

As We Heard It Report

Westboro Infill Zoning Study

Open House #1 – December 12, 2019

The first Open House for the Westboro Infill Zoning Study took place on Thursday, December 12, 2019 at the Churchill Seniors' Centre. Over 170 people attended the open house.

Comments were collected on a variety of topics, based on major themes identified from previous comments on the study's first Discussion Paper. There was also an opportunity to leave more general detailed comments on comment sheets or comment cards.

The most commonly identified topics, as per the Discussion Paper As We Heard It Report, are as follows:

Neighbourhood Change
Trees and Greenspace
Density
Traffic and Parking
Building/Site Design

Each topic was assigned its own discussion table, which included a variety of questions pertaining to the topic. Commenters were invited to add sticky notes or cards detailing their opinions on these issues and the related discussion questions.

In addition to the five topics listed above, there was also a "general discussion" table, to allow commenters the opportunity to provide their thoughts on any other topic that they feel is of relevance to the issue of residential development within Westboro. The format of this table was the same as the format for the other discussion topics.

The comments from both the discussion tables and from comment sheets/cards are summarized in this report, below. Below each list of comments is a set of "potential directions", which highlight potential ways to respond to the comments and concerns raised. Where appropriate, this may include current policy or By-law initiatives that may also be of relevance to these concerns.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGE

- A "neighbourhood" or "community feel" was cited by many residents as a feature to be maintained – "a place where people know each other"
- Concerns that infill has contributed to massive change in a short period of time, and that it detracts from this "neighbourhood feel"
- Similarly, some commenters were of the opinion that the neighbourhood is "not a suburb" and should not change into a suburban form.
- Residents indicated a desire for space for features such as gardens and other communal spaces

- Loss of trees cited as a concern
- Similarly, space for open space/greenspace is cited by many comments as a priority
- Some concerns about size, massing, and height of infill design within the neighbourhood
- One resident indicated that the neighbourhood needs “more affordable housing, fewer cars”

Potential Directions:

- *Emphasize infill design that contributes to the streetscape and street animation, to help mitigate the effects*
- *Incentivize infill that avoids car-centric design, such as front-facing garages or large surface parking areas, wherever possible.*

TREES AND GREENSPACE

- Loss of trees was the most common noted concern in comments. In addition to the “trees and greenspace” station, comments to this effect were left at every other station.
- Both street trees and back yard trees were cited as important features of the neighbourhood.
Concerns were cited with numerous trees being cut down without approval in numerous infill projects
- General sentiment is that there is no adequate protections for existing mature trees in infill projects in the neighbourhood
- Many commenters also suggested that the penalties for removing healthy mature trees should be greater than they currently are
- Lack of replacement trees (or insufficient trees) in situations where existing mature trees are removed
- One commenter suggested that replanting should only be considered where done at a 3 to 1 ratio of removed trees.

Potential Directions:

- *The Urban Tree By-law review was recently completed and a new Tree By-law is being introduced. This may be helpful in addressing some issues in relation to tree protection.*
- *With that in mind, there is also the potential to explore opportunities to emphasize greenspace and tree growth/protection through Zoning By-law regulations.*
- *Introduction of landscaping requirements for both the front and rear yard can be structured in a way to ensure that such spaces have adequate room for tree growth.*
- *Proposed changes to the regulations passed under Infill 1 and 2 will introduce a minimum aggregated landscaped area within front and corner side yards, to ensure space for front yard or street trees. However, there is an opportunity to consider similar requirements within other yards.*

DENSITY

- Concerns relating to the “1 to 8” form of intensification, where a single detached dwelling on a large lot is demolished and severed into 2 lots, each with a triplex or long semi-detached dwelling with secondary dwelling units.
- With the entire study area presently zoned R3, some suggestions that certain areas may benefit from higher or lower density permissions depending on their context
- A few commenters suggested that low income housing, as well as infill development in general, should be focused near transit lines
- One commenter suggested that zoning could be better “blended” within the neighbourhood, as not even semi-detached dwellings are permitted west of Golden Avenue.
- Another commenter suggested that new housing development should focus on those who cannot currently afford to live in the neighbourhood now
- Some concerns that the study area does not cover the entirety of Westboro and is therefore not covering all of the areas where infill development is happening.
- Some concerns that the present “redevelopment rate” in Westboro is significant
- One suggestion that some of the buildings currently being built in the neighbourhood should instead be permitted in the suburbs (Barrhaven, Kanata, etc.). There were also some more general suggestions that development should be “spread out”
- Many commenters acknowledged the need to increase density as a means of avoiding urban sprawl
- One commenter suggested the need for more education on the benefits of urban housing development (including reduction of urban sprawl)
- One commenter questioned why there are not incentives for new dwelling units in existing basements, or within additions to existing buildings

