

Clean-up eyed as plans solidify for townhouse developments at Collis

By Brock Weir

Plans could progress within months to raze Collis Leather for a new townhome development.

According to Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, formal applications for the redevelopment are expected to be filed by the site's new owners, the Kerbel Group, in the late spring or early summer.

"The Kerbel Group have been involved in a number of redevelopment sites such as the Tannery," said Mr. Ramunno. "Their intention is to clean up the site and redevelop it for residential purposes. They haven't submitted a formal application yet to the municipality [but] I have met with them on a number of occasions and they are proceeding to do all of their background information."

Mr. Ramunno spoke at a public meeting held last week to discuss Aurora's Community Improvement Plan. He was responding to Aurora resident Angela Daoust, a resident of Tyler Street, neighbouring on the former leather processing site sold last year by Maple Leaf Foods more than two decades after leather production ceased.

In the intervening years, the building had been used by a number of interests, including commercial office and studio space before the last tenants were evicted last summer ahead of Maple Leaf's sale.

Residents in the area have had ongoing concerns regarding potential contamination and toxic waste on the site, particularly such chemicals as chromium, and how it would affect the surrounding environment if disturbed by redevelopment.

"I am very interested in the Downtown Core plan," said Ms. Daoust on the Community Improvement Plan. "I was on a subcommittee a number of years ago looking at the revitalization of the commercial area of Yonge Street, we made a lot of suggestions, and none have really been implemented. I am glad to see that the ball is rolling now."

She was, however, concerned that the ball did not roll too far or too fast into the Tyler Street neighbourhood.

"Our main concerns as residents is with regards to the tannery property," she continued. "Now that the property has been sold and plans have been developed, it seems that the focus is on intensification. I would like to know if all the issues of the site are going to be cleaned up for multi-residential use."

From Mr. Ramunno's perspective, the onus for the cleanup will be on the new owners and they have given him every indication that they will follow suit.

"They are going to deal with the many Ministry of Environment requirements to clean up the site, to undertake the environmental assessment and their intent at this point is to develop it eventually for a townhome development. That decision hasn't been made, but they are doing their initial background work to undertake the environmental assessment work.

"They will need to present an application to Council and there will be a need for a formal public hearing. Prior to that happening, they have committed to public outreach to the community in advance of a formal application submitted sometime in the spring or summer of this year."

The plan proposes a number of assistance programs to help property owners do the necessarily cleanup in order to redevelop their sites.