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## County ideal for \$50M plan

### 'Our development will fit the landscape here perfectly'

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As Chip Hall stands above the shore of East Lake, a smile stretches from ear to ear as he surveys what he hopes will be his company's next development.

While Hall, a senior vice-president with Cottage Advisors LLC, an American company specializing in cottage developments, enjoys the view from atop a bluff overlooking the lake, he knows this will be one of the easier afternoons he can enjoy while trying to move the concept forward.

"This is a beautiful piece of property and I am 100 per cent convinced that our development will fit the landscape here perfectly," he said. "I can tell you this much -- if I wasn't completely convinced of that, we wouldn't be here now because we would have moved on."

With a couple of properties operating in Maine and Massachusetts, Cottage Advisors Canada Inc. was formed and an exhaustive search was conducted throughout Ontario in search of suitable properties for similar developments.

After exploring properties in areas such as the Muskoka region, Rice Lake and Crowe Lake to name a few, Hall was finally pointed toward Prince Edward County.

"I asked where the heck is that? And when I was told two hours south, I said 'isn't that in the middle of Lake Ontario?' Exactly, I was told -- so Prince Edward County is where we headed."

The company has now set its sights on an 80-acre site, a driving range and former trailer park on County Road 18, less than two kilo-metres west of Cherry Valley.

They have unveiled plans that include 237 cottages, resort amenities, activities for all ages and rental management services, worth an estimated \$50 million.

Cottage Advisors announced earlier this week they have submitted an application for a zoning by-law amendment to the municipality that contains a preliminary site plan for the resort.

The East Lake site includes approximately 525 metres of shoreline, roughly two per cent of the total shoreline on the lake with almost half of the 80 acres being wooded.

"We're on the eighth version of the site plan and we are trying to take absolutely everything into consideration before we submit the final plan to the municipality," Hall said. "Most of the shoreline is elevated and we will have 30-metre setbacks, so from the water, all people will be able to see are the rooftops of the cottages and the trees."

They have undertaken a number of studies including hydrogeological, traffic, archeological and economic impact. Forestry and arborist personnel have also been invited to survey the wooded areas.

Hall said the company is so committed to preserving as much of the landscape as possible. They have invited Ducks Unlimited to survey wetlands on the property which have been deemed low quality by the Quinte Conservation authority.

"Our property in Maine is in the middle of a field so we built the cottages on (concrete) slabs and then spent \$1.2 million on planting trees," he said. "Massachusetts is similar to this, so we did something different there by pouring (concrete) posts and building on those. It is much healthier for the trees and causes much less stress on

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the treed areas."

Hall knows the task of moving forward to the approval stage will be daunting. He said his company embraces the concerns brought forward by nearby residents and advocacy groups.

"That is nothing to be afraid of because, at the end of the day, hopefully you all represent the same thing and have the same concerns for the property.

"I had a lady come to me and tell me she was worried about her well, the water in the lake and her privacy. As I told her, I really have no control over the well and the lake. The studies are being done and with the systems we will have in place here, the numbers are going to be the numbers. If they show, they will have any effect on her well or the lake, then we won't be getting a permit. It will be as simple as that. As far as her privacy goes, I assured her we will do everything possible to ensure that her privacy is respected. People won't want to come here to invade on other people's privacy, they will simply want to enjoy the setting here."

In August, councillors Barry Turpin of Bloomfield and Keith Mac-Donald of Hallowell took part in a two-day bus trip to Maine and Massachusetts to view the facilities there.

"I was very impressed with both facilities," Turpin said after the trip. "Perhaps what impressed me the most is the lengths they went to at both sites to ensure they met all the regulations of the local municipalities."

Hall said an economic impact study completed by The Tourism Company suggests the economic benefit could be as high as \$110 million over a 10-year period using provincial guidelines.

"Of course the municipality won't be the only beneficiary of that, but it could mean 77 full-time jobs here and in the community every year and we are estimating it will bring another \$650,000 a year in taxes," he said.

"It's not just about how many people we employ, but the spending that comes out of it for things like building material and furniture."

Hall expects to hold public meetings following application for site plan approval.

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