

Dear Members of the Planning and Environment Committee,

Please accept my comments re: the revised application OZ-9127 - Ann Street and St George Street Block - York Development Proposal

At the last Planning and Environment Committee meeting, Council arbitrarily decided that the approval of this development is dependent on a minimum of thirteen (13) affordable residential rental units, including one (1) studio unit, one (1) one-bedroom unit, five (5) two-bedroom units, and six (6) three bedroom units (reflective of the unit mix proposed in the building).

This is a whimsical approach to housing affordability and will not replace the affordability of the current existing units on site.

Council will be evicting individuals that currently have housing they can afford. Many working individuals and families cannot afford new housing because they cannot afford first and last month's rent. They may have to live in shelters, sometimes with their families separated until they have accumulated enough wealth to secure housing. This approach evicts people from their homes, without properly considering what those people's fate will be.

For onlookers, Council seems to be acting in self interest without really understanding if these actions are hurting people or making the problem worse.

It will be no surprise to anyone that forcing an unrealistic deadline of June 20th to resolve serious flaws in this development was never intended to achieve a different outcome. Council was simply sending a message that the 13 affordable units was enough to win Council support. This is the same approach used to approve the development at 560-562 Wellington Street, which also broke good planning principles, had little public support and resulted in an Appeal. In that case, Councillor Josh Morgan went on a local newscast and made a proclamation about needing affordable housing for approval.

Councillor Lewis then approached Auburn Development and the 'usual suspects' approved the development. **This approach is not respected because it trades off good planning for units that are not affordable to the poorest residents and most at risk of being homeless.**

Last year, The Ontario Human Rights Tribunal received a complaint against the City of London for failing to implement the Near Campus Neighbourhood Strategy (NCNS) - which aims to balance long and short term housing (i.e. student rentals) through planning and zoning. It also claims that the City of London ignores discriminatory housing practices.

The Ontario Human Rights Tribunal has accepted the complaint and it is moving through the process.

For example:

York Development had explicitly informed Council that this development would be exclusive student housing. The development was rejected, in part, by city planners because it did not comply with the intent of the NCNS. The affected community has also stated that temporary housing (i.e student rentals) is over represented in the neighbourhood and is seeking relief from the negative consequences of having rows of empty houses and streets for almost half a year, each year. The neighbourhood is losing diversity in housing and people, and this is not healthy or safe for any community.

Council should know that purpose-built housing by the private sector is illegal in Ontario unless it is supportive housing such as retirement homes or homes for individuals with physical challenges.

In the North Talbot Neighbourhood, landlords, before showing an apartment to a prospective tenant, ask first and foremost whether the person is a student. If the answer is no, they are turned away and not shown the apartment. Students, as a group, are not a protected code in Ontario. Even though the developer has informed Council that the housing will be exclusive and planning staff have raised this issue in their report, Council has refused to acknowledge it and therefore appear to be 'people zoning' with intent and design.

By not acknowledging your own policy, and by not resisting a housing practice that is potentially discriminatory, you appear complicit.

The complaint also raises the 'right of an individual to the peaceful enjoyment of their property' which is embedded in Ontario's Human Rights Code. Neighbourhoods dominated by temporary student rentals tend to be overwhelmed by student behaviour that is oblivious to the remaining community because they are present for only a short time. The NCNS is intended to balance diversity in housing and people to achieve a full spectrum of residents. It is not intended to be exclusionary but inclusive. The NCNS also states that development is to respect the quality and character of these neighbourhoods.

This development does not contribute to this approach in any way.

The spirit of the Ontario Heritage Act is to designate properties of historical significance for the purpose of protecting our history in its physical built form, and its location is part of that history. The legislation is for the purpose of preserving built heritage for future generations. **Designation is not to be used only until you decide to demolish it a few weeks later.**

This development could be completely different. It could intensify the site and preserve the historical buildings on site. It could be something really great, but instead we have an aggressive developer, not interested in community, and Councillors that want to 'save the world' through eviction notices and approving buildings but not by building communities.

Sincerely

AnnaMaria Valastro

North Talbot Resident