

Opposition to plan for stacked townhouses in King City

By Mark Pavilons

King City may be a suitable place for residential intensification, but there's a limit to what politicians and the public are willing to accept.

King councillors and residents made it clear that a proposed 4-storey, 48 stacked townhouse complex on Keele Street is just too much for the community.

Council hosted a public meeting for the plan by 2472498 Ontario Limited, who is requesting zoning bylaw and Official Plan amendments to allow for medium density residential.

They want to build 48 common element stacked townhouses serviced by a private road with frontage on Keele Street and Clearview Crescent. The plan calls for two blocks of townhomes, as well as underground parking and a parking lot. The land, consisting of three properties on the east side of Keele, running from Clearview to just south of Elizabeth Grove. It's just over an acre, with 97 metres of frontage on Keele.

The lands are zoned core area and commercial in the King City Community Plan and zoned residential urban. The proponents want to redesignate the lands to medium density residential and are asking for four storeys.

While provincial policy mandates intensification and King City is the logical candidate to accommodate growth, this bid poses some challenges.

The principle planning issue is whether the proposed changes to the policies of the Community Plan in respect to density and height are appropriate and whether the proposed development can complement the existing streetscape and neighbourhood context, according to planning staff. Urban design principles are identified as part of the overall approach to planning for intensification within community areas.

Since there are no other four-storey structures in the area, planners are concerned about transitioning the project to better complement the existing mature neighbourhood.

Murray Evans, of Evans Planning, said this proposal makes sense on this property. It's ideally located in terms of walkability, local amenities and accessibility to transit. He admitted there are technical issues regarding parking, but they want to make sure the facility is functional.

The applicant hosted a public meeting March 8 and residents raised issues of traffic concerns, the character of the existing residential neighbourhood, height, density and design.

Those issues were pertinent among those who addressed council.

A Clearview Heights resident is concerned with the impacts on existing residences and with this degree of intensification. The plan, as it's presented, needs work, he said.

Bill Patterson, an Elizabeth Grove resident, said intensification in King City should be a large, coordinated approach. This project, he said, is premature, pending the completion of the Official Plan review.

A Patricia Drive resident said this project "doesn't live up to our high standards ... it looks like a vertical trailer park." She urged councillors to examine the footprint, height, traffic and parking and "don't lower the bar now."

Bruce Craig, a Clearview Heights resident, admitted this property is well suited to development, but "the level of intensification is much too high." While intensification is a sign of the times, Craig said planners should be trying to achieve a "sense of place" and we need to get the right development on this property. This site can act as a gateway to King City and could also use a commercial component.

He suggested that an ongoing dialogue with the community would be beneficial.

A Burton Grove resident found this application to be "impertinent" and "way over acceptable limits." He admitted he was angry at the plan, noting "this represents the worst of what we think of developers."

It was noted that a four-storey building is not suitable for seniors and despite its proximity to the GO station, people are not ready to give up their cars. This project will still generate a lot of vehicular traffic, some of which is bound to spill over onto adjacent streets. Councillor Linda Pabst shared the residents' concerns, noting concept drawings of the blocks make it look like a "prison." It's too tall and she said the proponents need to do some more homework.

Councillor David Boyd did concede that this development does provide alternative forms of housing, which is badly needed in King.

Councillor Bill Cober didn't argue against intensification, but said the functionality of this design is still in question.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer said ideally, we want something "exciting" on this property and this is simply underwhelming to say

the least.

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti said this site is ideal for intensification, but he believes two storeys is more appropriate.

While there is an expectation of intensification, this is not appropriate in height, scale or mass, he said. It has to be the right fit.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini urged the applicant's representative to take heed of the public comments and concerns. He also recommended the application engage in community consultation, which has proven very successful in past development applications.