

Further talks on Canadian Tire plan could send wrong signal to Province: Mayor

When plans to transform the former Canadian Tire property in Aurora's south end were sent back to another Public Planning meeting for review, doing so was approved by a near-majority of Council.

Voting against taking the plan to a further Public Planning meeting were Mayor Tom Mrakas and Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim.

Speaking on the merits of the proposal, Mayor Mrakas said he would prefer the plans to be sent directly to a future General Committee meeting lest it send the wrong signal to the Provincial government.

Targeted intensification in transit accessible areas that have the greatest impact that Aurora can make in moving toward a more sustainable future by fostering mixed use growth, the Aurora Promenade, said Mayor Mrakas. The proposal conforms directly with the Town's Official Plan and sections 11.6 and 11.7 by promoting the transformation of a primarily automobile-oriented commercial retail plaza into a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use area. Further, the design features a high-quality built form in line with the Aurora Promenade Urban design strategy and in particular the overarching vision of transforming from commercial strip to mixed use promenades, and strengthens the entryway function from south Yonge Street.

Asking aloud whether Council can work on the density, he said they could but as long as it was in conformity with the Town's Official Plan (OP).

The current site is a former large retail site with a large expanse of concrete and asphalt parking lot. In addition to providing housing options that meet our OP, the application also provides an opportunity to provide over 2,800 square metres of new park space. We are gaining green space and an urban park and in turn removing a massive heat island. Can we ask for more? Absolutely. With respect to the need for more affordable housing, the mix of housing proposed in the housing rental and owned must meet the requirements of our OP, which states that a minimum of 25 per cent of all new residential development must meet the definition of affordable housing. Can we add provisions to better ensure the provision of much-needed affordable housing? Absolutely.

This is a prime opportunity to demonstrate to the province that when presented with an application for much needed housing, including rentals, with appropriate intensification, that is in line with our OP, our vision for our community, and we will make the responsible decision to uphold that vision but make sure it is done properly as we expect and that is why I believe that we can go to a GC meeting, continue to work with the applicant, to find the necessary adjustments that our residents are asking for, that the Council colleagues are asking for, and we can continue through the process and let the Province know that we are responsible, we can make decisions and we can make planning decisions so they don't take it away.

They are taking away planning from our communities and here's a prime example they will use against any Council that you're not looking to move forward in the process. We all agree there are some shortfalls and we have to work on that, but we have to continue through the process as we continue to work through those details so we can have the best possible outcome for our community.

By Brock Weir
Editor
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter