

Mayoral decision issued to advance zoning for 35,000 housing units

Strong Mayor Powers used to propose zoning bylaws for 12 development applications

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Caledon's Mayor has taken steps to speed up housing development in Town.

On March 26, Mayor Annette Groves used Strong Mayor Powers to issue a decision to advance zoning bylaws for 12 development applications slated to bring 35,000 housing units to Caledon over time.

Caledon is required by the Province to have 13,000 new residential units in town by 2031.

In an interview, Groves said her recent decision is about thinking forward to 2051, when Caledon is expected to grow to a population of 300,000.

'We want to get ahead of the growth? it's better if we take a more proactive approach because then it gives us an opportunity to say 'these are the things that we need to see within these communities',?' said Groves.

She spoke of creating complete communities, where libraries, parks, trails, fire halls, schools and community centres are considered before development occurs.

Phil Pothen, the land use and land development manager for Environmental Defence, a non-profit that works to advocate for clean water, a safe climate and healthy communities, said the organization is concerned the recent decision means Caledon is missing its chance to stray away from low-density, car-dependent development, and picked one of the 12 application locations as an example.

Pothen called the development slated for the intersection of Hurontario Street (Highway 10) and Highway 410 'wasteful cul-de-sac sprawl' that has no place in a new zoning bylaw in one of North America's fastest-growing metropolitan areas.

In a March 26 media release, Town of Caledon staff said Groves' decision will ensure an ample supply of development sites for all types of housing. Staff said Groves' decision will allow planning staff to advance development applications through the remaining municipal planning process, and that it's expected to 'streamline procedures by approximately one to two years for the applications.'

The sites selected for zoning amendments by Groves are generally in the areas of Mayfield West, Tullamore, Allox, Wildfield and Bolton.

Groves said the 12 sites were already zoned for residential use under the expanded urban boundaries approved in the Region of Peel's official plan.

'Some of these properties already had applications on them,' said Groves. 'This is to streamline the process?' having said that, this is not a final approval? there are holding provisions within the bylaws.'

She said the development applications will still have to go through a secondary planning process.

'If you're going to put houses here we want to see the community benefits as well,' said Groves.

Pothen said zoning in Caledon's new settlement areas appears to permit greater density and a larger mix of uses than existing

Caledon subdivisions, but added it doesn't require higher densities or a pedestrian-friendly mix of uses.

He said it's disappointing to see that Caledon is expanding outwards before many of its existing neighbourhoods have expanded to be walkable and transit-supported.

?The retention of minimum parking requirements, and aspects of the Town's communications about the new zoning, are cause for concern that a walkable, transit supportive community is not actually planned,? said Pothen.

Groves told the Citizen she had to move the zoning bylaws forward through strong mayor powers.

She said working with developers is better than not working with them and then seeing developers fight Caledon at the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) where they often win. She said it's costly to taxpayers and that OLT decisions are often made by those who don't know what Caledon's needs are.

Groves said her approach will let Caledon tell the Province what it needs to make the Province's housing and growth targets in Caledon a reality.

Groves said Caledon needs true affordable housing, including rentals. She said through secondary planning, Caledon will work with developers on affordable housing.

A public meeting about the 12 applications will be held at 7 p.m. on April 25.

Residents can attend this meeting online at caledon.ca or in person at Caledon Town Hall (6311 Old Church Road). The applications will be brought to Council for approval on April 30. If more than one-third of Caledon Council supports Groves' mayoral decision on that date, it will pass.

?I'm very hopeful and very confident that council will recognize the need to move things forward,? said Groves.

Pothen said Environmental Defence will be seeking reassurance from Groves and Caledon Council that the zoning will be fleshed out in ways that ensure future Caledon residents won't need a car to comfortably live, work, and raise their children.