

Council okays condo development in King City

By Mark Pavilons

Zancor Homes was given the green light to proceed with their six-storey condo development in King City. Councillors approved Zancor's Official Plan amendment, allowing the height and densities associated with the project. The six-storey building will contain 284 units, two levels of underground parking and surface parking, outdoor shared amenities spaces, along with roof terraces, balconies and patios. Currently, 171 of those units will be one-bedroom, while 59 will include a den and 42 will be two-bedroom units. There will be 11 three-bedroom condos and one bachelor. The building keeps its initial C-shape and has become a complete six-storey structure on all sides. Proponents made additional changes to the project, from its initial public meeting at council. Underground parking has increased to 447 spaces. The main entrance has shifted to face the intersection of King Road and Banner Lane and the south side planting strip has increased to three metres. Planter features will be installed on tiered south-facing balconies to address privacy and overlook concerns. The project will contain some sustainable features, including a green/white roof, electric vehicle charging spaces, and individual water and hydro metres in each unit. The one-hectare site is located on the southeast corner of King Road and Banner Lane (former King Township office site). Four existing properties back onto the site on Banner Lane. The fire hall and King City Secondary School are just to the east. Under the new Official Plan (pending approval by York Region), the property remains in the village core designation, which allows for medium density residential development. While the new OP allows for a maximum of three storeys, there is an allowance for six storeys, as long as certain conditions are met. These include that the building is compatible in the area and has sufficient setbacks and buffers. Staff noted the plan's height and density will be consistent with the policies in the new Official Plan. Provincial policy does mandate more intensity in existing urban areas and King does lack mixed housing and apartment units. Staff pointed out the population forecast for King to 2031 sees an additional 8,600 residents. York allotted King 920 more units. This application will contribute 30% of the Township's intensification target. Township staff have worked with Zancor on some of the changes. Staff are asking that more green features be incorporated into the zoning bylaw. When the project was first unveiled, there was some concern about the rear setback and impact on existing neighbours. The developers have agreed to stick to the standard, 3-metre buffer. A 1.8-metre-high privacy fence will also be added. The units at the rear will also be tiered above the third floor. The revamped plan actually provides more parking than required. As well, outdoor amenity space has been increased to exceed minimums. An outdoor courtyard area exceeds 800 square metres and the roof top area will be more than 1,000 square metres. Staff did admit that the visual impacts of taller buildings like this one require careful consideration. The building will be placed up against the boulevard and it steps down in height towards the rear. This tiered effect achieves a 45-degree angular plane from the lot line and will effectively minimize privacy and overlook concerns. In practice, this means that the building will not infringe on a sight line of a person standing at the south property line looking upward at a 45-degree angle. Buffer and planting areas, according to staff, will also minimize the impacts of the building's height. Zancor has agreed to incorporate urban design and architecture techniques to address visual impacts. Staff said materials used, such as brick, precast concrete, metal and glass is an effective design approach to integrating larger buildings where lower building forms are prevalent. The impact of density is also addressed by placing parking underground, freeing up the site for enhanced landscaping and amenity spaces. Patios on the ground level adjacent to King Road contribute to what staff call an interactive streetscape. The building elevations have been broken up using articulation, step backs and balconies to contribute to a dynamic building facade, while minimizing the impacts of building mass on the street and surrounding lands. The increased number of units does mean increased traffic. Forecasts put the number of peak morning trips at 25 inbound and 70 outbound, moving to 74 inbound and 47 outbound on peak afternoons. Studies will look at intersection improvements and a possible left-turn. Staff supported the new design, noting it meets density requirements and the new design fits in better with the existing community. It also provides desirable housing options and a greater range of choices. This will be the largest single development in the core area. The plan drew praise from councillors and at least one member of the public. Resident Susan Beharriell hoped the building can lead the way, and be the first net zero impact building in King. She urged Zancor to build this the right way and make a difference. Consultant Don Given noted Zancor has made significant changes since it first presented the proposal and has listened to the public. Councillor Debbie Schaefer is pleased the developer has utilized many environmental initiatives. It's set to be a first-class development, she said, something King City residents should be thrilled about.