

## Hotel and Nordic spa planned for former Talisman resort property

ROB GOWAN

The owners of the former Talisman Mountain Resort property has announced plans for a large health and wellness community complete with a hotel and Nordic spa at the former ski resort.

Brian Ellis and Phil Cavano, who own the property that includes the former resort and ski hills, have announced the proposal that could see more than \$400-million invested and bring hundreds of jobs to the Beaver Valley.

"It is going to be a true health and wellness community that is going to be extremely unique," Ellis said by telephone on Monday. "It will have a lot of unique amenities to it that I think people are going to be thrilled with."

Ellis said they are attempting to be environmentally sensitive with everything they do to the property. At the same time he said they want to be sensitive to the surrounding community while building a development with a sustainable business plan.

"When you are doing a large-scale development you want your future patrons to really stay and play in the Beaver Valley, because that is what makes Beaver Valley different from Blue Mountain or some of the other areas," said Ellis. "It is really about the idea of being in secluded nature that makes it so cool."

Their plan for the project includes repurposing the main lodge building into part of the spa, while two other buildings on site will be removed for new construction.

"We are going to have a lot of water features and waterfalls because of the hills, so it is going to give us some amazing vistas of the valley," said Ellis. "A true health and wellness community needs that kind of an environment."

SEE TALISMAN ON A2

## Intend to blend in with hills

TALISMAN FROM A1

Other plans include restaurants, convention space, treatment areas, a gym, a tropical indoor pool and solarium and parking.

Ellis explained that the parking for 900 vehicles will be hidden from view beneath a platform that will include about five acres of additional greenspace parkland. "We have really taken this into a sustainable environmentally friendly development," said Ellis. "We are trying to work with the hills and the whole purpose of the building is to blend in with the hills."

Ellis said they are actually adding more parkland than they are taking away by repurposing what used to be "pretty ugly gravel driveways and parking lots."

While the development application doesn't include the former ski hills, future plans include a path system for hiking and walking. They would also like to eventually offer some opportunities for glamping on the former ski hills, which would be re-planted.

"The hills will be an integral part of the health and wellness," Ellis said. "We need the walking paths, we need the vistas they offer, and we have the Bruce Trail at the top of the hill as well."

The development is separate from a recent development application of the Beaver Valley Development Group, which owns the former golf course property at the base of the valley as well as lands on top of the escarpment. BVDG is seeking to build up to 370 residential units, along with commercial, community and recreational uses on part of the property. Local residents have spoken out against that plan, with concerns ranging from traffic congestion and build density to potential harm to protected escarpment lands and area species at-risk.

Ellis said they have owned their property for almost 10 years now, which has allowed them to do a lot of study and analysis outside the community in terms of demand and size and scope in terms of making their business a viable one. They have also received a lot of input from those within the community, have followed the BVDG meetings, and have "a very good relationship" with most of the Protecting Talisman Lands Association members.

"This is going to be a very large development, of which some who are against development of any sort in the area are going to have issue with," said Ellis. "But the overwhelming majority in the region will be extremely happy with what we are doing."

They have retained architect Paul Raff, who is known for his work in building unique properties in nature, while KLM Planning Partners is doing their planning work.

Ellis said the announcement of the development is exciting one for everyone as it will be one of the largest recreational developments in the province, bringing in a "tremendous amount" of tax dollars, and visitors to the Beaver Valley "in a controlled environment."

"We are going to be a five-star hotel under a big-chain brand name, and then the spa. It will be a very large health and wellness community," Ellis said. "It will be quite the monolith for the region, that is for sure."

Ellis said the owners submitted the zoning bylaw amendment application for their property at 150 Talisman Mountain Drive to the Municipality of Grey Highlands at the end of July. They are now waiting for their application to be deemed complete and to receive feedback from the various departments, before they move forward. Ellis said they hope to have all their comments in by the end of August, with several meetings to follow in the community to show their concept plans. They will gather feedback from the community about potential adjustments that may need to be made. Ellis said construction will depend on how quickly they can get their zoning bylaw amendment application approved.

"Once that is done and approved our plan is to hit the ground running," Ellis said. "We are going to start our program, including a marketing program, right away."

Regards  
Paul