

# OMB sends park developer back to drawing board

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN  
Staff Writer

Houses will still be built on Settler's Park but probably not as many as the developer had in mind.

That's the interim decision of an Ontario Municipal Board panel after a four-day hearing on the future of a privately owned 1.6-acre parcel in the German Mills park.

Panelists James Mills and Robert Drury told developer Jessamyn Holdings to go back to the drawing board before they approve development in the park.

The want a re-defined development area, including an eight-metre buffer along the southern property line.

They also instructed the developer to ensure representatives from the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, the town and ratepayer groups are on hand as they re-measure the top-of-bank requirements.

And they vetoed semi-detached or linked housing and asked developers to come forward with a new plan to build between one and five single family homes, rather than the nine homes on six lots, as originally proposed.

"This goes a long way to addressing the concerns we had at the hearing," said town solicitor Rob Robinson. "The planner we retained made it clear there should be no more than four lots."

Long thought of as part of the town-maintained park, residents and town planners alike were surprised to learn of a development application for the lands from the absentee owners last spring.

Residents want the town to buy the land and preserve the green space but negotiations broke down after the two

sides could not agree on the value of the land. That sent the case to the OMB.

Bowing to public pressure, town council voted last month to oppose development at the hearing. However, the planner retained by Markham testified the land could support a four-lot plan.

Councillor Randy Barber said he was pleased with the board-ordered concessions.

"Nothing will go on until those conditions are met and agreed to — and that's quite a bit of work for the developer," he said. "Under normal circumstances, the residents would be ecstatic, but in

German Mills, no matter what, they want the town to buy it all up."

He added the other 12 councillors may not agree to spend substantial tax-

payer dollars on Settler's Park.

Resident Eric Shapero, who led a walk-out protest from the hearing, said his reaction is mixed.

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