

INSIDE AURORA: Location, Location, Location

By Scott Johnston

The big news in Town last week was the announcement that a second hotel might be built in Aurora.

Although both structures are still on the drawing board, and some time away from receiving guests, that's two more places for visitors to stay within our borders than we've had since Howard Johnsons closed a few years ago.

The most intriguing revelation in all this was the proposed location of the second hotel; just a stone's throw from the first one.

True, it's near the highway, but you'd think that the new hotel might want a bit more elbow room from its competition, and that they may be able to find a spot a little further away within Aurora's 50 or so square kilometres.

At the very least, instead of being perched out on the very edge of the municipality, where to be honest, there isn't a lot of anything, the owners would prefer it to be a little closer to downtown, whether that be Yonge or Bayview or Library Square, or wherever downtown Aurora is considered these days. At least somewhere where there are cultural, recreational and other venues that might attract those wanting to stay overnight.

On the other hand, looking at the history of other developments in Town, perhaps their preferred location this isn't so surprising after all.

It seems that no matter where any sort of new infrastructure is proposed in Town, local residents offer resistance.

Some recent examples include the new seniors' residence on Yonge Street planned to help fund the United Church development.

This, as well as other proposed condo developments have been met with concerns about height, blocked views, increased traffic and generally being too big and out of place for the local neighbourhood.

The Highland Gate golf course redevelopment has had to deal with fears of having too many houses, minimal setbacks, not enough green space, and even too much lighting in the new park.

Restaurants with drive-throughs have had complaints about traffic congestion, engine idling and litter.

Concerns have even been raised about the potential redevelopment of the Ontario government land on Bloomington.

Although these are more recent examples, this sort of NIMBYism isn't anything new in Aurora. While you don't hear much about them anymore, for a few years there was a huge outpouring of angst from residents whenever a cell tower was proposed within sight of a neighbourhood.

That's not to say that in many cases residents don't have valid concerns and well thought out alternatives, and in the end, compromises on both sides usually result(ed) in these projects moving ahead to everyone's benefit.

But one can see how, based on the experiences of their predecessors, new businesses might be a bit leery of setting down roots in our community.

That's what makes the location on Leslie out on the edge of Town so perfect for a new hotel. While it may not be close to whatever attracts their eventual customers to Town in the first place, it's far from residential properties, and related concerns.

Certainly no one seems to have raised any red flags so far about this proposal.

Someday demand could be such that a third or even fourth hotel ends up in Aurora. If so, it wouldn't surprise me to see all of them clustered within sight of each other.

Unless, of course, by that time that area near Leslie has become surrounded by residential areas. In which case, any new hotel may face opposition that its predecessors didn't have to contend with.

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