

King's new Official Plan is a legacy document

By Mark Pavilons

This is a legacy that this council will leave, is how King Mayor Steve Pellegrini referred to the new, and long overdue, Official Plan.

Councillors passed the comprehensive planning document Sept. 23, after a productive discussion and input from several residents. Councillors made some last-minute amendments to the plan, which included zoning changes to the core area in King City, limiting severances and placing a two-acre lot minimum in Kingscross.

King now has a very good go-forward document, according to Mayor Pellegrini.

In the works since 2014, the Our King Official Plan replaces a 40-year-old strategic plan and marks an important milestone in King's history, according to consultant Bob Gauthier, project manager of WSP who worked on the plan.

He pointed out some key changes were made since the draft plan was introduced in July and the final version replaces all three community plans. It provides a central function for land use planning goals, ambitions and visions set by the Township.

The OP also implements upper tier (York Region, Province) policies which have a direct impact on local planning.

The new plan provides a growth management framework, sets greenfield densities, while maintaining King's small town character.

The OP does this very well, Gauthier said.

There was a need to establish intensification policies as mandated by the Province and the three villages are the focal points for this concentrated growth. The OP protects employment lands and offers source protection policies, and took into account literally hundreds of comments from agencies and the public.

The Official Plan is a very strong, modern framework for planning in King Township, Gauthier said. It does a good job balancing everything. It's the start of a new era of planning.

Gauthier stressed there will be many opportunities to continue to refine the document, particularly when York Region updates its own OP.

Several delegations, which included consultants, agents and landowners, asked for site-specific considerations under the plan. Many asked that future plans and uses for their properties be taken into consideration. All vowed to continue to work with Township planning staff on their proposals.

Leslie Whicher, on behalf of the Kingscross Ratepayers' Association (KRA), made a passionate plea to ban severances in established communities, and she also asked that new lots in Kingscross be a minimum of two acres.

She charged council was weakening its protection of communities and was dismayed at the lack of attention to this in the OP. She wants the Township to move forward, not backwards and stressed the same rules should be applied to everyone.

Other Kingscross residents echoed those sentiments, arguing stronger wording was needed to stress the matter.

Mayor Pellegrini pointed out King's interim control bylaw did, in fact, prohibit severances in existing subdivisions. He also pointed out Township councillors and staff did support Kingscross residents throughout the process and OMB hearing over a particular lot creation application that caused some tension.

We have fought the good fight, he said,

Our King OP addresses King's long-term planning requirements through 2031 and equips the Township with a wide range of policies to guide growth, development, land use, environmental preservation and also to facilitate economic development initiatives. Consultants had to respond quickly to changes in provincial legislation, as the OP was being created. The Province introduced Bills 139, 108 and created the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT).

Planning staff, together with the consulting team at WSP, are continuously monitoring the ongoing provincial changes and has adapted the Our King Official Plan to address the in-force legislation, staff said.

As well, York Region is undertaking its Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) with projections through 2041. King's OP will have to conform to this when it's completed.

King is also in the process of updating its 2015 Transportation Master Plan. When this is completed, it, too, will be incorporated in the new OP.

Several open houses were held to garner public input into the plan and many residents took advantage of these sessions. All of the

documents related to the OP, along with the OP itself, are available on the Township's website, at www.king.ca
The OP not only addresses planning issues, but defines goals and sets objectives; establishes a natural heritage system, and provides a framework for sustainable economic development.
Overall, the plan promotes complete communities that foster and support healthy, active lifestyles, while continuing to protect and enhance the natural environment, agricultural and rural areas that give King its distinctive character.