirm that the original intention for this community was to have boutique shops that used a variety of materials, textures, colours, and traditional architecture to create a “village” feel. The proposal for the development brought forward by the current owners of the site, York developments, do not live up to this original plan. Their proposal recommends massive ‘big-box’ stores as apposed to

“Main Street shops.” Their buildings will not use a variety of colours as Auburn’s original mock-up photos show, but lots of grey, white and silver, including “slate coloured brick, Granada stone, grey stucco, and cinderblock.” Their buildings do not include traditional, heritage architecture, but are grey and modern. York’s proposal images from their website confirm this, as is shown below.

This image was taken from York Development’s Website:



The buildings in York’s proposal look like they could be in any big box shopping plaza, anywhere. There is nothing special, heritage-inspired, or village-feeling about them. I realize that modern design, with lots of grey stucco, neutral colours, hard edges, and minimalist interiors are popular in today’s market, but they will not age well. What was considered ‘modern’ in the 1970s is now seen as ugly, and the same will be true for today’s ‘modern’ buildings.

Thank you for listening to my concerns,

Arthur Mustard-Thompson