

Apartment development off Industrial clears next hurdle but Council concerns remain

A seven-storey apartment building earmarked for Industrial Parkway North and Centre Crescent has cleared the next hurdle, but Council members have remaining questions on location and use.

At issue is a proposal for a complex of 193 units at 180 and 182 Centre Street, which will be built from Centre to front onto Industrial Parkway North.

Council approved Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw amendments to make way for the build at the last Council meeting before the summer recess.

The proposed development consists of a seven-storey residential apartment building with 193 units without retail at grade, said Kenny Ng, Planner for the Town of Aurora, in a report to Council. It will also include 252 parking spaces at grade and two levels of underground parking. A fourth full move vehicle access is proposed at the existing three-way traffic light intersection at Industrial Parkway North and the private driveway (access to the rear of St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School). The proposed entryway will lead vehicles to the underground parking or to the front lobby for drop-offs and visitor parking. The bedroom sizes proposed in the apartment range from studio to two-bedroom units. The applicant aims to allocate approximately 35 per cent of the total units to studios, one-bedroom, and one-bedroom with a den configuration.

There is a mixture of indoor and outdoor amenity space. The outdoor amenity areas are located along the western property line, which contains a courtyard, outdoor play area, shade area structure. The second outdoor amenity area is located at the front lobby area as a garden amenity area. There is a 3m landscape buffer around the perimeter of the site. In addition, an urban square consists of public art pieces, formal and informal seating is proposed at the northeast corner for the public use. According to staff, the plan fits within Aurora's Official Plan, which encourages developments like these near Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) and within the Aurora Promenade Plan.

The proposal has been before Council since 2023 and, in that time, proponents have held public engagement sessions on the plans.

Concerns raised, according to the report, range from density and traffic issues on Industrial Parkway North and controlling the number of rental units offered in the building.

These concerns were raised at the Council table as well.

While lawmakers expressed a degree of satisfaction of the variety of units that are slated to be found within the building, some said guaranteeing some of these units for purpose-built rental was integral.

Early on, there was discussion with the owner about it being a purpose-built rental building as opposed to, perhaps, a market condo building [but] we can't necessarily enforce the tenure of the building, whether it is a condo or a purpose-built rental, said Director of Planning Marco Ramunno, responding to questions from Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese. The owner is still working through his plans with respect to whether it is going to be purpose-built rental. He is still considering that.

Similar concerns were voiced by Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

Usually apartment buildings are rental buildings, she said. I believe the developer was proposing doing rental here, but I think they said in the Council Chambers they didn't know if it would be feasible.

Ramunno responded that it is their intent to build purpose-built rental but they can't commit to that 100 per cent.

?That is what they're going to explore moving forward,? he said.

Added Mayor Tom Mrakas: ?I believe the intent is there? but feasibility is still being explored.

Given the fact that property owners are ?asking for a lot of exemptions? to zoning, Councillor Gaertner, who ultimately voted against the motions, said she would be more in favour of granting their request if they would guarantee dedicated rental.

Another concern voiced by the Councillor was the building's relationship with Industrial Parkway North. She said there needs to be a greater buffer between the building and busy street for both residents and drivers alike.

?I don't think the Promenade (Plan) considered having an entrance to a building like this on Industrial Parkway, a very busy street,? she said. ?The setback at the first storey may make the building look overpowering and I am not sure we have left enough, too, to ensure trees flourish [on] the borders of this property.

?The apartments at the front are practically on Industrial Parkway and I don't like that at all. The fact that the amenity area has been decreased by so much, the purpose of amenity area is to have a place where people who live in the building can gather for social functions, to celebrate a birthday, whatever ? especially if we're having such dense living situation here. It has gone from 50 per cent having to be inside to 15 per cent ? a minimum of 15 per cent. They are including balconies in the amenity area space but amenity areas' intention is not for an individual unit, it is for the collective use of the building. I am very opposed to that.

?[Industrial Parkway] has a lot of truck traffic because of all the businesses, the factories ? it's an industrial street, so for me, to put apartments of any kind that close to such a busy street that carries so much truck traffic ? I'm looking at the noise, the pollution, and we're looking for quality of life for our future residents, so I will be absolutely voting against this? this will be a nightmare for future residents.?

By Brock Weir