

The case for a pool

My name is Kenneth Bokor and I am one of the initial residents of Southfields Village.

I wanted to respond to the negative comments the Town has received in their recent decision regarding our community centre. As a founder and past five-year chair of the Southfields Village Residents Group, I have been and remain an active participant within our community in working with the Town, Region, Province, developers and other stakeholders on behalf of area residents. The goal of the Residents Group that I helped to start has and continues to be one of fostering open communications and dialogue to assist in win-win-win solutions for all involved.

The aquatics inclusion for our community centre stems from this type of solution.

The Mayfield West Phase 1 (MWP1) area, which includes Southfields Village and neighbouring Anthem and Valleywood developments along with many rural properties, is now the second largest populated area within the Town of Caledon, only topped by Bolton. Current population of Southfields Village alone is estimated to be more than 10,000. Add in Anthem, Valleywood and the rest of our area and this would add another 6,500 or more residents. This constitutes just about one quarter of the Town's entire population.

This is important to understand, since our area is also very active with community involvement. This means that our residents ? young and old ? get involved and have a say in the way we would like our area to grow and what services are provided. The community centre decision was very much contributed to by our residents and represented at council by Ward 2 Regional Councillor Johanna Downey.

Last year, I led a volunteer resident task force that spent months working with Downey and Town staff in soliciting community centre feedback from area residents through open houses, meetings and on-line surveys. When asked to rank the importance of a list of possible recreational and other amenities, the overwhelming first choice was a pool. The feedback we heard came from all demographics and ages of residents. Understanding the great importance of a life-saving ability, families with younger children wanted a small pool for introductory to advanced learn-to-swim as well as parent-tot programs. Seniors wished for a small pool for non-impact fitness like aqua-fit programs as well as warmer waters for therapeutic aid. Most other residents hoped for a small leisure-style pool to enjoy all year-round and to not have to pay higher user fees in support of close-proximity Brampton facilities. It's been reported that because of the decision to put in a pool, we will lose a gymnasium and walking track ? items that also ranked well in our community responses. This is true. However, in defence of this, we have two existing elementary schools which have gymnasiums available for public use, including meetings, events and programs. Furthermore, we will have two more elementary schools opening within the next two to three years. Additionally, Southfields Village has been designed and built as a walking (and biking) community with kilometers of multiple pathways around ponds and in greenbelts, parks and a downtown commercial core ? the latter within a 15-minute walk from any part of our village. There is ample opportunity for seniors and others to be able to walk. Additionally, what has not been reported is the fact that we will still have a fitness centre, aerobics studio, seniors centre and youth centre, as well as community hub participants like Caledon Public Library, OPP and others, plus community, town and partner-designed programming. To me, this is a win-win-win for all involved.

These ideas that we are getting ?short-changed? and that Mayfield Recreation Complex will be in jeopardy of closing are not true. Today Mayfield's registered programs are 44 per cent supported by Caledon residents, with the remaining ?non-resident? support coming from primarily Brampton. The area across the road from Mayfield Complex in Brampton is being developed at a fast pace with hundreds of homes in development stages and with it a larger population in closer proximity. Additionally, Mayfield Pool will still be the only pool available in our Caledon area to support competitive swim and dive clubs (which provide significant revenues and are looking for even more paid time), as well as continue to provide an ice rink/arena, fitness programming, multipurpose rooms and kids camps, just to name a few other uses.

I would say to those folks who were ?astounded to see councillors vote? for this pool, that you learn all the facts and not just from one source, before making conclusions.

I'd like to add that I respect the opinions and comments from our Mayor, Town councillors and staff, as well as subject matter experts that are employed for their areas of expertise. There are valid points that are made, both in support and non-support of an aquatics amenity for the Southfields Community Centre. However, I think what is important to understand is that a decision was made which actually meets the wants and desires of a supportive community ? and not that of an outside consultant who does not understand Caledon's uniqueness.

Our Town representative took a stand for what her constituents wanted.

Also, the consultant report was heavily based on facts and figures for a pool that generally would not be supportive for any part of

Caledon ? a metric that simply cannot be used for decision making in our Town's case.

In closing, a decision for a leisure pool to be the anchor amenity for our community centre was a sound choice. Not only does it support Provincial Policy Statement and Places to Grow Guidelines for Compact Communities, this centre will also offer multiple programming and house Hub partners to provide additional services. It will attract residents from many areas of Caledon, not just Mayfield West, in its breath of scope and leading LEEDS design. Yes, it will cost more to service than a centre without a pool, and we will probably have more traffic issues to deal with in the village. However, this will be good for all and will be sustainable.

I for one am looking forward to ?getting my feet wet? in our new centre when it opens either late this year or in 2018.

I would welcome any questions or comments you may have and more of an opportunity to provide additional input if need be.

Kenneth Bokor,

Southfields Village

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