

Madam Chair, Mayor Goldring, Councillors, Ladies & Gentlemen,

My name is Nicole Dolson and I am a member of the Havendale Advisory Committee formed by Councillor Craven. My comments which reflect points made in the Havendale Advisory Committee's Position Paper submitted October 27th, 2017, will outline community concerns and wishes related the types of housing presented in this National Homes Proposal.

In discussing housing types, we make the assumption that community demographics have been carefully studied. The City of Burlington report related to this development states: (report number PB-30-18)

"Burlington is an inclusive and diverse city that has a growing proportion of youth, newcomers and young families and offers a price range and mix of housing choices."

This statement is incomplete and as a result, misleading. Stats Canada informs us that close to 30% of Burlington residents are aged 50 or over. This number is on the rise and places Burlington at or near the top of the list for having the largest population of older adults in Halton and Ontario.

The World Health Organization tells us that unfortunately, among people over the age of 65, approximately 40% are dealing with disabilities. These stats deserve due consideration and I believe that as compassionate and responsible elected representatives, you are all desirous of addressing the needs of all constituents within our city.

In canvassing the neighbourhood, I learned that there is much interest in this National Homes development from Tyandaga and Havendale area residents who are considering down-sizing.

It has become clear that with the right product, National Homes would have an eager market in residents who love their 'hood and would be eager to look at what this development has to offer.

Universally, the reaction to the proposed housing types has been one of disappointment.

Consider: What is it that usually makes home-owners decide to down-size? Invariably, it is the fact that they can no longer deal with stairs.

My family has lived in our home for almost 35 years. We have loved and continue to love our neighbourhood. With the turn-around that happens in all neighbourhoods, we have gone from being the young family on the street to being part of the older set. Thankfully, the younger families seem to enjoy our participation in our annual summer street party and we certainly enjoy getting to know them.

Over 35 years, we have been aware of many neighbours who have moved away for the purpose of downsizing. Among those we know of, with one exception, all have left Burlington.

This phenomenon – of people leaving Burlington when they downsize – is fairly common because housing choices for downsizing are so limited in our fair city. And so, people move to Waterdown, Ancaster, Oakville, Milton, Hamilton - all around us and beyond.

It is important to note that this decision to leave a known community, including friends and family, is made because of the limited housing options available in Burlington and not because of housing prices. It is quite simply the lack of desirable and accessible, single-level housing.

Also, to be noted is that few people who downsize are ready for condo or apartment living. Shoebox condos and apartments are quickly becoming the most available down-sizing housing option in Burlington.

This unfortunate fact and the overall reality of Burlington's limited housing market simply means a loss to our community as people opt for the broader menu of accommodation choices available in surrounding towns and cities.

And so with that, Burlington loses an important element in the community: people who have a history and strong roots in the city, who provide a thoughtful, experience-based perspective within the community, people who have time and money to spend on housing, restaurants, and entertainment and who love to shop. They simply take their business elsewhere.

In spite of this phenomenon, our growing percentage of older citizens is a reality - one that demands attention and action - and of course, having a disability and needing accessible housing can be a reality for any of us at any age.

This is not only about age. It is about the serious gaps in the housing market in Burlington and the obvious shortfalls in this proposed development in particular.

I believe that all of you, our city council members and city staff are well aware of this need and also that you are committed to addressing it.

The 2 and 3 storey dwellings offered by National Homes in this proposal are not accessible. Making the only physically accessible solution the option of adding an elevator at the cost of at least \$40,000.00 is discriminatory.

In the images submitted by National Homes and seen on the City of Burlington website, the plan provides for entrances to the units that are all raised and multi-stepped with anything from 3 to 12 step access to front doors.

Even with the expensive and space stealing elevator, this is not age-friendly, it is not accessible, it is not even visitable.

‘Visitable’ is a self-explanatory term that tells us that even with a young family, this inaccessible front door will not be welcoming to grandparents – and I shudder to envision the young family that has to struggle down 10 or 12 icy steps with toddler and stroller in tow.

Visitable housing means level access entrances, wider halls, and bathrooms on the main level. Accessible housing – another term that is self-explanatory – essentially means all of the above and adds that all spaces, including doorways and bathroom facilities will be accessible.

I feel foolish as I read this checklist as it strains logic to think that housing would not be built for accessibility. I mean, what's the point in that?

And let's not forget about parking space which also needs to be open and accessible without having to resort to a pool noodle to protect your vehicle as seen earlier in another National Homes development in the video.

This is more than a desire for variety and the need for seriously improved design, although aesthetics are also essentially important as they contribute to quality of life. This is about celebrating diversity and refusing to discriminate. Let us not be a community that is uni-focussed, and that goes for the easy template solution as seen here.

Let's be a community that truly values all stakeholders by insisting that housing projects provide fully accessible accommodation with a mix of living and design options that people will actually enjoy living in.

Incentives to provide accessible and visitable housing abound. One that comes to mind is the David Onley Award available to communities and builders. A further incentive would be realty statistics which show that in existing Burlington townhome communities, when the bungalow townhome design comes available, you are into a bidding war.

2100 Brant Street is ideally situated. Within walking distance are many features including a bus stop, a grocery store, a choice of pharmacies and a multitude of other service-oriented businesses. Clearly, the stage is already set for an innovative and show-stopping development project that truly responds to the needs of the community for accessible housing.

I believe that you who comprise our city council and senior staff have the knowledge and the problem-solving expertise to see that the issue of accessible housing and variety in housing types is addressed in this National Homes development.

In your deliberations, may you have the wisdom and the will to insist on a variety of options to address the need for accessibility.

Options such as some low-rise condos, some stacked townhomes and yes, even some bungalow townhomes. It would be so refreshing to see something that truly serves the greater good in this way!

To conclude, I ask you to reflect on this question of service to the greater good in this development.

I pose the question – Who does this development serve?

- Not young families without any green space,
- Not young professionals or anyone with vehicles that are larger than compacts
- And not older adults or people of any age with disabilities.

And so, members of our city council and senior staff I hope that you will agree that much needs to change in this proposal. I also hope that the representatives of National Homes take these issues to heart.

This property provides an opportunity for the City to demonstrate its commitment to accessibility on the last large tract of land available for new development within the city.

Let's get it right.

Thank you