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New plaza for King City receives council approval

By Angela Gismondi

A new commercial plaza will be built at King Road and Dufferin Street in King City.

The applications to permit the commercial development, submitted by King North Developments, were approved at a special committee of the whole meeting last Monday. There are a number of matters which must be addressed by the applicant prior to the execution of the site plan development agreement but the development is moving ahead.

The proposed zoning bylaw amendment and site plan approvals will permit the commercial development of the lands, which will consist a mix of commercial uses, including a supermarket and other retail commercial, restaurants, automobile service station/gas bar, business and professional offices, banks and financial services, health care services and a range of other commercial uses. The lands, about 6.15 hectares (15.2 acres), are located at the northwest corner of King Road and Dufferin Street near the King North residential development.

The new plaza will consist of 16 buildings in varying sizes and configurations, including a food store, a gas/service station (including car wash and convenience store), a convenience restaurant (with a drive-thru), and two banks (with drive-thrus), one free-standing and another which is incorporated within a multi-unit building. The new plaza will offer a total of about l51,056 square feet of commercial retail space/units and roughly 700 parking spaces.

In addition, the development proposes a gateway and central public space at the northwest corner of King Road and Dufferin Street. This area is proposed to include signage, including digital/electronic signage, and landscaping and design elements to encourage the area to be used as a central gathering space. The owner/applicant has indicated a willingness to enable the use of these features for community notices and other similar purposes.

Paul Mondell, representing King North Developments, thanked staff for their work on the project and said the applicant supports the staff report.

?We want to thank staff for the tremendous amount of work that has gone into this project,? said Mondell. ?We have secured a number of retail tenants who are excited about coming to King City.?

Local resident Susan Beharriell thanked staff and the developer for working together on the project. She also pointed out the developer has taken into consideration some of the concerns brought up by local residents and made changes to the plan accordingly. She hopes the cooperation will continue throughout the process.

?This has moved from a ho-hum plan that can go anywhere to one that fits into King rather well,? Beharriell stated. ?The decisions you make regarding this development will impact this township for the next 50 years. I hope you will choose sustainability over expediency.?

She was particularly concerned about the types of businesses that will be located in the new plaza and their commitment to being green. She offered a few suggestions to make the businesses more sustainable.

?Drive-thrus go against the fundamentals of King,? said Beharriell. ?If you can't talk them out of it then bargain for something else. Make the restaurants do something else green in return such as using only compostable materials in their establishment.?

She was also concerned about the design of the buildings, especially with respect to fitting in with the heritage character of the community.

?Cookie-cutter designs do not fit everywhere but some companies think they do,? she noted.

Local resident Sandro Soscia said the approval is premature.

?I am not in opposition of the development but I think a bit more work is required to finalize the reports and plans,? said Soscia, adding more details are required to see and understand what the end product will look like. ?This is something I am in favour of I just want it done in a good manner. There is no reason why downtown in King can't look like Islington Avenue in Kleinburg or Main Street in Markham. I would like staff to put the same effort into King. I think we have a community here that deserves better.?

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti said a lot of time and effort has been put into the plan and this version is different and much improved from the first version presented in 2010. He said he could understand that it is difficult to visualize what the plaza will look like based on drawings on a piece of paper.

?Councillors need to be involved and make sure that the architecture reflects the community,? said Mortelliti. ?Overall I think we're moving in the right direction. We want to hold up a high standard for King City.?

While there remain some outstanding matters which are currently under review, Township staff stated in the report that they are satisfied with the applications and they will continue to work with the applicant to address the remaining matters. Council requested that staff work with the applicant to incorporate sustainable elements into the design of the buildings.

The applicant has recently requested that the site plan application be revised to remove the lands north of Tatton Court and, therefore, those lands will be subject to a further and separate site plan approval and site plan development agreement.
It was recommended that the applications be approved and that the amending zoning bylaw and the site plan development agreement be prepared in accordance with the recommendations of the report. The motion carried.