

August 8, 2011

BIGS Community Association request delegation status and the opportunity to provide a brief presentation to the Built and Natural Environment Committee, City of London at their August meeting so that our request can be brought forward at the August meeting of City Council.

The BIGS community association represents the residents of Beaufort, Irwin, Gunn and Saunby Streets, a quiet and isolated neighbourhood just north of Oxford Street and bordered by the Thames River to the east, Gibbons Park on the north and Wharncliffe Road to the west. BIGS is seeking council action to address the unique and urgent situation in the neighbourhood described below.

Family homes are being demolished to be replaced by 10 bedroom duplexes at a pace of three or more per year. The combination of R2 zoning and a lack of city bylaws to consider issues of balance, is allowing this to take place, house by house at a feverish pace without public notice or a pause of any kind that would allow professionals and those impacted a moment to assess the cumulative impacts on the neighbourhood or the implications for the city.

There are only 18 owner occupied homes left out of 42 properties in this "block of concern" (Irwin, Gunn, Saunby and Beaufort Streets). Since 2010, five, 10 bedroom duplexes have been added to this single block which already has a five-plex, two four-plexes, three duplexes and a 9 bedroom Children's Aid Society group home. Add to this the twenty-eight five bedroom student townhouses built in 2005 at the end of Beaufort St (Varsity Mills) and most would agree this neighbourhood has provided more than its share of student housing. However, the developers think we need more student rentals and are particularly aggressive this summer in their approaches to obtaining properties including 61 Gunn which had utilities disconnected last week in preparation for demolition and conversion to a 10 bedroom student rental.

This is a great neighbourhood for families that is affordable, near the core and has safe pedestrian access to Gibbons Park. The intensification has reached a point where there is no balance in the neighbourhood. Professional planners suggest we need an interim Bylaw placing a hold on further development until the issues can be examined with a view to possibly downgrading the zoning.

We are asking Council to place this interim Bylaw on Beaufort, Irwin, Gunn and Saunby Streets now for a period of one year and direct administration to examine the situation and provide recommendations back to council on a permanent solution to achieving some balance through planning control in this family neighbourhood.

Regards

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