

Planning Board accepts revised Kingham Hill plans

Acton planning board has recommended that council accept the revised plan of phase three of Kingham Hill Estates which was presented to them by Mike Brodigan of Windland Associates at a special meeting, Thursday.

Planning board members were critical of the first draft of plans for phase three of the subdivision and recommended several changes which they felt would improve the area including changing a street so it did not become a speedway, creating better buffer zones using houses categorized as R 1, R 2, R 3 and R 4. But the main objection was based on density of population which services would be ill-equipped to handle.

The board felt the flow of houses would also be improved if the planners adopted their recommendations which would reduce the number of row houses and population density from about 1,100 to 800 people.

Mr. Brodigan outlined the changes made and planning board members were satisfied with the results.

Vice-chairman Vic Bristol noted that the revised plans reduced the total number of units by seven and he wanted to know if this would affect the eventual price of the houses. Mr. Brodigan said it would not. He said they had planned to make full use of all the land in the original draft but revised plans also gave the area a more open look, which planners requested.

Board chairman Sid Saltz noted that price was irrelevant now

because the development was two years away and figures showed an eight per cent rate of inflation, which was compounded by the escalating price of lumber. Roger Cunningham of Windland Associates agreed. He said there had been 120 per cent jump in lumber prices in the last month.

The board was also assured that adequate parking space was included in plans—one space for each unit and an additional space for each five units.

Phase three of Kingham Hill Estates encircles Fairview Cemetery with some streets intersecting at Cobblehill Road.

Survey people in CIH zones for views on development

Residents of CIH zones in Acton will be asked to determine whether they wish to keep present zoning, want it altered or obliterated, in a survey commissioned by the planning board. Areas affected include portions of Mill, Bower, and Church as well as bisecting streets.

Answers to the survey could determine the direction commercial growth in Acton will take — either confined to the present downtown core or moving to the east end of town.

A special meeting of planning board to discuss CIH zones Thursday decided to initiate the survey when the mayor explained he felt CIH zoning was imposing unfair restrictions on residents who have lived in town for some time, hampering them from improving homes.

In the beginning, the first town planning boards set CIH lots aside for expansion of the present downtown business section, but Mayor L. Doby felt they had been overzealous. He suggested many of the homes would never be required for commercial development and the CIH cloud should be removed from over householders' heads.

Residents in CIH zones must apply to the committee of adjustment if they want to add garages or porches, for instance. Members of planning board also contend that the CIH zone takes in several of Acton's most stately homes, which should be preserved rather than altered or torn down to make way for commercial establishments.

Manipulating lives
Mayor Les Doby led off a two hour discussion on the matter, declaring he felt the municipality was manipulating the lives of people in CIH zones unnecessarily. Some people in the zone had approached him, who hesitated to improve their homes because of the uncertainty. He hoped discussion of the problem would justify removing the CIH zone from their residences and resolve the uncertainties.

Questioned by board member Dave Muckle, the mayor said he felt the holding zone should be concentrated on Mill Street. Streets such as Bower and Church should be in residential zones. "Bower" is definitely a residential street after the reconstruction, he declared. The town has similar plans for Church St.

Board chairman Sid Saltz agreed with the mayor, stating he

could see enough difficulties on Mill Street to keep commercial development going without adding extra streets to possible development.

GO growth
Mr. Muckle warned, that Acton was on the threshold of growth with GO trains scheduled to start in the fall and growth could mean the present downtown core would not be adequate. If the board decided the CIH zone should be changed they should also make ample provision for future commercial growth.

Chairman Saltz noted that over the years there had only been one application for a change in residential zone in the downtown core but many applications for strip plazas in the east end of town. "We tried to promote the downtown but no one wanted to go there," he said.

Mr. Muckle said it was up to the planning board to provide some direction because Acton would soon have many more people to attract businessmen. Bower Avenue has several stately homes which he felt should be preserved. At the same time he thought there were some places on Church St. which would be better replaced with department stores.

Councillor Bill Coats, long and advocate of giving more direction to developers, said he thought planners had been over-optimistic about growth of Acton's business section but he also thought it possible some residents may believe it is an asset to be in a CIH zone, because property values could be higher.

He agreed the town was coming into a period of growth which would attract commercial type development and recognized builders would prefer to build on vacant land. As a result he felt the town would be faced with more and more requests to build in the east end of town.

Start saying "No"
If they decided commercial development would be mainly confined to the downtown area, Coats believes they would have to start saying "No" to development in the east end. "I believe developers will buy downtown property then," he said, suggesting a survey of property owners in CIH zones to get their opinion.

