

Next phase of Mayfield West to be pedestrian friendly

By Bill Rea

The idea has always been to have the second phase of Mayfield West developed as a community that's friendly to pedestrians and cyclists, and that's not changed.

The point was spelled out several times Tuesday morning to Caledon councillors as they were briefed at a workshop session. Senior Policy Planner Tim Manley pointed out the Town has put together a multi-disciplined team to work on this secondary plan, adding council endorsed its framework in September.

It involves 207 hectares bordered by Mayfield Road to the south, Chinguacousy Road to the west, the provincial Greenbelt to the north and Hurontario Street to the east. The secondary plan is going to include homes for a little more than 10,000 people, along with 2,635 population-related jobs and 1,164 employment area jobs. The proposed density will be 66.9 residents and jobs per hectare. Manley said there has been an application made for an amendment to Peel Region's Official Plan.

Manley also stressed to council there are many factors involved in this process, but for the purposes of Tuesday's briefing, staff had only focused on a couple of them. The issues that were not addressed Tuesday included provisions to reduce energy and water consumption, among others, and he said they will be addressed in future presentations.

"They haven't been forgotten," he said.

Manley also stressed the aim is to build this community around people, as opposed to around cars. He pointed out designing a community around people attracts people.

"When you create plans for pedestrians, you're going to get more pedestrians," observed John Richard of NAK Design Strategies. Manley added a group of medical officers of health from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) issued a call to action in May to try and build more physical activity into people's lives. This was in light of health concerns and worries about increasing obesity, and Manley said this project represents a great chance for the municipality to follow that path.

Manley observed a healthy community is represented by being pedestrian friendly, supportive of transit and enabling and encouraging more physical activity. That means the aim is to encourage people to walk or cycle around the neighbourhood. The elements to achieve that involve densities, walkability and public transit, he said.

Richard said while there are clear borders between the two phases of Mayfield West, the combination is taking a holistic approach. He also said the plan the team has been working on addresses density requirements, preserves natural heritage features, provides open space and is easily accessible from all areas of the site.

Special character areas in the plans include an urban village component that will be centred around the intersection of McLaughlin Road and a proposed east-west "spine road." That area will include medium density housing, as well as live-work units and mid-rise condominium development. The plan also suggests commercial operation in the area, as well as a recreation facility and community park, and two village square components at the two eastern corners of the intersection. Richard said these are being seen as passive community gathering points. There are also plans for parking areas for the commercial operations, and bikes are going to be accommodated, including on the "spine road."

The proposed streetscape will reflect an urban village setting to encourage people to walk, as opposed to having them drive elsewhere. There will be accommodations for transit on both the main roads. In terms of the condominium being considered, Richard cited the River's Edge development in Bolton as an example of what could be in the works.

The current proposal also calls for three distinct zones for the "spine road," as it serves as a main street and character avenue. The western portion will see medium density residential development, with trees and boulevards. It will also be a three-lane road, with a left-turn lane in the middle, along with provisions for bike lanes. As well, they would want to limit the width of the road to make it more appealing to pedestrians and cyclists.

The middle zone, which will include the intersection with McLaughlin, will be geared to giving pedestrians access to stores on the street, with wider sidewalks, street trees and planters, etc. Richard added the road would be widened near the intersection.

The third zone would be streetscaped to represent a transition from Hurontario Street to the east, with more in the way of commercial lands.

Another part of the plan that was mentioned involves the tracks of the Orangeville-Brampton Railway that passes through the site. Richard said there is landscaping and streetscaping planned for where it crosses roads in the area, and he said this offers some opportunities for unique use of open space.

Other open space components will include various parks and parkettes, as well as a network of storm water management ponds and the Greenbelt to the north. The plan, Richard said, is to have amenities within walking distance from just about any place on the site.

As well, he said the proposal will include having homes at the north end facing away from the Greenbelt, so it will be bordering on back yards. He said that would be a good way to integrate the Greenbelt with the community.

Richard said the storm water management ponds will reflect the open spaces, and there are thoughts of putting some forms of seating near the shores. In addition, there are plans to put in naturalized native plants, so the ponds will also be able to provide habitat.

The plans also include provisions for hiking and cycling trails, which would link with trail networks outside the lands in question.

The plan is to have commercial and employment lands at the east end of the site, between the 'spine road' and Greenbelt.

As well, there are plans for an off-street transit hub, which Richard said is a key component. It will be integrated with other transit services, including Brampton and GO.

Councillor Allan Thompson wondered if there's really going to be a call for transit. He said he hears from residents of SouthFields Village, and the majority there don't want it. He also said if it's going to come, there have to be easy ways for pedestrians to access bus stops.

Councillor Gord McClure agreed, pointing out many people move here to get away from transit.

Mayor Marolyn Morrison countered council has always taken the position that future public transit needs to be included in plans like this.

In terms of the cycling provisions, Thompson suggested staff talk to local cycling organizations for their input.

McClure said he cycles a lot with his grandchildren and he wondered how people are supposed to get across Mayfield Road to access the trails to the south. John Vander Mark, of Paradigm Transportation Consulting, said they could cross at intersections, but McClure wasn't very pleased with that.

'It doesn't sound real safe to me,' he commented, adding the Conservation Authorities have been able get to passages under streets in Brampton for animals to get through. 'I think we're more important than animals.'

Morrison pointed out Mayfield is to be widened, so that might be the time to make a push for something like that.

Councillor Rob Mezzapelli was pleased to see the provisions to make the plan pedestrian and cyclist friendly, but he also stressed the need to address the demands for private and public parking.

Manley told him they are working on a parking plan for the whole community. He added they are working with conservation authorities and land owners to create an east-west trail system in the Greenbelt.

Addressing transit issues, Mezzapelli acknowledged the plans for bus service, but wondered about the train tracks running through the site. He thought there might be an opportunity for a more diverse mix of transportation options.

Manley said there's no GO service on this line or anything connecting to it, so such an arrangement would have to be started from scratch. But he added nothing being planned now would preclude such service from coming sometime in the future.

Councillor Doug Beffort wondered about the commercial mall that's been proposed for the area of Highways 10 and 410. Manley said it's still in the works, adding it's going to be more of a regional scale shopping centre.

Councillor Patti Foley asked if development charges could be used to develop the public transit. Town CAO Doug Barnes said there is no transit infrastructure in place, so there's no basis to collect development charges for that.

Morrison said she counted 15 storm water management ponds in the plan. She said the Town will have to maintain them and that's costly.

'We need to squish some of them together,' she said.

There were some problem expressed by members of the public.

Developer Gil Boland said this envisions planning developments for which there's not much demand.

'This plan lacks reality,' he said. 'It lacks respect for what the demand is.'