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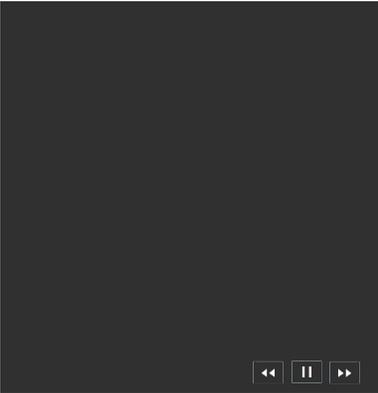
Citizen Spectrum: A Growing Concern in Kleinburg

Kleinburg's Official Plan is facing requests for exemptions from builders. Residents are concerned what approvals would lead to.

Vaughan Citizen
By [Adam Martin-Robbins](#)

Celebrated author and historian Pierre Berton once wrote of Kleinburg, the village he called home, that its "greatest asset is that it still manages to capture some of the feeling of the rural past."
Now, a group of residents is raising concerns that asset could be wiped out by a half-dozen or so proposed residential/commercial developments.

"We have (at least) five applications coming down the pike, it's going to make a huge change to this village," said Bob Klein, a longtime resident and director with the Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers Association.
"Councils, in the past, have said Kleinburg is the only tourist destination they've got in Vaughan, other than (Canada's) Wonderland, and they're destroying it."
The residents are quick to point out they're not opposed to development. Rather, they're against projects that don't meet the guidelines and regulations in place for the Kleinburg core as set out in the city's Official Plan (OP), the Kleinburg-Nashville Heritage Conservation District Plan and the zoning bylaws.
"We do support good development



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SIDEBAR

SPECTRUM OF PERSPECTIVES

RESIDENTS
"Every time you have a compromise the bar goes lower."
-Bob Klein, director Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers Association

APPLICANT

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that's in line with the plan," said Mark Tatone, who lives next door to one of the proposed developments. "You'll find from the residents that they're very, very pleased with Villagio (Ristorante). They're very pleased with the new dentist's office. They're very pleased with the Starbucks. These are things that are sustainable, they're profitable (and) they fit."

But, there are other proposals that don't fit, residents say, citing one on Stegman's Mill Road, near Islington Avenue, and one at 30 Nashville Rd. These were the subject of a public meeting at city hall earlier this month. The Stegman's Mill development would see 30 three-storey detached homes (with an underground parking garage) built on three existing single-home lots.

The 30 Nashville Rd. project is proposing to replace a one-and-a-half storey home, currently occupied by a hair salon and spa, with a three-storey, 30-unit condominium building.

The Stegman's Mill project developer is seeking exemptions to the Official Plan's allowable height of 9.5 metres and the compatibility criteria "to respect and reinforce existing physical character and surrounding area."

Other exemptions being sought include zoning bylaw requirements for setbacks and parking spaces. The developer of the Nashville Road project is looking for exemptions to exceed the allowable height, exceed the allowable lot coverage and to permit some residential units on the main floor rather than just commercial units.

In response to those two development proposals, hundreds of residents packed the council chambers at city hall two weeks ago, with most in opposition.

"We're not against any development, if it's appropriate," Mark Inglis, a resident and KARA director, said in an interview before the meeting. "It's not appropriate to be suburbanizing the village and that's what's happening. We end up with residential units only and this little square of commercial property. We're losing out on business commitment and we're losing out on community benefit."

Maple/Kleinburg Councillor Marilyn Iafate, speaking to The Citizen after the meeting, said she shares many of the residents' concerns.

"I've been seeing more and more of people coming in with development applications that have far greater expectations than what the current Official Plan allows, that concerns me," she said, speaking in general terms – not about any specific development proposal.

"It seems like it's a replication of what's going on in Maple. ... There's no respect of community anywhere, people just come in and build whatever they want."

Infill development projects are being proposed across the city, but unlike some areas Kleinburg simply can't handle a lot of growth, she added.

Thornhill Councillor Alan Shefman appears to share the some of the residents' frustration too.

At the public meeting, he asked a planner for the Stegman's Mill project why the developer would bring forward a proposal that doesn't meet the requirements laid out in the Official Plan, which cost the city millions and took years to create.

"I guess the answer I have is, we live in a system where planning is governed by the Planning Act and you have the right to make the application," said Ryan Mino-Leahan, with KLM Planning partners. Mino-Leahan added that his client looked at several options, including an institutional building, to find something that "really fit within the community."

He stressed his client is trying to meet Official Plan requirements, but, as an example, the "architectural style being demanded of residential buildings today" makes it difficult to meet the 9.5 metre maximum height requirements.

The Citizen put the same question to Claire Riepma, planning consultant for the proposed 30 Nashville Rd. development.

Riepma pointed out the Official Plan looks at the big picture, but "doesn't necessarily work for each individual property."

He said his client is asking for a "couple of very minor amendments" to the Official Plan. Residents disagree that the requested changes are minor.

Regardless, they say, if developments that don't conform to the Official Plan are approved by council, it will set the new standard for future proposals, which could end up being even taller and larger.

"Every time you have a compromise, the bar goes lower," Klein said.

The residents say city council ought to reject any projects coming forward that don't conform to the existing guidelines and regulations.

And, if necessary, they ought to fight them at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), something council has been "reticent" to do of late, says Klein.

Iafate agrees.

"We're going to have to meet them head on," she said. "I do not agree with allowing these types of things to just happen and let it go and turn a blind eye and say we're going to lose. If we always take the attitude that the OMB's going to do whatever it wants and we don't have a say, then what are we here for?"

Citizen Spectrum is a look at different perspectives on community issues.

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–Ryan Mino-Leahan, KLM Planning Partners Association

RESIDENTS

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– Mark Inglis, KARA director

APPLICANT

"(The Official Plan) doesn't necessarily work for each individual property."

–Claire Riepma, planning consultant

AREA COUNCILLOR

"There's no respect of community anywhere, people just come in and build whatever they want."

–Marilyn Iafate, Maple/Kleinburg Councillor

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