

Questions still remain over affordability, future opportunities in Community Permit Plan

Aurora's proposed Community Permit Plan System (CPPS), which will help guide intensification in the historic downtown core, received tentative support from Council last week but questions remain ahead of potential ratification on January 27.

Among the questions raised at last week's Committee of the Whole meeting was whether increasing housing stock in the Yonge and Wellington corridor would result in a greater number of affordable housing units in Aurora.

Questions on affordable housing were raised by Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner and Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo. In response to whether or not the CPPS would encourage affordable housing units, Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, said intensification will result in a ?range of unit sizes.?

?I can't give you a price point now because, as we know, prices fluctuate, but based on if some of these buildings were to be built over the next few years, some of the smaller units within the range could likely meet our affordability threshold [set by the] CMHA,? he said. ?Right now, at today's rate, that would be somewhere around \$550,000 for our market unit and rental would be, I believe, about \$2,000 per month. I think this would go a long way in providing some more available units in a great location that could?get close to our affordability targets.?

Councillor Gaertner stated it was ?certainly one of the intentions to have affordable housing here? in an area that is well-served by transit.

?I know that the Region and the Province would like us very much to make use of the Viva and GO systems which are in this area, so it would be great for people who don't have a car, and I think that is part of the intent of this, to use our transit.?

In order to achieve a CPPS goal of making the area more pedestrian-friendly, the Councillor went on to suggest that Aurora needs to be stricter about the amount of truck traffic in the area and emphasize the original intent of Industrial Parkway to serve as a bypass for trucks around the core.

?We have to do something,? she continued. ?Industrial Parkway was meant to be a downtown pass? there are certain things we don't want in this area, and I don't know how we would encourage that, but we should encourage that because we don't want fast traffic or trucks in this downtown area if we're envisioning it as we are ? as a more pedestrian kind of area.?

That, said Ramunno, would be part of the urban design study component of the CPPS.

?A component of that study is also dealing with the Yonge Street traffic study and some options that we'll bring forward to Council with respect to Yonge Street in its current condition with respect to traffic and on-street parking,? he said. ?That's a separate study that we're working on and we'll have news to report to Council on that this coming year.?

Councillor Gaertner, however, was clear in what she wanted to see come back.

?We've never really signed it as an instruction to trucks in particular to take that bypass,? she contended. ?I think to really accomplish what we're trying to accomplish, we should make sure that that Industrial Parkway route is fully used.?

The Councillor also sought assurances that the CPPS had some flexibility in its guideline areas if future redevelopment and intensification opportunities crop up elsewhere, particularly the Bacon Basketware site on Wellington Street, just west of Temperance.

This site, when it was first built as the Fleury Foundry, was the cradle of some of the community's best-known industries and has

long been considered for its heritage buildings, with some heritage advocates likening it to a local opportunity to create something similar to Toronto's Distillery District.

?Are we going to have a plan for that in advance?? Councillor Gaertner asked. ?At some point, I think the property will be for sale. That isn't to be in conjunction [with the CPPS] but will we be ready when that happens??

The short answer, according to Heritage Planner Adam Robb, was yes.

?We recognize that the plan before us today does have that defined boundary, but based on the comments that were received from the public meeting, and I believe by Council as well, we want to have a certain level of flexibility where if there are these connected parcels that could benefit from being brought into the CPPS boundary based on adjacency or proximity, there is an open opportunity to allow them to be part of the CPPS when the time comes and when they're feeling development pressures. So, there is synchronization between this plan that we have and then the neighbouring parcel in terms of their development capacity and framework.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter