Site plan committee rejects Palm Place high-rise plan

By Kim Arnott
SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

More than eight months ago, town council rejected the concept of a high-rise development for the former Shell House property in Bronte.

Given that, it was no surprise on Tuesday evening, when councillors also rejected drawings outlining specific details for the high-rise development they don't want.

At a special site plan committee meeting, councillors reaffirmed their commitment to a vision of low-density residential homes for the 10-acre, treed site on the shore of Lake Ontario.

Back in February, Council told Concord-based Palm Place Developments that it wanted no more than 27 single-family homes, with a maximum height of three storeys, for the property.

Palm Place has filed its request for a high-density development with the Ontario Municipal Board, and a hearing is scheduled to start on Jan. 9, 2006. It is expected to last six weeks.

The site plan filed with the town and reviewed on Tuesday, proposes a U-shaped 12-storey, 370-unit building for the western half of the Lakeshore Road West property.

The building runs parallel to the waterfront, with two terraced wings – ranging in height from eight to 11 storeys – jutting back toward the street.

The proposal would see the eastern half of the property conveyed to the town for use as parkland. As well, a 15-metre public walkway is planned to run along the water's edge, behind the building.

A report authored by the planning staff says the proposed development "does not contribute positively to its surroundings." The report continues: "This structure will create the sense of an unrelenting wall, which will overwhelm the waterfront and proposed trail system."

Residents appear to agree with the staff's assessment of the proposed building.

"It is hard to imagine an uglier building," said Mary Cassidy, spokesperson for the Bronte Village Residents' Assocation (BVRA). "It is hard to imagine a building that would have more impact on our neighbourhood."

Town staff reviewed the site plan proposal and recommended a number of changes to it, as a safeguard in the event that the OMB does accept the Palm Place proposal.

Along with a motion rejecting the site plan application filed by Palm Place, councillors also approved a motion calling for the appropriate authorities to document and safeguard wildlife, including a reported family of white-tail deer, living on the property, prior to the start of any construction.

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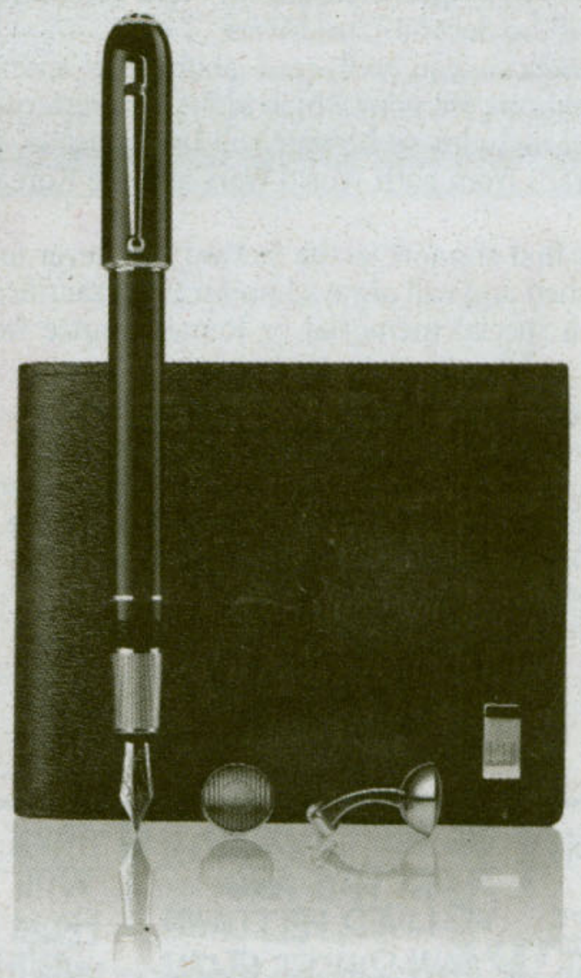

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