

# ST. JOHN'S

**Hybrid Public Meeting - 358-376 Portugal Cove Place  
Foran Green Room/Zoom  
Thursday, November 27, 2025 – 7:00 pm**

## **Meeting Report**

### **Present:**

Glenn Barnes	Facilitator & Chair	
Ann-Marie Cashin	Planner III	City of St. John's
Ken O'Brien	Chief Municipal Planner	City of St. John's
Faith Ford	Planner III	City of St. John's
Christine Carter	Legislative Assistant	City of St. John's
Nevin Hollett	GDL Homes Limited	Proponent
Dave Kelly	GDL Homes Limited	Proponent
Keith Buis	GDL Homes Limited	Proponent
Mark Stuckless	Traffic Engineer	Harbourside Engineering

**Public attendance:** 10 in-person & 8 virtual

### **Call to Order**

Glenn Barnes, Chairperson and Facilitator, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Barnes advised attendees of the role of facilitator and outlined the rules for decorum to ensure everyone who wished to speak had equal opportunity to do so.

### **Purpose of Meeting**

The Chair advised that the purpose of the meeting is to provide an opportunity for residents to discuss their concerns and ask questions on an application received from GDL Homes Ltd. to rezone land at 358-376 Portugal Cove Place from the Residential (R1) Zone to the Residential 2 (R2) Zone and Apartment 1 (A1) Zone for a mixed residential development.

The Chair asked that those that were attending in person come to the mic at the centre of the room should they wish to speak. It was asked that participants restrict their comments and questions to the proposal.

Online participants would be provided with the same opportunities to speak on the issue.

The agenda for the meeting was then provided:

- Overview of the application by City Staff, Ann-Marie Cashin, Planner III
- Comments from the Proponent
- Questions and Feedback from Participants

### **Background and Current Status**

Ms. Cashin advised that the recording of the meeting tonight will not be posted, and individual names will not be recorded or in the final report from this meeting.

Online participants were instructed on how to use the reaction buttons should they wish to speak on the rezoning, noting that accommodations could be made to assist participants if required.

A land acknowledgement was then given, recognizing the history of the land and those that came before us.

Ann-Marie Cashin, Planner III, advised that she will provide an overview of the City's policy changes that are required to consider this project.

The proposed development is on land between Portugal Cove Place and Portugal Cove Road. Access to the site will be from Portugal Cove Place.

The applicant can speak to the design and layout of the proposed development.

The land is currently within the Residential 1 Zone, so a rezoning is required to change the front of the property along Portugal Cove Place to the R2 Zone to consider townhouses. The initial proposal was for a combination of Semi-detached Dwellings and Townhouses along Portugal Cove Place. That has been updated to Townhouses and both types of housing are permitted uses within the R2 Zone.

The land at the rear is requested to be rezoned to the Apartment 1 Zone to consider a Cluster Development.

The Cluster Development is proposed to be comprised of 154 units within 11 Apartment Buildings.

The Townhouses are proposed to be built facing Portugal Cove Place, with two accesses into the land at the back, the Cluster Development.

The applicant meets the required parking with respect to bicycle and vehicle parking. The City sets minimums and maximums, and the proposed parking is within that range.

For this application, an initial traffic memo was required. Generally, a traffic study is not required unless the increased traffic is over 100. In this case it was less than 100, the City did require a traffic study as they are proposing an emergency access to Portugal Cove Road near the storm pond. The traffic study is available on the City's Engage Page.

Another change being considered with this amendment is a reduction of the minimum landscaping requirement in the Apartment 1 Zone from 35% to 30%. The reasons for this are two-fold. The first is that the other Apartment Zones, A2 and A3, have the minimum landscape of 30% and we want to make this consistent with other Apartment Zones.

The other is that there is a new regulation for Cluster Developments. When more than 20 units are required, there is an additional landscaping requirement. Any Cluster Development with more than 20 units have an additional landscaping requirement to provide 6m<sup>2</sup> per unit, bringing the overall landscaping for this project closer to 34%.

Ms. Cashin indicated for those in attendance the location of the emergency access in the drawings on screen, which is located just to the left of the storm pond on the upper right side of the image.

