

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) – SEPTEMBER 14, 2009

RESIDENTIAL PARKING ISSUES CONSEQUENT ON THE “NEW URBANISM”

Recommendation

Councillor Tony Carella recommends that street design and by-law enforcement issues relating to residential parking be reviewed by the committee and that staff be directed to bring forward to Council options to address these issues.

Purpose

To address the concerns of residents receiving an excessive number of parking tickets.

Contribution to Sustainability

The sustainability of the so-called new urbanism (defined as denser populations within residential zones, resulting in smaller lot sizes but leading to more efficient use of public infrastructure) requires creative solutions to the problem of families with more vehicles than can be accommodated on their property.

Economic Impact

Nil

Communication Plan

A communications plan is premature at this time.

Background – Analysis and Options

The planning perspective commonly known as the “new urbanism”---first seen in Vaughan in the so-called Woodbridge Expansion Area, now Sonoma Heights---seeks to achieve a more efficient use of public infrastructure by increasing the density of the population it is designed to serve. To achieve such densities, houses are constructed on narrower lots, with narrower garages, reduced basements (and thus less on-site storage space) and smaller side, back and front yards, in the last instance resulting in shortened driveways. Ideally these garages and driveways can, respectively, accommodate three cars---one in the garage and two on the driveway.

But if the homeowner has chosen a house with a sidewalk in front of it, the “parkable” driveway may only accommodate one car, unless the boulevard is sufficiently deep to permit a car to be parked in the windrow (being that portion of a driveway that crosses public property, between the sidewalk and the curb). If in addition the homeowner cannot make effective use of the garage (for instance, it is used as storage space), or it will not accommodate a vehicle that needs to be accessed from both sides once parked inside the garage), the number of effective parking spaces is reduced to one. Very few families own just one automobile.

While it may be argued that home buyers should only purchase homes that can easily accommodate as many cars as they own on private property, the fact is that an increasing number of the single family dwelling being built in the Greater Toronto Area are as described, if only because of the cost of such dwellings in general and the planning perspective (again, the new urbanism) that mandates their construction.

The end result of this situation is that more and more of these homeowners are being issued tickets for parking overnight on the street, or for parking in such a manner that the front or rear end of the car overhangs the sidewalk or the curb, or both. In some areas this is already common.

A long-term solution may be mandating the construction in new urban area of what are sometimes referred to as "monolithic" sidewalks, placed adjacent to the curb, with no grassed boulevard at all. This type of sidewalk is a feature of Firglen Ridge, a street in Woodbridge which is well over thirty years old, with no known problems reported with respect to snow clearance, the typical utilitarian as opposed to aesthetic justification for the placement of boulevards. Monolithic sidewalks result in lengthened driveways which can usually accommodate at least two cars, whereas, as we have seen, sidewalks with abutting boulevards reduce that number in half.

In the shorter term, however, the complaints of some neighbors of the above-noted residents---regarding overnight on street parking, or the overhanging onto the sidewalk of window parked vehicle---are resulting in fines which are a genuine financial burden, particularly to young families with children and otherwise limited incomes.

One short term solution merits discussion: the amendment of the parking by-law to permit the overnight parking of vehicles that overhang the sidewalk (thought not the curb) between the hours of 10 pm and 6 am, when pedestrian traffic is unlikely if not non-existent

It is hoped that other potential solutions may be identified through a thorough examination of this issue in the context of a working session.

Regional Implications

Nil

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Conclusion

The new urbanism has created problems with respect to parking in residential areas, which problems can best be addressed by a thorough discussion of the issue in the more informal setting of a working session.

Attachments

None

Report prepared by:

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Respectfully submitted,

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