

December 5, 2025
Chris Bonnett, ■ Monticello Crescent, Guelph / ■■■■■■■■■■

Comments on Staff Report: Exploring the Potential for Five Plus (5+) Units in Guelph

Report prepared for Council Meeting, December 9, 2025

To: Clerks@guelph.ca, Cathy Downer and Leanne Caron, Ward 5 Councillors

I have waded through several documents to get some context for my comments, but there are many documents I still need to read.

I want to assure Council that my goal is not to refuse any and all development, but to ensure that what happens is visually and practically compatible with our neighbourhoods. For example, there are 11 building criteria in the Official Plan. The first criterion is about “building form, scale, height, setbacks, massing, appearance and siting.”

Another excerpt, regarding the built form of low rise residential redevelopment in the Official Plan, provides further guidance for Council’s consideration of this proposal.

“However, new buildings proposed within older, established areas of the city are encouraged to be designed to complement the visual character and architectural/building material elements found in these areas” (p. 77, emphasis added).

This latest proposal for massive, new in-fill buildings cannot possibly meet those requirements, as will be explained in this submission.

Council's meeting on April 9, 2024: Staff Report – Community Consultation

In Background, this report includes a number of references using language that is completely at odds with what we have seen with lot severances and redevelopment proposals for ■ Monticello and ■ Evergreen in the last few months. For example, emphasis added:

1. "Gentle density...focuses on slightly increasing the number and variety of homes..." The term "gentle density" is also used on the city's HAF infographic (undated).
2. "...minimally building out these lots..."
3. "...the ultimate sign of successful gentle density is that it is gentle enough that one hardly notices."

Missing: The Real World

These statements are absurd considering that, under Spruce Living, [REDACTED] Monticello has become two semi-detached buildings with 48 bedrooms, replacing a 4-bedroom bungalow. This is of course anything but gentle, or a minimal build-out, and it will be grossly noticeable in terms of residents, vehicles and garbage bins...and I expect neighbourhood tension and conflict. It will be noticed in reduced property values, and potential street safety incidents due to a lack of sidewalks and street lighting. We expect [REDACTED] Evergreen will present identical challenges, but multiplied since the two properties are less than 200M apart.

I could find no written explanation of what the city thinks 4 and 5+ Units actually mean in the real world. No where is it mentioned that 4, or now 5-12 units, mean far, far more residents than these first-level numbers imply. I want to emphasize that the latest Staff proposal means up to 12 Units. Using the same math used by Spruce Living, 12 units could create 144 new bedrooms and even more residents on one existing lot! Again, not "gentle", not "minimal", and outrageously obvious. This fails any test of "compatibility" as defined in the Official Plan.

Defining Missing Middle

The Staff Report for the upcoming (December 9, 2025) meeting refers to "Missing Middle" housing (p. 3), which according to an American commercial website of that same name, includes everything from duplexes, to Triplexes, Quads, Fiveplexes and small and large mansions (see: <https://missingmiddlehousing.com/neighborhood-kit/>). Is that US website the source of this term in our city's plan? Do we have a Made-in-Guelph definition (...which I have also not yet found)?

Redevelopment in our neighbourhoods does not satisfy the city's important goal to build more affordable housing (December 2023). Using terminology like "missing middle" is clearly not the same thing.

Council's meeting on December 9, 2025: Staff Report – Approach and Criteria

Staff created five criteria on which to filter where 5+ Units could be built in RL.1 and RL.2 neighbourhoods like ours.

Again, we read "gentle density", which becomes more ridiculous when the minimum lot size for 4 units is just 450 square metres, or roughly equal to a 48' x 100' lot. I note the frontage is less than half of the Monticello and Evergreen lots, and so it's very difficult to understand how such a small lot could contain 5+ primary units plus many more ADUs.

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Staff also used a minimum lot frontage of just 9 M, or about 30 feet. Again, this seems absurdly narrow for a building with five or more primary Units.

Knowing I repeat myself, these aberrations reinforce how unrealistic this “5+” proposal is. Much more time and effort are needed to understand and address residents’ needs and concerns. This proposal is putting the cart before the horse.

Background Data

My neighbourhood, Mayfield Park, is identified as "suitable" for 5+ units. I understand that Staff provide monthly reports, and create an Annual Monitoring Report. I also understand that there have been no applications for fourplexes in 2024 or 2025. However, other building types have the potential for at least as many units and residents, and I am assuming that four or five Dwelling Units, as will be soon discussed by Council, means all types of buildings with 4 or 5 or more units.

Will the city track and publicly report how many PDUs and ADUs and how many new/renovated units and residents those developments entail, not just fourplexes or fiveplexes?

Does this “5+” proposal include dedicated student residences, as both 6 Evergreen and 9 Monticello are? I haven’t read that student housing is excluded from the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Action Plan, but it also doesn't appear that this demographic is the intended beneficiary.

Resident Consultation

These drastic changes to our neighbourhoods strike me as similar to signs posted in housing developments in Mississauga and elsewhere that warn about frequent, loud, low-flying aircraft because those new developments are adjacent to busy airports. Continuously inserting 4- and now 5+ (i.e., up to 12) unit buildings into existing neighbourhoods like ours should require the city to warn residents and potential residents of these drastic changes that will affect quality of life, and not just people living with a 60 M radius. I am not alone in becoming aware of these in-fill developments only because of organized neighbourhood resistance to [REDACTED] Evergreen Drive.

I expect our home's value will be significantly diminished because of these federal and provincial grand homebuilding schemes that are now being very quietly implemented in Guelph. Our home is a very important part of our financial and retirement plan. It may not be the intention, but unconstrained over-development has already caused people to uproot their lives and essentially forces them to relocate before they intend. More balance is needed.

I noted no mention of neighbourhood consultation in the city's Housing Pledge letter to then-Minister Clark dated March 10, 2023. Even if the province doesn't want to hear about it, the city

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should have insisted on substantive and sustained consultation with its residents. This would of course respect our interests as taxpayers and voters, and not just the needs of developers.

I find Staff's stated intention to consult with neighbourhoods to be woefully inadequate: too little, and too late. Their recommendation to advance their "5+" planning has already been stated. Essentially, they have already 'voted' to proceed. Given the scale of these approved and proposed changes, neighbourhoods should be engaged at a much earlier stage, not after Council votes on a staff recommendation with such significant, long term effects.

Future

In my admittedly limited experience, it is clear that the city has failed to engage residents in its existing 4-Unit approval in a meaningful, timely and transparent manner. As stated in my recent submissions and presentation to the Committee of Adjustment, none of what we have seen in our neighbourhood meets any reasonable definition of compatibility. I have not seen the Committee of Adjustment or staff give serious consideration to neighbourhood input. Staff have interpreted the broad Official Plan definition of compatibility only in narrow, technical terms. The CoA has stated their mission is limited to approving a severance, ignoring the obvious downstream consequences that affect residents. This present debate is an opportunity for Council to do better.

Given those failures, I strongly recommend that any consideration of a policy to support 5 to 12 unit buildings in RL.1 and RL.2 neighbourhoods be postponed. Ideally, it should never be approved because such buildings are much too big to be shoehorned between existing homes, and the existing 4-Unit approval is too new to understand how it is being implemented in the real world. Related redevelopment approvals in my neighbourhood have been far from ideal.

Any recommendation to support more work on "5+" units only makes our existing situation worse.

Sincerely,
Chris Bonnett