



MINUTES
UNIONVILLE SUB-COMMITTEE
September 20, 2011
Ontario Room

Meeting # 1, Hughson Drive Working Group

Members/Council

Regional Councillor Jim Jones
Councillor Don Hamilton
Councillor Alan Ho

Members/Constituent Representatives

Anne Chang (12 Lunar Crescent)
Sam Jouri (43 Hughson Drive)
Al Ladha (10 Hughson Drive)
Ulisse Torelli (27 Hughson Drive)

Staff

Anna Henriques, Senior Planner – Zoning & Special Projects
Richard Kendall, Development Manager – Central District
Dave Miller, Development Manager – East District
Tom Villella, Senior Project Coordinator – Zoning & Special Projects
Marina Antonoglou, Assistant to Councillors Ho and Hamilton
Kitty Bavington, Council/Committee Coordinator

The Ward Councillor, Alan Ho, expressed an interest in Chairing the Subcommittee meeting and the majority of the Committee concurred.

The Unionville Sub-Committee convened at 3:10 p.m. with Councillor Alan Ho in the Chair. There were no declarations of interest.

1. Introduction

The participants at the meeting introduced themselves.

The Chair and staff outlined the purpose of the Working Group: to work collaboratively to determine appropriate zoning standards for the neighbourhood. The findings of the group will be used as the basis for a recommendation to the Development Services Committee.

Staff reviewed the agenda for today's meeting and outlined the proposed work plan consisting of four proposed meetings: September 20; October 4; and two dates to be determined near the end of October. It was noted that if the resulting zoning standards being proposed are substantially different from those previously proposed, another statutory Public Meeting will be required. A non-statutory community information meeting may also be called. These events have been built into the work schedule to ensure the project is completed before the Interim Control By-law expires in February, 2012.

2. Existing Character of the Area

i. Neighbourhood Video

A video of the neighbourhood was played, illustrating the built forms, lot sizes, setbacks, and components of the neighbourhood “character”.

ii. Group Discussion and Visioning Exercise

Staff spoke of defining elements of neighbourhood character, such as lot size, vegetation, dwelling type and architectural style, age of neighbourhood, and municipal road and boulevard treatment. An aerial view of a typical lot was displayed, with average lot size, setbacks, frontage, and a footprint of 2500 sq ft. overlaid.

Committee members provided their vision of desirable neighbourhood characteristics:

- lot size
- privacy
- peace and quiet
- secluded
- mature trees and vegetation
- close proximity to city amenities
- the closure of Lunar Crescent was noted as a beneficial feature, to reduce traffic and for safety reasons
- proximity to transit, highways, shopping
- residential feel, all detached single family residences

Committee members described what they dislike about the neighbourhood:

- lots are too large
- one lot was allowed to be severed
- don't want sidewalks
- some properties need updating, general repair, maintenance
- investment in redevelopment is needed, perhaps including intensification but remaining as detached single family residences and preserving mature trees
- dislike overhead wiring on streets, prefer underground services
- character of local park needs improvement

The Committee debated what lot size for severance is acceptable - half or quarters lots, or a specific footage? It was suggested that a half lot is the maximum degree of severance, as long as the character is maintained. The issue of maintaining character and value is a matter of individual opinion. A comparison was made to the Angus Glen development.

Committee members described what is important to maintain:

- lot size
- unique character of the residential pocket
- vegetation and mature trees
- reasonable size of homes
- provision/retaining the option to sever a property if desired, and to be able to use the existing zoning standards
- closure of Luna Crescent; however, the barrier needs to be strengthened and aesthetic improvements added

Committee members described what they envision the neighbourhood to look like in 10-20 years:

- single family dwellings on estate-like lots
- minimum traffic
- upgraded houses on existing lots
- reinvestment in terms of new buildings and upgrades
- mixture of housing styles (one-and-two storey houses, side splits, not semis)
- some intensification provided in the form of single family dwellings

Discussions included population growth trends and what is anticipated in the future:

