

Hau, Lucy

Subject: FW: Secondary Suites proposed for Unionville - we need your opinion!

From: NORMAND BRETON
Sent: Tuesday, May 05, 2009 3:40 PM
To: Talbot Consultants
Subject: Re: Secondary Suites proposed for Unionville - we need your opinion!

Richard,

I am against secondary Suites. After living in Toronto and seeing the negative impact of theses units on an neighbourhood, I do not want to see it in Unionville.

Here are a few points for my opposition to Secondary Suites. They are not in any order.

- 1) There will be a parking problem. People will enlarge driveways to get extra car parking. There will be cars parked on streets day and night. Traffic will increase in our neighbourhood. Will the city take an aggressive stand on speeding and parking? Go is already at capacity. Public transportation must be improved before considering Secondary suites.
- 2) The benefit of the income will go to the Second Suites owners, but the extra cost for these suites will be payed by all. Both monetary and more importantly quality of life.
- 3) Crime will increase. Now you know everyone on your street because people don't move in and out of houses as often as you move from Secondary Suites. Who will pay for the extra law enforcement that will be needed?
- 4) Will the increase in demand for Health Care, School, water, sews etc. be address? Who will pay for this demand? Again I am sure, it will not just be the Secondary Suites owners.

Normand Breton

Hau, Lucy

Subject: FW: Secondary Suites proposed for Unionville - we need your opinion!

From: R.J. Van Seters
Sent: Tuesday, May 05, 2009 8:49 PM
To: 'Talbot Consultants'
Subject: RE: Secondary Suites proposed for Unionville - we need your opinion!

Richard, the way I read the report it is a done deal. The report invites those who are in agreement

with the Town's proposal to attend the next meeting (phase). Nowhere does it invite those who

may disagree.

Nowhere does it tell anyone how it hopes to regulate, control or police infractions or violations and what

the proposed penalties might be.

Nowhere does it deal with the impact on the public education system, traffic, use of utilities like water,

sewers, power, natural gas, phone lines etc. and who is responsible for the added restrictions. How does

it impact tax assessment, property values, eligibility for tax collection like GST on rental etc. reporting

to Revenue Canada etc. etc.

What is the impact to on-street parking by new residents, their children and their visitors?

What is the impact to garbage collection, recycling, limits per household on garbage etc.?

What is the impact on voter registration and census taking and on postal services.?

Will houses have to identify if they are multiple family dwellings for fire and ambulance emergency services?

What is the impact on our overburdened hospital and emergency facilities?

What is the impact on infrastructure like roads and traffic from additional drivers and vehicles and public transit.?

What is the impact on aesthetics when garages and driveways become overloaded? A problem that can only be made

worse.?

Will existing residents in non-multiple housing units be rationed for water? (Water pressure is low already at certain

times of day.)

Existing communities were designed to support the population that built and purchased

homes in a given area. How will

this social change in use, population and all the impact issues above affect those who, in good faith, purchased properties

and moved into communities, and supported those communities under a specific set of rules and bylaws.? Questions

could be asked about the elderly, small children, single parent families, poverty, welfare, abuses to the system etc.

What are the social pressures that this policy change might create in terms of police services, crime, public safety and

control of these areas - especially when these services are over-burdened with the existing population as it is?

What will the financial impact be to the residents that choose not to participate or are opposed to the change - ie: change

in property value, changes in taxation, reduction of services, quality of life and maintenance of public property?

What are the rules about family members and non-family members sharing single household facilities and where is the line

drawn for extended families and their relatives? Some immigrants may decide to bring their families and friends to Canada

and live in conditions similar to their country of origin where overcrowding (by Canadian standards) is common-place.

What is the political and financial impact regarding the increase in size of bureaucracy, town staff etc. in running this department?

None of these things are in the report.

Perhaps Richard, we should try to get some answers or at least pose the questions to our members and the committee

so that a survey can have a hope of getting an informed response.

It will also be useful to get the pro's as well as the cons. I'm not sure this gets the town off the hook for affordable housing

if this is within the town's jurisdiction or mandate to start with.

Something to consider?

Regards,

Richard Van Seters

Hau, Lucy

Subject: FW: Secondary Suites proposed for Unionville - we need your opinion!

