

Henderson area residents worried over new LCBO location

Plans to re-locate downtown Aurora's LCBO location from its long-time home at Yonge and Brookland to the Metro plaza at the southwest corner of Yonge and Henderson Drive has left area residents concerned about traffic and displaced business.

The LCBO, which has been off Brookland for decades, is expected to move to the Metro plaza in units currently occupied by a dollar store, a pet food store and a dry cleaners.

The potential move of a high-traffic business like the LCBO south on Yonge Street has led to myriad concerns from neighbours, including the impact the move will have on independently-owned businesses currently in place as well as on making an already busy intersection and street even busier.

Linda Dickins, who has lived in the area for more than 10 years, describes residents' feelings as 'shock and horror' at the prospect of a business like the LCBO moving into a plaza 'embedded in the neighbourhood.'

'The location is not really off Yonge Street like in the Brookland location,' says Ms. Dickins. 'It's turning into a neighbourhood where there's a lot of elderly people and children getting off of school buses, etc., in that location. It is also a matter of the displacement of businesses that have served the community.'

'Another concern is where the driveway is located. It's a busy residential area. The parking lot is already super-busy with just the grocery store and the stores that are there. I don't know how frantic it is going to get with a liquor store.'

These concerns were echoed at last week's General Committee meeting by Councillor Wendy Gaertner who questioned whether there was anything the Town could do to address residents' concerns.

'People are saying all kinds of things about what's going to be going on in that plaza,' she said, asking municipal staff for further clarification in time for this week's Council meeting. 'People are starting to get worried because they look at this as a neighbourhood shopping centre and they're not pleased about an LCBO.'

Mayor Tom Mrakas said that the relocation of a business like the LCBO to the earmarked location is permitted under current zoning and the property owner is allowed to make that happen without permission from the Town.

'The word is sadness,' Councillor Gaertner continued. 'I think it is true that a lot of people walk over and they consider these to be family-centred stores, so I am making that comment on behalf of residents.'

She went on to question whether there has been a traffic study on how an LCBO will impact Henderson, adding, 'I am really surprised when I go over there [now] that it is hard to find a parking spot and I imagine that the LCBO would generate more cars than exist now.'

Parking rates, responded Town Planner Marco Ramunno, are the same for all commercial plazas, regardless of the type of store.

'The parking rate was accommodated when the site plan was originally approved,' he said, adding the zoning permits 'a variety of personal retail uses.'

An LCBO, he confirmed, would have the same parking standards as a dollar store or a restaurant drive-thru.

'I think if that's the way it is that's the way it is,' said Councillor Gaertner, 'but I think an LCBO would generate a lot more traffic, especially on weekends.'

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