

## Town Park parking continues to rankle residents, Council

**By Brock Weir**

Recent parking restrictions around Town Park, both during the day and overnight, were meant to address the concerns of residents, but complaints continue to roll in.

Programs to address parking shortages in the area created by GO commuters has resulted in a flurry of emails to Council members and staff alike looking for answers.

Brought up at by Councillor Michael Thompson, an update was requested on what actions are being carried out to address the issues of nearby residents who are unable to park at Town Park.

‘We have received numerous comments and enquiries and some complaints,’ said Techa van Leeuwen, Aurora's Director of Bylaw Services. ‘We are monitoring the streets around Town Park to identify any impacts on those residential streets where parking may be permitted throughout the day.’

A new parking permit system and dedicated parking spots were introduced this past winter in the hopes of alleviating ongoing traffic concerns in the area. Measures included time limits for on-street parking during certain hours of the day.

‘We have 15 available permits at Town Park and 14 permits have been issued to residential property owners to park at Town Park overnight,’ said Ms. van Leeuwen last week. ‘Those 14 individuals were here on the first day those permits were available and were quite satisfied with the program.’

‘We have heard a number of different things from stakeholders. We have been issuing warnings for a period of one month and we have distributed over 200 door knockers to residential properties. All of those communications invited people to an online survey [which] closes April 20. We have had numerous responses to those surveys and staff will be reporting back on all those things in May and providing Council with information and the outcomes of the implementation of the parking permit program, as well as some options for consideration.’

These parking problems could become particularly pressing in the next few weeks as new homeowners begin moving into Wells Street Schoolhouse Lofts, according to Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

Councillor Gaertner once again reiterated her concerns around the Council table last week that three parking spots within the loft property designated for guest parking is just not going to cut it.

Council is set to formally approve the condominium plan for the 34 unit building, the former Wells Street Public School, this week.

‘I am going to be very glad to see this completed and bringing people into the Cultural Precinct area,’ said Councillor Gaertner. ‘It has been a continuing concern of mine that we only have three [spots] for visitor parking for all these condominium units and I think what is going to happen is when they have visitors to these units they are going to be parking at Town Park. We already have issues there.’

According to Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, however, there is not any way at this point to secure more than three visitor spots. The 2012 site plan was reviewed to include sufficient parking spaces, he noted, and based on the traffic study submitted, his department feels that there is sufficient parking on site.

‘I believe there is going to be a concern for this Council in the future,’ said Councillor Gaertner.

But a simple solution might be available if it does become a concern, noted Councillor Thompson, in the form of a permit system

being put in place where drivers could secure permits online as needed through their smart phones.

?The program we have approval for to proceed?with a parking management solution is on hold pending a report back to Council on the possible overnight parking suspension pilot program,? added Ms. van Leeuwen. ?Timing [for this report and full occupancy in the lofts] is probably around the same time. They are looking for occupancy sometime, I would say, within the next six to eight weeks. Having said that, if need be, we could implement a manual parking permit system if required.?