

Township incorporates green development standards

By Mark PavilonsEditor

King is boosting its commitment to the environment with an improved green standards policy. Council gave its stamp of approval on the new ThinKING Green: Sustainable Development Standards, which will apply to all applications for Draft Plan of Subdivision and Site Plan Approval. Hopes are it will come into effect on Sept. 1. Councillors lauded the plan and Mayor Steve Pellegrini noted King was one of the first municipalities to have its own set of green standards. This builds on the strong foundation moving forward. Staff noted the program has been developed through extensive consultation with interested and affected parties. It establishes a set of metrics with the purpose of evaluating the sustainable performance of new development in the Township of King. The goal is to create a sustainable, resilient and healthy community for all. ThinKING Green applies to all Site Plan Development and Draft Plan of Subdivision Applications throughout the Township, to ensure that all proposed development aligns with the vision for the community. In terms of sustainability, the standards will help meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This means that the actions we take must protect, restore, and enhance our natural and urban environments while promoting a high quality of life today, tomorrow and for generations to come. Staff stressed that new developments must occur in a sustainable manner to work towards the development of communities that are resilient and equitable. King Township contains portions of the Oak Ridges Moraine, Greenbelt and Holland Marsh, all of which contain diverse ecosystems. The Township includes lands that are regulated by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA), and Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA). The program aims to ensure that the diverse ecosystems continue to flourish while recognizing new development, primarily within the Township's villages. ThinKING Green encourages new development to protect and enhance the natural environment while utilizing efficient, innovative, and sustainable measures. They can do this through things like incorporating alternative energy sources, innovative landscaping, and green technologies. ThinKING Green is an important tool to help implement Provincial, Regional and Municipal land use planning, sustainability and climate change goals and objectives. The Program works to promote the development of complete communities that are healthy and sustainable, support the quality of life for residents of all ages and abilities, promote energy efficiency and lower GHG emissions, and support cultural and natural heritage conservation. The Program also offers flexibility to enable development proponents to choose the sustainability approach that best suits their project. The Sustainable King: Green Development Standards Program was developed in 2019 and endorsed by council on September 23, 2019, shortly after Township Council declared a climate emergency on July 7, 2019. As a result of amendments to the Planning Act through Bill 23 (the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022), Site Plan Control was removed as a tool for the review of development proposals where no more than 10 residential units were proposed. Accordingly, the inclusion of individual single detached dwellings was not pursued further, however Sustainable King continues to apply to Site Plan Applications for commercial, institutional, industrial, on-farm diversified uses and multi-unit residential developments. Based on the direction of council, staff drafted an expansion of the Program that proposed to apply to Draft Plan of Subdivision applications in addition to Site Plan Applications. This draft Program, entitled the ThinKING Green: Sustainable Development Standards (?ThinKING Green?) was born. While staff cannot mandate that applicants adhere to the requirements of ThinKING Green, such as the minimum score requirements, meeting the requirements of ThinKING Green would be strongly encouraged as a Council adopted Program. Submission of the Program Table would be required as part of a Complete Application for Site Plan and Draft Plan of Subdivision Applications even if the applicant does not meet the minimum score requirements to ensure that uptake in the Program is being effectively tracked. Staff note that since the current Program came into effect, all Site Plan Applications have met the minimum score requirements. The Program is structured as a Guidebook that includes sections on the purpose of the Program, Implementation, Future Updates, Metrics, Program Table, and Glossary. Applications are proposed to be evaluated through a points system comprised of three levels; Bronze, Silver and Gold. To ensure an effective implementation of ThinKING Green, staff are proposing that the Program come into effect for Site Plan and Draft Plan of Subdivision Applications submitted on or after Sept. 1. This will provide an opportunity for sufficient training to be provided to Township staff on the new Program and the evaluation process, and will provide an opportunity for members of the public and the development community to familiarize themselves with ThinKING Green and the Program requirements. The proposed implementation date will also provide an opportunity for Staff to update the Township's website to include how-to guides and additional instruction information on the Program.