

Unveil plans for longterm facility

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Concerns about increased noise and traffic and possible infringement on a pioneer cemetery were raised at a public meeting last week to unveil Extencare's plan for a long-term care facility in Georgetown.

A numbered Ontario company working with Extencare, which owns and manages 63 long term care facilities in Ontario and manages 15 others, has filed applications to amend both the Town's Official Plan and zoning bylaw to allow the facility on a 3.8-acre property on the south side of Highway 7, north of Lindsay Court and east of Trafalgar Road.

The proposal calls for 86,000-square foot, two-story building with five grouped living areas, each for 26 people, and a hair salon, gift shop and coffee shop. Part of a regionally-significant White Pine wood lot on the property would have to be cut down to make way for the development.

Extencare planning consultant Brent Clarkson said the average age of a resident would be 85 and the facility would include 96 long term care beds allocated in 1986 by the province and 34 Extencare beds at Oakville Hospital which would be relocated to Georgetown.

The proposed building represents a new design concept focusing on a total of five

residential home areas with a maximum of 26 residents, instead of the traditional long institutional corridors with centralized common areas.

"In other words, it's a move away from an institutional feel inside the facility and an institutional look on the outside," Clarkson said.

Architect Tye Farrow said the facility would be somewhere between a hospital and a retirement home with five "little neighbourhoods" grouped around outdoor courtyards adjacent to the wooded area.

Several area residents are concerned the facility could cause increased noise and traffic on the site and Robert Leverly, with the Ontario Historical Society, pointed to two

recent cases where the Society stopped development on former cemeteries.

Bert Post, a principle with the Ontario numbered company that has entered into an agreement to purchase and develop the site with Extencare, said a study done by Halton when a pumping station was built in the area proves the graves are gone.

"It appears from the plans that the cemetery was underneath the treed area and because the trees are a major focus that we want to preserve, we'll build away from the area. Because we don't know where the cemetery was, exactly," Post said.

Clarkson said he's confident the cemetery issue can be addressed during site design and a traffic study will look at the residents' concerns and pointed out what he called a tremendous public benefit with the proposal.

Clarkson said in Halton - the lowest-bedded region in the province with just 67 long-term care beds for each 1,000 persons 75 and older - there's a 12-month waiting list of 850 people for long-term care spaces. Clarkson said this facility would meet the needs of the Georgetown community and surrounding area and after the meeting said that includes Acton.

Town planning staff will continue to circulate the plan to various agencies for comment and additional studies concerning the cemetery will be done before a final report is brought to Council for debate.

Town report has a snapshot of seniors' life

The graying of Halton Hills - the steadily growing number of seniors and their unique needs and wants are detailed in a seniors snapshot presented to Town councillors last week.

The report was compiled in response to requests from the public and investors interested in providing seniors services. It includes demographic information, housing opportunities and community services. The report doesn't assess the ability of current services to meet future needs, that will be done in future planning reports.

While Halton Hills does have the youngest population in Halton based on the 1996 census, Town Planner Kristin Sainsbury pointed to the large number of people who will become seniors - some 15 per cent - by 2031.

Sainsbury said affordable housing has been identified as a critical issue for seniors and a seminar in the New Year with all the players will take a fresh look at the issue.

Services available for seniors also play a key role in allowing them to stay in their own homes as long as possible. Sainsbury said the report would be a valuable tool to help in understanding an important group of people in Halton Hills that often has specific housing and service needs.

Demographics

- 3,885 people - 9.1 per cent - aged 65 years and older
- 60 per cent married, 32 per cent widowed, 65 per cent live with spouse
- 25 per cent live alone, 4.4 per cent live with relatives, 1.1 per cent live with friends
- 58 per cent earn less than \$20,000 per year, 36 per cent earn between \$20,000 and \$50,000 and 6.6 per cent earn more than \$50,000
- 9 per cent considered low income compared to 6.1 per cent of total population

Housing

- serious shortage of 43 long term care beds by 2001
- shortage of community programs to offset lack of institutional care
- two rest and retirement homes in Acton provide room and board and supervision with medications

- Town has received application by Otel for 122 rooms and 60 seniors' assisted living apartments and a 130-bed Extencare facility, both in Georgetown

- 85 seniors waiting to get into five seniors' rent-geared-to-income apartments, including three in Acton

- Dawkins application filed for 147 townhouses and condominium apartments in Acton

Services

- Acton and Georgetown seniors well-served by recreation centres in each

community providing educational, social and cultural activities and events

- Transportation - Activan and Red Cross provide transportation for Acton seniors and residents with physical challenges

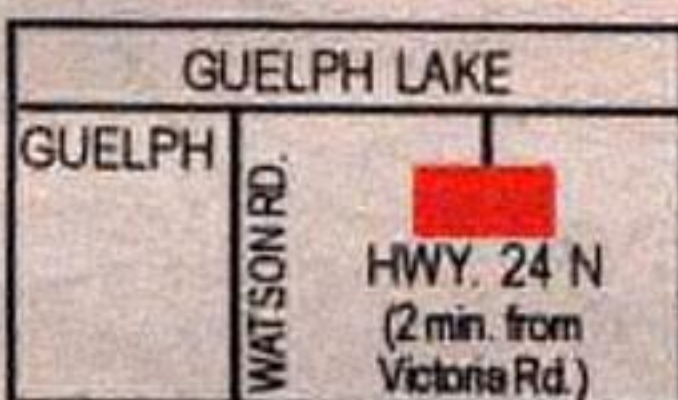
- Meals - Meals on Wheels and Meals to Wheels hot meal programs

- 12 homemaking groups provide health care and home care services

- six groups provide day programs to frail elderly to give caregivers a break

- four groups offer volunteer visiting programs

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