- future growth does not mean that every area needs to be intensified
- severing of lots may not stop at 50 ft lots; they may be further subdivided
- the purpose of the working group is to support appropriate development
- this area has not been designated as a unique and protected area
- would a few severances destroy or enhance the neighbourhood

Discussions included Ontario Municipal Board Hearings and other neighbourhoods:

- the neighbourhoods of the Oakcrest and Carolwood areas were discussed with respect to similar challenges to preserve lot size
- it was noted that the severances permitted in the Oakcrest area have resulted in a nice neighbourhood and that the built form has proven to have more impact than the lot size
- Markham is a vibrant, evolving town, and what was appropriate in the 50's and 60's may not be today
- existing zoning standards in the Hughson by-law are out of date and don't reflect current standards or accommodate appropriate redevelopment

The Hughson area subject to this study was defined as including Lunar Crescent, Ankara Court, Polaris Drive and Athens Drive, which contains a mix of characteristics.

It was summarized that all property owners have the option to apply for a severance; however, some proposals will be more difficult than others to achieve, and may require a Minor Variance.

3. Current Zoning Standards

Staff outlined the current zoning provisions and displayed an example of potential development based on the provisions in place, using setback restrictions only. There are currently no minimum lot frontage, or maximum building depth or height restrictions. On an average lot, a house with a 957m² building footprint can be built. If the average lot was severed, a 333m² dwelling footprint could be built. The Working Group is being asked to establish reasonable standards that will provide some controls.

The Committee commended the Town of Markham for using this cautious and responsible approach with the Interim Control and Working Group process.

4. Recent Development and Consideration of Zoning Standards

i. Photos of recent development & zoning standards

The committee viewed photos of six recently built homes showing a variety of setbacks and characteristics (10 Ankara Court, 4 Hughson Drive, which was the first house built in 2004, 10 Hughson Drive, 25 Hughson, 31 Hughson, 43 Hughson) and discussed how they comply to both the existing by-law and the provisions proposed by Meridian. It was observed that the vegetation and architectural control may have more impact on the character of the property than the lot size. With respect to the measurement of building height, the use of established grade versus crown of road calculations were briefly debated and will be discussed later in the process.

ii. Group discussion on appropriate zoning standards for neighbourhood

(front yard setback, side yard setback, rear yard setback, garage projection, building depth, height, maximum number of storeys, lot frontage & lot area)

Existing provisions: front yard, rear yard, sideyard, garage projection

Front yard: is a wider 43 or narrower 27 ft front yard setback appropriate?

- depends on size and height of house
- the large boulevard of approximately 18 ft. is a factor
- the Committee agreed with 9m.

Sidyard: 1.5m, 4.4m, or 10 feet?

- include percentage such as 10% each side for a total of 20%?
- closely tied to severances
- typical is 1.2m for one storey and 1.8m for two storey in Markham
- suggested minimums for 50 and 100 ft lots
- Meridian recommends 30% with minimum 3m each side
- requested info on how many of existing houses comply to the 3 metres
- no consensus was reached on this standard – more consideration/discussion needed at a future meeting

Rear yard: typically 25m.

- Meridian recommends 10 metres = 32.8 ft.
- Committee agreed to 10m

Garage projection: samples of 0 and 8.2m (27ft) were shown

- the purpose for this standard is to pull the garage closer to the house for aesthetic purposes
- this should be in line with typical Town standards, so as to not put undue hardship on any builder/investor
- no consensus was reached on this standard – more consideration/discussion needed at a future meeting

Staff will put together a typical site plan based on the suggested provisions. A typical site plan for a dwelling on Hemingway Crescent was also requested. The Committee will discuss provisions for building depth, height, maximum number of storeys, lot frontage and lot area at the next Working Group session.

5. Administrative & Other Items

The date and time for the next meeting is Tuesday October 4, from 3 to 6 p.m. in the Council Chamber.

ADJOURNMENT

The Unionville Sub-Committee adjourned at 6:10 p.m.