From: Gord Mah
Sent: Tuesday, May 05, 2009 2:59 PM
To: Richard Talbot
Subject: Re: Secondary Suites proposed for Unionville - we need your opinion!

Hi Richard,

Supportive

1- The population mix within Ward 3 is changing. There are more extended families moving in. That doesn't necessarily mean that any additional changes are required to current houses inside though. Many may share the current set up of (1) kitchen, bathrooms etc. So what some may consider a secondary suite will no real impact if we were to legalize it.

2 - If (a very big "if") the Town looks at this in a broad, comprehensive solution to intensification (Harry's idea). There is an opportunity to use Secondary Suites (SS) to reduce the requirements to shoehorn people into Langstaff Gateway and Markham Centre. This wasn't directly addressed in the presentation. It is unrealistic to presume that every unit sold in either Langstaff or MC will be owner occupied. Less development may be required in MC and Langstaff.

3 - Yes, more affordable housing may be required in Markham.

Concerns

1 - The proposal gives "regulating and permitting second suites will improve life safety of estimated >2500 illegal suites" (slide 6). That raises the question what is being done now. If Joe V is correct in saying that the Town has very limited success enforcing a black and white law now, it gives me little comfort that they will have any more success in the future. I drove by a house recently with a large spray painted sign nailed to a tree in front of a house advertising "Apt for Rent."

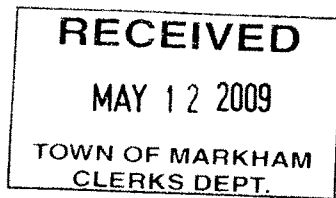
2 - If the current number of SS is 2500, what is the expectation for the future? There is no explicit expectation given. Will it be every other house? Markham has put forth the number of additional staff required (slides 21 & 23) to inspect and enforce the bylaws without providing any realistic expectation of them being able to accomplish it. Will it be possible for 2-4 people to monitor and inspect all of the housing stock, not just SS.

3 - Re: Slide 22 "New Regulatory Controls" The staff recommended Option 1 vs Option 2 seems to be the preferred method by the Town staff to do things. Throw a lit match into a pile of leaves and see if it burns. If not, it must be OK. There's no point in pretending that there is a goal to "improve life safety" if all the Town will do is distribute leaflets (Option 1) describing how to handle garbage. How can Option 2 not be the proper method to inspection?

4 - On that note. As a lady brought up last night, there isn't anything in here to address some other impacts. If a house with a SS is able to put additional garbage at the curb, you are implicitly approving more garbage and recycling may be put out by all houses. It isn't reasonable to expect the garbage collectors to monitor or differentiate which homes have SS's and which do not. What costs will be distributed across all the ratepayers to finance the increased demands on services? At least with MC, there is a process to allocate those costs.

One alternative that has not been offered is to phase in SS (e.g by Ward's) as opposed to at once across the Town. If there is a demand for SS in a certain area, it makes sense to do a test study. Product makers do this all the time. It would reduce and concentrate the demands of staff to only have to monitor a smaller area. During that period, any "kinks" or unexpected consequences may be worked out. Like traffic calming.

Gord



Second Suites Submission to Council May 12, 2009

Experience Tells Us This Is Not Right For Markham

This strategy is not mandated by the Province or the Region. We don't have to go down this road. Many municipalities have chosen not to do so. Our experience tells us this is not right for Markham. I and my neighbours are fundamentally opposed to the legalization of second suites due to our experiences with many of the tenants who live in them and many of the landlords who profit from them. The nuisance factor created by many tenants and the failure of many landlords to deal with that nuisance factor has created so much bad feeling between neighbours in our community that many have sold up and moved out and others no longer speak to each other. How many of those nuisance factors, that residents have been complaining about for years, has the Town addressed in the revised strategy? None. Not even external property standards, and we are told that would cost only \$27 000 a year.

Life Safety and Public Health Issues

This strategy still does not address the life safety issues and public health concerns residents expressed at the May 20, 2008 meeting. Where in this strategy are the professionally installed and inspected ventilation systems and other measures, which will deal effectively with cancer-causing radon gas? Where in this strategy has the danger of basement flooding due to extreme weather events been addressed?

