

June 17, 2024

Presentation by Stewarttown Community Association to Council

Good evening: your worship, council members, staff, and members of the public. My name is Sam Mercurio, Acting President of the Stewarttown Community Association.

The Association was formed to represent the residents of Stewarttown, the oldest hamlet in Halton Hills. We are incorporated as a not-for-profit organization created to provide a strong voice to issues facing our neighbourhood including development, traffic, and safety. Would members of the public here from Stewarttown please stand and be recognized.

We are here to support the Town of Halton Hills with regards to the Stewarttown Secondary Plan. In particular, we support the position that the secondary plan should maintain the rural character of the hamlet by protecting its cultural and natural heritage systems and sense of serenity. For the expansion lands it is essential that a density target of no more than 8 units / hectare is established and that any new development is compatible with the character and quality of life of the existing community. The quality of life in our neighbourhood includes its rich history, quiet rural nature, low traffic, and safety. Our hamlet is truly an oasis in the midst of a much larger community.

The hamlet of Stewarttown is the oldest in all of Halton Hills and has a rich history dating back to 1819. Some of our streets are named after early settlers in this region. These pictures were taken by me and my wife on the day of the solar eclipse. We have lived here in Stewarttown for 9 years, and didn't know there was a cemetery at the top of the concrete wall on the east side of Trafalgar Rd. We had walked up to the cemetery to get a better view of the solar eclipse, but instead were humbled by the headstones of these settlers who left Ireland in the early 1800s. Unless we are members of the indigenous community, we are all descendants of immigrants. We should do more to celebrate and honour the efforts of these people who founded Stewarttown.

There are 8 homes in our hamlet that have received formal recognition of their cultural heritage value under the Ontario Heritage Act and the area has many identified features as being of potential cultural heritage value or interest, including:

- the remains of a former mill pond and stone dam
- Black Creek (including valley lands and vegetation on public and private lands);
- Mill Pond Drive
- Stewarttown Road (including the crossing over Black Creek)

To walk down our quiet streets is to commune with nature. There is an abundance of flora and wildlife that includes beavers, coyotes, deer, foxes, rabbits, and rare trees including black walnut and butternut trees. There is a waterfall from the stone dam, and views of Black Creek from the bridge on Stewarttown Road. Neither my wife or I had ever seen a beaver lodge, beaver, or fox until we came to live in Stewarttown.

The suggested density target of 8 units / hectare for the expansion lands is well above the original target of 5 units / hectare currently in place for the rest of Stewarttown. In fact, both targets are well above the densities of the entire existing community, none of which are above 3.6 units / hectare. Despite our objections at a previous council meeting, the Town decided to increase the target density for the expansion land development as a compromise between the existing density, the density of surrounding communities, and Provincial targets.

Our association understands that there is an urgent need for housing in Ontario. We are not against development. We feel that the Town of Halton Hills is well on its way to meeting provincial targets for new housing through the Vision Georgetown, Southeast Georgetown and the GO Train area developments to name a few. The much higher density suggested by the developer is not needed to help the Town meet its provincial targets.

This is not about trying to stop development. This is not about the size of our lots. This is about density and its effect on the quality of life in our neighbourhood. Our position is that any density above 8 units / hectare in the expansion lands will severely affect the character and quality of life in our hamlet community.

At present the hamlet roads have a very low level of traffic. These pictures of Mill Pond Road and Harrison Place were taken on a typical evening walk. Note the lack of traffic. An evening walk with the dog can be taken without having to dodge traffic. Children are safe to play hockey or basketball in front of their own homes. The Secondary Plan has proposed the only access road to the expansion lands be at the end of the dead-end street Harrison Place. Because of this, the traffic associated with the number of units created will have a dramatic impact on these residents as well as those on Thompson, Stewarttown and Mill Pond Road, and will affect our way of life in the hamlet.

We strongly urge the council to direct the planners and lawyers to maintain the maximum density of 8 units / hectare in any upcoming discussions with the developer or during any mediation at the Ontario Land Tribunal.

We thank you for your time, and we respectfully ask you to keep the wishes of the Stewarttown Community Association in mind in all future decisions concerning the new development.