

Plans for future growth leave Acton 'frozen'

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Residents also have an opportunity to make submissions to Halton Region about the Plan before they give it their stamp of approval.

But the ink is barely dry on the Official Plan and work has already begun on Halton Region's Durable Plan. One of the major objectives of the Durable Plan will be to determine the future growth of Halton Hills.

Mayor Rick Bonnette said this Official Plan will strengthen the Town's position on growth during the Durable Plan debates.

Already developers are champing at the bit to expand the urban boundaries of both Georgetown and Acton. Among the developers wanting expanded boundaries is the South Georgetown Landowners Group, a group of landowners with lands generally bounded by 10 Sideroad and 5 Sideroad between Mountainview Rd. and Trafalgar Rd. that includes Mewbrook Developments (Tribute Communities). Other developers are Lormel Developments, Ozner Corporation and Shelson Properties Ltd. on lands west of Eighth Line and between 10 and 15 Sideroad.

Meanwhile, Acton resident Fred Dawkins would also like to see changes, covered by the provincial Greenbelt Plan, which land locks his community within its current boundaries.

"As seen by the recent take-up (of housing) it is improbable that what is available (within the current boundary) will meet and sustain the needs of Acton for the next 25 years," said Dawkins.

He noted that Province's Greenbelt

'I understand where (Dawkins) was coming from in regards to Acton development coming to a complete stop. I think that's something we do want to avoid.'



JON HURST

Plan freezes growth in Acton, yet the Smart Growth Plan calls all municipalities in Halton to take in more population.

"So Halton will be forced to double but Acton, the only urban area that was denied growth in the past, will be virtually frozen during the same period," said Dawkins. "This freeze makes us the envy of those in Milton and Georgetown who are experiencing very significant growth. Easily said when you have all the amenities and services that you could possibly require."

"The Town has to make the case for Acton (for intensification and for modest expansion)," he told council at a recent meeting, also calling on members of his community to speak up as well during the Durable Plan process. "If the Town doesn't make a case, the Region doesn't feel the need to make changes."

Planning director Bruce MacLean agreed Acton's boundaries are "locked" until the 10-year review of the Greenbelt Plan which then allows for consideration of modest settlement area expansions.

Dawkins' comments, he said, are more appropriately discussed as Town's growth as a whole under the

Durable Plan and the Town's Strategic Plan, both exercises that will get under way with the election of the new 2006-2010 council. He said current and future infrastructure (water, wastewater, recreation, schools roads, etc), plus town and region community services, plus land use (expansion and intensification), plus the financing of all of the above must be considered.

"I have had the discussions (with senior Halton Region staff) to ensure that Acton and the future vitality of Acton are addressed," said MacLean, adding that there is a possibility, backed with good reasoning, of the Town and Region "opening the door" with the Province on loosening the greenbelt around Acton.

Wards 1 and 2 Regional Councillor Clark Somerville introduced a motion, that was approved, calling for a strategic planning vision session dealing with the future of Acton and report back to council within 12 months.

"We've got many unanswered questions with regard to Acton," said Acton Councillor Jon Hurst. "I've talked to many residents over the past couple of months, and I've had the indication from virtually all of them that they are happy with the current population of Acton. They don't want substantial growth. Having said that, I understand where (Dawkins) was coming from in regards to Acton development coming to a complete stop. I think that's something we do want to avoid."

For more information on the Official Plan, check out the Town's website www.haltonhills.ca. For details on the Durable Plan go to Halton Region's website, www.halton.ca.

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