Many older areas of town, including our community of German Mills in Thornhill, have only a 2 year level of protection from stormwater. Many of these older areas of town are extremely vulnerable to flooding and should never have been included in the amendment to the Town's Zoning Bylaws which would add permissions for second suites townwide. To bring in this amendment to the Town's zoning bylaws, townwide, without excluding flood prone areas, is extremely risky and could leave the Town liable in case of future property damage, injury or drowning. We have already had a 150 year storm, on August 19, 2005, with many basements in Thornhill flooded with sewage, homes moved off their foundations, basement floors destroyed by stormwater shooting through them like mini geysers due to hydrostatic pressure and people rescued from rapidly rising floodwater. With global warming and climate change already upon us, we might not be so lucky next time as far as injury and loss of life is concerned.

Why are these two serious life safety and health concerns, of radon gas causing lung cancer and basement flooding in flood prone areas, not being addressed by the Town of Markham in it's second suite strategy?

Financial Responsibility

We are also opposed in principle to the Town spending our tax dollars to provide a free inspection/registration program for one year and free re-inspection/re-registration every three years thereafter, so that landlords who run rental businesses out of residential areas can make even greater profits, when we are desperately in need of those funds in

other areas such as stormwater sewer rehabilitation and upgrading. Most of these people are not paying income tax on their second suite incomes, their properties have not been assessed for second suites and they are therefore not paying sufficient property tax either. Where in it's second suite strategy does the Town address these issues and how many times do we have to raise these issues before the Town does address them? When costs to carry out the program comprehensively reach half a million dollars a year, the financial responsibility for this program should be placed squarely on the landlords who are running and profiting from these rental businesses. Making the rest of us pay as well, is unfair.

Proof of Compliance With Property Standards

In the report to the Development Services Committee March 3, 2009, there is a heading which says **Mandatory Reinspection and Registration**. We believe that permission to reinspect the property every three years **must be a requirement of initial registration**. If there is anything that makes a mockery of the Town's " **strict regulatory regime** to ensure all building and fire safety codes.....and property standards are upheld " it is the clause that allows a landlord to provide proof that the property complies with all applicable standards **without inspection**. How can reinspection be both mandatory and accomplished without inspection? How can proof of fire and electrical safety be provided without a physical inspection? Are you going to have landlords swear an oath before a Commissioner of Oaths and sign their names to a form stating that their properties comply, like you did for the brand new basement apartments that went in, in our community five years ago, when all the new landlords had to do was swear to the lie that those suites had been there since 1995 and were therefore legal? Is that the proof you will require? This section of the strategy must be removed and if re-inspection is denied by a landlord, then registration should be revoked. A landlord who has nothing to hide, will comply, the rest need to be dealt with.

18 Month Monitoring Program and Interior Property Standards

After the initial inspections and registrations, how will an 18 month monitoring program be able to determine whether **interior** property standards should be introduced or not, when inspectors will not be back **inside** those properties for three years? How will staff be able to assess the concentration of cancer-causing radon gas and the need for ventilation? How will windows, floors, stairs, landings, heating and ventilation be assessed unless they are inspected?

Again most of these issues have been raised before. Where in the Town's second suite strategy are these issues addressed?

Nuisance Factors

We have had a few second suites in our community since the subdivision was built and they were grandfathered in 1995. They were largely no problem. We have also had people who have bought a home for investment purposes and rented it out to another family and again there was no problem. All this was perfectly legal and caused few problems or complaints. What has caused the problems over the past 15 years is an influx of landlords with vastly different standards than in the past, who have developed **rental businesses** in residential areas and other businesses on driveways and front

lawns, who rent out each floor of a home separately and who often have several such homes. There can be dormitories of students, a dozen or more in overcrowded basements. **The aim is profit maximization with no regard for community standards.** There is no provision of garden equipment such as a watering hose and lawnmower, so grass goes uncut and weeds grow skyhigh. Lawns deteriorate especially south-facing lawns and large patches of bare soil erode into the street, piling up in front of catchbasins. Window coverings and light fixtures are not provided or replaced. At night there is no privacy for tenants, and neighbours and passersby can see right into rooms lit with bare lightbulbs. Buildings deteriorate, torn screens are not replaced, and damaged doors, windows and garage doors are not repaired, replaced or painted.

Many new tenants also have vastly different standards compared to tenants in the past. Litter, garbage, disturbances between tenants, loud parties and noisy speeding cars are all major problems for neighbours. Frequent police visits indicate illegal activities. There is frequent turnover of tenants and nearby residents do not know who their neighbours are, or if their children are safe.

