

Back to the drawing board for King City development

By Mark Pavilons

King councillors and members of the public have sent a strong message to proponents of a townhouse development in King City. They want the proposal sent back to the drawing board, to make it more in keeping with the community.

Council hosted a public information meeting Nov. 14. Hujade Group Corp. has applied for an Official Plan amendment and zoning bylaw amendment, to allow an 18-unit townhouse development off of Keele Street, north of Dennison Street.

The plan is to change the density on the property, allowing for three blocks of 5, 6 and 7 units. They would be three storeys high with tandem garages and range from 3,200 to 3,500 square feet. The private road into the development would include a turning circle and a limited amount of visitor parking.

Staff noted some 108 trees would have to be removed to accommodate the construction. The two residential lots total some 1.73 acres and have 245 feet of frontage on Keele.

The property is surrounded by existing detached residences.

This development seems to be key in the area. Township staff have been approached by others with respect to developing two more lots just north of these lands. These properties total 2.2 acres. Staff do believe that both sites would benefit from a comprehensive plan to integrate developments to coordinate streetscapes, site layouts, servicing an access.

Yin, Xiao, a representative of Sparcs Acquisitions Inc., owners of the abutting northern properties, said they support the applicant's build form and housing type. She said they did approach Hujade Group, noting they're willing to work together to create an integrated plan over the four parcels.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini told the capacity crowd that it's not uncommon for developers to work together and staff have tried to connect them when it's deemed appropriate.

Planning staff did stress there are shortcomings to the proposal, which include a lack of parking and the size of the proposed homes. York Region has indicated road improvements would be required and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority said this application is premature.

The staff report did concede that this proposal would go towards meeting provincial intensification targets, while broadening the range of housing stock in the community.

Matt Alexander, with Weston Consulting, admits that changes will be needed to this proposal. He attended the meeting, anxious to get input from the public.

A local resident urged the Township to maintain the existing buffer zones and take Oak Ridges Moraine guidelines into consideration.

A 35-year Keele Street resident said this plan is simply not in sync with the character of the surrounding community. It will compound traffic congestion and set a dangerous precedent, handing developers a free pass. A solution to current traffic woes needs to be in place before a development like this takes place.

A Dennison Street homeowner said while it's important to consider the housing needs for King, he's concerned about the density and building height this project brings. He also noted, at over 3,000 square feet, these units would not be considered affordable.

Another Dennis Street resident called the project a monstrosity, stressing it just doesn't fit. He'd prefer to see detached homes in the area, noting this project will only add to traffic dangers.

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti called this proposal ridiculous, adding the only path forward is for the proponent to team up with the property owner to the north.

There are pressures on municipalities to increase intensity and he urged residents to get a sense of what's happening by reading government documents, such as the provincial growth plan. Medium and high-density housing will come to King, but he'd like to see a compromise.

The applicant has a lot of work to do, he said. It comes down to working together to get the best balance. There's more in store for King City, he warned.

Councillor Bill Cober pointed out the tandem garages is no solution to parking issues. And Councillor Linda Pabst said residents, especially seniors, need smaller, more affordable units.

Despite the opposition, staff did note the project has some merit and benefits, which include proximity to the core and public transit, and it's not within an existing neighbourhood.

Staff will review all comments received and return to council at a later date with a set of recommendations.