

Town could purchase downtown Yonge Street block

By Brock Weir

A commercial block on Yonge Street at the southeast corner of Mosley Street could soon come under the ownership of the Town of Aurora following an upcoming Council meeting on January 26.

Currently home to commercial and office space now occupied by, among others, Yellow Orange Spa, the restaurant Annalisa, an art gallery and several medical offices, the two buildings immediately north of the Aurora Public Library could be purchased with the passage of a new bylaw that evening.

Public notices on the potential acquisition give little away on what the Town actually plans to do with the properties, should the bylaw pass, other than use the properties for "municipal purposes," but the buildings on the corner in question came into sharper focus last month as consultants drafted a proposed plan for a "cultural precinct" in the area.

"All I can really say is the matter will be in front of Council with respect to the potential acquisition of the properties and we will be receiving Council direction on January 26," says Anthony Ierullo, Manager of Long Range and Strategic Planning at the Town of Aurora. "In terms of specific purposes, I don't really have much to say in that regard. The Cultural Precinct certainly does have some thoughts around that, but I can't necessarily say this is a direct result of that or not. It is still a potential acquisition."

FOTENN Consulting, the company retained by the Town to develop the Cultural Precinct Plan, referred questions to Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Parks and Recreation, but calls to Mr. Downey had not been returned at press time.

Consultants Sarah Millar and Michael Stott, however, presented the bones of their respective vision for this corner at Council last month. In their presentation, they proposed razing the two existing buildings in favour of a mixed use building that would include retail on the ground floor and condominiums above.

"I understand the property is for sale," said Ms. Millar at the time. "Part of this process was to understand what the development potential on that site was. Over the last month, we took it to the public and we asked what they wanted to see there. A lot of what we heard was they wanted to see redevelopment. They liked brick facades, they liked the idea of a mixed-use development with strong connections to the existing design context."

Following the presentation in December, they said ongoing talks with area landowners and developers would continue through to Council tackling the Cultural Precinct Draft Plan in greater detail this month.

"Prior to implementation, we have some additional consultation that we have found, through the process, is going to be really valuable to making sure we ground truth this concept and the community continues to be a part of this process," said Ms. Millar, noting the next step was hosting a second forum for the building industry.