

Residents express mixed views on McGibbon redevelopment

By Kathryn Boyle
kboyle@theifp.ca

Halton Hills council has been asking to hear from the community regarding a proposal for the McGibbon Hotel in downtown Georgetown, and on Tuesday night, heard they were.

Seated at the front of Christ the King Secondary School's cafeteria that evening was Halton Hills general committee during the Town's official public meeting regarding the 125-unit, 11-storey condominium proposal by Silvercreek Commercial Builders Inc. In order to build what they have proposed, Silvercreek requires an amendment to the Town's Official Plan and an amendment to the rezoning bylaw to exceed the current maximum height for the area, which is eight storeys.

Given the opportunity to update council on their plans, Silvercreek representatives said they didn't have any changes at the present time. With hands folded in their laps and some scribbling in notepads, they turned the public meeting over to the residents.

Some expressed support of the project, fearing the McGibbon Hotel will crumble and collapse if nothing is done to it, including resident Bill Wilson, who has lived in Georgetown for over 70 years.

I don't want to see the McGibbon Hotel end up like the Station House or the Barber Paper Mill, he said. Those went to the heritage (committee). What's it look like? The Station House is falling apart, it's disgracing the town. And this could happen to the McGibbon Hotel.

Tim Rowley, owner of Mill Street Cheese Market housed beside the McGibbon Hotel, expressed his support for the project and warned residents of the building's state.

Our building was built in the 1800s. It needs so much work. The foundation is

crumbling on it, it requires a new roof put on it, he said. I actually have steel beams underneath the floor, holding the floor up.

Whether it comes down now or later, if later, it's going to come down on its own, he warned.

If the project were to be accepted by general committee and followed through, Rowley expects only good things to come of it.

Having those 100-some-odd apartments upstairs is just going to help retailers. From Monday to Friday, we don't make any money. We make it all on the weekend, he said. There's no people coming into the downtown helping out the stores. But if you have another hundred people upstairs, that would be amazing.

A few more residents came forward to support the project, including Betty Cunningham, who said a few minor changes to the building's aesthetics were needed to better suit the downtown feel.

Not all of the residents who came forward were in support. Several members of Honour the McGibbon's Heritage, a group currently circulating a petition to stop the



Mill Street Cheese Market owner Tim Rowley expressed support for the McGibbon Hotel redevelopment proposal, warning residents of the building's precarious structural state.

Photo by Kathryn Boyle



Patricia Farley, president of Architectural Conservancy of Ontario-Halton Hills

construction, voiced concerns about the height of the building and the tower of glass taking away from the town's heritage.

Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

Halton Hills branch president Patricia Farley voiced her concerns on the project, asking council to keep the heritage of downtown Georgetown in mind. She then stated in Milton, all new developments are required to be compatible with and sympathetic to heritage buildings, and cannot exceed four storeys.

I would respectfully suggest that Halton Hills council undertake a similar (ideas), exploring intensification options that don't require the destruction of four 19th century buildings and the construction of an unsympathetic, glass condo, she said.

Chris Meredith, who has been living in Georgetown for 30 years, brought his concerns forward regarding the traffic in the area, stating Silvercreek did not conduct a recent traffic study for the Maple and Main

St. intersection.

After about an hour of voiced opinions, Ward 3 councillor Moya Johnson, who chaired the general committee meeting, asked executive director of planning John Linhardt for a timeline on when council would receive a report from staff on whether or not to support the project. He explained at the present time, staff did not have a specific date in mind and would have a better idea when peer reviews on the project are completed.

At the end of the meeting, Johnson said council wants residents to come forward with their opinions on the project and has opened up all lines of communication to do so, including phoning the Town office at (905) 873-2601 or email Clerk Suzanne Jones, suzannej@haltonhills.ca

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