Ms. Cashin advised that all comments will be accepted, by the City Clerk, until close of business on Friday, November 28, 2025. Comments received, along with the minutes from this meeting will be brought back to Council for their consideration.

Council will then decide to adopt the proposed amendment or reject it.

#### **Presentation by the Developer:**

Nevin Hollett, GDL Homes, provided an overview of the project and referred to the project renderings.

- GDL Homes saw a large section of vacant land in the east end of the City, and with the current housing crisis, they are looking to help with purpose-built rentals in the missing middle of the real estate market, where there is the biggest gap. The high end luxury section of the market has been well served, and there are a lot of programs in place to develop social-affordable housing. In the middle is where there is the biggest gap.
- With the current cost of construction, it is difficult to deliver housing to the middle market. Rental stock in the City and metro areas is very underserved.
- This site of 8 acres could handle more density, but they did not feel it was appropriate for this area.
- The design is for residential looking buildings, with 2 stories in the front and 3 on the back, town home looking buildings, but it is multi rental units.

- These are homes for people, people should be comfortable and be happy to live in.
- Unit sizes are in excess of 1,000 square feet per unit, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, with an exterior entrance, and a patio. It is a condo grade but not being sold as condos.
- There will be adequate parking and keeping the density as such so it does not overwhelm the area.
- A traffic study was conducted that showed how it would fit in and not overwhelm the area.
- Townhomes would be bungalow style homes for seniors, to be sold not rented. This is another market segment that is underserved. They would be low maintenance for seniors. There will be 14 of these units and are confident that the community will receive those townhomes well.
- There will be 154 units (apartments), spread out over 11 buildings, with 23 units in the largest building, keeping the density in line that will blend in nicely for the area.
- These will be built with 3 key things: they will be energy efficient, affordable and some will be accessible units. Accessible units are in high demand.
- This is a residential looking product at a reasonable density that fits well within traffic and residential models and feel that this will be an excellent addition to the east end of the City.
- It was clarified that it is expected that between 10-15% will be accessible and will be universal design standard units.

**Comments from Participants**

<b>COMMENTS</b>	
<b>Speaker #</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Speaker 1</b>	<p>Agrees that housing is needed, but the proposal is very ambitious.</p> <p>Two major concerns – related to the size of the proposal and traffic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic is already a big issue that residents already experience and does not agree with the results of the traffic study.</li> <li>• Residents know the congestion and traffic at the intersection of Higgins Line and Bell’s Turn, very skeptical of the traffic study conducted and the results (turning lane modelling, traffic light installation).</li> <li>• Traffic studies are a good guide, but the City should commission a larger study without bias. The proximity to Portugal Cove Road and the highway access would necessitate that.</li> <li>• The study should be looked at on a longer-term basis.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current proposal would more than double the number of users of the roads (Higgins Line/Bell’s Turn), and the neighbourhood area/roads are unable to accommodate that amount of density.</li> <li>• The original development initially planned to have the Portugal Cove Road emergency exit as another exit. Think that maybe that was removed due to the proximity to the highway off ramp that was taken out.</li> <li>• The timing of the Traffic study was also questioned as it was done when the school term had ended for the winter university semester and other post-secondary campuses in the area – May 22, 2025. Less users at that time of the year versus fall and winter, more delays when classes are in session.</li> <li>• Do not think that the current traffic study should be accepted but look at it on a long-term basis. This study does not recommend a new traffic light.</li> <li>• Discussed the proposal with other area residents and will be circulating a letter to members of Council with some suggestions and a petition.</li> <li>• Highlighted the interview by Deputy Mayor Ellsworth, appreciates his enthusiasm, but felt that he was over enthusiastic about this proposal without hearing citizens’ concerns. It was asked that the Deputy Mayor recuse himself from the Council vote on this proposal, and in the future that Councillors wait to hear both sides of the issue prior to publicly supporting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Response from Proponent:</b></p> <p>Thank you for your comments but I disagree with the statement that this proposal is ambitious. This area has been looked at for various designs, but this area needs low rise, 3 story buildings that people want to live in.</p> <p>A Traffic Engineer was hired for their expertise.</p> <p>We want this development to work for a very long time, and it has been a very calculated design to speak to the area and the viability of this type of project for the area.</p>
<p><b>Speaker 2</b></p>	<p>Questioned why the bulb of the cul-de-sac sits directly on the boundary of 367-369 Portugal Cove Place and wondered why there is not an allocation of a sidewalk to be there as there is a lot of room there, to shift to the right. This will adversely affect those properties.</p> <p>City staff advised that the bulb is in the current right of way, this is our basic requirement to achieve direct access from the apartment buildings to the sidewalk.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> This issue will be brought back to the Traffic Engineers for consideration for a continuous sidewalk around the full bulb of the cul-de-sac.</p>