Councillor Norman Elliott reminded the board that if they cut down on the downtown area they would force developers to the east end. He saw the CIH zones as logical extension of the present commercial area and if

the commercial zone was cut to Mill St., residents on back lots facing Church and Bower would be faced with growth detrimental to the residential character of their homes.

There are still many lots to develop along Mill, the mayor felt, enough probably to handle the expansion which he estimated could double the population over the next five years.

Mr. Muckle suggested doubling the population was an "enormous project" for a town Acton's size. He felt some protection should be afforded for Acton's stately homes in CIH zones, to ensure "we have some of our history left."

The mayor felt development on Bower and Church streets would compound the parking problems. "It would be hard for me to accept a store front on Bower Avenue," he reiterated.

Get big plaza
So far as member Lou Bonnette was concerned it was inevitable that the town would get a big plaza if there was extensive population growth. He said plazas in other communities were attracting Acton shoppers now and only comparable facilities would keep them here.

"I said almost the same thing before," said chairman Saltz, "and some merchants said they hoped I was misquoted."

"We may have to face the fact the commercial centre of town might have to be moved eastward," said Mr. Muckle. In the mayor's opinion the downtown core would never lose its relationship with the size of the town's population. He foresaw 8,000 people within the present town boundaries and if the urban area was enlarged as far as the Fourth Line, population could reach as high as 15,000.

"We may double the population," he said, "but we will never double the size," and the downtown core would never be far from new development.

Councillor Elliott noted that with the advent of regional government, developers on the Third Line would welcome opportunities to get things going there. "They are just waiting," he stated.

But chairman Saltz reminded the board and members of council that the government's regional proposal would leave Acton only part of the area planning board.

"It will be out of our hands," he forecast.

New policy
"We are slowly crystallizing a new policy on development," Councillor Elliott felt but if commercial development was allowed only on Mill St., residents on the back of lots might be driven out by the undesirable facets of commercial growth in their back yards, such as some on Church St. were contending with now.

He suggested the town centre would go to the east either by erosion or by policies which would drive developers there.

"Don't think householders in Glenlea are not happy about commercial development in the east end," said Frank Simoni, a resident of the east end. He said residents there appreciated recent development in the east end. They found it more convenient to have a medical centre, drug store and other new businesses within walking distance and more development would likely be favored.

In the chairman's estimation the direction of discussion made it imperative residents in CIH zones would be surveyed for their

opinions and the board should encourage participation by the public in the decision.

"We should also get the feeling of the merchants and other businesses, possibly through the Chamber of Commerce," agreed Councillor Elliott.

After more discussion, the board decided to instruct the secretary to initiate a survey. A committee composed of the chairman, Mr. Muckle, the secretary H. Patterson and Councillor Bill Coats was appointed to arrange mechanics of the survey.

It was also suggested that the board advertise for briefs and other interests and possibly resolve the CIH issue at the March meeting.

"Is annexation a dead issue then," asked member Lou Bonnette before the committee concluded business.

"There is nothing to be done on annexation until regional government is resolved," answered the chairman.

Holidays
Next holiday for public school students is winter break, March 16 to March 25. Last day of school is June 29.

Double ad

Super salesmanship? Through a misunderstanding, two display advertisements for the Y's Men's snowmobile stamp dance appeared in last week's Free Press, instead of one. And far more people attended than had been expected! Don't know if double advertising can really get all the credit for it, though.

