

PIM?reveals ?opportunities? for proposed King City development

By Mark Pavilons

A public information session on a proposed King City development resulted in some surprise suggestions from councillors and members of the public.

The Mansions of King Inc., application calls for 318 residential units on the northeast corner of Jane and King, and was presented for discussion.

The opposition to the project was centred mainly around a proposed connecting road to Manitou Drive in Kingscross, and not the project's density. In fact, it was suggested that the proponent look into low-rise multi-unit residential designs, which are needed in King.

The applicant (Joseph Chetti)?is asking for bylaw and official plan amendments to allow for higher density and relief of some buffer zones. As well, the applicant has provided a preliminary draft plan of subdivision.

The project calls for 318 dwellings, consisting of single detached homes and medium-density residential on the oddly shaped parcel that currently has access to King Road. In order to make this happen, they need to redesignate the lands to low and medium density residential, upping the density to 5-6 units per hectare.

Many concerns from the public have been expressed, mainly opposition to a road connection to Manitou Drive, and the traffic impacts it will cause. Residents have also expressed concerns regarding impacts to groundwater quantity and quality in neighbouring private wells in the Kingscross neighbourhood. Reducing some of the environmental buffers also caused issues with residents.

In reviewing various documents, including the Township's Official Plan, council previously agreed to permit higher densities in King City ? 7 units per hectare on average. King can't meet York Region's target population goals based on existing intensification in King City. Therefore, it was noted that densities in greenfield areas should be increased to make up this shortfall from provincially mandated rules.

One of the main hurdles with this application is there has yet to be a formal response from York Region and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority regarding environmental constraints on the property.

These comments are significant, according to King planner Gaspare Ritacca. He pointed out a well attended open house was held Oct. 26 and generated good feedback. Staff will review this application concurrently with its OP?review. They'll also be looking at potential development on neighbouring lands. At this point, the applicant doesn't have any specific concept drawings of what the development may look like.

Robert?Dragicevic, from Walker, Nott, Dragicevic Associates Limited, said the process began in 2013 and they've worked with many agencies to address concerns from the outset. They have also met with representatives of Kingscross Residents' Association. They have already produced a host of supplementary documents and reports.

?We've done our homework,??he said.

He admitted access to the site is ?critical,? as is input from TRCA. They haven't looked at access to the west, connecting with Jane Street. They believe the site is compatible with surrounding uses, and their project does protect and enhance natural features of the area.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer did say the applicant has been open and accommodating during the process.

Mary Muter, co-chair of KRA, said they've retained a planning consultant and they still have many concerns regarding the development. They're concerned the natural topography of the property will be changed forever and many large, mature trees will be removed. Residents are concerned about flooding, runoff and groundwater loss.

In her discussions with TRCA staff, she said they are not in favour of a connection with Manitou. The TRCA, Muter said, seems to support a connecting road to Jane. She suggests the applicant goes back to the drawing board to make some adjustments.

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti said he was pleased to see that KRA does support multi-unit dwellings on this site, adding it's all about ?give and take.?

This development does provide ?opportunities for creativity,??he said.

Ian Hille, also of KRA, said Kingscross is evolving and more younger families are moving in to the estate subdivision. Opening up Manitou to the new development would increase safety concerns. Kingscross residents rely on wells and he's worried about the sustainability of the water supply.

He did stress KRA is more than happy to continue dialogue with the developer.

A long-time Kingscross Drive resident said his well has been monitored for years. He, too, is concerned about pedestrian safety, since there are no sidewalks in the community.

A Manitou Drive homeowner said she's worried that encroaching development will force out the abundant wildlife in the area. A Champlain Crescent resident is worried about how close the back neighbours will be, and opposes any reduction in buffer zones. Councillor Avia Eek also said she won't support reducing buffers. She noted that developers should be rethinking the efficiency of stormwater management ponds, stressing wetlands are vital to the environment and have to be protected.

Reducing buffers is problematic, according to Councillor Debbie Schaefer, who said they're in force for a reason. She says we all have to pay more attention to our groundwater.

Regarding access to Manitou, Schaefer said she, too, supports a western route. She hopes the developer is open to further collaboration.

Mortelliti said the applicant should consider a different form of development, which may be more acceptable. Hopes are the application will turn into ?an outstanding development on a magnificent piece of land.?

Mayor Steve Pellegrini said with residents willing to sit down and discuss the development, it presents a great opportunity for the applicant. Working out a compromise will move this project along faster.

Staff will take all comments, and those still outstanding from York and TRCA, and bring recommendations back to council at a later date.