<p><b>Speaker 3</b></p>	<p>The speaker expressed concerns about traffic. There are 14 streets with only one access, and currently residents are parking on both sides of Bell's Turn.</p> <p>A major concern is that if a bus or an emergency vehicle had to get up the road, it would not be able to get up.</p> <p>There has been continuous development in the area, recently a church on Hunt's Lane. Other developments will increase the amount of traffic.</p> <p>If there was a major access route that would be perfect, but the limited access is not acceptable.</p> <p>The area of Higgins Line, in collision reports, has this area considered the 2<sup>nd</sup> most dangerous intersection in the City.</p> <p>The traffic report prepared is lacking.</p>
<p><b>Speaker 4</b></p>	<p>I am a long-time resident of Hunt's Lane and has watched traffic and development in the area over the years. There is already major traffic in this area.</p> <p>No issue with the development but questioned why they did not consider installing a roundabout on Portugal Cove Road instead. This would keep heavy traffic/trucks going up that road during construction and improve access to the area after it is constructed. This would be a win-win.</p> <p>Bell's Turn cannot accommodate the traffic; there are no sidewalks there now, and 3-4 cars parked in each driveway in this area.</p> <p>We know people need homes and the developers are only in it for profit.</p> <p>The resident's proposed roundabout location was shown on the drawings.</p> <p><b>Response from Proponent:</b></p> <p>The speed of building is between 3 to 5 years on that site, and with heavy traffic for construction.</p> <p>It is not being sold, this is a rental 'build to hold' of the 11 buildings. It will be phased construction; as there is not enough labour available to build all 11 buildings at once. It would be staggered/phased construction, a blend of construction abilities and rental demand.</p> <p>There are 14 townhouse units to be sold, and 154 rentals will be in the rest of the buildings.</p>

	<p>This is not being marketed as seniors specific, as someone who is 50 looking for housing could be living there as well.</p> <p>It was noted that there are a lot of seniors who want to move out of their homes and want 1,000 square feet to rent and not have the responsibility of a home. The trend is that people are selling their homes, moving into rentals, and using their equity to subsidize their living.</p> <p><b>Speaker 4</b> disagreed with the comment on seniors selling their homes, citing that it is the opposite, seniors wanting to stay in their homes.</p>
<b>Speaker 5</b>	<p>What is the price range for the purchase of the townhomes and what will the rental costs be? Is it high end, or middle?</p> <p>Having to wait for a long time to turn onto Bell's Turn. Currently people parking on both sides of Bell's Turn is a problem.</p> <p>Adding the issue of snow on the streets adds to the traffic and congestion. Unless you live in this area, you do not know the real picture.</p> <p>There will be more cars on the street with this development. There are a lot of rentals already in the area, and the City was petitioned to have no parking there.</p> <p>When the traffic study was conducted in May, students were gone, and the area was blocked again in September.</p> <p>Traffic comes down and up Bell's Turn and then they go up Hunt's Lane to avoid going onto Higgins Line, and adding this development to the area, there will be hundreds more cars.</p> <p>Business is business and this is being done to make money.</p> <p>We live there and support the petition.</p> <p>The idea of a roundabout is a good one, but the ramp speed coming onto Portugal Cove Road is not followed, many are coming onto it over 100 kms, so using that for access is dangerous.</p> <p>Where is the water going from the storm drain, as there are also concerns about flooding, as there is a water main there as well.</p> <p>Will that ramp be extended to the water house area? It would give access yes, but will be in the subdivision, and will there be a second ramp?</p>

