

Commercial area being planned for SouthFields

By Bill Rea

Commercial development and the addition of a Catholic school are becoming main talking points in the ongoing development of SouthFields Village.

There were updates on what's in the works last week at the regular quarterly meeting of the SouthFields Village Residents' Group. Kenneth Bokor, one of the founders of the group, said development is progressing to its full anticipated build-out, which he said would be about 2,900 homes. They are currently at about 1,100, and he said it's anticipated it will be at 1,200 by the end of June. A Catholic School is in the works, but Trustee Frank Di Cosola, local representative on the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, said there's still a planning process to go through. He said it will have to be approved in the Board's Capital Spending Forecasts, then the Ministry of Education will have to approve. It's still too early in the process to have even given the school a name.

Di Cosola said the new facility could be open for the 2017-18 school year.

He added the plan is the new facility will draw students from St. Cornelius Elementary School in Caledon East and St. Rita Elementary School in north Brampton. Di Cosola said about 200 students would be expected from St. Rita and roughly 75 from St. Cornelius. About 400 students is what will be needed to get the go ahead for the new school, and Di Cosola said the enrolment would probably get to 700 eventually.

He added there are no plans for a Catholic secondary school in the area.

Rob Hughes, senior development planner with the Town of Caledon, offered some updates on the development in the area, including matters involving three parcels of land in the SouthFields area that Town council dealt with earlier in the month. One of the items dealt with the removal of a holding provision to allow mixed use commercial and residential development. The lands include properties on both the north and south side of Dougall Avenue, west of Kennedy Road, and form the majority of lands intended to be developed for mixed use commercial and residential uses within the village centre. Surrounding development includes single and semi-detached dwellings, townhouses dwellings, and future parkland (Village Blue to the west and the proposed community centre to the east).

The proposals include commercial development on Dougall Avenue, west of Kennedy Road. The intention, Hughes said, is to create a walkable community, complete with landscaping, as opposed to a traditional commercial area.

"That is not a strip mall," Bokor observed, adding it will be a village-type streetscape. There will be street access to the shops, as well as entrances serving the parking areas to the rear.

Hughes observed the challenge will be ensuring they get the type of look and feel that they're seeking.

"It's a challenge in working with developers," he said.

Bokor said they are anxious to avoid any anxieties associated with the planned developments. There are no plans to put in big-box stores in the area, as any of those will be going west of Highway 10. He also said a Shoppers Drug Mart is being considered, but it will be designed to fit in with the village feel.

There have been calls for a community centre for the village, and one woman brought that up at the meeting. Bokor told her it is being planned, but realistically, it's going to be at least two years before shovels are in the ground. He added there will be public consultation on what sort of amenities people will want in the community centre. He said that won't likely be until the fall.

Addressing parts of the proposed commercial area, Bokor was unable to say if they would be independent shops. He said there are no set rules governing that, adding it will depend on the market. Hughes added the Town is not in a position to regulate who leases a store, although there is some control over the range of permitted uses in an area.

He also said the plan is to have street parking on both Dougall and Kennedy, although that could change as traffic patterns change. Addressing the Village Blue plans, Hughes said it will be across the street from the commercial area, and will include amenities like gazebos and space for a farmers' market.