

Listed home on Wellington Street might make way for medical offices



(The house in question, as it stands today.)

By Brock Weir

It has served as a residence in Aurora for nearly 140 years, but the recently sold house at 95 Wellington Street East could soon make way for a new medical office.

Council is set to approve removing the property from Aurora's register of buildings deemed of 'cultural heritage value or interest' this week, following a recommendation from the Town's Heritage Advisory Committee.



New owners want to tear down the existing home, and build a new house in a heritage style, inspired by this new salon on Yonge Street.

A new medical office is the vision of Dr. Philip Kritzing, an Aurora resident, who currently operates his York Vein & Laser Clinic out of Newmarket. It is a practice which originated in Aurora, but quickly outgrew its local premises. If his plans for a homecoming are borne to fruition, he plans a new building taking inspiration from its heritage surroundings, inspired by Rocco Picheca Salon on Yonge Street, near Aurora Heights Drive.

'I started my practice in Aurora, moved to Newmarket 12 years ago, and I would like to move back,' said Dr. Kritzing. 'I work out of a small house on Davis Drive and that house is now too small for me. The proposal is to remove the present dwelling and replace it with something that looks more like Rocco's place. I would like to build something as gorgeous as that and respect the Aurora Promenade Plan, as well as the heritage look and feel.'

After putting a conditional offer in on the property, Dr. Kritzing said he walked up and down Wellington Street looking for local architectural elements that would be worth incorporating and imitating into his proposed new development, but his chief inspiration came from that new building on Yonge, having no idea at the time it was actually a completely new structure.

"When I commute to work, I don't go up Yonge Street and when I first saw the building [a little while ago] I didn't realise it was a brand new building," he said. "It looks like it belongs there. They did a marvellous job and I want to do the same."

"[The present building] is pretty small, it is not sitting in quite the right location and the biggest problem is the rooms inside all access each other from each other, having to go through a room to get to another room. Most offices have a central hallway with rooms coming off the side. This building makes it very difficult to work with. The rooms are small, the upstairs is small, the basement is six feet high, damp, musty, and almost unusable."

An additional challenge is the home is subdivided into apartments, with the main floor accessible only from the porch in the back and the second floor apartment only by the main door facing Wellington Street. A new building, he added, would rectify many issues.

"[I want to] remove the old dwelling and put a brand-new, gorgeous dwelling up there so I can move my own medical practice there," he said. "It is currently occupied by residents in the upstairs and downstairs, but it has been sitting there for a long time, undeveloped, and unappreciated. I would like to build something that would elevate the status of the entire street and join together with lawyers, dentists, chiropractors, and finance people on the street already."

While the property in question is listed as being of interest, it is not formally designated heritage. HAC last considered delisting the property in 2012, but they voted against it as there was no concrete vision provided on what would be built on the site.

Heritage Evaluations placed the property in "Group 3", which means it is "moderately significant, worthy of documentation, and preservation" but if a building was to be demolished, photographic records, measured drawings and the salvaging of architectural elements "may be required."

"It was not found to warrant significant cultural heritage value because of the evaluation and the owners provided a site visit with members of HAC to determine availability of items related to the salvage program," said Vanessa Hicks, Manager of Heritage Planning for the Town of Aurora.

The recommendation passed HAC this month, with the main concern centering on traffic on Wellington Street.

"We have horrendous traffic issues on that block," said Erina Kelly, who tendered her resignation as a member of HAC earlier this month, noting a business such as this would need access for people turning left and right.