

# Old University Neighbourhood Residents' Association

**Stay Engaged in our Old University Neighbourhood  
OUNRA General Meeting  
May 14, 2024 at 7 pm  
Harcourt United Church, 87 Dean Ave**

## **Guest Speaker: The Honourable Lloyd Longfield, MP**

Mr. Longfield will address, from a federal perspective, the housing and other challenges we are all facing in this time of economic uncertainty. There will also be time for him to address your questions and concerns.

**Also present will be Ward Five Councillors Cathy Downer and Leanne Caron**  
They will convene their customary Councillors' Corner and respond to residents' questions.

## **President's Message**

### **John Lawson, President, OUNRA**

The housing crisis continues to dominate headlines both national and local. The federal government pushes 4-Plexes, the Ontario government resists, and the City of Guelph Council is currently debating the issue this spring with a decision on moving ahead with 4-Plexes as a right throughout the city in residential areas in June. And that is but one issue.

While all agree that change and intensification are necessary – we struggle when we wonder what it looks like. OUNRA has consistently fought for a balanced approach.

- To respect the family character of the neighbourhood.
- To have a healthy balance of student rental and owner-occupied residences.
- To ensure a healthy mix of tree canopy and built environment.

We continue to believe and work for this balance while resisting the calls for a solely NIMBY reaction.

All this – to be credible and effective – requires neighbourhood engagement and education. Your engagement.

It requires listening to our kids and young families who would love to live and raise their kids here – but are priced out of the neighbourhood – a neighbourhood where they perhaps grew up. They need a place to call home.

It requires resisting those developers who see this area primarily as a place to make a quick buck – maximizing density, clearing trees and maximizing profit with little thought to the neighbourhood as a whole.

Community and neighbourhood associations such as OUNRA is where our democracy begins at the local level. It's not always easy – but without it – others will be making decisions for us in our absence.

Over the last few meetings, we have heard from our Mayor, Cam Guthrie, our MPP Mike Schreiner. At our AGM on 14 May 2024, we will welcome our MP, Lloyd Longfield. Lloyd has said that he will not be standing for re-election and so he will bring some general reflections of both the challenges and the directions that he sees for Guelph and neighbourhoods such as ours within the city. We will also, of course, hear from our City Councillors.

Come and be part of our democracy in action. ~J.L.

Stay in touch at  
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## Fighting for Our Community: What Have I learned Over the Last Decade?



- If City Council or the Committee of Adjustment (where applicants can request exemptions to zoning bylaw restrictions) fail to base their refusals for development initiatives on these same planning principles, the developer will simply appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal where they are highly likely to win. Local authorities are not all-powerful in these situations.
- Protecting the character of the neighbourhood is a very technical and political game. The only way to have an impact is to learn the rules, be persistent and strategic while making every effort to be constructive.
- Ward Councillors are our allies even when they cannot save us from developments we don't like. They depend on us to express our views, without which they are on weak ground if they want to make a case for us.
- Ten years ago, there was great concern that the OUN would become overbalanced with too many student houses in relation to family homes. But that concern faded as property values increased to the point where it became uneconomic for absentee landlords. But now, with so called 'gentle density', the capacity to put more student bedrooms on a property increases the possibility that the problem of too many student houses might re-emerge. OUNRA will be watching.

### Bruce Ryan, Past President, OUNRA

A little over 10 years ago I joined the Executive Committee of OUNRA after spending many hours in meetings with city planners and a developer who wanted to build several huge, stacked townhouses on lands then occupied by St Paul's School (now Cornerstone Christian School) very close to my house on Forest Street. These were fraught meetings where threats and insults were exchanged on both sides. In the end, the development did not happen most likely because the numbers did not add up for the developer who took his money elsewhere. From this experience I learned that a neighbourhood must stand up for itself or it might get developed out of existence. OUNRA was an important ally and resource in our efforts and I wanted to support the association in return.

So, a decade later, what have I learned?

- OUNRA has been an active and productive advocate on behalf of OUN residents in making frequent contributions to bylaw changes and responding to other concerns expressed by residents.
- I learned that unless you speak in terms of planning principles, as they are encapsulated in the City's Official Plan and the Provincial Planning Act, when objecting to a development proposal, you will not be taken seriously and you will be labeled a NIMBY.

Neighbourhood involvement – your involvement – makes all the difference! ~ B.R.



John Lawson and Bruce Ryan



**On behalf of OUNRA, heartfelt thanks to Bruce Ryan for 10 years of service, leadership, research, newsletters, research, advocacy, and so much more. We cannot thank you enough Bruce!**



### What Gentle Density Looks Like

Check out the three new houses and their backyard accessory buildings at 26 Forest St to see what gentle density looks like. As big and crowded as they are, they are being built to the current three-unit standard, not the four-unit density the new bylaw will allow. OUNRA objected to the 11.9 m frontage variance requested by the developer in place of the 15 m required by zoning. We were unsuccessful. For the next two or three years, at least, these buildings will be used for student houses.



### Update on Active Transportation in Our Neighbourhood

This February, OUNRA met with Adrian Salvatore, chair of the Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation (GCAT). We learned that GCAT is a very active and vibrant organization in our City. GCAT has many events for the public throughout the year.

The good news is that bicycling and walking are relatively easy and safe in our neighbourhood. However, getting from our neighbourhood to the rest of Guelph can be a challenge. The City will build protected bike lanes on Gordon, but we understand this may take 10 years. Another challenge is Edinburgh Road, which can be daunting and dangerous for cyclists. OUNRA raised these concerns to our councillors and City staff. City staff wrote that Edinburgh Road is "not considered a suitable connection" for cycling because, among other factors, "the steepness of the road". Hopefully, this will not be the last word. OUNRA will stay engaged on the issue.