The impact on neighbours has been severe. Many have sold up and moved out of the community. Some, surrounded by deteriorating rental properties, fear falling property values while others are reluctant to invite guests over to their homes. Neighbours who have asked tenants to turn down loud music have been subjected to verbal abuse and intimidation and many neighbours no longer speak to each other as a result.

The situation has become intolerable and uncontrollable for many residents. Town resources may be able to make basement apartments marginally safer from a fire safety point of view but they will never be able to adequately handle deteriorating conditions caused by human nature and greed, and if legalization occurs, all these problems will multiply as new units come on line. We realise that not all landlords and tenants are irresponsible, but all second suites established since 1995 are illegal, a fact which is inescapable even for the most "responsible" landlord.

Not all parts of our community experience basement apartments, but those that do, have suffered immeasurably for many years. Some improvements have occurred and our affected residents are grateful to Council and bylaw enforcement for their efforts. The car wrecks have been removed from front lawns and driveways, as have the second hand car dealerships of up to 10 cars and second hand car parts businesses. The problem of abandoned shopping carts has also improved since Council brought in that bylaw. However the other problems remain and come and go as tenants come and go.

Conclusion

We urge councillors to reject the proposed legalization of second suites townwide and maintain and enforce the current zoning of single residential, especially for those areas like ours that do not wish to be rezoned.

Our main concerns are the health and life safety issues of fire safety, lung cancer-causing radon gas and basement flooding and the liability issues for the Town associated with these, the prolonged and ongoing nuisance factors, from which responsible citizens and their families deserve a long awaited release, the profoundly unfair financial issues and the inconsistencies in the policies on property standards and the reinspection process.

We hope that if this strategy is carried forward and especially in areas of new construction, that the health and life safety issues will be front and foremost, that stormwater systems will be upgraded/installed to current standards with basement apartments in mind, that current electrical/fire codes will be upheld and that new units will be built with radon gas in mind and that all units will be tested for radon gas and that remediation of outstanding problems will take place where necessary. These are extremely serious issues and should weigh heavily on your shoulders, and not just for initial inspection but for reinspections as well. We also hope you will make any future second suite policy fully funded from fees charged to the landlords making the profits.

German Mills, Thornhill and Markham residents deserve better than what is currently proposed. We hope you agree.

Submitted by Eileen Liasi,

Aberfeldy Crescent (south) Thornhill.

Hau, Lucy

Subject: FW: Second suites

-----Original Message-----

From: Tom Cordina
Sent: Tuesday, May 12, 2009 1:18 PM
To: Hau, Lucy; Virgilio, Joseph
Subject: Second suites

(Memo to Lucy Hau, as requested, you have my permission to receive this communication into the record and to share it with whomever you wish. Thank you.)

To: Joseph Virgilio, Ward 3 Councillor

Re: Second Suites

Dear Joe:

I know you are a busy guy and your hearing lots about this from a lot of people but I did want to put my own two cents in on this matter. As a long time Hydro industry worker and as a former chairman of Markham Hydro my own focus on this matter is in the strain on utilities and services. It is not about the rental housing supply or the owner to renter ratios, to me it is just about the facts.

Facts are that the vast majority of the homes that we built and serviced in Markham that are large enough to attract a second suite were designed and built for a one couple family with 2.3 kids and a dog. No amount of hand wringing can change that. Houses built with 100 amp electrical service, two or three bathrooms, one laundry room and one kitchen are even now drawing far more electricity, gas, and water and placing more demands on our communications infrastructure than anyone would have predicted before the advent of multiple flat screen TV's, computers in every room, high speed internet, everyone with their own telephone number and high capacity washer/dryer systems. To allow second suites to become the norm will double the load and put in peril our ability to deliver consistent and reliable amounts of electricity, water and communications. It will also put an added strain on our sewer system.

In short, all of those things that the social engineers do not pay attention to when they postulate that a community can absorb 30% or more citizens then it was built for will not be able to deliver. We already have water shortages and rationing. Wait until you have "brown-outs" just like they had in Baghdad from an overloaded electrical system. I lived in Bolton before we moved to Unionville and they had an inadequate electrical system which on hot summer nights had a tendency to become overloaded. When that happens voltage drops first, lights dim, hence the term "brown out", and then motors start to burn up. Just imagine a sunny day in August Joe and your office receiving a couple of dozen, or hundred, calls wondering just who is going to pay for the new motor in their freezer and the hundreds of dollars worth of ruined food.

