

559 Southcote Rd Development Application

May 23, 2025, Planning Committee



Read by Planning Committee Chair, Councillor Tammy Hwang:

I apologize that I am unable to be in attendance at this week's Planning Committee, but I am currently on my way back from a workshop in Helsinki, Finland entitled *Healthy Urban Policy*. It was funded by a federal grant by the Canadian Institute for Health Research. I am excited to bring back all the knowledge and insights from this trip and find ways to make Hamilton a healthier city.

I am grateful to Chair Hwang for sharing my thoughts on this development proposal at 559 Southcote Rd in Ward 12.

Each development proposal must be considered based on many factors. No specific development is appropriate in just any location. Good development boils down to the appropriate development for the site: height, massing, scale, and how it fits into the City's vision. Hamilton's approach is to focus the bulk of increased density along transit corridors, like Garner Rd, which is the site of this proposal. Enabling more people to live near transit lines provides the option of mass transit, a more sustainable form of transportation that eases the traffic from single-occupancy vehicles on our roads. Further, developments like this increase the viability of transit; it's a virtuous, reinforcing circle.

In recent years, Hamiltonians at large have come to appreciate the value of land, the many harmful consequences of low-density sprawl, and the benefit of maintaining the modicum of natural heritage we have left after decades of urban boundary expansions. I am well aware that approval of this proposal will result in the loss of forty trees including a truly majestic weeping willow with a trunk diameter of 186 cm. I know that every heritage tree lost in Ward 12 is felt keenly by the community and I am very thankful for residents who have taken the time to stand up and speak on behalf of our natural heritage. Your voices are valued

and so important to this process. I was opposed to removing the over 370 trees at 509 Southcote which is directly adjacent to this site. However, that proposal has been green lit by the OLT and every tree on the lot, including dozens of towering conifers, except four, will be removed. That was a very short-sighted decision beyond the control of Hamilton City Council.

I am also grateful to my colleagues' recent support to deny the proposal on Hamilton Dr where nearly 700 trees would be clear cut to allow a net increase of 13 housing lots on that land. However, modest missing-middle density in a compact form at this location is a much wiser decision than conceding to the same number of low-density units outside our urban boundary, consuming farmland and natural heritage on a greater scale and requiring a disproportionate infrastructure investment for the number of homes provided.

From another angle, we are also being forced to deal with the rising costs of housing that have fundamentally changed the housing market which now excludes demographics such as young people starting lives on their own. This has forced us to take a hard look at the housing mix available in our communities and come to the realization that a historical model that overwhelming supplies single-detached housing is a huge contributor to our predicament. Although I don't expect that these units will be affordable by any reasonable definition, they will provide the opportunity for local residents to right-size their housing and stay in the neighbourhood. Whether they are empty-nesters, widowers, or otherwise, there are benefits to potentially freeing up family-size housing within Ancaster or elsewhere in Hamilton.

Finally, with each new development proposal we must also consider the constantly evolving legislative environment in the Province of Ontario. Infill density projects like this one provide a significant amount of overlap between Provincial housing objectives, Council Priorities such as improving the tax productivity of our land for the benefit of taxpayers, and meaningful community benefit such as the aforementioned additional missing-middle housing stock and alignment with building a strong public transit network. With each of these elements in mind, this project is a good fit and I support it. I urge my Committee colleagues to also consider these factors in the hopes that they come to the same conclusion and support the staff recommendation to approve this application.