

Town taking steps to prevent future 'monster home' conflicts

By **Melanie Hennessey**
Special to The IFP

The Town of Halton Hills is taking steps to prevent future "monster home" conflicts in established residential areas.

Terms of reference for a Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study were endorsed by the Town's Community Affairs Committee last week. As part of the study, the Town intends to create a steering committee comprised of members of council, Heritage Halton Hills and local residents.

"The scope of the study is to examine the issue of large home rebuilds in older established neighbourhoods of Acton and Georgetown to determine if changes are required to the zoning bylaw to better protect the character of these areas," said Town Manager of Planning Policy Steve Burke.

Over the past 15 years, there've been 26 older homes in Georgetown that have been demolished and replaced—with the majority north of Maple Ave.— and five in Acton.

The issue came to a head last summer when local residents Bob Nesbitt and Anne Anderson voiced their strong op-

position to a new two-storey house being built about four feet away from the fence of their Churchill Cres. property, which houses their bungalow and Halton Pool Guys Inc. home office.

The terms of reference indicate that the study will be broken into three phases over a 12-month period, and will include opportunities for public input.

The Town will examine how other area municipalities have addressed the issue and review Halton Hills' zoning standards for low-density residential zones, including lot frontage, setbacks, building heights, etc.

"Many other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area have conducted similar studies in recent years to address an increasing trend of "monster homes" in mature neighbourhoods," states the study's terms of reference. "The demand and pressure for large-scale residential rebuilds in mature neighbourhoods is expected to rise as the supply of large properties within the Town decreases and land

values across the Town continue to increase."

The study will focus on low-density residential areas developed before 1990, generally north of Hungry Hollow in Georgetown and west of Churchill Rd. in Acton.

Staff intends to consult with the Town solicitor to see if an interim control bylaw that temporarily freezes rebuilds in estab-

lished neighbourhoods is necessary while the study is completed. A follow-up report on the

matter will go before council later this month.

Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette said he's glad to see the Town addressing an issue that has "caused grief in our community."

He asked how staff intends to find residents to serve on the steering committee for the study.

Burke said newspaper and web-based advertising would be used.

"We could also approach neighbourhood associations," he noted.

Ward 2 Councillor Ted Brown said he's happy to see Heritage Halton Hills's inclusion on the committee.

"As a member and chair of the heritage committee, we take the brunt for a lot of things we have no say in, so this at least gives us direction," he said, noting he would be happy to sit on the steering committee.

Ward 4 Councillor Ann Lawlor asked if Norval and Glen Williams would be looked at as part of the study as well.

"There are a lot of older homes in those neighbourhoods," she noted.

Burke said Norval's zoning rules were recently brought up to date through its Secondary Plan and that Glen Williams will be addressed through a separate process as well.

The exercise comes as part of a comprehensive zoning bylaw five-year review, which will also look at zoning standards for the Premier Gateway Employment Area north and south of Steeles Ave.

The overall bylaw review has an approved budget of \$154,000.

The terms of reference will go before Halton Hills Council for approval at its Feb. 29 meeting.



'(It is an issue that has) caused grief in our community.'

— Mayor Rick Bonnette—

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