

Wedding Cake house is setting for new shops

A new shopping centre will make its home on Main Street by next year according to the real estate company which bought the property.

Stephen Moranis, executive vice president at Sadie Moranis Real Estate Ltd. says the Wedding Cake house and surrounding property could accommodate a shopping centre by 1988. The house and land is on Main Street near Hwy 7 and used to belong to local carriage manufacturers, the Speight family.

Moranis stumbled upon the Wedding Cake House and its surrounding properties while looking for a place to set up a residential real estate office in the area. The house sits on an acre of land.

"I was looking for an older home which would have been conducive to a real estate business," Moranis said. "And in dealing with a local agent was shown the Wedding Cake House."

Moranis explained that the key reason behind the purchase was his fascination with the Wedding Cake House, which will house the real estate office. The rest of the property will consist of high profile retail stores.

While originally naive about the historical significance of their purchase, Moranis said the new development will be designed to blend in with the historic home.

The property purchased by Sadie Moranis Real Estate Ltd. includes three townhouses, the former Carriage House Tearoom, a barn and the Wedding Cake House.

"It is our full intention to tastefully develop the property in keeping with the architectural design of the house," Moranis said.

Presently the developers are in preliminary stages of the design of their new shopping center. According to Moranis their architect has been meeting with proper authorities on the feasibility of certain plans.

While Sadie Moranis Real Estate Ltd. is temporarily housed in the carriage house, it will eventually become the sole occupant of the Wedding Cake House, with the former tearoom being demolished to make way for a courtyard leading to the retail shops.

"The previous owner of the property received permission to demolish the tearoom. It hasn't any historical significance and originally was never there," Moranis said. "Highlighting the Wedding Cake House is only feasible if it stands alone."

Moranis explained that he would like to restore the house to its original state, including the veranda which was apparently removed at some point.

"If anyone in Markham has original photos of the house we would like to see them so that we might be able to identify the original materials used, like the roof, and find out how the porch was designed and constructed," Moranis said.

It is Moranis' intention to totally restore the interior and exterior of the Wedding Cake House to its original state, and once operational, allow the public to visit.

While Moranis is optimistic that work will commence next spring, he explained that it will depend on approval of plans by the Town of Markham and the economy.

"This is a unique project. Our shopping area will be geared strictly to high-end retail stores, which we feel there is a demand

for, because there isn't a lot of vacant space on Main Street," Moranis said.

Moranis explained that leases are coming due with the merchants still located on the Speight properties. He said that Sadie Moranis Real Estate Ltd. has offered them the option of relocating in the new center upon completion if they wish, but with rents comparable to Markham Village Lanes at between \$25 and \$30 a square foot they might not be able to afford the boost and would have to relocate temporarily when construction begins anyway.

"We paid \$1.6 million for the property, a stiff price to pay when you look at the redevelopment costs. It'll cost between \$1 million and \$1.5 million to develop the retail property along with the exterior and interior of the Wedding Cake House."



The Wedding Cake house is familiar historic sight on Main Street. It was bought earlier this year by Sadie Moranis Real Estate Ltd. and will be incorporated into a shopping centre development. — art by Karen Rattray

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