

Westlakes on hold pending township study

By Don Murray
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LAMBETH — The massive Westlakes condominium community project was put on hold Monday by Westminster Township council while it decides how it wants to develop the land tucked up against London's southwestern boundary.

Council immediately put the wheels in motion for a study of the "fringe perspective" area that includes the 90 hectares (221 acres) where the proposed community of 4,800 would be located.

The plan by Livingston Holdings Ltd. of London calls for creation of nearly 1,800 housing units at the southeast quadrant of Southdale and North Talbot roads — only 260 metres or 850 feet from London's boundary.

The community would nearly double Westminster's population of 6,000 and feature self-contained water and sewer systems, eight man-made lakes, commercial outlets and recreational facilities.

Reeve Dave Murray told council the township planning advisory committee felt it couldn't accept or reject what would be the largest project in Westminster history without doing an in-depth study of the fringe area.

The hurry-up study will cover such key issues as water supply and sewage disposal, land use and future development priorities.

Development of the fringe area has been a touchy subject over the years, with the township's commercial sector growing steadily within

a stone's throw of London's borders. The Westlakes property, ironically, is not part of the 3,550 hectares, or 8,772 acres, the city is seeking to acquire from Westminster by annexation.

A recent consultant's report on the impact of Westlakes said the

development would prove that Westminster is capable of handling a major residential community, but it could also be a juicy assessment plum the city would find hard to resist.

Monday, Livingston planning adviser William Dickie would only

comment that council's action was not considered a setback for the project. "It's part of the planning process."

Murray told council the fringe-area study is called for in Westminster's official plan. Before deciding

for or against Westlakes, "we owe it to ourselves to ensure our homework is done and we have clearly mapped out the future of the fringe area before it is developed."

The reeve added that the fringe study will be expedited because the township doesn't want to be seen as "stalling" on the Westlakes decision.

The study, to be conducted by a private consulting firm under the supervision of township planner Doug Stanlake, will cover the area bounded by the city limits and Thames River on the north, the Delaware Township-Westminster town line on the west, Highway 2 to the south and Spring Creek (just west of Wonderland Road) on the east.

Stanlake is to have terms of reference and a list of possible consulting firms ready for council's next meeting July 13.

City wants say in Westminster application

London wants to make sure it gets a hearing before the Ontario Municipal Board on an application by Westminster Township for town status.

City council told its administration Monday that it should submit a request for a public meeting to the OMB to protect London's interest in negotiations for boundary adjustments with four surrounding townships, including Westminster.

Mayor Tom Gosnell said London

wants to point out to the OMB that whatever its decision on Westminster's bid for town status, it should be aware the city has wanted to extend its boundaries since 1979.

The mayor said he was not sure whether a jump from township to town would inhibit the city's expansionary plans into Westminster, London, West Nissouri, and North Dorchester townships.

"Plans for annexation have been public since 1979. It's not something that has come up recently."

He said talks have been held with the townships and Middlesex County both independently and collectively to explain London's needs.

There have been no meetings for a couple of months, "but we are planning on resuming our dialogue with the townships and county in the near future. We all understand this is a long project."

Gosnell said he expects an OMB hearing will be held before the year is out.