

City of Guelph fourplexes comments:

Guelph city staff report included on the website for the meeting defines gentle density as:

“an approach to urban development that focuses on **slightly increasing** the number and variety of homes in neighbourhoods that typically accommodate only low-density, single-detached homes. This approach to increasing a range and mix of affordable housing options involves creating more homes and **minimally building out** these lots so that more than a single home can be accommodated. It is **development that is not meant to be imposing** but rather, the ultimate sign of successful gentle density is that it is **gentle enough that one hardly notices.**”

We all recognize that increasing housing supply is needed and adding additional units are beneficial but this needs to be done in a way that minimizes impacts on existing communities and residents as in the city’s definition of gentle intensity. Below are the reasons I think the city should not support fourplexes to be put just anywhere in the city.

1. Fourplexes, especially where they are put side by side on a single property, can come with significant community disruption, traffic, parking and road safety. It could create traffic and congestion on previously quiet streets. These changes also ask for less parking spaces on the property which means spill over to the street. **How are safety issues being considered in light of this increased street parking and volume of traffic? What are the impacts for access of emergency vehicles such as fire trucks and ambulances?** Not all streets in the city are built the same. I have a work truck and I can tell you on some streets when there are cars parked on both sides it’s hard for my truck to get through, then how would a fire truck get in? Has the city talked to emergency responders about potential impacts this bylaws could have on street access? These are serious community safety issues that need to be considered and addressed. Guelph Today reported in 2022 that between May 2020 and May 2022 the city received 13,485 parking related complaints including on street parking, parking on private property and lawn parking. <https://www.guelphtoday.com/local-news/residents-behaving-badly-city-breaks-down-by-law-complaints-5355764> Clearly parking is already a significant issue in the city, fourplexes could make this a lot worse in some neighbourhoods.
2. This also raises the question of practical garbage storage. **Where are these garbage bins going to be stored in fourplexes?** A fourplex means 12 garbage bins. There needs to be rules set out so front lawns and driveways are not going to be lined with garbage bins as this impacts whole neighbourhood? What work has been done by the city to address this? Are the garages going to be built to store 12 bins and a car?
3. The reality is that fourplexes will happen predominately in mature and established neighbourhoods with older homes. These homes typically have slightly larger lots than homes in newer subdivisions. What this could mean is that someone could come in and not only put 4 units on a lot (which one could more reasonably argue is in line with the idea of gentle density) but what could happen (and as **we already see is happening**) is that someone can subdivide

these lots into numerous smaller lots and then build units on each of those sub-lots. What we are seeing is that a single house lot on a quiet residential street where one or two families would have lived could potentially be replaced with 8, 12, or 16 units. This would potentially place hundreds of occupants in previously single family communities. **What is being done to manage the number of bedrooms in these dwellings?** To compound this, these units can be rented on a per room basis – especially to students given this is a university town – meaning that dozens and dozens of people being added to where previously one or two families would have lived. **The compounding of additional units with sub-division of lots is an exponential intensification not consistent with the definition of gentle density that is supposed to be ‘slightly building out something’ or be ‘hardly noticeable’.** This is a potential complete overhaul of neighbourhoods.

4. If homes in these types of neighbourhoods are being bought to be torn down and replaced with fourplexes to max values then I question the logic of **how this is leading to greater affordability?** The first thing that comes to my mind is that those potential homebuyers that are looking for single family or semi-detached homes in older neighbourhoods that they can renovate, add a rental unit, could be **competing with developers** for those houses because of the potential of these properties to be turned into fourplexes by developers.

An article on the Ontario Home Builders Association website talked about this idea of profitable investment in housing for students saying that

‘With student enrollment in Waterloo and other Ontario university towns increasing annually, some residential developers across Ontario are seizing the opportunity to build made-for-student condominiums and multiplexes featuring up to five bedrooms with common areas, parking, social rooms and gyms. Seeing rental potential and an attractive investment opportunity, private investors, property owners and parents of students are jumping on board’.

<https://www.ohba.ca/housing-higher-learning/>

Fourplexes would provide conditions for these type of builds!!

5. The city needs to think about the livability of neighbourhoods. I live 4 km from the university. Putting a fourplex with dozens of rooms for students to rent could be very profitable for someone as we see in the article above. Reading this same article it sounds like cities such as Waterloo and London have put some effort to understand the impact of student housing on surrounding communities. To me putting a fourplex could attract a lot of student rentals. **Has our city done any work on what that means for communities and streets such as mine where predominately families live and what it would mean if fourplexes with the intent to renting for students were built in the middle of these streets?** I believe that this needs to be done before the city even thinks about introducing fourplexes on residential streets within reasonable distance to the university. A fourplex, or two or three fourplexes in a row, could be turned into a mini student residence in a middle of residential neighbourhoods. **Is one of the reasons for this bylaw change to encourage building more student housing throughout existing low density residential neighbourhoods?** Given the proximity of the university to many established low-density neighbourhoods I think the city has a responsibility to the people in the city to address the potential impacts on concentration of student residences in low density neighbourhoods

that the bylaw may encourage. These are real impacts to people, streets and whole communities. Again the article by the Ontario home builders association talks about, for example in London where some of the issues with student housing have been things such as *“exodus of long-term residents, poor property maintenance, the large number of by-law enforcement complaints and high resale costs based on rental income potential versus comparable resale value.”* These are the things that worry me as well. **How is our city addressing the possibility of student concentration in fourplexes in current low density residential street and the potential disruption this has to existing communities?** The other thing we have to remember is that these could be built as regular rental units then rented to one tenant student who then becomes lead tenant but sublets the other rooms to other students!

6. The impacts of the bylaw change to allow fourplexes has a huge impact on potentially thousands of people living in the city, especially within close distance to the university. I found out about this from a neighbour. Why has the city not asked all the people to give their input - this has possibly huge impacts on us? The information on city website for this meeting talked about community engagement and talked about how there was an open house. **How were people of Guelph informed about this, and what effort was put into this?** I did not receive anything from the city about this consultation! If there is a playground being redone in my neighbourhood I receive a letter from the city to inform me of this and give me chance to provide my opinion! **This bylaw could have an enormous impact on my street, community and my house and I didn't receive anything to tell me this is happening?** I see that the development and the home building community had a specific session specifically just for them, how were they invited to the session – did they find out from their neighbour as well or did they get a letter from the city? **How can the city make this huge decision without asking the people that live in the city, and without actually informing them of the change and asking for their opinion & input?** I strongly believe this needs to be done before the city makes any decisions to allow fourplexes because this has a huge impact on entire communities and our city.

I'm also very disappointed that the city website talks about 5 unit discussions in the fall – to me this just shows that the city already made it's decision on these fourplexes without really putting in the effort to understanding how it impacts different neighbourhoods and the people that live in this city and asking the people that live in this city how it may affect them.

Raising legitimate concerns about where and in the type of neighbourhoods fourplexes can be built should not be right away dismissed as a 'NIMBY'. These are legitimate concerns that the city needs to think about as they have a very real impact on residents, communities and neighbourhoods that we live in. I wholeheartedly support building more homes but this needs to be done reasonably, and serious consideration about the impacts this has on communities and the people that already live in them.

Paul Szymanski