	<p><b>City Staff Response:</b> Emergency access will be gated so no traffic will be permitted.</p> <p><b>Speaker continued:</b></p> <p>With 300 more cars on Bell’s Turn, residents cannot get out now and if you meet a bus, you must stop.</p> <p>Does the City plan on prohibiting parking on the road?</p> <p>Hunt’s Lane is cleared in the winter, it is a priority, but our street is not cleared. Traffic is the biggest problem, agree to help seniors, but should consider having underground parking.</p> <p>Reduction of green space is a concern, currently have larger lots of land and well landscaped.</p> <p>Heavy trucks during construction will be a problem.</p> <p>Concern with speeding going up the roads, currently speeding taxis going up the road as they park there. This needs to be stopped, and speed limit should be reduced.</p> <p>It is a nice neighbourhood and access getting onto Higgins Line is a problem.</p>
<p><b>Speaker 1</b></p>	<p>Is your project related to the recent announcement for the 50-year fixed rate loans through CMHC? Is it financed by federally subsidized loans?</p> <p><b>Response from Proponent:</b></p> <p>No, it is not subsidized. CMHC does not give loans but provides insurance for multi-unit construction with favourable terms compared to commercial rates.</p> <p>CMHC does not provide loans, but they do have some programs where they do provide loans, which is the construction loan program. The developer noted that there is nothing planned at this point for such loans, but within the CMHC program they use a point system to improve the terms of the loan for housing when key issues are met, such as more accessibility, energy efficiency, and affordability.</p> <p>Not sure if that program will be available when we reach the stage for construction.</p> <p><b>Speaker 1 –</b> call into question the profit motive, if you are getting such favourable rates, which is a subsidy, there is profit motive. Is there anything prohibiting you from selling the project to a Real Estate</p>

	<p>Investment Trust in the future or are you forced to hold on to the property itself?</p> <p>The Chair noted that this is outside of the purview of this meeting but left it to the proponent to respond if they wish.</p> <p><b>Response from Proponent:</b></p> <p>This is very early in the stage of concept to know the answers to these questions.</p> <p>This is a 'build to hold' property, the comment made earlier that we are 'in it for profit' was raised, and that we would build it and leave, and it will no longer be our problem. That is not the case, we are holding the property.</p> <p>If traffic is a problem, it is our problem. It has an impact on rent and occupancy. If there are concerns or other issues they contribute to downward pressures that could take you from a profit to a loss, they are key issues. We are looking at this through a long-term lens. It impacts the rental rates, property values, and occupancy. We are not looking to flip it out.</p>
<p><b>Speaker 6</b></p>	<p>Cannot comment on how this is designed, etc., and when you look at it, this project looks doable, but it is on a hill and this is an old road. There are a few issues that need to be looked at.</p> <p>The traffic issues are not just on Higgins Line but also on Portugal Cove Place. The 's' turn there is dangerous. There is parking on one side and, between that right turn and the left turn, even if one car is parked there, you have to go to the other side of the road as there is a blind spot, and that needs to be made safer.</p> <p>On Gilmour Street, people roll through the stop sign, this is not a developer issue, but a City problem, whether this goes through or not, those areas are dangerous. If people are rolling through and more traffic is coming, that must be looked at.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> The speaker asked that Councillor Davis, as the Ward 4 Councillor, work on the traffic and safety issues noted in this area.</p> <p>On Bell's Turn, turning onto Higgins Line, there is a pole that obstructs the view on a turn. If you have traffic going right or left that needs to be looked at as a traffic issue as well.</p> <p>If you are not seriously looking at how to do this overall, it cannot work. The speed limit is a problem too. Drivers going 60-70 is not abnormal,</p>