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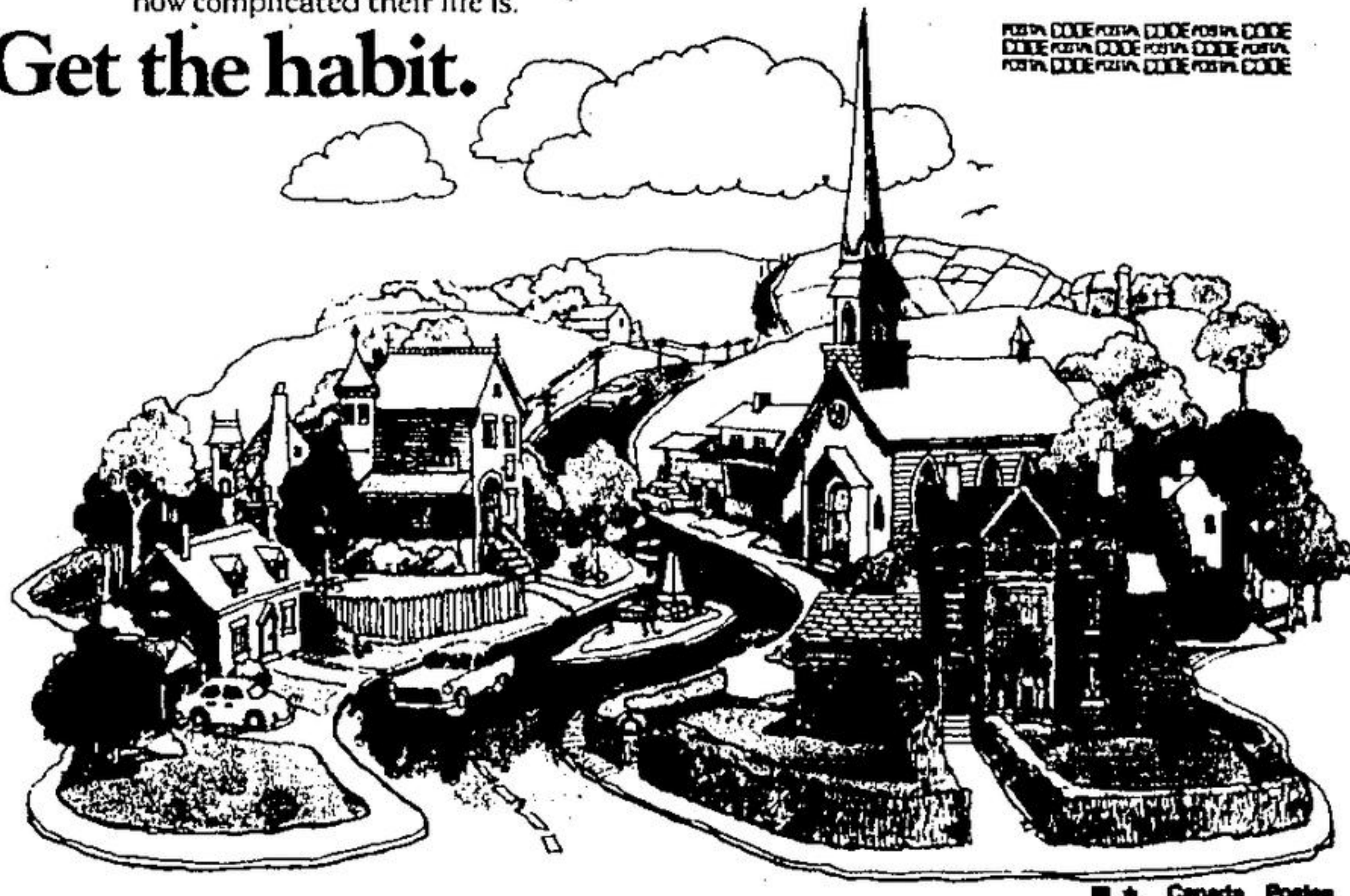
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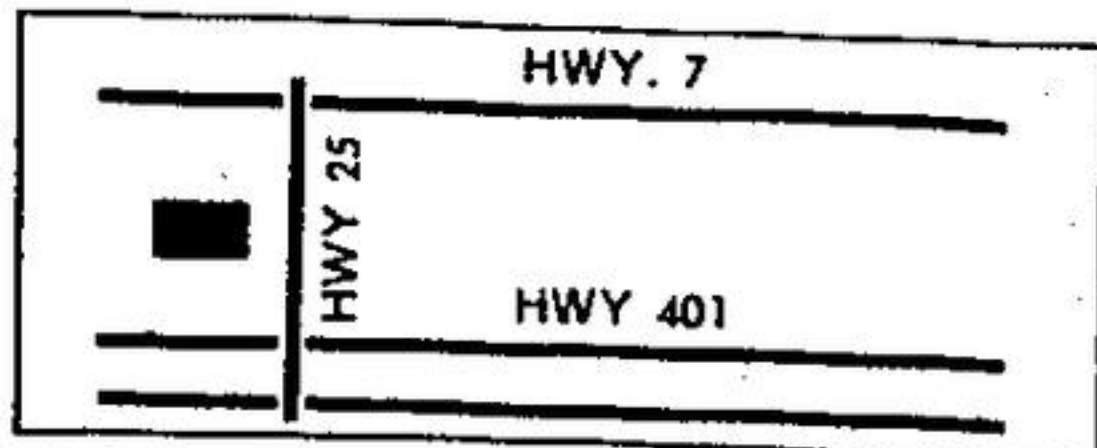
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