

Will King be home to a new hospital?

By Mark PavilonsEditor

King Township has rolled out the welcome mat to the future expansion of Southlake Regional Health Centre. Mayor Steve Pellegrini presented a motion at the final meeting for the 2018-2022 council, supporting a new facility on the border with Newmarket. Along with King's endorsement, councillors also approved the motion which calls for the Province to approve a new hospital on the lands and fast-track the approval process. The motion further directs staff to work with the landowner, Province and Southlake Regional Health Centre to expedite development approvals for these lands, and directs the clerk to forward a copy of this resolution to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Health, and to the President and CEO of Southlake Regional Health Centre. "It is important that we continue to protect the health care of those who live in or near King and help further the vision for expansion of the Southlake Regional Health Centre. King Council unanimously requests that the new Southlake Regional Health Centre is constructed, and that its approval is fast-tracked to ensure this happens," said Mayor Steve Pellegrini. The mayor explained that he's been working with the Southlake board behind the scenes for some time, as they've outgrown their current hospital. They're looking at a similar, multi-hospital system used by Mackenzie Health. In the search for nearby land, a perfect parcel presented itself at the northwest corner of Davis Drive (Highway 9) and Bathurst. In a strange twist of fate, planning changes presented by the Province in Bill 23 took this parcel out of the greenbelt, making it prime for development. The 500-plus-acre parcel is currently owned by the Rice Group, a vertically integrated retail, industrial, and infrastructure developer with a proven track record of executing on its project strategies. They currently manage a portfolio in excess of 1,000 acres primarily in the Greater Toronto Area. Mayor Pellegrini said this parcel is ideal in many ways, not the least of which is its proximity to transit and the existing hospital. "It also has access to servicing and everything is lining up." The mayor is optimistic the powers that be can get a hospital for King. "You can't find a better location," he said. "We're willing hosts, let's get going!" Danae Theakston, communications strategist for Southlake, noted the communities served by Southlake in northern York Region and southern Simcoe County are among the fastest growing and aging in the province. With no significant acute care capital expansion in 20 years, Southlake has become one of the most overcrowded hospitals in Ontario. In April 2022, Southlake received a \$5-million planning grant from the provincial government to support our planning for a new state-of-the-art hospital and the redevelopment of our existing Davis Drive campus. This will transform Southlake into a leading two-site hospital system. "Southlake is grateful to have the support of the communities we serve. We sincerely appreciate the support of the council of King Township and the opportunities this brings. We are currently embarking on our site selection process to identify the preferred site and should be in a position to announce it as soon as possible. To learn more about why a new Southlake is so critically important for the communities of northern York Region and southern Simcoe County, please visit anewsouthlake.ca.