

Way cleared for Sandbanks cottage resort to proceed

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An obstacle blocking development of a cottage condominium resort on East Lake, near the famous Sandbanks Provincial Park, has been cleared.

Friends of East Lake has withdrawn its Ontario Municipal Board appeal, allowing following a compromise

worked out with the developer and municipality. Sandbanks Summer Village, to be built on the site of a former golf driving range, will include 237 three-season cottages on 32 hectares. The resort will include four-star amenities, such as swimming pools, tennis and sports courts, playground, putting green, general store, recreation pavilion, fitness centre, restaurant and market barn.

The resort is being developed by Cottage Advisors of Canada. The project is the first for the company, which has built three similar resorts in the United States. A Canadian investor, Jim Lawley of Halifax, is one of three partners in the endeavour, along with Howard Hall Sr. and Howard 'Chip' Hall Jr.

"We have submitted site plans to the municipality yesterday and expect it will be approved without any major changes," says Liz Donnelly, marketing representative for Cottage Advisors of Canada. "It will likely be approved this summer, we'll break ground this fall and have the first cottages ready for next summer."

The OMB appeal had been brought against the municipality, for approving the zoning for the site. It was dropped after agreement was reached on several issues, such as moving some of the cottages from an old growth forest area to a newer forested area.

"It wasn't a matter of protecting old growth trees, but letting new underbrush grow," says Donnelly. "We're also contributing \$40,000 to lake management plan for East Lake. We always said we'd always support plan



HARRY FARFAN ILLUSTRATION

Rendering of the lakefront restaurant, fitness centre, pool and lodge next to a lakefront cottage overlooking the beach on east lake.

but cost of doing one is expensive and the municipality doesn't have the money and residents couldn't afford it. We will pay up to half the cost. We will also do water testing on cottages or homes within 200 metres of our property to make sure no impact on neighbouring wells and share those results."

Another sticking point was the view from County Rd. 18 and landscaping plans have changed, so the old growth forest is not hidden from road views.

Cottage Advisors has started taking reservations and has 20 for the first phase; Phase II has been launched, which will have cottages facing wetlands or parks. (Lakefront cottages are not being sold yet). There are five models, all about 800 square feet in size with two bedrooms, built on sonotubes (thus no basements), starting at \$159,000 with maintenance fees of about \$225 per month. The architecture will reflect the local area; some models have front porches. The amenity buildings will resemble "old homestead buildings" says Donnelly.

"This for people looking for hassle-free cottages they can rent out," says Donnelly. "They are condominium, so there are no worries about cleaning the property, putting a dock out, turning on water or cutting grass. We also offer a managed rental program, so that's hassle-free as well."

People don't have to rent out their cottages, but municipal bylaw prohibits the owners from living there for more than 179 days a year. (The resort will be open from mid-April to the end of October each year).

"There is a lot of focus on sustainability and the waste water treatment plant is state-of-the-art and will be a \$1 million investment," says Donnelly. "Everyone wants to protect the lake. There's a whole attention to detail on the architecture and protecting the beach. And trees are not being cut down other than a few; cottages are being built to fit around the trees and are on sonotubes so the root systems won't be disrupted."

Donnelly says the site has a small beach, which is good for children, as well as canoeing and kayaking, but she anticipates most residents will be using the Sandbanks beach, 8 kilometres away. The resort will be providing a shuttle to Sandbanks.

At East Lake, Summer Village will also provide eight fishing boats "so cottage owners won't have to buy a boat, which is nice for young families, who don't want that expense on top of buying a cottage. This way they can experiment with introducing their children to fishing without the high cost."

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