

Housing density key issue in planned expansion

By KIM ARNOTT

Special to The Champion

What's the magic number when it comes to new homes on Milton's west side?

That was one of the big issues of debate Monday night, as more than 100 residents crowded into Town Hall Council Chambers to comment on a proposed massive expansion of Milton's urban boundaries. Town staff has presented a revised draft plan outlining how almost 5,000 acres of land, known as the Sherwood Survey, should be developed.

The L-shaped development area is bounded primarily by Hwy. 401 on the north, Tremaine Road on the west, Britannia Road on the south and Regional Road 25 on the west.

The northernmost area up for development includes lands that hug the Niagara Escarpment, and are adjacent to the town's existing Milton Heights development.

With sensitive environmental lands and existing residents to be considered, town planners suggested the magic density number for that area should be 15 units per hectare. Densities in the southern part of the development area are proposed to average about 40 units per hectare.

Density requirements determine the type of housing to be built in a specified area. Higher density numbers allow more compact development such as apartment buildings and townhomes, while lower density numbers require a greater number of single family dwellings.

For comparison purposes, the density in Hawthorne Village is about 35 units per hectare.

The proposed numbers, however, didn't make everyone at Monday's Town Hall meeting happy. Neil Davis, a lawyer representing three landowners in the Milton Heights area, suggested density in the northern area needed to be in the neighbourhood of 30 units per hectare.

He noted that the area will include such features as the railroad tracks and expanded roads, as well as lands adjacent to employment areas.

"The kind of development that will go around those things is not going to be executive housing," said Mr. Davis. "You have to look at a much more accommodating density than the 15 (units per hectare)."

He suggested a density of 30 units per hectare would allow developers to respect the natural environment and existing neighbourhoods, while giving them the ability to build appropriate types of housing throughout the area.

But several local residents told town councillors they support lower densities, particularly in areas close to the Niagara Escarpment. "When is there too much, in terms of development?" asked Alan Herring. "The densities being suggested are certainly going to dramatically change our community."

Ward 4 Councillor John Challinor said he's also concerned with the density of development being proposed for the area.

"In my view, density sets the parameters for what this area is going to look like in the future," he noted. "This area is the jewel, and it's important that be reflected in

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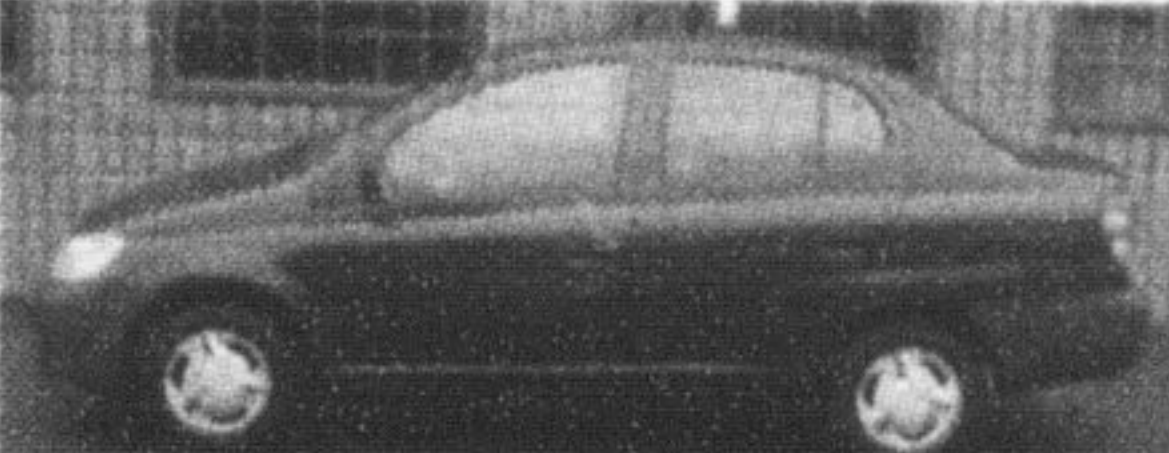
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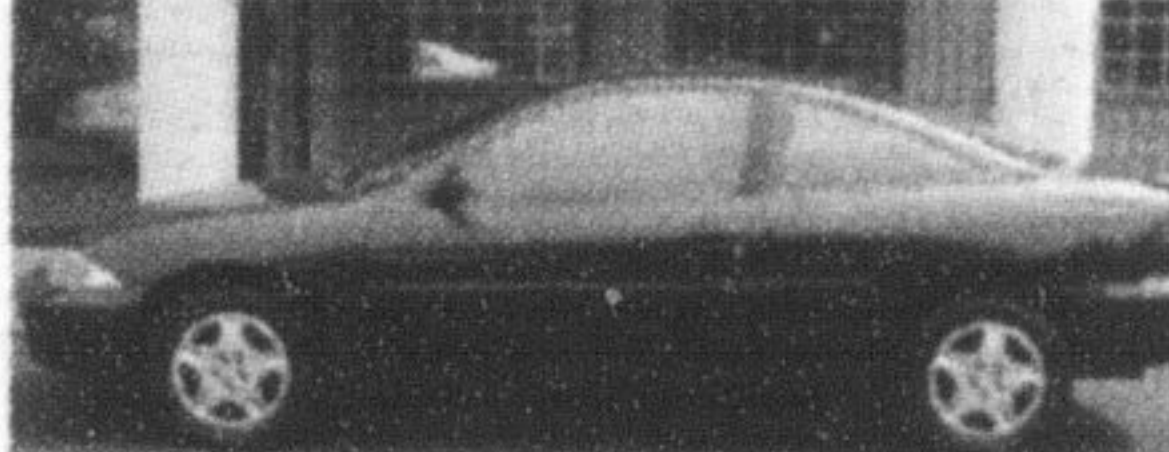
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