



Windfields Farm Community Association

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Student Housing Task Force Status Update, December 2008

Over the last few weeks, you may have noticed the articles in the local newspaper regarding rental housing in the area around UOIT. A Student Housing Task Force was created in the fall to bring together all of the parties involved in rental housing in our area, residents, students, landlords, UOIT/Durham College representatives and the City of Oshawa.

David and I have attended several Student Housing Task Force meetings over the past several weeks and were encouraged by the general cooperation displayed by the members. It was our impression that everyone understood and agreed with the basic premise outlined in the first meeting, that the R1 zoned neighbourhoods around UOIT should be restored to their original intent – low-density residential (not commercial or economic) single-housekeeping establishments.

Subcommittees were established to find ways to ensure this basic premise could be obtained. These subcommittees have discussed such things as how to begin more significant enforcement of the Residential Rental Units Licensing and Lodging Houses bylaws, where purpose-built rental housing can be constructed in the area, how to encourage construction of such buildings, how to balance the supply of new rental housing with the denial of licenses to illegal lodging houses and how to coordinate all of these elements to move forward with the least disruption to the community.

We all had to acknowledge that the current situation is not sustainable. Our communities cannot continue with such large number of rental properties, most of which are operating as lodging houses which is not a legal use in a low-density area such as those around the campus.

To clarify the difference between a rental house and a lodging house, this was explained best by Judge Howden in his decision of the lawsuit brought forward by Tribute/Windfields and the City of Oshawa earlier this year. As Judge Howden explained, a lodging house is rented to individual lodgers, paying rent separately to the operator for the exclusive use of a bedroom and the shared use of washroom and kitchen facilities with the goal to make a profit of the operator. This is different from a traditional rental house which is rented in its entirety rather than as individual bedrooms with share facilities.

There may be some confusion in the difference between the Lodging Houses Bylaw and the Residential Rental Units Licensing Bylaw. The Residential Rental Units Licensing Bylaw will only grant licenses to those houses operating as traditional rentals rather than lodging houses. If a property is found to be operating in contravention of the Zoning Bylaw, such as being a lodging house (where individual bedrooms are being rented out or used exclusively by an individual lodger with shared washroom and cooking facilities), the house will not receive a license and cannot be rented.

Resident representatives had to acknowledge that these rental properties/lodging houses cannot be denied licenses without alternative housing being provided to the tenants, in order to ensure a housing crisis isn't created. This alternative housing must be near campus but it must be constructed and operated in such a way as to adhere to all zoning and licensing requirements set by the City.

As we all know, this type of purpose-built housing is scarce in North Oshawa at this time. Fortunately, builders such as Ray Stanton, Dundurn Edge Developments and Windfields Farm have come to the table to begin constructing more of this type of housing.

Ray Stanton has already constructed a town-house type complex on campus that houses 110 beds and he has begun building a second phase of another 110 beds to be ready for September 2009.

Dundurn will begin clearing and cleaning the site at Simcoe Street N. and Niagara Drive S. very soon. They expect to have their building, with 560 beds, ready for occupancy by September 2010.

UOIT and Windfields Farm have also begun negotiations for a complex to be built on the west side of Simcoe Street N. , just north of the Campus Ice Centre. This housing complex will likely be ready for occupancy by September 2011 but we are hoping to see at least one phase ready for 2010.

The Task Force subcommittees have also discussed various properties around campus that can be used for future construction. At this point, we have identified properties that already have the correct zoning for higher-density construction. The largest parcel is south on Simcoe where the "golf ball" driving range currently sits. This property is zoned for a large, multi-story building. Other smaller parcels are also zoned for higher-density and most of these properties face onto Simcoe Street between Taunton and Conlin Road . No higher density construction is being considered in the Windfields community on the east side of Simcoe Street N at this time. There may be some limited higher density planned for the distant future but would be north of Britannia and only right along Simcoe Street .

Another subcommittee is considering financial incentives to attract developers to build rental housing. There are a variety of options being reviewed and we hope these will be successful in bringing in more development in the future. While the university growth is currently expected to be very limited due to space and funding restraints, more housing will be required in the future when the cap is lifted in a few years.

We are expecting a report in the next few weeks which will summarize the work of the Task Force and will request City Council to endorse the plans going forward. We will communicate with you when this report is ready and will likely ask you to attend some city Committee or Council meetings to show your support for the report, assuming it recommends a position we can support.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email us at wfca@rogers.com.

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