

High Density Housing Complexes

Rouge Valley Rd. and Sheppard, Toronto, ON

While on a recent outing to the Toronto Zoo a complex similar to a portion of the proposed one at Maplevue Dr. gained my attention. I traveled back to further investigate how this complex had progressed over the 9 years it had been occupied. Here are my findings:

- The buildings themselves were attractive but very close together, so much so that the front lawns facing the street ranged from being rather attractively maintained to being totally neglected and littered with garbage related items. The access point for lawn maintenance for the middle townhouses was either through the townhouse or around the block.
- The issue of day to day storage of garbage and recycling items was very apparent as some of the front porches contained all garbage containers while others were decorated with plant containers.
- The decks with underneath parking were well utilized and some had been stained albeit a myriad of colours. Cars were still parked on the streets.
- There were proper streets which would have been maintained by the city and therefore offered the required distance between the townhouses. If laneways were the norm, as in the Barrie proposal, no one would be responsible for their snow removal and more housing developments would fit in.
- The predominant signage was "For Lease" as opposed to "For Sale" which leads me to believe that these housing units have been purchased by investors who are absentee landlords.
- The decks above the parking areas were more for storage and I didn't see anyone utilizing them as it was a very hot day and they would have been too hot to occupy.
- There were several entrance and exit streets so fire/emergency safety and easy access was in place.
- The variation in maintenance, appearance and overall placement of children's recreational items seemed to indicate that no consistent standard or management/supervision of the exterior was in existence.

Barrie Complex

Many if not all of the concerns regarding the Sheppard Ave. complex apply directly to the proposed Barrie development, the difference being that the Barrie development is more “dense” and much larger.

The basic overriding question is “who is in charge” to ensure that this proposed Barrie complex is a well maintained community with a healthy lifestyle and standard of living that we in Barrie have come to respect and expect. This very much sets a precedent for exceeding the minimum requirement as set by the province for “high density housing”.

The proposed development in Barrie is very much a “city” until itself. One of the most important factors in successful family dwellings is the “private” space for children and families to enjoy the out of doors. With the exception of the townhouses, there are no private spaces and given the potential number of residences, the public park would have limited capacity to meet those needs.

Is there any potential for the City, if they so wish, to apply back the province to have this “high density” designation changed to better reflect the wishes of the residents whose neighborhoods are already in existence? If not, then pursue the possibility of having the minimum density standard met?

From: Mary Lou Staples