



Delhi Eramosa Neighbourhood Advocates

COMMENTS

Submitted to: City of Guelph Council

By: Delhi Eramosa Neighbourhood Advocates (DENA)

Date: July 8, 2021

Subject: Zoning By-law Amendment for 65 Delhi Street (File No. OZS21-004)

We invite you to think critically before voting on the zoning by-law amendment for 65 Delhi Street.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

You, as our elected officials, are being asked to approve (or not) a zoning by-law amendment in Ward 2. The City of Guelph staff report recommends you do so. Understandably, it might seem like a “minor” agenda item. Pass it and move on. However, we invite you to consider the impact of that one action.

Passing the zoning by-law amendment for 65 Delhi Street means:

- **“Status quo” for homeless people in the City of Guelph and Wellington County.** Based on data presented by the County at a recent Town Hall meeting, every time a person finds housing, another person enters the system. At best, our region is treading water (inflow = outflow). *If you entered politics because you wanted to improve the quality of life for people in our community, you are failing those at the bottom of the housing spectrum, if you pass this zoning by-law.* This action, and similar ones that Council keeps passing and the County keeps administering, are not improving the quality of life for those who need the most help. They are simply warehousing people which is *not* adequate housing.
- **Getting a few people off the street *but not* improving the quality of their lives.** Ending homelessness in Wellington County is a noble cause that society should wholeheartedly embrace. It is the *timeline* (zero homelessness by 2023) that is completely unrealistic if improving the quality of life of these people is the ultimate goal. There is a reason people choose to live in tent cities or in boxes on a ledge downtown rather than in shelters. The current continuum of housing system does not meet their needs. *We invite you to consider whether you entered politics to simply get people off the street by 2023 OR to improve the system (which will take longer than 2023) where people are treated with dignity and have the opportunity to receive all of the services and supports they need to rebuild their lives, so that they too, someday can become contributing members of society?* If it is the latter, these people will continue to have the same social problems they have today, when the “feel good” 2023 Housing and Homelessness report comes out saying we have zero homelessness in our region. *If the goal is to improve people’s lives, then the system needs to change. We need to do some things differently. Why not start now?*

- **The County will proceed with its current proposal, which will not meet the needs of the people that will someday live at 65 Delhi Street.** How does this relate to your decision as elected officials to vote to approve (or not) the zoning by-law amendment? Voting “no” to the by-law means that the County will need to revise their current plans, thereby *helping fewer people well*. The literature shows that there are successful ways to develop supportive housing. Modest units that include private bathrooms, room for a small table and two chairs for hosting a friend, a kitchenette, a single bed, all work to create a “home” for people while they rebuild their lives. Seniors housing (Arbour Trails, Elliott) and Youth housing (51 Bellevue Street) in our community include such amenities in small private units so that they have a real home, with wrap around services onsite or nearby. *Ask yourselves, why are homeless people not being given similar consideration for accommodations? In other words, why is Council willing to condone unequal housing for the homeless, by passing the by-law amendment and thereby enabling the County to purchase 65 Delhi and go ahead with their plans?* The County’s plans include three floors of 10- 12 private rooms “smaller than parking spaces”, shared bathrooms on each floor, and one security staff on each floor 24/7. There is not going to be any sense of “home” or dignity for these people. *Ask yourselves, how can people reasonably be expected to rebuild their lives in such conditions?*

Summary

- DENA is asking Council to take the time to think critically about how a seemingly simple zoning by-law amendment has a domino effect on how homeless people are treated in this community. This could be your defining moment on Council, the moment when YOU collectively decide it is time that the homeless deserve a DIFFERENT result.
 - A result that will actually serve these people well as they rebuild their lives.
 - A result that will, over time, decrease the burden on local social services.
 - A result the makes the surrounding neighbourhood feel valued and empowered to play a critical role in helping people re-integrate into society and rebuild their lives.

A win-win-win!

- **Doing something different is voting NO (or at minimum deferring a decision)** to the zoning by-law amendment. This will result in the County either not purchasing 65 Delhi OR rethinking their plan so that they house 18 or fewer people in larger units with private bathrooms. In other words, *helping fewer people well*. If the County no longer wants the property, the City can put it up for sale at fair market value. Then redirect that money to purpose-built housing units with wrap around services.

Thank you for taking the time to think critically about the zoning by-law amendment. It has huge consequences for whether the City *chooses* to change inadequate social systems and supports to better meet people’s needs or *chooses* to keep the status quo. The choice is yours.

Delhi Eramosa Neighbourhood Advocates (DENA) is a group of people who live in the neighbourhood close to 65 Delhi Street. We believe that Guelph and Wellington County should act to serve the most vulnerable in ways that are best structured for success. We are advocating that the initial proposal be reconsidered. It should be scaled to make the number of units compliant with the official plan and by-law. By creating no more than 18 transitional housing units, suites could be enlarged for more independent living, with the possibility of private bathrooms and kitchenettes. And room could still be left for delivering supports onsite. This would allow enough space for dignified and humane transitional housing units and the supports needed to help people progress to permanent housing.