

Official Plan review to look at neighbourhoods

By Brock Weir

With the dawn of the New Year, Aurora is getting ready to look at its official plan with fresh eyes ? and part of this review will focus on unique areas around Town.

As Council prepares to go in-depth on a proposed plan for significant changes in the Downtown Core in what has become dubbed the ?Cultural Precinct,? other ?precinct? areas are set to come into focus as the Official Plan (OP) review gets underway, including such historic and heritage areas as this, which radiates from Town Park to Yonge Street, to commercial and residential areas on Temperance Street and surrounding the former Collis Leather tannery.

The plan to place an emphasis on these core areas was born out of discussions at the last Council meeting following a motion from Councillor John Abel calling for a similar ?Cultural Precinct? plan to be developed for Temperance Street itself, which features a mix of businesses, heritage homes, and other dwellings.

?It seemed to me another great area of our Town to support the revitalization of our Downtown Core exists on the west side of Temperance Street and there is the potential there to investigate and see the possibilities,? said Councillor Abel, noting it would be a good lead-in to further develop Aurora's Promenade Plan. ?There is interest in some development on the corner and we just saw one application come forward on the northwest corner and we referred it back to our Promenade. It might have been helpful and useful for our developer to have had a vision prior to submitting an application.?

Although the motion was seconded by Councillor Tom Mrakas, he expressed some reservations that this motion was looking at just one area when there are seven distinct areas identified in existing plans.

?My concern would be doing this one we would be looking at it separately and then look at another one,? he said. ?It might be more beneficial to look at it as a whole outside of that.?

For Mayor Geoff Dawe, however, the time was not right to look into another Cultural Precinct just yet when they won't have a chance to discuss the detailed proposals for the quadrant on the southeast side of Yonge and Wellington presented at Council in early December until the middle of January.

?I would like to see how we make out with the one we are dealing with right now,? said Mayor Dawe. ?How do we measure it as a success? Do we use that as a reference point going forward? I think I would much rather get this one done and see how we make out with it and then move forward to something else.?

According to Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, all of these questions can be tied into this year's OP review, including the puzzle pieces of the precincts and doing them through the OP review, they could save money on consultants in the process.

?What we are really looking at is coming up with a more detailed use and plan for some of those precincts that are already planned in our official plan,? said Mr. Ramunno.

Councillor Kim, however, expressed some hesitation.

?I don't view the west side of Yonge in the same way as I do the east side,? said Councillor Kim. ?It is just as unique, attractive, and aesthetically pleasing, but I didn't think it was in the same category as Library Square. If others view that it is worth the money to undergo this study, I am not going to be opposed to it, but I think there are better ways to use consultancy fees. With that being said, I am open-minded and will look at what comes back.?