

Robicheau, Vanessa

Subject: RE: written submission for Oct 1 Planning Ctte meeting re: Strathcona Secondary Plan

From: Jennifer Dawson

Sent: September-27-13 11:17 AM

To: Robicheau, Vanessa

Cc: McHattie, Brian; SCC President

Subject: written submission for Oct 1 Planning Ctte meeting re: Strathcona Secondary Plan

Vanessa Robicheau

City Clerks Office,

1st Floor, 71 Main Street West

Hamilton, Ontario

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To: Planning Committee members

Re: Strathcona Secondary Plan - objection to land use designations

I am writing to express my objection to the Area Specific Policy (Area E) proposed in the Strathcona Secondary Plan.

I feel very strongly that knocking down 19 homes on Inchbury and Strathcona Ave N. for high rise development on York Boulevard will have a negative impact on the very things that make Strathcona a wonderful place to live--historical building stock that has great appeal and is hard to find in other cities. I was recently told that Strathcona's property values have increased more than any other neighbourhood in the entire city over the past decade. If dollars are a way of denoting value, it seems people like Strathcona the way it is. And they like it a lot.

City planners have put special provisions in the secondary plan document that are meant to assure us that any proposed high rise development in Area E will be designed with the neighbourhood in mind. But that doesn't change the fact that 19 homes would be demolished to allow for such development.

York Boulevard was forever changed in the 1970s when a "renewal" project tore down blocks of traditional mixed-use Main Street-style buildings on both sides of the street. Today, York is a highway speeding through my neighbourhood (albeit with a nice boulevard) with pockets of bizarre commercial and residential development on either side, apparently built to correspond to the then-in-vogue idea of buildings that overhang the sidewalk. Needless to say, I feel a little bit like "we've been here before." And the results aren't pretty.

Planning staff have told me that designating this area as appropriate for high density development will help protect other areas of the neighbourhood because developers will be directed to Area E rather than other parts of Strathcona to build residential towers. To me, such land use designations set a dangerous precedent for knocking down homes to build high rises in our neighbourhood--a message that I am very afraid of communicating. We just have to look a little bit east to the Durand neighbourhood to see what that can mean to a community.

I am not opposed to intensification. However, I don't think we need to sacrifice neighbourhood character, history and vibrancy to do it. In fact, research has shown that quantities of low-to-mid-rise buildings (3-5 storeys) can easily reach densities in excess of pockets of high rise development. If high rise development is

required in Strathcona (although city planners have told me that there are no density targets for the neighbourhood) then high rise developments at Queen and York would be better, to me, than at the gateway to Victoria Park.

Similarly, I would ask the Planning Committee to reconsider staff's recommendation to allow homes at the corners of Main Street and New Street, Main and Strathcona S., King Street at Ray St and King and Pearl to be demolished for similar higher density developments. Some of these homes are quite grand. Some are cute one-floor semidetached worker's cottages that are hard to find in any city (and perfect for an aging population). All of them have value in our neighbourhood. The proposed loss of these homes is not anywhere near the scale of the demolitions proposed for Inchbury and Strathcona Ave. N at York, but they are a concern to me nonetheless. These homes are important to creating a neighbourhood feeling at the edges of our community--a buffer at those spots where low density residential meets commercial "Main Street" uses.

In all cases I have discussed here, I believe that traditional "Main Street" style developments of up to four storeys could be built along the major streets without demolishing any homes on the north-south streets at all. These would achieve higher density in the neighbourhood without sacrificing the quality of the interior neighbourhood areas.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Dawson