

For The Committee, April 27/2024

In zoning, density isn't a measurement, instead it is determined by all the elements of zoning code working in combination. A building with 'X' storeys and 'Y' FSR can only be so big according to the size of the lot, so it's assumed the building can then house only so many people.

It's a very broad brush, very indirect, and hard to apply to an evaluation of density.

Unfinished basements do not typically count toward FSR which makes sense as they are not housing people. But finished basements can and logically should when discussing density, especially if they include bedrooms.

All other things being equal, an increase in FSR will contribute slightly to density, whereas an increase in the number of stories can increase density exponentially.

In the case of this development the dirty secret is the basement (or top floor? Whichever way you look at it).

R5 zoning is to have 3 storeys max, and for example 0.6 FSR. These two measurements together help shape its density potential.

This is where I question how a 3 storey version of the development, without FSR variance, could ever have the same density as the 4 storey one with enhanced FSR that is being proposed.

Without the variance the structure would be limited to three storeys- or one less storey throughout the entire development- which would absolutely mean less units, less bedrooms & bathrooms, less people, less density- how could it not?

The layman's way I have found to get a feel for density is to look at the floorplans, and specifically count the bedrooms and bathrooms.

When looking at floorplans, use the bathtub for scale (bathtubs are usually 5ft long unless stated otherwise). So a bedroom that looks 2 bathtubs by 1.5 bathtubs would be 10'x7.5' and so on (incidentally that's building code minimum for a bedroom). If a bedroom looks 10x10 and the bed looks big, it's a queen size and it might be worth assuming two people might sleep there (also minimum building standard size for a bedroom with a closet).



Unit layouts need to be taken into consideration when imagining the human experience that will be had living there and looking at how many people might be using the space. Are the units spacious with varied room sizes and layouts that will fit families? Will the development be versatile and sustainable enough to meet the needs of residents as families live and grow? Will they be good value for the middle class that needs the housing?

It is important to remember when discussing the number of units that we are really talking about the number of people and the kind of living standards they will enjoy.

In this case almost every bedroom has its own bathroom- which is great, but drives the cost up, and gives the impression that they are designed for individual rooming rather than housing family units.

This is a 3 storey building in the context of Eastwood.
3 storeys, FSR under 0.6, 11m height, with a peaked roof.



It doesn't take much to achieve greater density.

Maximum density is not compatible with this context.

No residents benefit from the kind of density being proposed.

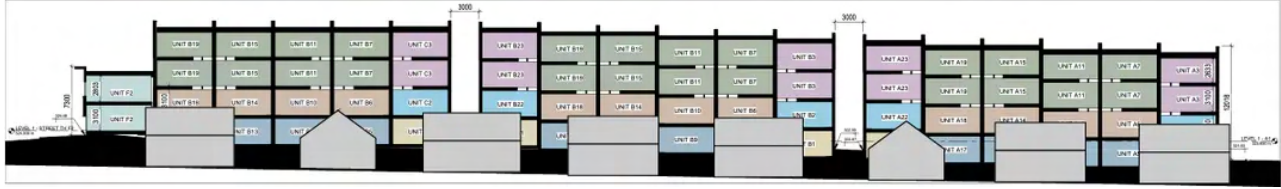
Densification of the subject lands within the existing context is entirely possible, without the need to bring undue stress and imbalance to the rest of the community or the new residents.

Like you, I live in this city- I see the wave of similar and modern buildings like the one being proposed popping up throughout.



Usually in places where zoning allows, without pushing the boundaries of respect for adjacent properties, even while being separated from existing communities by parking lots and boulevards.

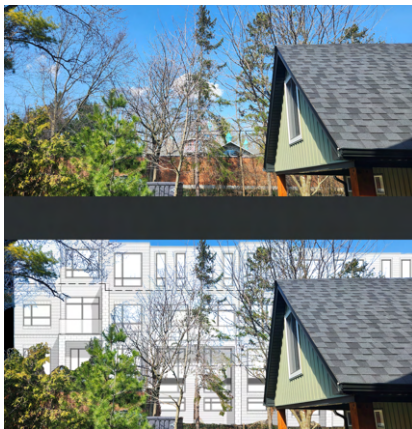
In no other example is a building orientated such that it will negatively impact the surrounding community the way it will here.



5 SITE SECTIONS - NORTH-SOUTH BLOCK C



3 SITE SECTIONS - NORTH-SOUTH @ BLOCK B,D



I see the headlines, 6 homes being replaced by 120 units, and I have to question if that's realistic, if it's necessary.

We're not talking about a vacant lot that doesn't already have housing. There are 6 occupied residences on the lot and it is immediately surrounded by homes.

Let's look at those 120 units. Is that 10x the housing? 15x ? No it is a full 20x the housing for this infill plot of land.

I'm not sure what anyone involved saw in this site that made them think this would be good place to push the limits of densification.

On the contrary the truth of the matter is that this is the hodge-podge of residences that has been afforded, and the plan devised from there to fetch the most revenue possible for the developers.

But they won't have to live here.

I don't feel that the people of Eastwood, in particular the people of Brentwood and Fairmount, nor the future residents of 135

Jackson, should have to pay the price for it. It is our experience that will be changed forever.

We are more than happy to do our part to help with the housing crisis, we support development and densification of the subject lands, but we did not personally create the housing crisis any more than anyone on any other street in this city.

It seems it must have at least 120 units to make it worth doing for the developer. This is concerning given the yet unrealized saga of the Elevate Project.

