

Our King? Official Plan nears completion

By Mark Pavilons

King Township took a giant leap forward with the public unveiling of its new Official Plan ? Our King.?

After years of work, public engagement, and a ?fantastic? amount of input, King reached this milestone last week at a special public meeting, where the final draft of Our King was revealed.

Bobby Gauthier, project manager of WSP, explained the Official Plan is the main planing tool that sets a vision for the Township and provides a growth management strategy. It pulls together the three existing community plans for King's main villages, as well as the rural official plan. The document defines goals, ambitions and policies, a vital set of rules to implement King's and the upper tier policies.

Seven main policy directions guided the development of the plan, ranging from complementary growth, meeting growth targets, protection of existing neighbourhoods to protection of employment lands. The growth strategy takes us to 2031.

Key changes were made to the final draft and these included updated floor space index policy, drive-through criteria and vehicle anti-idling bylaw. There are also policies that relate to a broadband Internet strategy.

The consultants and staff received more than 50 written submissions and thousands of visits and downloads from the website.

Gauthier said the comments contained a diverse range of issues, including a prohibition of drive-throughs to mixed use designations and building height requirements. Gauthier noted the exercise includes conformity with York's Official Plan, which is slated to be passed in 2020. King's OP?also has to be in line with the provincial policy statement of 2014 as well as the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and conservation plans.

The OP?also carries forward initiatives in the Township's Sustainability Plan, Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan, Economic Development Strategy, Transportation Master Plan and the water/wastewater master plan.

The public has until July 31 to submit comments before the plan is tweaked for the last time and presented to council for approval this September.

Township staff noted the review has taken an ?aggressive??time line, with a lot of work being done over the past 18 months.

A large contingent of residents and citizen's groups provided their comments and concerns to the plan.

Mary Muter, of the Kingscross Residents' Association, noted the plan lacks any sort of flood plain mapping strategy, something she believes is vital. It's ?foolhardy??to proceed without such a tool, she said, noting they'd like to see a water management plan before the OP?is approved.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer agreed, noting King should have a watershed plan. She also pointed out that references to 100-year storm events are already proven obsolete and she'd like these updated.

CAO?Dan Kostopoulos said Conservation Authorities do all of the watershed work in the region and municipalities rely on their data and expertise in these matters. Both the TRCA?and LSRCA?have done watershed mapping.

Regarding lot creation in established neighbourhoods, Muter said current wording isn't strong enough and it could lead to more development on smaller lots in this premier subdivision. She'd like to see Kingscross uniquely designated to reflect the character of the community.

Resident Susan Beharriell said she'd like to see the new OP?near bullet-proof against appeals to the Local Planning Appeal?Tribunal (LPAT). She wants the new plan to have ?bold power.?

Angelo Santorelli, president of the King Chamber of Commerce, outlined the business organization's key priorities.

The Chamber's vision of sustainability is to have jobs available locally and the Township needs to address the severe jobs deficit. ?King is already a great place to live and play but we are falling behind on the goal of making it a great place to work,??Santorelli said. ?Being a bedroom community where there are no jobs for locals and people must travel to other communities for work is not sustainable.?

The Chamber provided seven recommendations to achieve these goals, such as setting aside sufficient employment lands for the future; looking at prestige employment uses for the Highway 400 corridor, and exploring more mixed use buildings in village cores. Mayor Steve Pellegrini said he fully supports attracting business to King.

Resident Bruce Craig urged the Township to consider an ?environmental first? approach to planning. He urged them to place a far

greater weight on the environment in terms of development. He's concerned that many of the policies in the plan use a "broad brush stroke" of planning, even though every community is markedly different.

Staff pointed out the OP "promotes the use of a climate change lens to promote sustainable and innovative development."

Pellegrini said the new OP "is taking the best of the three former community plans, bringing these policies to bear."

The mayor also pointed out that the reality is King must conform to the upper-tier rules from York Region and the Province. Any suggestion of delaying the process is not an option.

"We've been working on this for five years. It's a liability not to have a current Official Plan," he said.