

Plans for new hotel begin to take shape

By Brock Weir

A new hotel in the Town of Aurora has been a long-held dream for the local business community, sports clubs and the community as a whole for close to a decade, now plans for a new hotel in east Aurora are beginning to take shape.

Site plans for the new four-storey, 108 room Microtel hotel on Eric T. Smith Way near Don Hillock Drive, just south of Leslie and Wellington Streets are set to be approved at Council this week after receiving a tentative green light last week amid concerns over on-site parking.

Council members were presented with site plans for the 52,067 square foot development at last Tuesday's General Committee meeting. Located on the northwest corner of Goulding Avenue and Eric T. Smith Way, the lands in question are part of the burgeoning business park which is now home to the headquarters of Bulk Barn, York Regional Police, and a stone's throw from the State Farm headquarters on the other side of Wellington Street.

The plan shows a 108 room hotel with a total of 103 parking spaces, with three additional check-in stalls on the Eric T. Smith frontage.

‘The proposed site plan was reviewed by both internal departments and external agencies,’ said Fausto Filipetto, Senior Policy Planner for the Town of Aurora. ‘There were no objections to the proposed site plan, however comments were provided which were technical in nature. It is anticipated that the majority of the comments would be addressed in the next site plan submission.’

‘Given the Town's goal of promoting development of their employment lands and given this application is being processed by the Office of Business Concierge Team as part of the new economic development, staff are recommending site plan approval at this time, subject to the resolution of any outstanding issues.’

Parking nevertheless remained an outstanding issue when Council members took their first sweep of the plan, particularly from Councillors Michael Thompson and Wendy Gaertner who questioned why developers propose five less parking spots than the number of rooms, considering on-site staff and other factors.

‘Should they ever be at max capacity, which includes staffing, where would the overflow be expected to park when there really isn't anything remotely close?’ asked Councillor Thompson.

Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, conceded that is indeed true, but the developers made a request to reduce their parking requirement and justified it at that point.

‘Part of the rationale, obviously, is a question [of whether] it is going to be 100 per cent all the time, which is highly unlikely, and not everyone is going to arrive with their own personal vehicle,’ said Mr. Ramunno. ‘We took a look at the parking study and were satisfied with the recommendations and can support the reduction. They are willing to submit a minor variance application to comply with the parking rate based on our current bylaw standard.’

Councillor Gaertner, however, remained concerned.

‘We're hoping this hotel is going to be very successful, we need it, and will draw people,’ she said. ‘So, where will people park if they do have full occupancy? Maybe some people will be coming by taxi but I would think a lot of people would be coming by car.’

In response, Mr. Ramunno reiterated the rationale, adding other municipalities have a lower parking rate for hotel users, so he was ‘confident’ there shouldn't be a parking issue. But, Councillor Gaertner asked whether any overflow parking would be available on nearby streets, Mr. Ramunno said if any parking occurred where bylaw didn't permit, parking standards would be enforced.