

Little public support for shopping area near Valleywood

By Bill Rea

The developers are enthused at the prospect of a large retail mall in the area of Hurontario Street and Highway 410 near Valleywood, but they're having trouble selling local residents on the idea.

Proponents told a public Information meeting on the proposal, held last Wednesday in Caledon, that it will be an attractive development that fits in well with the community. Several residents agreed it could be attractive.

"The only problem I've got with it is it won't work," one Brampton man observed.

Caledon JV Partnership Ltd. is interested in developing a new retail and commercial centre in the area with a gross floor area of up to 100,000 square feet.

Brandon Ward, senior development planner for the Town, pointed out the lands in question straddle the border between Brampton and Caledon, although most of the property is in Caledon.

The roughly 8.87 acres contains two buildings that used to be part of an auctioneering operation, as well as a vacant house.

The plan is to have a large supermarket as the anchor store for the development, with other operations like a drug store, coffee shop, etc. being included. He said the exact mix of uses has yet to be determined. The current idea has the supermarket at the east end of the property.

The proposed development on this site has a history, Ward said. There was an application in 2008, with a public information meeting in 2009, but the ownership subsequently changed. A site plan application was submitted in April, and Brampton held its public information meeting a couple of weeks ago.

Many of the issues that were raised dealt with access to the site. There will be one off the east side of Hurontario Street, but Ward said only right turns will be allowed there. The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has decided that. The other access will be to the south, off Highwood Road, at the intersection with Hillpath Crescent.

Glenn Scheels of GSP Group told the meeting the property is relatively flat, with no significant natural features. He also said the plan is to have a 50,000 square-foot supermarket with smaller stores. The site will be landscaped, and he promised it will be a "quality development."

The proposal has been the subject of a number of studies. Scheels said the urban designers have come up with a proposal that would be appropriate for the neighbourhood. He also said the landscaping and building plans would be peer reviewed.

A noise study was carried out, and the plan is to have the truck loading area some distance from homes.

Scheels agreed the Highwood access is a concern for the community. But he added it's a collector road, with the capacity to handle the traffic. He also said they are still hoping to get MTO to approve a full access from Hurontario.

One man at the meeting, who said he has 17 years experience as the manager of a supermarket, wondered if there will be enough business living nearby to make the store viable. He added the volume of traffic needed to make it work couldn't be accommodated.

He also raised safety concerns, pointing out St. Rita Elementary School is nearby.

He said that given what's planned for Hurontario Street, there's no way MTO will allow a full access to the site.

"You're going to have a nightmare," he declared. "It's really just common sense."

He also wondered how they determined there will be no impact on traffic flows. "Are they going to fly in?" he asked.

One woman said the site might cross a municipal border, but the local residents represent a united community opposed to this. There have been 125 families that have signed a petition or letters of opposition, she added.

The woman was also concerned that cars would turn off Mayfield Road and head north on Sumer Valley Drive to get at the site that way, rather than dealing with the traffic lights at Hurontario. That will mean a hazard for children who walk to school, as well as for adults.

She also pointed out there have been plenty of problems and confusion with the interchange of Highways 10 and 410, and she was concerned things would get worse if this goes through.

"The traffic will be ridiculous from this plaza," another woman charged.

"All I can see right now is nothing but trouble," another man added.

There were also comments on the proposed location of the supermarket. One man observed it's too close to homes on Donherb Crescent, and suggested it be moved north, closer to the ramp with Highway 410.

Another Donherb resident said the big store would take away a lot of natural daylight for the homes at sunset, as he agreed it should be moved to the north. He also observed there are walkways planned to connect the site to Donherb, adding that's the way the residents want it.

One Highwood man questioned whether it has the capacity to handle the anticipated traffic.

?It has to be a significant increase,? he said. ?It's a small residential street.?

He also wondered how delivery vehicles are going to get in and out.

One woman pointed out there has been a supermarket and drug store just a couple of blocks away for three years, and residents are happy with that arrangement.

Town planners will be sending a report to council on this matter at a later date.