This isn't a proposal driven by a desire to provide people with a fair and comfortable place to call home. The units lack desirability, or livability, on the contrary it is a design for rooming mass numbers of people at the cost of comfort. Not only are there a surplus of units proposed but the unit floorplans are heavily focused on sleeping quarters to the point that all are at building standard minimums.

I would challenge Mr Shukla to build same size if he must- but limit the number of units and increase the quality of living to something that matches that of the surrounding neighbourhood. This is a neighbourhood of family homes- a dormitory does not fit the context nor will it be versatile enough to endure future use.

We are here today because that extra 5x the density is worth risking the wellbeing of everyone involved by exceeding longstanding zoning standards based on livability.

I think everyone could be happy with a fair compromise.

For example the maximum height being requested would be acceptable with the prescribed enhanced setbacks, or property executed stepbacks, or a combination thereof. For example, if the lower level were to begin at a single storey 3m from the property line and escalate at an approximation of a 45 degree angle it wouldn't have nearly the same claustrophobic impact. At over 10x the housing we wouldn't have to be asking ourselves these questions. People would have the appropriate floor space, adequate parking, the building wouldn't have to be intrusively tall, or close, in fact possibly no variances would be required at all. Remember, we wouldn't be losing 5x the housing, we would be making the 10x the existing housing that much more livable, much more desirable.

Would '6 homes replaced by 60 homes' not make a pretty good headline? I have to wonder, at some point we're cramming in so much housing, that it becomes bad for the people living there. Maybe it becomes not such a good idea, too much of a good thing. At some point it's no longer a nice place to live. There's not enough space for the people and you've also created an imbalance with the rest of the community.

Can we not leave some air for people to breathe, to live, to play with their dogs, to raise their children.

I hope the day never comes when the city actually needs the kind of density that those things can't be achieved.

And I have to ask, why? Yes, there's a housing crisis and municipalities have been incentivized to approve as many housing units as possible. In fact an unprecedented amount of housing has already been approved only 1 block away. All these proposals seem to be getting pushed forward in a panic, at the longterm expense of the people and the neighbourhoods.

Variances need to be granted in a very practical and judicious way, and that's where this process comes in.

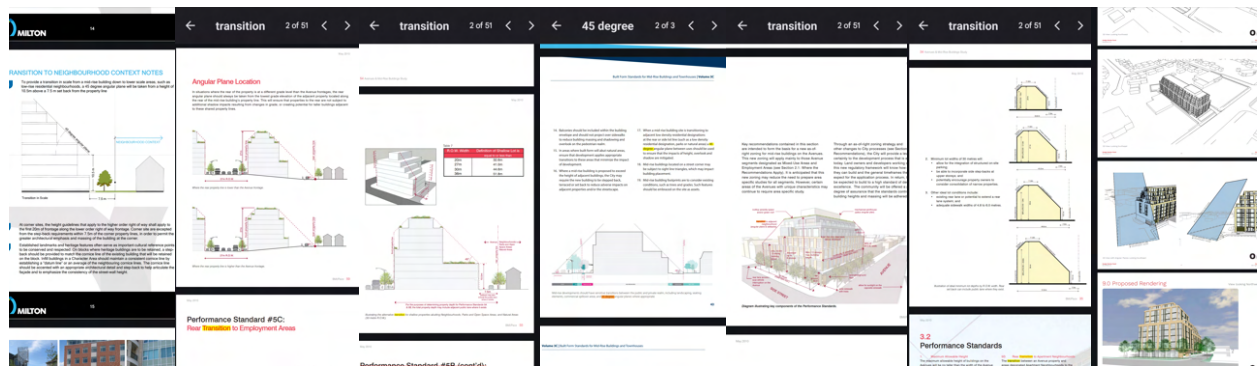
City Planners have said they do not manage people, and perhaps that's fair, their responsibility starts and ends with the zoning code. However in this case as has been pointed out, there are some serious concerns about the selective application of zoning code to this proposal.

This is particularly impactful for those who live immediately adjacent to the lot.

The City of Kitchener Urban Design Manual was created as a guidebook for the integration of these kinds of buildings (mid rise) into existing low rise neighbourhoods (like this one). The intention was that it be integrated into the building code through the course of this advisory process.

In this case the missing elements of transitional building setbacks and properly executed stepbacks are the most noticeable.

The idea of a 45 degree angular plane is a well established concept used to guide urban planning in municipalities throughout Ontario.



The basic idea is that no part of a building should interfere with the 45 angle view of a person standing on the property boundary.

Residents have invested their lives into living in a mature and stable neighbourhood. It is telling when a proposal makes the people around it, who support development, feel they must come forward to defend themselves. When it causes them to re-evaluate what will be left to keep them here, when everything that made sense about their decision is taken away.

It has been my experience through this process that City Planners have manipulated the public and Council through misinformation, intimidated residents by threatening reduced setbacks, and justified the developers goals through the perversion and selective application of zoning code.

It has been frustrating to watch as we have all tried to understand and dispel the nonsense being presented.

This is a major issue within this review process that needs to be resolved going forward- there is no doubt in my mind that some damage has already been done to this City, but it doesn't have to continue. If you see the patterns you have the power to put an end to it here and now.

Somewhere in this technical and financial evaluation the well being of the people has to come into consideration.

This Committee alone must manage the human aspect of this business. It's a big responsibility deciding how the people of the future are going to live, it's not easy.

Remember, you have until May 9th/ 2024 to decide.

I leave the responsibility with you, the Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee, to decide what kind of housing people will have in the centre of this block in Eastwood.



Thank you for your consideration.

Aaron McLaughlin, [REDACTED]

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