

Design guidelines help set the stage for the future

By Mark PavilonsEditor

Universal design guidelines will help guide King Township in building its treasured communities. The last of three virtual open houses wrapped up last week, hosted by consultants. They're working on King's new urban design guidelines, a comprehensive plan to safeguard the characters of King City, Nobleton and Schomberg. As well, the plan will outline guidelines on the future development of employment lands across King. Consultant Matt Rodrigues noted they've received some great comments from residents at these open houses and they will continue to work with, and learn from residents in each community. Project manager John Tassiopoulos noted with King's recently adopted Official Plan, it was time to update the design guidelines, which were originally set out in 2006. By engaging with residents from each village, it will help identify local aspirations. The aim, he said, is to consolidate guidelines into one document, and serve as a base to create new ones down the road. While it will be one all-inclusive plan, each village and its unique characteristics, will be outlined. The plan will also include how to move forward on employment lands. It will be a go-to strategy with design elements that point to desired results that help shape each community. It will consider housing, mobility options, public spaces and heritage structures. He said they're mid-way through the first phase of the process and a draft discussion paper is on the Township's website. The draft guidelines will be available later this year, with more open houses planned for early 2022. Hopes are it will be finalized in the first quarter of next year. Tassiopoulos said they want to ensure that residents have every opportunity to get involved and participate, despite current health restrictions. The employment areas will have their own separate set of guidelines and primarily apply to lands in Schomberg and King City. The three key areas under examination are village cores, established neighbourhoods and employment areas. These will complement streetscaping and beautification plans, green strategies and King's Climate Change Action Plan. The Our King Official Plan identifies growth, intensification, commercial and mixed use developments. Tassiopoulos stressed the Township is adamant about protecting the characters of existing neighbourhoods and there are policies in place to that effect. King planner Kristen Harrison said the Official Plan is very restrictive when it comes to new lots in existing neighbourhoods. The guidelines will address village cores, with an emphasis on compatibility, heritage and vibrant main streets. Taller buildings, streetscape goals, and transportation will all be looked at. The GO Transit hub in King City is a vital component across the municipality. Intensification is planned around the station in King City. The guidelines will help shed some light on the need for intensification in King City, along with different types of buildings, up to six storeys in some cases. Already, council is reviewing plans for condos and townhouses in the village. Tassiopoulos noted longer buildings are coming, too and the guidelines will help address the logistics of these types of uses. Established neighbourhoods take precedent and any future additions, replacements or new builds will have to fit in the existing neighbourhood characteristics. Employment lands, typically located at village entrances, or gateways, will need to be part of a clear vision. There's an emphasis on prestige industrial developments. In Nobleton, there's a need to enhance public spaces and build on the work that's already been done, Rodrigues pointed out the set of guidelines will make it easier for staff and eliminates duplication that exists in the current set of village designs. It will be tailor-made to each village. Tassiopoulos said they're not jettisoning current guidelines, just streamlining them. Nobleton resident Lori Holjevac said homeowners are sensitive to any future developments in the village, and they're not really keen on condos or high-rise buildings. "We're a village, we came here to escape the density of the city," she said. Harrison noted there's a maximum height of 4 storeys and 6 in some very specific locations. The Township is not suggesting such buildings everywhere, and is mindful of the character of Nobleton. Councillor David Body said the bottom line in all of this is that Nobleton has very limited water/wastewater capacity, which limits future development. It can only accommodate a certain amount of new growth.