

Delegation Notes from Tony Lo Presti

Good evening Mayor Meed Ward, Councillor Bentivegna and all participants and listeners of this virtual meeting,

My name is Tony Lo Presti and I am a retired educator living in Millcroft. Occasionally, I contribute opinion articles to the *Hamilton Spectator* newspaper.

I am writing to you in response to the City's request for feedback from residents of the Millcroft community regarding Millcroft Greens' application for a zoning amendment that would enable it to introduce housing in the Millcroft golf course it owns.

At the outset let me say that I vigorously oppose this application for the reasons that will follow below.

But let me begin with what we all know -- that the City is the guardian and protector of municipal Official Plan regulations and gatekeeper of our municipality in deciding what developers can or cannot do in a community. The City's duty encompasses the protection of both publicly and privately owned lands, especially those designated as Parks and Open Spaces because these are valuable assets that provide a calming community presence, recreational opportunities, and health-enhancing physical and psychological benefits to residents in reducing the stress of work and urban life.

Therefore, the City has a duty of stewardship towards the Millcroft community because the fate of the golf course and its open spaces is inextricably linked with the fate of the Millcroft area and its community. If City Council permits Millcroft Greens to reduce the open spaces of the Millcroft golf course, its decision will result in an increase of housing density and a degradation of the quality of life of the Millcroft community. The sad reality is that by eliminating open spaces from the golf course for the purpose of cramming more housing and people in the area, the Millcroft Greens' development proposal will not improve but retrogress the Millcroft area.

Residents who bought into the Millcroft area did so with the understanding that the golf course and its parcels of lands were protected from housing developments because of Zoning and Official Plan regulations that designated the golf course as Open Space. As evidenced by the pre-consultation meetings held by Millcroft Greens and the close to 4,000 signees of a Millcroft Against Development petition, the overwhelming majority of Millcroft residents oppose the introduction of housing on golf course land. Yet, despite this opposition, Millcroft Greens has submitted its application for a zoning amendment, clearly and nakedly demonstrating that it puts its own profit above the will and the welfare of the Millcroft community. Consequently, its residents hope that the City will neither approve nor modify the Millcroft Greens' application.

The City needs to keep in mind that there is no real and pressing justification for the developer's housing proposal other than profit-making. Typically, developers justify such zoning amendments by some authentic and compelling reason – such as offering evidence that the golf course is on the verge of bankruptcy or that more housing is needed in the area because of a housing crisis.

But Millcroft Greens has advanced no such substantive justification in its proposal – except the flimsy pretext of addressing errant balls to houses surrounding the golf course. The errant ball justification is an issue that can easily be rectified by installing protective netting.

The City also needs to be wary of Millcroft Greens' future intentions. The approval of an amendment application for partial conversion of open spaces into housing opens the door to full conversion of the Millcroft golf course into housing subdivisions in the future. I, therefore, plead with the City recipients of this letter to keep in mind that if they approve the zoning amendment application of Millcroft Greens that would allow it to demolish part of the golf course now, how will the City be able to stop Millcroft Greens or any other new Millcroft golf course owners if and when they decide to demolish the whole golf course in the future?

Finally, I would like to point out a few of the negative impacts that will befall the Millcroft community if the Millcroft Greens' application is approved. Firstly, turning parcels of golf course land into housing is a bad idea; it is important to preserve green open spaces in the golf course because they help in reducing carbon emission levels, thus contributing to cleaner air for area residents, not to mention lower temperatures and less air pollution.

The Millcroft Greens' partial conversion of the golf course into housing will also disrupt existing ecosystems and wildlife habitats in the golf course because trees and plants will be removed. Additionally, Millcroft Greens' proposed development will overtax the current storm water and drainage system and make pre-existing homes and new ones to be built more vulnerable to flooding, to water damage, and to repair costs that will raise liability issues.

What's more, the Millcroft Greens' development proposal will wreak havoc on the community from the noise, vibration, dust, traffic detours and driving delays that the construction of housing will cause in the community. Factor into this mix the planned CN Rail Hub development (which projects 1600 truck trips a day accessing the QEW Niagara and 403 corridors via Millcroft's Appleby Line and Dundas St.) and the City will create a traffic nightmare for the community if it approves the Millcroft Greens' development, which will add more car-owning residents in Millcroft.

Ultimately, the big question that the City needs to consider is this: Whose best interests will the approval of this amendment application serve -- those of Millcroft Greens whose real motive for attempting to insert housing developments on the golf course is profit, or those of the Millcroft community which will lose open spaces now and, likely, the whole golf course in the future to its recreational, environmental, ecological, infrastructural, and vehicular traffic detriment?

For all the above reasons then, I strongly oppose the Millcroft Greens housing development and exhort the City not to approve or modify its application.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Lo Presti

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