

Business park expects to create 2,000 new jobs

Wal-Mart outlet proposed for Hwy. 48 development

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

A development, including a Wal-Mart outlet and a business park, proposed for Hwy. 48 will bring about 2,000 jobs to Whitchurch-Stouffville, a town committee was told last Thursday.

If council gives the go-ahead, the two-part development will be built on the east side of Hwy. 48, south of Ringwood.

"It will mean 900 permanent commercial jobs and approximately 1,000 business park jobs, providing a mix of full-time and part-time opportunities," planning consultant Paul Lowes told the town's economic advisory committee. He was speaking on behalf of developer Geranium Corp.

The 42-acre commercial project will be made up of about 13 stores. In addition to Wal-Mart, the plan includes Canadian Tire, A&P, a restaurant and national retail outlets such as Mark's Work Warehouse.

Geranium Corp. would like to have the power centre's major retail outlets built by the fall of 2005, Mr. Lowes said.

While the two packages of land are zoned industrial, Geranium wants about half rezoned commercial.

Representing the business park segment of the development, Glenn Crosby of Jj Barnicke Ltd. said he has eight bio-technical and medical-technical businesses interested in the park.

Construction of the retail buildings tells other types of business this land is ready for development, Mr. Crosby said. Having the business park adjacent to big box stores is a drawing card, Mr. Crosby said, noting "it's been a good sell and people like Stouffville."

The development will mean \$3.3 million each year in property taxes, of which the town will receive about \$365,000, Mr. Lowes said. York Region will get

\$669,000, while education taxes will amount to \$2.4 million.

The proposal will generate \$9.3 million in development charge revenue and \$567,000 in building permit fees for the town, Mr. Lowes added.

If the town does not provide for the development of more retail, many residents will "choose to shop in other municipalities," consultant Doug Annand told the committee.

"This is an opportunity for a larger share of retail expenditures by Stouffville residents to be retained in the town," he said.

Mayor Sue Sherban has stated she wants the focus for commercial development to be on Main Street. Mr. Annand said the proposed development will not hurt Stouffville's downtown. If this development comes to Hwy. 48, the downtown will still have the potential to thrive, he said.

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If Wal-Mart doesn't come to the Stouffville, it will likely eventually go to commercial lands at Hwy. 48 and Major Mackenzie Drive in Markham, Mr. Annand said. The megaretailer will not come to both municipalities, he added.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce gives the development a favourable review. The town has an opportunity to embrace growth and benefit from it, or risk losing this commercial development to neighboring communities, chamber president and chief executive officer Helene Johnson said.

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