

Iovio: Decision time near for development

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

Properly marshaling the forces of business and development could result in Milton's downtown mirroring the growth and popularity of Niagara-On-The-Lake, according to town planning director Mel Iovio.

Speaking to a group of more than 40 downtown retailers and property owners last week, Mr. Iovio said plans for the central core call for

- An extension of the business district from Bronte Road through to Thompson Road;

- People-friendly developments limited to perhaps four stories;

- The creation of landmarks to serve as gateways to the area, and street-oriented buildings rather than strip plazas or self-contained malls.

"We are at a critical juncture," said Mr. Iovio. "We could soon receive 5,000 (homes) of capacity from Peel which could fuel explosive growth of as many as 1,000 units per year."

Retail space

This type of expansion could cause retail space to double between now and the 20 year time frame for development, he said.

"There will be forces that will want to move in other directions with downtown development so we will need public support, a public buy-in to these plans," said Mr. Iovio.

Several downtown merchants used the meeting as an opportunity to push for immediate local improvement projects.

At least one merchant also wanted to see immediate development of lands near the downtown because it would immediately impact businesses in the core.

"I'd like to see the area west of Bronte Street developed first and improved lighting on Main Street," said Steve Bonin, owner of Harris Stationery. He added he was attempting to organize a unified paving job for the large parking lot between Mill Street and Main Street, west of Martin Street.

Limit big box retailers

Peter Haight of the Dorland-Haight Gallery on Main Street said the local fine arts community is working on several projects which could help the downtown. Citing the ski resort Whistler, in British Columbia, he questioned if bylaws could be used to limit the types of retail outlets in the town. He also noted so-called big-box retailers have been banned from the entire state of Vermont.

Mayor Gord Krantz said no such bylaws existed and the legality of proposing them would have to be explored. He said he did not think it was possible in Ontario.

Mr. Iovio said such a bylaw probably would not stand up to an Ontario Municipal Board review.

Milton Councillor Rick Day spoke about his experiences in Oakville making building restoration profitable.

"I do small projects. I can't afford to speculate in vacant lands. I got into heritage by accident," he said. "My goal is to increase rents from properties by creating small additions or renovations of unused space."

He explained small projects usually can be sped through municipal approvals because the changes are only minor and do not require a full-scale planning review.

Former town councillor Brad Clements, a downtown landowner, said phasing in of new retail and office space was important to maintain steady growth.

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MEL IOVIO

Dateline

Dateline is a free listing of coming events only. The column is available to local community groups to assist in promoting their future events. Only charitable or non-profit community groups may use this service. We can only guarantee one issue of publicity closest to the date of the occurrence although more insertions are possible if demand is low.

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Wednesday Feb. 5

Bereaved families of Ontario Halton/Peel hosts a **family support night** at 7:30 p.m. at its offices, 190 Britannia Rd. E., unit 11, in Mississauga. The purpose of the evening is to offer support and understanding to families who have lost a loved one. For more information, call (905) 507-2200.

The Milton Players Theatre Group presents **Fantasy by Appointment**, show only, at the Milton Seniors' Activity Centre, 500 Childs Dr. The performance is at 8 p.m. Tickets cost \$10 per person and are available at Peggy's in

Milton Mall. Stop for a Party downtown and at the seniors' centre. Call 875-0629 to reserve a table.

Halton Region hosts a **Venture Capital and Business Financing Forum** with registration at 8 a.m. and presentations at 8:30 a.m. The cost is \$15. This forum is for companies seeking information on equity between \$250,000 and \$2 million. Various financial industry speakers are scheduled. For more information, call Halton's Business Development Centre at 825-6300.

The Canadian Diabetes • see DATELINE on page 13

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