	<p>what will you do to regulate the speeds. Bell's Turn and Portugal Cove Place have these issues. Need to find a workable solution.</p> <p><b>Speaker 4</b> added that at the bottom of Bell's Turn, the old Super 8, has now been approved for fifteen units, which will also delay traffic at the bottom lane of Bell's Turn. The left turning lane on Bell's Turn can only accommodate three cars.</p> <p><b>Speaker 5</b> added that the traffic near the McSheffery Centre is being met with parking on both sides. Development is great but the people that live there need to be considered in this, it is challenging with all the students using these roadways to park.</p>
<b>Speaker 7</b>	<p>Having lived in the area for only a few years, we see the traffic issues now, and that is the main concern.</p> <p>An email has been sent to the City Clerk's Department with concerns over this development as it relates to traffic.</p> <p>Every morning trying to turn left onto Higgins Line is a nightmare and the results of the study are ridiculous. Already have to leave early to avoid the traffic in the mornings.</p> <p>If the area sees even a slight increase of area residents, the waits will be very long.</p> <p>People treat the exits on some roads in the area like yield signs, and some take very wide turns due to some pole locations.</p> <p>Would not support the proposal as it currently exists.</p>
<b>Speaker 8</b>	<p>Good to see several City Councillors here.</p> <p>Traffic projections are a weird thing, but a development like this is good for St. John's. This is a \$42 million project and adds revenue to the City.</p> <p>Traffic calming could be considered by the City in this area. This project is also in close proximity to buses in the area.</p> <p>In the LUR it appears that all internal roads are owned privately, and the City will only need to service the homes except for waste collection.</p> <p>This development is fifty units per hectare, compared to Southlands which is 8 units per hectare and Kenmount Terrace is 9 units per hectare.</p> <p>It is good to know that there are a lot of people that support projects like this and do not come out to these meetings to express that support.</p>

	<p>Understand the concerns expressed by the residents that are here, that traffic is an issue and that the speed limit should be reduced to 20 km hour.</p> <p>The storm retention system looks good as proposed, glad to know that universal design is to be used.</p> <p>I am a big supporter of the project and would like to see more developments like this in the future.</p>
<p><b>Speaker 9:</b></p>	<p><b>Mark Stuckless, Harbourside Engineering</b></p> <p>Mr. Stuckless acknowledged the comments related to the traffic concerns expressed.</p> <p>He explained that a traffic study is an unbiased process, and it is the City that dictates the terms of the study not the developer, and it is the firm doing the study that presents the facts.</p> <p>Mr. Stuckless noted that the issue of morning wait times was raised several times during this public meeting, but this study did not consider the adjacent intersection at Portugal Cove Road and Higgins Line, as it was not a part of the study and is quite a larger study.</p> <p>The focus of the study was to determine how much additional traffic would be generated, and can the intersection handle it. The volume is from a series of studies in Canada and the United States that look at similar developments, the peak period in the morning and the evening. The number of studies reviewed and the statistics from those studies used were noted. This development fit well into the number of studies that were available to choose data from.</p> <p>Those numbers were used and superimposed into the traffic count data. The timing of the traffic study was a major issue for participants, but the study was conducted based on the timing set out in the RFP.</p> <p>The Traffic Study is a snapshot in time and if conducted in the summer it would give different results as well.</p> <p>A resident asked whether the traffic on Higgins Line and Newfoundland Drive was considered in the study, as the area is completely blocked at peak times (morning and evening commute times).</p> <p>Another resident asked that Portugal Cove Road, Newfoundland Drive and Higgins Line be further studied due to safety and the volumes using those roads.</p> <p>An attendee asked if the City looked at what the cost would be for a 3-post light at Bell's Turn and Higgins Line and if there is a rough cost</p>

	<p>estimate. They suggested that it might be a thing for the City to consider for the area residents.</p> <p>Ms. Cashin advised that the traffic was not generating enough to recommend a traffic light in that area. It was not required so further investigation into the cost of such a light was not conducted.</p> <p>Ms. Cashin also added that regardless of what happens with this development, whether it is to proceed or not, the City will conduct a city-wide collision report in 2026. If the Higgins Line and Portugal Cove Road intersection ranks high, the City will undertake a detailed review to identify potential improvements.</p>
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**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The Chair thanked those in attendance for their participation and advised them to contact City Staff should they have any additional questions or feedback on the proposed development.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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Glen Barnes  
Chairperson/Facilitator