

Council should take another look at buying historic property: Abel

By Brock Weir

Securing properties in Aurora's Downtown Core will be an integral component in revitalizing the business area, according to John Abel.

Councillor Abel will put forward a notice of motion at next week's Council meeting calling on the Town to take a second look at purchasing two historic properties located on Yonge Street, two of three components that were brought forward to Council in the last term in the Hillary-McIntyre Park proposal.

In his motion, Councillor Abel calls on Council to direct staff to negotiate a purchase price of Horton Place, which is currently on the market, "in combination" with Readman House immediately to its north, currently owned by realtor Bruce Spragg, with a report back to Council.

This is a very different approach to the park proposal, Councillor Abel tells *The Auroran*, in that by purchasing "key properties in bulk maximizes the development opportunities for the purposes of revitalization."

"Before Council [last year] was the full concept of developing the land into a park and it required an investment from the Town," says Councillor Abel. "What I am requesting is a look at securing the properties in our Downtown Core and then to be able to put in a revitalization program where we would attract developers, people who would build affordable housing and [provide] intensification along our Yonge Street corridor, as per our promenade plan.

"We would rent the properties out so we would cover a tax that would be coming from the two properties. What we're doing is purchasing the land and going to work with a developer to optimize exactly what we would like in a development in the Downtown Core. We would like to see some affordable housing, maybe some park pathways, a combination of infill as well as green space."

Other properties along Yonge Street could come up for sale in the future, and that is something of which the Town should be "cognizant."

"What I want to do is let developers know the Town is willing to work with them in moving applications forward with a common goal to enhance the community," he notes.

Looking ahead to next week's Council meeting, Councillor Abel says he hopes his colleagues do not confuse what he is trying to do with any residual thoughts from the Hillary-McIntyre Proposal, which Town Staff deemed unfeasible from a municipal perspective. These are two very different issues, he says.

"Acquiring land is a role that we can play because we can sell it back," he says. "It is a revolving investment. We purchase the land, we attract a developer to work with us, perhaps organizations, and then we get back our money because they will purchase the land. Then we will have a role to play in how that development should look."