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Planning a new development

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Progress and development is going to happen.

There is always going to be something new that is built or a new highway being engineered and planned.

In a place as large as North America,you could build steadily for a hundred years and still have hundreds of thousands or even millions of square kilometres that are empty.

If you've ever flown over the prairies in an aircraft, you know what I'm talking about.

In Southern Ontario, the build is on ?especially in regions north of the GTA.

I'm not sure why everyone is moving north. South is not an option, but there are plenty of points east and west that are available, however there doesn't seem to be a rush to the Windsor area.

The provincial government has designated some regions as ?growth areas' whether they like it or not.

Municipalities don't really have a lot of say about what is going to happen in their town.

I recall having a conversation with a mayor of one of the designated growth areas where there was considerable opposition to planned sprawling new subdivisions.

He told me that growth is ?going to happen whether people like it or not,? and followed up by telling me ?that's the way the province wants it.?

In other words, the province tells municipalities what they are going to do.

Some people in many smaller towns don't want the growth to happen. They like the charm and appeal of their town and don't see 1000 new cookie cutter, repeat every three models homes, built in a former corn field, as any type of welcome addition.

I can understand this. I'm no fan of urban sprawl, and I'm certainly no fan of the current way of designing many new subdivisions.

The fact that many communities have been designated as growth areas means developers will be arriving to start building.

If you're lucky enough to own a farm that has been in your family for generations and is in a prime area, you could end up being quite wealthy if you decide it's time to sell and move somewhere else.

Normally there is a whole process behind deciding where to build a new development.

Not all areas are suitable for housing. You have to consider the type of soil, the amount of rock in the area, especially in northern Ontario, and environmental factors. You can't just decide to build over a stream or river and expect the water to go somewhere else. You can't just build on an area where the soil is not suitable only to have houses start to lean and foundations crack after a few years.

A subdivision must have a clean water supply and a source for that water.

All these things are normally considered when a developer makes an application to build in a municipality.

However, that is all changing as more and more developers are applying for, and receiving a Minister's Zoning Order.

An MZO is a green light given to a developer, by the provincial government, that allows them to go around municipal red tape.

An MZO did have a purpose. It was designed for northern communities where there was a small population or lack of a municipal structure to make development decisions. In this case the province would make the decision when no one else could.

However, a change in legislation a few years ago, opened the opportunity for developers to petition for an MZO anywhere across the province.

The problem is, the province does not place any restrictions when granting an MZO.

The ministry simply says, ?yes' or ?no.' It does not consider environmental issues like wetlands, arable farm land, or anything else, when granting an MZO. It just stamps the order as approved.

This has caused considerable concern among environmental groups who say the MZO's are allowing developers to build on sensitive areas like flood plains and wetlands. It is also a concern for residents who are opposed to urban sprawl.

Growth is going to happen ? it is just a part of accommodating a growing population. People have to live somewhere.

At the same time, growth should be well planned and well thought out.

It doesn't make sense to cut the ribbon during a ceremony to start a new development if that project is going to poison your water down the road.