

RECEIVED VIA EMAIL – June 21, 2021
Town Clerk
Town of The Blue Mountains
32 Mill Street, Box 310, Thornbury ON, NOH 2P0
Phone: 519-599-3131- Fax: 519-599-7723

Subject: Proposed Preferred Location for a Craigleith Service Area Multi-Use Operations Facility

We are property owners on Lendvay Alley, one lot away from Grey Road.

We recently received the Public Information Notice regarding the proposal to use land on the east side of Grey Road 19 for a Multi-Use Operations Facility.

It is a serious concern to see that the factors outlined in the letter seem to restrict the choice to the suggested location and that no information on the other locations under consideration is included.

Incompatible With Subdivisions And Residential Community:

There is no consideration of the fact that proposed uses are not compatible with the already approved developments in this community. Nor does there seem to be any acknowledgement that the establishment of the facility would have a major impact on the proposed and approved developments on adjacent residential properties.

The use of this property for a public works yard is totally incompatible with the residential developments underway for the adjacent area. There will be traffic lights installed at the end of Craigleith Road when the new developments are built. Putting a works yard etc. at that point would necessitate the widening of the east side of Grey Road by the town property. (There are already structures and environmental zones right across the road on the west side of the road.) To have constant traffic and dirt/dust from the movement of materials and vehicles for public works in this new residential area is a bad fit.

Critical Facilities Needed For New Permanent Residents:

This area of Craigleith, with the proximity to the lake and the escarpment is a special area. With the new projects already underway for the new subdivisions (Parkbridge etc.), this will be a key residential area and significant **tax base** for the Town. There are no school and community centre facilities available or planned for the surrounding developments. Nor are there any assisted housing/seniors' facilities etc.

The proposal does not address the demographic changes taking place in the Town of Blue Mountains and how the changes will impact the services needed by new residents.

This past year, there has been a substantial change as all age groups of people (not just seniors) establish permanent homes in the area from Thornbury to Collingwood. This trend is expected to continue. The other critical trend is the evolution of all the winter ski facilities to year-round operations as climate change impacts the length of the ski season and turning this area into a full year-round community. One outcome of the Covid-19 pandemic is the expected increase in work opportunities that enable remote working which is a key factor in enabling younger families to move into the area.

This workplace change will lead to a significant increase in the permanent population in Craighleith along with a demographic change. Instead of seniors and seasonal workers/users, the new residents need schools and community services. And this piece of land is the perfect location – central to a large residential area, on a bus route etc.

The consideration for a walk-in medical clinic makes sense and might also lead to appropriate ancillary services such as therapists, chiropractic, massage etc. But they could be part of a community centre.

A multifunction school and community center incorporating a medical clinic, meeting rooms, sports facilities etc. tied to public school with a schoolyard with playing fields and playgrounds would be a tremendous asset. We have to stop thinking of these structures as alone purposes and move to improving the effective utilization of the community buildings. That way the taxpayers get much better “bang for the buck”! Toronto now has community centre/school combos to maximize the usage of physical plant – a huge benefit for ratepayers and the community.

If the Ontario educational system moves to a more year-round education system, the ability to have flex space become even more critical. Having a digital hub or electronic library in the community centre may be another service for local residents who do not have high speed internet.

As the population ages there is a need for different facilities such as assisted living and nursing homes. St Joseph’s Heritage in Thunder Bay is an example of a multiuse facility designed to support seniors and the community by combining a nursing home, seniors housing, and community centre.

If nothing else, Covid-19 has taught us that we have to think more flexibly about needs and usage of structures. This land offers a tremendous opportunity for such development to provide needed facilities for public usage.

Future Expansion And Re-Routing Of Highway 26

Another aspect not mentioned in the notice is the long-awaited decision from the province on the redevelopment of Highway 26. I expect this will impact the most beneficial siting of the public works yard, EMS and Firehall.

Cost Of Moving Facilities.

We have not been provided a financial justification to move the firehall and EMS services. It would be important to see some information regarding the current fires station and EMS usage. Perhaps EMS calls will show that direct proximity for EMS to Blue Mountain Resort makes more sense. The same question can be asked about the proposed move of the fire hall.

Environmental Impact

It makes no sense that on one side of the road the Town has zoned an environmentally sensitive area and wetland with restricted development and immediately across the road, the Town is proposing such an environmentally unfriendly facility. Having heavy traffic with trucks and diesel vehicles in a residential area is just wrong. This should be in an industrially zoned area not in a residential community.

Parkland

There is little public access parkland in the area. Much of the natural areas are privately property, Craigleith Provincial park has fees, the waterfront is pretty well developed, so where can one go with a family for a picnic, walk, or just to run around? We need a park tied to a school and community centre. A woodland park would help offset the impact of all the trees cut by the Town and help improve air quality, reduce the carbon impact etc.

Parking

Any proposed use would require parking. It would be a massive benefit for the community to have parking surfaces that minimize water runoff (and related ground pollution) that also are designed to provide shade in the summer. Normal pavement becomes a serious heat sink in hotter weather, and the simple addition of trees helps minimize this impact and as importantly provides a critical environmental benefit.

So please – ensure this valuable piece of land in a residential community is used to provide the critical resources needed – school, community centre, playgrounds and woodland park.

Regards,

Barbara Wilkes

[REDACTED], Toronto , ON M4N2W5

Owner of [REDACTED] Lendvay Alley, currently in construction planning!