

## Concerns over new heritage district spark information session



By Brock Weir

Residents in the southeast quadrant of Yonge and Wellington will have the opportunity next week to sound off on plans to convert their neighbourhood into Aurora's second Heritage Conservation District.

A special public information session has been scheduled for Tuesday, March 4 at Town Hall before that evening's General Committee meeting from 5.30 ? 6.30 p.m.

Following the public session, Councillors will then consider recommendations stemming from Aurora's Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) to take the Conservation District plan to the second phase.

The public information session was scheduled by the HAC in response to concerns brought to the committee earlier this month by residents of the area.

Billing themselves largely as Concerned Residents of Aurora Centre, these residents and business owners spoke of what they viewed as ?negative impacts? from a building and property perspective that could come with a Heritage Conservation district and said in communications with The Auroran they would ?not be dissuaded by a heritage consultant with nothing invested? in the neighbourhood.

Among their concerns were potential hits in the property values as well as what individual owners could do with their own lots within the constraints of a conservation district. More effort, they said, should be focused on alleviating downtown parking congestion and finally coming up with a solution to the future of Library Square.

Members of HAC, however, rejected the idea that the plan had come about too quickly and there wasn't enough time for residents to be informed.

The plan has been in discussions for over 10 years, argued HAC member Irina Kelly, who sits on a subcommittee steering the district plans.

?I appreciate some people are new to the area, but I think as a citizen you are responsible for reading the paper and [being] responsible for reading the Town's website,? said Ms. Kelly. ?The argument we're rushing is offensive to those of us who have worked so hard to retain the heritage of our community, to bring the Farmers' Market to the Centre of Town, and to raise awareness of heritage in our community.?

The committee brought their message to the Aurora Farmers' Market on Saturday, setting up a booth in the downstairs gallery. Staffed by Committee members, as well as Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, the group said they had a good turnout of interested citizens and positive feedback overall.

?A lot of people were aware of the study because they have been receiving our door hangers and newsletters that we have been putting out over the last few months and they have had some questions with regards to what the study is about, the areas effected, and how a designated district might affect their property,? said Mr. Ramunno.

According to Mr. Ramunno, the Tuesday session will provide the opportunity to answer any questions people might still have before Councillors potentially green light proceeding with Phase 2 of the project, which would enshrine the policies contained in the overall district plan. There will also be an opportunity for residents to delegate to Committee with their concerns.

?Some people will want to raise concerns that they have for Council, and our message here is there is going to be additional public consultation as well,? says Mr. Ramunno.