

# Housing boom on horizon in Markdale

(by Don Crosby)

There's potential for nearly 900 new housing units to be constructed in Markdale within the next few years.

Grey Highlands CAO Rob Adams revealed several developers' plans last Thursday in Markdale at a business networking event put on by Grey County Economic Development.

Ashley Chapman attended the meeting, and stressed the importance of having a mix of housing options.

Among the housing proposals is Stonebrook Development, originally a 55-unit townhouse project by developer Paul Bonwick, which has been upgraded to 80 units with occupancy expected by Christmas.

Bonwick has plans for another 60-80 townhomes next spring.

Ridgeway Lane is a 14-unit life-lease, seniors- only housing complex.

The former Dimakos property, which has draft plan approval and a potential for

120 semi-detached units on the east side of Markdale, has new owners.

The former Paul Lisanti property has been acquired by Devonleigh Homes. It has the potential for 600 units, depending on the type of homes. Construction on that subdivision is expected to begin in the spring of 2018, and develop over the next two years.

"We've had planning meetings with them. They're working on their draft plan of approval and we expect approvals. So as soon as the snow is gone (next year) they'll be in there developing," said Adams.

"They are one of the best developers in Ontario. I've dealt with them before in Orangeville. And they have built in Alliston, Beeton, Collingwood, Huntsville," he added.

Adams said he's been in talks with two other developers who aren't quite ready to go public. They have purchased property in Markdale and expect to begin construction

next spring.

Three developers have shown an interest in a large site of a former Sobeys store in downtown Markdale. The company closed it a few years leaving one other store on the south edge of town.

"We're looking at some streetscape, some offices and maybe some residences for seniors," Adams said.

Adams is also looking for a tenant to take over the existing Foodland property once the new super store is open.

Sobeys plans to build an \$8 million, 32,000 square foot Foodland just a few blocks from downtown Markdale similar to the one in Warton.

"I expect in August or September it will come to council for approval," Adams said.

Ashley Chapman, vice president of Chapman's Ice Cream reiterated the importance of a variety of accommodations for Chapman's growing number of employees.

"The most important thing for development in Markdale is housing, not just low income or single family dwellings but apartments, condominiums, rental properties would be very important for our employees," he said.

Chapman said currently 75 per cent of company employees come within a 60 kilometres radius around Markdale and the remaining 25 per cent are coming from further out.

He said the company is expanding and to attract and maintain workers last year it increased its starting wage to \$15 an hour.

"Hopefully by the time the Liberals put the minimum wage up to \$15 in 2019 it wouldn't surprise me if we're closer to \$16 as far as starting wages," he said.

Chapman said in a few weeks the number of employees will reach an all-time high of 800 for the first time in the history of the company.

And by this time next year with the ramped up expansion plans he expects that number will reach 1,000.

"It's an ever evolving business and we're always staying ahead of the game," he said.

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