

Gallo's 10 Point Plan includes housing, transit



(Gallo released his 10-Point Plan before family, friends and supporters at Joia Restaurant on Wednesday night. Auroran photo by Brock Weir)

By Brock Weir

Aurora's two-man mayoral race began to take further shape this week, with the release of candidate John Gallo's 10 Point Plan.

Dubbed "Imagine Aurora 2030", the remainder of the plan was announced Wednesday.

In addition to previously announced goals of establishing a "Citizen's Advisory Task Force" to engage citizens, an effort to attract an "Aurora Convention Centre Hotel" to Town, and a plan for Downtown Revitalization through the Promenade Study, the remaining seven planks of Mr. Gallo's platform focuses on housing, transportation, communication and further engagement.

Kicking this off is a goal to develop a plan for "more appropriate" housing to meet the demands of Aurorans young and old. Key to this, he says, is "micro-housing" to provide affordable options for younger and low-income residents.

"I see it in the downtown core, primarily, and closest to public transportation," says Mr. Gallo. "I haven't made it so specific to be pigeon-holed to a particular housing form, but everything is on the table. The concept is to figure out a way to facilitate developers to build affordable housing where younger families can live, as well as where the elderly can afford to live."

Great ideas, he says, are coming forward now to allow wood construction for buildings higher than three floors. This could be a solution to finding more opportunities for affordable housing, he says.

Expanding transportation options is an additional platform plank. Dubbed "The Move Aurora" strategy, Mr. Gallo says this is a "prioritized, comprehensive" plan to bring the Town's plans to get people moving, including the Trails Master Plan, together to work in conjunction with the Province to make things better. Coupled with this is a plan to explore further a "Made in Aurora" plan which could see a smaller scale transportation service developed within Town. While transit is currently a Regional mandate, he said he would like to "explore" further independence from York Region Transit to "move people around internally."

This would require further communication at the Regional level, and an additional platform plank is Regional Collaboration, something he says is currently lacking. Aurora needs a more "proactive" voice at the table to advocate for the wider-ranging issues that face Aurora.

"I believe we are undermining the value of Council communication and public communication on very specific things that are affecting Aurora regionally and I think we are doing a very poor job allowing the public and Council [on having input] on conversations that are happening regionally."

Further conversations also need to be had at the local level on getting the value for every tax dollar, he added, noting this also includes getting to know what residents want from their politicians. To this end, an additional platform plank is the creation of a "Citizen's Bill of Rights" so Aurorans understand what they should expect from their elected officials.

"What I found was apathy and the amount of information from the public in knowing what their rights are, and that they can come to the Council chamber and voice their opinions," he said. "They can start ratepayers' groups and they can get their community together to express either the things we are doing really well, or the concerns that we have. I want to be very clear what our role is, what their role is, and it is a little bit muddy right now."

Rounding out the plan are an emphasis on environmental protection, particularly when it comes to the Oak Ridges Moraine, a further "task force" with a view on economic and business interests, and a focus on Aurora's quality of life, including a "Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee", a focus on an indoor tennis facility, and exploring the possibility of attracting the Jazz Festival "or at least components of it" back to Aurora.

THE POINTS:

1. Establish a Citizens Advisory Task Force
2. Lead the charge to bring a new "Aurora Convention Centre Hotel" to our Town
3. Develop a Downtown Revitalization Strategy
4. Develop a plan for more appropriate housing needs to meet the needs of young and old
5. Expand transportation choices: create the Move Aurora Strategy
6. Protect our most valuable asset: Aurora's Environment
7. Get committed to collaborating Regionally
8. Work to improve the local business climate and job growth
9. Develop community services to support local quality of life aspirations
10. Ensure fiscal responsibility and best value for every dollar: Open, inclusive and collaborative mayor that represents the best interests of all taxpayers