

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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Smaller big box stores slammed

Wal-Mart plaza plan 'disastrous to downtown'

BY ALYSHIA HIGGINS

Although Stouffville may have issues filling downtown buildings with retailers, current business owners certainly didn't have any problem voicing their opinions at a public meeting last week.

"We do have vacancies in the downtown, and we are having problems filling them," said Eric Button, chairperson of the Business Improvement Area.

Brent Clarkson of MHBC Planning and Doug Annand of urbanMetrics made a presentation to council backing a proposed amendment to change the restrictions on the zoning by-law governing the Wal-Mart/Canadian Tire plaza being developed by SmartCentres to allow for smaller stores.

The big box development is at Hwy. 48 and Hoover Park Drive.

Mr. Button said the proposed amendments to the zoning restrictions would have a "devastating effect" on downtown businesses.

Councillor Richard Bartley agreed.

"I think this is a disaster waiting to happen," he said. "It would be a tragedy (to downtown businesses) to do this."

Council originally passed the zoning restrictions for the 43-acre retail area in May 2005 allowing only stores above 5,005 square feet to be constructed, as

See DEVELOPER, page 8.



STAFF PHOTOS/SJOERD WITTEVEN

Chairperson Laura Roessler is all set for the official opening of the 24th annual Strawberry Festival today. The festival continues through to the July 1 Canada Day festivities in Memorial Park. For information, see Jim Thomas' column on page 5, Coming Up on page 12 and the festival's website at strawberryfestival.ca

24TH ANNUAL FEST KICKS OFF TONIGHT IN MEMORIAL PARK WITH LOTS OF HELP

Volunteers make Strawberry Festival tick

BY ALYSHIA HIGGINS

Strawberry Festival volunteers were feeling the love and the time crunch this week.

The 24th annual event officially opens tonight and volunteers from the community and Love Stouffville have been working feverishly to get ready.

Thousands of residents are expected to browse the streets this weekend. The festival runs through Sunday and resumes Tuesday with Canada Day fireworks and other events in Memorial Park.

► The berries are late, but abundant, this year. See story on page 11.

"We look at the festival as our baby," Strawberry Festival Committee chairperson Laura Roessler said. "It takes nine months of hard work to put it all together."

The 10-member committee, along with hundreds of other volunteers, is responsible for putting on the event, which draws crowds from across the GTA. Planning for the event begins a year in advance,

and committee members put in as many as 10 hours a day, Ms Roessler said.

Love Stouffville, a group of churches, was created last year and is ready to help out again. This is the second time they are participating in the festival.

"I've heard great things from the volunteers (of Love Stouffville)," said Scott Clubine, youth pastor at EastRidge Evangelical Missionary Church and leader of the campaign. "You get different people from different churches working

together. It's a great way for them to be involved with the community."

Love Stouffville supplies "80 per cent of the logistical volunteers throughout the festival", said Ms Roessler.

"Without Love Stouffville, it's almost as if there wouldn't be a festival," she said.

Besides the approximately 75 volunteers Love Stouffville provides, many other volunteers not involved with the committee also contribute to the success of the

See VOLUNTEERS, page 18.

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