

## Orangeville Council learns of new retirement residence opportunity

By Mike Baker

The president of the company behind the proposed construction of a six-storey retirement residence on Orangeville's north side has informed Town Council the multi-million dollar project would "revitalize a currently underused property" in the community.

Matthew Melchior of Primacare Living Solutions spoke openly and passionately with local Council on Monday (March 18) as he attempted to make a case for developing a large parcel of land located at 515 Broadway.

"This is a project, and a site, we have been looking at for four years," Mr. Melchior said. "Our experience is in all forms of seniors housing, both assisted living and independent living, and in providing memory care and long-term care. We believe this location is what seniors in your community deserve."

The company lodged an official application with Town Staff back in August last year. The proposal includes plans to construct a 161-unit retirement residence and 18 two-storey townhouse units on approximately 1.53 hectares, or 3.8 acres, of the 3.66 hectare, or 9 acre, site. In total, following discussions with Credit Valley Conservation, Mr. Melchior notes the project will protect roughly 60 percent of the land from development.

The development will also include 90 parking spaces on site for the retirement residence, with each townhouse dwelling receiving two parking spaces.

A public meeting was held on Monday, with the company presenting an official plan to Council. Currently, the lands in question are designated as Low Density Residential and Open Space Conservation. Before construction can begin, the lands will have to be re-zoned to Medium Density Residential. The company will also have to receive approval from Council to demolish an existing building at the site.

Primacare currently manages three long-term care residences in Ontario, with one in Brampton, one in St. Catharines and another in London.

"We have developed an expertise in seniors housing since 1996 and (alongside the facilities we manage today), we have been involved in the development of senior housing sites in Niagara Falls, Peterborough, London and Hamilton," Mr. Melchior said. "We are very excited about the opportunity presented at this site."

Having discussed the importance of attracting potential developers for both senior and long-term care housing here in Orangeville throughout last year's municipal election, local Mayor Sandy Brown was, perhaps, understandably excited about this potential development.

"I think this is an unusual and creative use of land. Our population is aging and we need some additional long-term care or senior facilities in Orangeville," Mayor Brown said. "I look forward to hearing more about this in the future."

Deputy Mayor Andy Macintosh noted that a lack of senior housing was one of the most talked about issues while he was campaigning last year, while Coun. Joe Andrews admitted he was encouraged by what the developer was proposing.

The project isn't without its detractors, however, with the Town's Senior Planner Gordon Dickson confirming the municipality had received one letter opposing the development. The land in question currently shares an entranceway off of Broadway with Kurtz Millworks, although the identity of the complainant was not disclosed.

Also in attendance on Monday, joining Mr. Melchior, was Deb Kakaria, Primacare's planning consultant on the Orangeville project.

One point of note Ms. Kakaria made was in relation to the 'baby boomer' generation, which she says will soon be approaching retirement age.

'There will be an increased need for retirement facilities. Baby boomers currently makeup 15 percent of Orangeville's population,' Ms. Kakaria said. 'They will need somewhere to live. We feel this proposal responds to this (issue).'

The townhouse component of the project was of particular significance to Mr. Melchior, who said the units could, potentially, help keep families together.

'One of the reasons we're so excited to have townhouses on site near the retirement residence is because, often, we run into issues where someone is a little more capable and able to live on their own and don't have to join their partners (at the retirement residence),' Mr. Melchior said. 'These people will be able to buy these townhouses. This way, we may not see the tragedy of seeing a couple who have been married for 50 or 60 years having to live apart, on opposite sides of town. This provides a unique solution to a heartbreaking problem.'

While there was much buzz in Council chambers on Monday, the project is still in its infancy. Mr. Melchior promised to work with the Town, and landowners in the area to come up with a project that works for everybody. Council voted to accept the report as presented by Primacare.