

Community Improvement Plan gets first taker

By Brock Weir

If Aurora wants to encourage Downtown property owners to spruce up their premises and attract people to come into the historic core, the municipality needs to put some money forward to make that happen.

That was the view of the last Council when they established funding for Aurora's Community Improvement Plan (CIP).

This week, the fledgling incentive program had its first taker.

The CIP was developed to give Aurora a series of tools enabling them to offer financial incentives and other programs to stimulate redevelopment with an eye towards intensification of retail, commercial, or mixed-use buildings in the core, developing long-vacant sites, and enhancing heritage properties with such measures as a façade improvement program.

Aurorans will be able to see the first evidence of what this program can do in a heritage property on the northwest corner of Yonge Street and Kennedy Street West, in a building most recently home to a bridal store, which has since moved to another location.

?The applicant is proposing to demolish and rebuild the two-storey rear addition located on the historic property,? said Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning. ?The proposal would allow for structural and aesthetic enhancements to the historic building [and] enhance the commercial use of the property, thereby enhancing the viability of the historic resource.

?As a principle, the programs of the CIP support the preservation and enhancement of the existing heritage stock and the historic architectural integrity of buildings within the Aurora Promenade CIP area. The CIP encourages the improvements of such properties through building enhancements to promote occupancy, bringing sites into the highest, best and active use.?

Through the program, the property owner in this case will also be able to take advantage of the Heritage Property Tax Relief component of the plan, which allows for a break on the annual property taxes levied at the municipal and educational level to encourage enhancement, restoration and preservation of heritage properties of between 10 per cent and 40 per cent.

?I am really looking forward to seeing how this turns out,? said Councillor Sandra Humfries, an early proponent of the CIP in the previous term of Council. ?I am looking forward to seeing the evolution of that property, where it is going, and the partnerships they have built.?

The Victorian structure is a designated property under the Ontario Heritage Act, and is known as the Reuben J. Kennedy House as well as Elmwood Lodge, from which Elmwood Bridal takes its name.