Potential Directions:

- *Options that result in an overall net downzoning or removal of permitted dwelling types would not be in accordance with Section 2.2.2 of the Official Plan.*
- *Consequently, when considering the question of appropriate density within the neighbourhood, it is also appropriate to explore opportunities for additional dwelling types where they can be accommodated appropriately, taking into consideration other concerns as raised through this study.*
- *Consider opportunities for higher density along corridors within the study area, so as to concentrate new housing supply along those streets.*

TRAFFIC AND PARKING

- A large number of commenters were opposed to parking areas in the rear yard, citing concerns with rear yard trees, as well as neighbouring property owners’ enjoyment of their rear yards
- There is a general assumption that multi-unit dwellings will increase the number of cars and the amount of space taken up by on-street parking

- Similarly, concerns that development will increase traffic and consequently decrease walkability
- Some commenters questioned why developments without parking are not being further encouraged
- While front yard parking is prohibited, some suggestions that it reduces greenspace to a lesser extent than some rear yard parking configurations
- Underground parking (or parking otherwise contained within the building) was suggested by some commenters
- Snow storage was cited as a concern where parking is provided
- Requirement for permeable surfaces was cited as one way to mitigate issues with hard surfacing for parking purposes
- As the diagrams presented showed different parking configurations, one commenter questioned why there was not a corresponding diagram showing no on-site parking

Potential Directions:

- *On-site parking is presently not required for residential buildings containing twelve or fewer dwelling units.*
- *However, there is an opportunity to more proactively incentivize the development of residential buildings without parking. This could involve the restriction or prohibition of surface parking within certain areas (i.e. the rear yard) or on certain lots.*
- *Where parking is desired, it should be provided in a manner as to minimize hard surfaces on site and ensure adequate space for trees and similar features on-site.*

BUILDING/SITE DESIGN

- “Diversity of architecture style” was cited as desirable by many commenters.
- However, some commenters suggested that homes built should look like the existing homes on the street.
- Some concern that there are no clear standards for architectural design
- “Designing for people” was a common theme among many comments related to infill design.
- Front porches and front gardens were cited as desirable features
- Concerns relating to the size and massing of buildings. Some commenters suggested smaller building footprints are necessary. Others noted that variances to setback requirements exacerbate massing concerns within the neighbourhood.

Potential Directions:

- *Emphasize design that avoids a massive or “boxy” appearance, in such a way that ensures animation of the streetscape.*
- *The Department is of the view that it is inappropriate to prohibit or require a specific architectural style, but there may be opportunities to address the permitted building envelope and/or how building height is measured to help address the above concern.*

- *While there exist design guidelines for infill development, there is an opportunity to update these guidelines to address current development trends and applicable policies.*

GENERAL

- Drainage and stormwater runoff were cited as concerns in relation to a number of topics (including building design and traffic/parking)
- Spaces for children were cited in a number of topics as an element to be encouraged and maintained
- Some acknowledgement of the need for a “vision” for development in the neighbourhood, which includes a set of defined rules for redevelopment
- Enforcement and implementation concerns: both enforcement of the Zoning and Tree By-laws during construction, but also limitation of the volume of Minor Variance approvals from the Committee of Adjustment
- In addition, concerns regarding how to limit and discourage after-the-fact changes, such as additional units in buildings approved and constructed nominally as triplexes

Potential Directions:

- *The goal of this study is to establish a general vision for the neighbourhood, consistent and in conformance with the Official Plan, which can provide direction for future zoning changes. The previous topics and considerations give a general idea of what priorities this vision may involve within Westboro.*
- *With respect to the process related concerns, it is necessary to ensure, to the extent possible, that builders show the final intent of a development proposal in their initial development applications.*
- *Effective implementation is necessary to ensure that any Zoning By-law or other process changes achieve their intended effect. That being said, it is important to first confirm what zoning changes are necessary or important.*