

King's Official Plan review moving along

By Mark Pavilons

The review into King's major planning document is moving forward at a steady pace.

Consultants Meridian Planning made a presentation last week during a public open house, to offer the public an update into the progress of the Official Plan review, and the next steps.

More than 50 people attended the open house to learn more. Township staff said one of the items that was brought out in the discussion was the Region's concern regarding Nobleton servicing. As the Region's sewage facility in Nobleton is receiving more water than originally anticipated, the existing facility cannot service additional development.

The process was launched in 2014 to update King's OP, which dates back to 1970. Key issues, sustainable development principles and projected growth are all areas covered in the plan.

Meridian has made a lot of progress to date, and they're wrapping up phase two, which will conclude with an upcoming presentation to council. Phase two included the creation of seven policy direction areas, which included growth management, intensification, existing neighbourhoods, greenfield densities, employment lands and more.

Regarding growth, King will top out at just under 35,000 people by 2031, an increase of 14,600 residents. Additional residential units have already been constructed or approved, leaving roughly 12,200 still to come. Greenfield areas and remaining vacant lands cannot accommodate this total, leaving a shortfall of roughly 1,200 people. To accommodate this shortfall, Meridian notes King can create more intensification, increase densities in greenfield areas, or a combination of the two.

The consultants are recommending that densities permitted within the designated greenfield area be increased to meet the population forecast to 2031.

York Region's Official Plan requires King to develop an intensification strategy to look at the targets, examine regional corridors, GO facilities, local infill, etc. For intensification targets, Meridian is recommending that King City be allocated another 457 units, while Schomberg could accommodate 89 more.

More should be directed to King City, they say, because of its GO station link, proximity to Highway 400 and future growth at Seneca College.

The consultants recommend that current building height maximums be maintained, but that increased heights be considered on a site specific criteria.

King should be as clear as possible as to where intensification should occur and this will help pre-identify areas and provide clarity. This will help in planning and may expedite development approvals, saving staff time in the planning process. To that end, they recommend the Official Plan should pre-identify intensification areas; provide evaluation criteria and a pre-zoning of intensification areas within the village cores.

Pressures over the next two decades could see the need for new lots and multiple unit developments.

Current policies in all three Community Plans generally permit the creation of new lots in existing subdivisions, provided they reflect the characteristics of the neighbourhood.

The consultants are recommending this practice end and that detailed policies be created to regulate development on existing lots. King won't be able to meet the target of 34,900 people by 2031 if 920 units are developed through 2031 and current densities for vacant lands are retained.

It's recommended the densities permitted within King City's designated greenfield area be increased to ensure King meets those 2031 population targets. Meridian sees seven units per hectare as an acceptable level.

Given Nobleton's servicing constraints, it's recommended that the new Official Plan limit the village's population to 9,500 by 2041. With regards to employment, the target is 11,900 jobs by 2031, which represents an increase of 4,800 jobs. There are roughly 80 hectares of vacant employment lands available in King and these could be home to some 2,000 jobs. With Magna's development west of King City, bringing with it some 700 new jobs, the consultants strongly believe King can meet its employment targets, and there's no need to consider additional employment lands at this time.

Regarding the structure of the Official Plan, it's recommended that vision, goals and objectives that apply Township-wide should be established up front in the new plan. Goals and objectives unique to the villages should be in separate sections that apply to each of the main communities.

These recommendations will be presented to council later this month. The recommended policy directions will lead into phase three of the review, during the fall of 2015 and into early 2016.