

Settlement reveals scaled down plans for Highland Gate

By Brock Weir

Aurora residents will have a chance to sound off for perhaps the final time on the future of the redevelopment of the former Highland Gate Golf Course next week, but now interested parties know just what they are sounding off on.

A settlement, which was approved by Council last month, received the backing of participating stakeholders last week when the minutes of settlement were signed by all parties. Now that the ink is dry on the minutes, the details of the settlement have now been revealed.

Following extensive mediation with the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), minutes of settlement regarding the redevelopment of the Highland Gate Golf Course have now been signed by the Town of Aurora, Highland Gate Developments Inc., and the Highland Gate Ratepayers Association, announced the Town of Aurora on Friday afternoon.

The settlement reveals a slightly scaled down plan from the original proposal of 184 residential units and a 10 storey condominium on the present site of the golf course's clubhouse.

Now up for final consideration by the OMB is a plan of 159 residential units and a seven storey condo, which brings the initially proposed 144 condo units down to 114.

The new configuration of the condo removes the plan to have commercial and retail units on the ground floor.

Further details on the settlement include a 10 metre buffer throughout the redevelopment plan between existing rear yards and adjacent new streets, with the exception of three minor pinch points where alternate buffering will be provided; an increase in the length of off-road trails from 4.4 km to 7.5 km, 100 per cent of the spine trail within Highland Gate lands [being] off-road; additional trail connections added to the plan, making the green space more accessible; additional open space block provided throughout the plan; preservation of the existing underpasses along Murray Drive and the underpass on Golf Links Drive near the proposed condominium building; a major new park, 21 acres in area, to be constructed in conjunction with the first phase of development in the western portion of the Highland Gate property; and larger transition lots at the ends of view corridors looking south from Highland Court and Dodie/George Street.

According to the announcement zoning standards more closely mirror the standards of existing neighbourhoods, and maintain the zoning standards where development takes place on existing streets.

Communication is also included in the settlement, including a commitment by the developer to provide an opportunity for neighbouring homeowners to meet with the developer's landscape team regarding proposed landscape plans and buffering.

Highland Gate Developments has also committed up to \$75,000 over three years to help pay for the ongoing professional fees of the Highland Gate Ratepayers' Association, and for community services and events supported by the Highland Gate Ratepayers' Association.

While the minutes of settlement have been authorized by the developers, ratepayers, and municipality, it is still up to the OMB to ensure it ticks all the right boxes and hear feedback from stakeholders. OMB officials got an early taste of some of the residents' concerns that still might come forward at a hearing earlier this month, where area property owners said they still had worries about their homes being surrounded on three of four sides by homes, the environmental impacts of the proposal, as well as wanting full justification from Aurora Council members on why they voted to endorse the settlement on a 6 to 3 vote.

The next settlement hearing is scheduled for next Thursday, December 1 in Council Chambers. Full details of the settlement will be released to the public following that session.