

Is Acton seeing a retail resurgence?

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rently we have a lot of clients in Acton and the surrounding area."

In the old Vinyland location a new vegan restaurant is setting up shop.

Two other spaces are currently vacant, including the old submarine shop, as well as the CIBC building.

The bank closed their Acton location and moved their clients to the Georgetown branch on Guelph Street.

"The decision to close any of our banking centres is not taken lightly and we carefully consider all options before making this decision," said Jon Kastikainen, spokesperson for CIBC.

He said that the company is having to make changes to their network, as 80 per cent of CIBC banking is now done outside of banking centres.



Alexandra Heck/Metroland

Five storefronts in a row are vacant in Acton's downtown, as businesses move and close.

It's a turnover that Halton Hills Coun. Mike Albano says is part of the cyclical nature of downtown Acton.

"It's a cyclical thing,"

said Albano. "With the closure of CIBC there's almost five stores that are empty."

He says the town and the BIA are working to de-

velop the downtown, like rebranding Acton, and rolling out a strategic plan for the corridor.

"The town is working closely with the BIA to ad-

dress some of the vacancy concerns," said Albano.

The councillor explained that there's a number of obstacles at play.

"We have a number of landlords living outside of town," he said, adding that there are more local landlords of the retail spaces than in previous years.

With the inception of online shopping and the growth of big box stores on the other side of Acton, Albano says the role of the downtown is changing.

"At one time downtown Acton was full of stores," he said. "We need to find some kind of niche."

With organizations like Helson's coming in, and restaurants like the Clay Oven, Lily Thai and Vietnamese as well as Olympic Greek Souvlaki flourishing, Albano sees a potential for a focus on services in the downtown.

"I think we just need to find the angle," he said.

Nancy Wilkes of Acton Optical sees the potential for the downtown. Eight years ago, she bought the old church at 80 Mill St. and made it into a studio for eyeglasses.

"In all honesty, I haven't seen the change that I know is coming," she said. "There's such potential."

She says that there is a strength in the community, despite it being a bit of a bedroom community, where people commute outside of town for work.

"Owning your own business always has been and will always be far harder than anyone understands," she said. "We need the support of our community to be here."

In her opinion, there are changes on the way for downtown Acton.

"What we have appears to be empty storefronts," she said. "There's a lot happening behind the scenes."

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