

Changing habits necessary to improve village cores

By Mark Pavilons

Improving our village cores is as much about a concerted effort as it is about changing commuter habits.

Two of King's hamlets ? King City and Nobleton ? are along major regional road corridors, prime commuter routes.

And that presents a challenge when it comes to making these cores more pedestrian friendly and walkable.

The King City Business and Community Association is hoping that off-peak parking in King City will transform the core into a people-friendly place to shop.

Their campaign is gathering support from businesses and residents with the goal of encouraging off-peak hours on-street parking and increased police enforcement of vehicles speeding on King Road.

The KCBCA will work collaboratively with King Township and York Region on this campaign to achieve their objectives of ?a vibrant, prosperous, livable and walkable place!?

Most drivers may not realize that parking is permitted on King Road.

Anna Raeli, KCBCA president, said currently the area is a thoroughfare for commuters and truck traffic. Residents have to be made aware of options and various solutions have to be explored to make it a safe and people-friendly core.

?We need to take ownership of our village not unlike what other municipalities are doing to create a sense of pride in their community. The businesses need it and so do our current and future customers,??Raeli observed.

She said they've already seen how parking on King Road has slowed down traffic. The group has received considerable positive feedback. Drivers need to adhere to the 50-km/h speed limit in the core.

More visible signage will clearly inform commuters that parking is permitted.

To make it all work, the KCBCA will inform businesses and citizens about free three hour off-peak hour on-street parking on King Road and Keele Street.

With that comes more visible parking signs. They suggest replacing the current signs on posts with larger ones coloured green with permitted times. These can be posted on hydro meters, lanterns or bicycle racks.

The group also recommends that stall markings or white painted curbs point to on-street parking.

They would also suggest that York Regional?Police enforce speed limits on King Road.

Council has been requesting relief in the core since 2007 when a motion was passed requesting that the Region build a bypass for King City. This was subsequently requested again by the current council, according to Councillor Cleve Mortelliti.

As an interim measure, council requested the Region's approval for off-peak parking on King Road in both King City and Nobleton, and this was granted, however, even though parking is permitted, few people know about it as the Region has not posted sufficient signage.

Mortelliti said both he and Councillor Schaefer, at the recent Transportation Master Plan public information session, requested that the Region provide line painting for parking stalls, or at least allow King to paint the stalls. He stressed this is a regional road and King is awaiting their approval to do this.

Mortelliti pointed out it's a catch-22 ??parking on King is great for pedestrians but creates headaches for drivers.

But it's a move that both he and Nobleton Councillor Peter Grandilli supported, making the formal request to York Region.

The lack of parking within our commercial cores, as well as vehicle speed, congestion and truck traffic were all weaknesses and threats that resonated through King's Community Improvement Plan consultation process, according to Jamie Smyth, King's economic development officer.

Council just recently adopted its CIP and accompanying Municipal Leadership Strategies.

It noted both Keele and King Road, two major thoroughfares, present a barrier in creating a pedestrian-oriented community. A priority for streetscape improvements in?King City in particular is demarcation of on-street parking.

We have to find ways to alleviate and calm traffic, Smyth stressed.

Nobleton, too, is a community that is largely automobile-oriented and the challenge is to create a sidewalk network, improved crossings and on-street parking spots.