

Aurora Votes 2018: Harold Kim wants to continue standard of 'servant leadership'?



By Brock Weir

In 2014, Aurora voters elected Harold Kim on his pledge of 'servant leadership,' that is, a commitment to serve the needs of the community as a whole.

As Mr. Kim vies for a second term on Aurora Council, one that will be reduced this year from eight members to six, he has renewed that pledge and belief that leadership does not come from the top down, but rather the bottom up.

'Servant leadership is not just a flashy slogan or a tag line that I want to use to catch people's attention, but that is really my motto in life,' He says. 'The paradox of being a public servant or politician, which I have struggled with over the last four years, is you have to self promote. Self promotion is something I find particularly challenging and very difficult. The way I operate, and in my faith, is about having humility. It is not about telling people, 'Hey, I did this or that.' Ultimately, people need to know a politician '

Councillor and public servant ' is what we did for them. With servant leadership, you are the chief servant, the chief volunteer. That is why I am here in this position, to serve the residents, to serve the people.'

While self-promotion might not be within Mr. Kim's comfort zone, he is not without achievements over the last four years of which he is particularly proud. Among these, he says, is his work on Aurora's Finance Advisory Committee, which has instilled on municipal departments 'due diligence' to find 'savings or more efficiencies' when it comes to local services and has been tasked with identifying areas that have been underfunded.

He also takes particular pride in leading the charge of making Aurora's Multicultural Festival, an event that was intended as a one-off to mark Aurora's Sesquicentennial in 2013 into a yearly celebration of the increasing diversity of people now calling this community home.

'It was a tough decision,' says Mr. Kim of throwing his hat into the ring for the second time. 'My family is still relatively young and I want to spend time with them, but I truly feel this is a calling, so to speak, and when you have a calling you have a passion. I feel like I am making a difference in the community.'

While continuing to serve is his 'number one reason' for seeking re-election, he does cite a number of pieces of unfinished business he would like to see through until the end.

One of these pieces of unfinished business is Library Square, which took a several significant steps forward in this term of Council including the demolition of the former Aurora Public Library and Seniors' Centre buildings on Victoria Street to pave the way for redevelopment, and Council's approval of a concept plan and new building for the area.

'There is some flexibility left with the design of Library Square and we're discussing that now,' he says. 'I think in the beginning of next term that will be the forefront.'

During his first election campaign, one of the issues Mr. Kim cited was his desire to address the problem of Aurora's 'main street' ? or, rather, the idea that Aurora's main street is not a traditional one in the same way as communities ranging from Newmarket to Unionville.

A 'main street', he says, is a place of significant foot traffic, a place where people gather and get to know each other. Library Square, he adds, addresses some of those needs, but a 'main street' opportunity might be in the offing in the next term of Council as the Stronach family proposes a transformation of some its lands in the Bayview and Wellington corridor.

'It is not a Town project, it's a private project, [but Council] has been invited to contribute to the planning process over the last couple of years and I want to continue to have an active Council and myself participating in the design for the Stronach lands,' says Mr. Kim. 'From what I've seen, it looks pretty much like a future main street where you have some residential with some commercial and retail, and it connects to trails into a 75 acre ecological park. I would like to try and provide some input when asked, and I think that is something I would like to see developed over the next four years.'

The arrival of Niagara College's Canadian Food & Wine Institute is another factor Mr. Kim says will foster that all-important foot traffic and economic offshoots into our community.

Addressing the issue of renovating the historic Aurora Armoury to make way for Niagara College's lease with the Town, Mr. Kim says a budget of \$2.5 - \$3 million was needed just to bring the Armoury up to standards so the Town could use it. The extra money to allow a post-secondary institution to come into the community will be a 'huge push' when it comes to Aurora's overall economic health, increasing business, tourism, and 'general economic activity.'

Should Mr. Kim win re-election this October, he will be just one of a six member Council. Although he was initially not in favour of reducing Council's numbers when the vote came down this term, and is still skeptical of Aurora changing from an at-large system to a ward system of representation where specific neighbourhoods are represented by a single Councillor, he concedes this will be an issue that will have to be addressed in the upcoming term.

In addition to a possible ward system, other top of mind issues for the next four years will be addressing sports and recreation needs in Town 'and, to that end, Mr. Kim supports the idea of a new recreation complex, complete with Olympic-sized swimming pool, proposed for Bloomington Road lands currently owned by the Provincial government 'as well as infill development, as seen recently in the debate over Aurora's 'stable neighbourhoods.'

'Without building out, you have to build in,' he says. 'I know the Provincial Policy statement states that we are designated a certain allotment of the population growth and with that we're going to have to have infill developments. That will be a constant issue because people don't want intensification in their neighbourhoods.'