

Plans fitting together like a puzzle in development

By Mark Pavilons

With the submission of the first draft plans of subdivision, the large-scale development near King City is progressing well. King councillors received details of several subdivision plans as part of the King City North East Functional Servicing/Development Area Study (FSDAS), a comprehensive plan (template) to bring cohesiveness to a massive tract of land involving six property owners.

Township staff brought councillors up to speed on the progress, and how the individual subdivisions are shaping up and interconnecting. The FSDAS provides the foundation for the integration of development for this new community area. Given the magnitude just over 1,000 units which will be home to more than 3,000 residents it is like planning a village. The King City East Landowners Group (KCELG) consists of various property owners in the study area, who have all come together in a coordinated effort.

Planner Gaspare Ritacca pointed out this gives all parties the ability to design their subdivisions as if there were no clear property lines or borders. It's a more fluid, effective and efficient way to plan.

Together, seven applications combine to create this huge development. Acorn Development plans 55 detached homes, while Remcor is looking at 529 detached homes and 47 townhouses, along with a school site, parks, etc. Supco has the smallest project of seven residential lots. Kingsfield Estates proposes 43 lots, while King Green Developments plans 90 lots as well as a park. King Rocks Developments is looking at building 74 detached homes and 77 townhouses, with a park, buffer area and water management pond. Scouli Developments is aiming for 99 detached homes, a park, natural heritage features, open space, etc.

While the applications are separate, Township staff are looking at the whole big picture.

To date, there have been some comments and concerns raised regarding this development.

Residents are asking that Acorn be limited to a maximum of 40 lots. Others want pedestrian trails. There are concerns regarding the fate of a small portion of land earmarked as future development.

Current restrictions limit building heights to three storeys and a gross density of 7 units per hectare.

Staff are asking that the number of cul-de-sacs be minimized. They would like to see an increase in the number of townhouses or semi-detached units. Staff also pointed out that both the Acorn and King Rocks properties have significant access limitations, which may present a challenge to achieve a design with multiple access points, and therefore, more difficult to rationalize a higher number of units within those areas.

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Department staff are working with the developers to identify the best size, location and distribution of parks.

Overall, staff noted this development does provide a significant connectivity throughout the different sections. A network of sidewalks, trails and multi-use paths are included.

Traffic impacts are also being reviewed. Staff are concerned about single access points in some areas, including the proposed extension of East Humber Drive. Staff have asked the applicants to explore revisions and make improvements.

Staff are also looking at the phasing of the development, to ensure it occurs in a comprehensive and orderly manner.

Overall, staff is pleased with the way this development is coming together, like puzzle pieces fitting together.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer said it's remarkable what we're trying to do here.

An East Humber Drive resident asked council to maintain the area's tree cover and plant as much foliage as possible.

Another resident is worried about traffic congestion this development will cause, noting it's difficult to get out of his area during peak morning rush hour.

Resident Judith Tenenbaum said this is an innovative, smart-growth approach and she praised staff. She's concerned about the potential use of the 2.4-acre future portion. She urged council to prohibit any form of commercial use on this site.

While the Acorn development wants 55 units, but the Township and residents would prefer 40. Ritacca said while the overall densities are set, each property has its own unique practical realities that will limit the number of lots.

The review of the applications is ongoing and staff will report back to council as the process continues.