I know what your response will have to be, your insurers will never pay up, Power Stream is equally protected but the voters will not really care about who is saying NO, they only have one weapon to use to get satisfaction for their power outages, water shortages and sewer back-ups, they can vote.

I hope you and your fellow councillors can see past the easy out of

voting to allow these suites which I believe are just the camels nose inside the tent and choose instead to manage housing supply growth using new developments. Surely all of the high rise construction planned for Markham Centre will fill the need for rental units for the foreseeable future.

Thank you very much for your time Joe, I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

Yours

Tom Cordina

Hau, Lucy

Subject: FW: No secondary suites in Markham

----- Original Message -----

From: Nancy Chan-Palmateer

To: Scarpitti, Frank; Heath, Jack; Jones, Jim; Wong, Tony; Landon, Gord; Burke, Valerie; Shapero, Erin; Virgilio, Joseph; Moretti, Carolina; Webster, John; Horchik, Dan; Kanapathi, Logan; Chiu, Alex

Sent: Tue May 12 15:25:49 2009

Subject: No secondary suites in Markham

Dear Mr. Mayor and Town Council,

As a resident of Unionville, I'm very concerned that Markham is thinking of allowing secondary suites, which will not benefit our communities. Secondary suites will only open up a can of worms and create more issues that will negatively impact our neighborhoods including:

- Stress on our Local Services - water, sewers, hydro, roads, garbage collection, etc. - the infrastructure in our neighborhoods were not designed to support multiple households in one dwelling;
- Increase Traffic on our Streets - tenants bring more cars and people with their own vehicle and those of their visitors - no additional parking spot may be permitted, but that doesn't prevent street parking and more traffic, which will affect our pedestrian friendly neighborhoods where we stroll and our children play;
- Difficulties in Enforcement - regulation will not prevent bad landlords and I don't expect that there will be enough town resources added to keep abreast of all these units to ensure compliance. My sister rents an apartment in Toronto, while regulated, it hasn't ensured good maintenance by the landlord; and
- Pride of Ownership and Accountability - while there are good renters, unfortunately, we've also seen tenants who don't show the same respect for their units and the neighbourhood. Renters are typically short-term residence, which does not foster the same sense of community and pride of ownership.

With Markham Centre and other "high density" areas in Markham, more housing for small households is being provided in the form of condos and townhouses. A lot of thought and planning is going into Markham Centre to ensure good quality of life and appropriate infrastructure.

Please do not permit secondary suites into our neighborhoods, which weren't designed to accommodate this increased density, particularly in such an ad hoc fashion (vs. a planned community like Markham Centre) and will adversely affect current quality of life and strain existing services.

Respectfully,
Nancy Chan-Palmateer

To whom it may concern,

Coming from Scarborough, where it is legal to have a second suite, some problems could arise to make second suites legal:

- Parking for tenants and visitors. Many sub-divisions of Markham do not have public transit and cars are a necessity.
- Increase of noise levels.
- Street safety for children jeopardized; traffic will increase.
- Garbage problems; people dumping extra garbage elsewhere. Different sizes of bins? Unfortunately this solution is still a problem in Toronto.
- Policing issues. People might not register and be monitored and spend money to upgrade unit for fire safety; instead they could say that tenants are family members.
- Tenants do not want to be bothered with upkeep of exterior. Neighborhoods will decline.
- Tenants might not have the same respect for neighbors as a homeowner. Some incidents might not be reported due to fear. One of the reasons people move away from second suites area in Scarborough.
- All services from The Town (schools etc.) will have to increase. Will there be a proportional increase in property taxes for the second suites dwelling?

What we need is a promise from The Town to build affordable housing and not try to bypass this responsibility by legalizing second suites.

In York Region there is a demand for affordable housing and basement apartments are already close to \$1000 per month!

If Markham Centre has the Public Transit in place, affordable housing should be part of the planning. And we can focus on intensifying this area first.

Once the above issues can be resolved, perhaps legalizing second suites can be an option if there is still a need for it.

Regards,

Elisabeth Tan
Unionville