

Bid for Nobleton plaza raises concerns

By Angela Gismondi

Residents are concerned a new commercial plaza proposed for Nobleton will not fit in with the quaint character of the community. The building, proposed to be located at the south west corner of Highway 27 and MacTaggart Drive in Nobleton, was the subject of a public meeting held at the Township of King Municipal Offices Monday.

The applicant, Condor Properties, submitted a site plan development application to facilitate the construction of the three-storey, 40,000-square-foot commercial plaza, explained Stephen Kitchen, director of planning for the Township of King at the meeting. A zoning bylaw amendment application to rezone the property from transitional to commercial shopping centre - exception was also submitted. The property is designated as a commercial area in the Nobleton Community Plan which allows for retail stores, personal service shops, banks and financial institutions, restaurants and business, professional and medical offices. The Commercial Shopping Centre - Exception zoning would allow for more commercial uses on the lands.

The proposed commercial uses identified by the applicant include adult or children's learning centre, banks with drive-through facilities, day spas, day nurseries, pharmacies or drug marts, private schools, restaurants with drive-through facilities, artist or photographer studios, professional offices, daycares, dry cleaning establishments, printing establishments and veterinary clinics. The applicant is proposing to have commercial and retail uses on the ground floor, including a unit with a drive-thru facility at the south end of the building. Although the building has been designed to be three storeys at the corner of Highway 27 and MacTaggart Drive, it steps down to two storeys as it moves to the west and south. The second floor is intended for professional and medical offices and third floor will house mechanical equipment and one office.

The application also proposes underground and above-ground parking areas. Access to the site is proposed via MacTaggart and a right-out exit is proposed at the south end of the site onto Highway 27 from the proposed drive-thru.

"We have reviewed the staff recommendations and will continue to work with staff processing this application and address with you any issues that arise," said Mark Yarrington of KLM Planning partners, representing the applicant.

He explained that traffic impact studies have been done and all the intersections in the area will function adequately with no large impact on current traffic. As for parking, the developer is proposing 38 spaces at grade and 59 spaces below grade in an underground parking garage. They are also seeking front and side yard setbacks to accommodate constructing the building at the edge of the road, as encouraged in the Township's planning documents. He also suggested that loading space will not be required as most of the units are small and do not lend themselves to business who would require a lot of loading space.

In terms of design styles, the applicant is considering other buildings in King such as the new walk-in clinic on Highway 27 or Hogan's Inn in King City. Councillors and residents were not impressed with the proposed designs and drawings shown during the presentation.

"This is looking more 'Vaughan-ish' than 'King-ish,'" said Mayor Steve Pellegrini, adding the No Frills plaza went through quite a bit to meet the Township's design guidelines requirements. "We held very firm on our design guidelines. We want to create a quaint looking community and we have a small chance to do that."

He suggested the building look more like the Hambly House in Nobleton.

"Sometimes there is a challenge in replicating something that is very ornate," responded David Choy, the architect for the project. Former Nobleton councillor Peter Grandilli attended the public meeting. He asked if the applicant has seen a building like the one he is proposing in Nobleton.

"I have not seen that and the people of Nobleton, I don't think they will like it," said Grandilli, adding the community has not been adequately informed of the project. "Up until a few minutes ago, I don't think anyone knew what was going to happen on this corner. How many residents were given notice about this development? I don't see that many people here tonight to talk about it. I am not in favour of this building and I think they should go back to the drawing board and come up with something completely different." He was also concerned about the increased traffic and suggested a second lane to accommodate it.

"I want to see the corner of Highway 27 and MacTaggart Drive fully urbanized with sidewalks, gutters, no ditches and no overhanging wires. They have to go underground," Grandilli stated.

Patty Fleetwood of the Nobleton Village Association said the proposed design of the building does not belong in Nobleton.

"The building is coyote ugly," Fleetwood said, adding it should look more like the Fandor building. "It does not fit in Nobleton. It looks like Langstaff in Maple or Woodbridge and we don't live in either. Let's make this look country because it's not Woodbridge."

She was also concerned about the proposed uses, pointing out that Nobleton already has several pharmacies, medical offices,

learning centres, day cares, hair salons and restaurants.

'My biggest concern is that you're going to hurt the businesses we have by creating this,' said Fleetwood.

'If we build this, is it going to be full ? are you going to have tenants right away or is it going to be empty and you're going to have to fill it,' said Fleetwood. 'The whole town is going to look like it's for lease. Just looking ahead, maybe this time we can do it so that they actually have tenants.'

Doug McNair spoke on behalf of his neighbours who are going to be backing on to the proposed development. A major concern is disruptions from the construction and the impact of increased traffic.

'This is a horror show ? it has a major impact for the people living directly behind it,' he said.

Maurizio Longo also said he didn't think the building was 'suitable' for the community. He too, was concerned about the traffic, especially with St. Mary's Church across the street.

'Traffic on MacTaggart in combination with the church ? it will become a nightmare,' said Longo. 'It's tight now ? The amount of traffic it could bring in could alter the feel of the neighbourhood and the quaintness of the neighbourhood.'

'At the end of the day, it is a commercial lot and I appreciate that,' he said, adding that the developer should take another 'kick at the can' on a few aspects of the design. 'The community would like to have more businesses but something more attuned to all the residents in the area.'

Local councillor David Boyd shared the residents' concerns about traffic. He asked the developer if they have discussed the proposal and the potential impacts on Highway 27 with the Region of York. Yarrington responded there have been preliminary talks but no formal comments yet.

Boyd is also concerned about security, especially in the underground parking lot, and the potential for young people loitering there after hours. Yarrington said that nobody will be able to get into the parking lot after hours but there will be a panic bar in case someone needs to exit the space. Also, access to the underground garage is activated by a car entering the space and the only pedestrians will be the ones walking to and from their cars.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer told the developer she would like to see a sustainable building with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) principles.

'Given that this building is going to be built at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, it should be built to LEED standards,' said Schaefer adding this is a premier site.

The applications were received and referred back to staff for further review.