

To: Clerks, City of Guelph <clerks@guelph.ca>
Date: December 6, 2024

Dear Mayor and City Council Members

RE: 8 Mitchell Street, Proposed Zoning By-Law

This proposed development would greatly change the “feel” of our neighbourhood community. I have lived in Guelph for 40 years in different areas, most of that around the downtown – on Cork St near the Basilica and on Dublin St across from Central Public School. I have lived on Mitchell Street for 20 years now. Nowhere else in Guelph have I had the experience of living in a true neighbourhood community. (And I say this as a decade-long volunteer with the GCHC and the Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition). I remember when someone bought the house next door, and I offered to help with snow shovelling, the new owners suspiciously asked, “And what do you want for that??” –my answer was “We have a real neighbourhood here, we take care of each other and watch each other’s houses.” We have an online group, we have neighbourhood events in the park and smaller neighbourhood gatherings in people’s backyards and homes. We have true connection and care for one another.

I have deep concerns about the proposed development at 8 Mitchell Street. It seems to me that internal ADUs create a situation similar to a boarding house. I have always thought that boarding houses (lodging houses) were against the law in the City of Guelph. I am not sure this proposed type of dwelling would attract permanent residents, but rather transient people that would have less desire to become immersed in our neighbourhood culture. The people in our neighbourhood are proud of the architectural diversity and the diversity of people attracted to long-term living in our neighbourhood. I have heard people that have moved away due to growing families say they truly regret their decision to move and wished they could come back.

Our neighbourhood is next to the St George’s park neighbourhood. This is where a lot of very exceptional large homes are located, one of the oldest areas of Guelph. Where these people alerted to this proposal?
It would affect their neighbourhood, as well.

This past year of major road closures and new condo developments around downtown have changed the traffic flow and parking patterns. As a driver, on Mitchell Street I already feel stressed getting out of my own driveway when the street is full of parked cars for local businesses. But those small businesses are important to the special feel of our neighbourhood.

We are also “overflow parking” for the downtown for the River Run Centre and for Storm games. For that reason, I always back in my driveway so I can exit it safely. I speak to drivers that are parking, urging them to make sure they move forward enough to allow two cars to park on the street in front of my house. When other major east-west roads are affected (York Rd and Speedvale, for example), the traffic increase on Eramosa is incredible and I have difficulty turning left from Mitchell onto Eramosa. I cannot imagine adding so many more parked cars at the proposed development at 8 Mitchell, it is such a busy corner.

These days, even turning right onto Eramosa and then left onto Arthur St can be an issue, as the cars in the left turn lane where Eramosa meets Wyndham and Woolwich can be backed up into the straight lane

going from Eramosa to Wyndham. On a steep, slippery hill in the winter, this could be a danger. For gas emissions, this is also distressing. The 24-hour per day, 12-month per year parking on King St is absolutely necessary for current residents that do not have driveways, due to the age of the neighbourhood. I rely on that type of parking when I have an overnight visitor. It is also within walking distance to the hospital. To have residents from the proposed 8 Mitchell use those King St parking spaces because there are not enough allotted parking spaces for the number of units would mean people would be “fighting” over spaces. I am concerned that the internal ADUs at 8 Mitchell would encourage shared accommodation, roommates rather than families –meaning more cars.

When I drive from Mitchell Street, along Arthur South, under the train bridge, I always feel I am “taking my life in my hands”, with the left turn onto Arthur and cars not yielding to my right of way. As a pedestrian in that area, I feel even more nervous, attempting to walk onto Arthur South.

If these and other proposed developments are in response to the demands of the Ontario government, then I request that the City of Guelph -- my beloved city of 40 years! --protect my interests and those of my community and work with the Government of Ontario to find other ways to meet the demands for accessible, affordable housing.

Putting modern developments into old neighbourhoods with very narrow streets and narrow sidewalks cannot be the only answer. Let us work toward an answer that is not either/or, but is inclusive and respectful of our traditional neighbourhoods. Yes, we have some smaller apartment units nearby -- but most of those people are long-term rentals who also love the neighbourhood.

For these reasons and others not mentioned here, I request that you defer this proposal. A revised plan is needed to include the context of the neighbourhood and the necessity for more affordable rental units.

Sincerely,

Wendelin Galatianos,
■ Mitchell St.