

## Outdoor gathering space proposed for Yonge and Wellington

Congregating indoors will still be off the books for a little while longer, but Aurora's downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) is proposing an outdoor gathering space for businesses and patrons alike just south of the Yonge and Wellington intersection.

The proposal was brought to Council's attention last week by BIA Chair Joanne Russo who provided an update to Council on their operations moving into 2021.

'We wanted to be able to welcome individuals into the Downtown Core and support local businesses right now in terms of takeout,' said Ms. Russo.

Lisa Hausz of Aurora's Economic Development Board noted that a report will be coming forward to Council in the coming weeks on the project's specifics, but said the use of land was donated by a property owner with Town Staff tasked with 'doing the cleanup and the promotion of the space' to the tune of \$9,000.

'This would be done in an open space for visitors and patrons of the downtown to have a gathering spot that is COVID-safe,' she said. 'The tables would be [distanced] apart, but it [would be] an outdoor seating space that isn't directly in the line of traffic on Yonge Street.'

'The BIA was supportive in being able to promote this space. The funds they are proposing tonight are to do just that and promote the space for gathering, for visiting, and attracting people in the Downtown' there are so many crazy ideas to attract people, whether it is buskers, music, whether we have artists in the space ' something unique down there and that's what the funds are for' to try and animate the space and invite people down.'

Presenters at last week's General Committee meeting were mum on the exact location of this proposed greenspace but confirmed to The Auroran the land in question is a vacant lot just north of the old post office/Clock Tower building that has been earmarked for apartments in the future.

'The owners, Yonge Developments Inc., are intending to build a residential or mixed-use building and they are working with Town Staff on what type of development would be best given the current times and vision for the Downtown,' said Ms. Russo. 'In the meantime, they have generously donated the space for temporary use this summer for public open space. The Town will be clearing it and making it available for seating and shade space for visitors to the Downtown. The BIA will be supporting the space and businesses through promotion and signage. We are also hoping to 'animate' the space with music or artists, but we are awaiting more volunteers for brainstorming and, of course, the Province for COVID protocols.'

**By Brock Weir** Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter