

Condo building good for economy: Hargrave

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If you build it, they will come.

In this case, by Whitchurch-Stouffville council unanimously deciding to allow the PACE/Geranium building to be constructed at Main and Lloyd streets, more private development in the downtown core will follow.

"We need to embrace these opportunities," Councillor Rob Hargrave told a packed council chamber Tuesday night during a special meeting dedicated to the project.

Judging by applause, the majority of those seated in the gallery appeared to be in opposition to the project.

In an era where banks, once the hub of downtowns, are moving en masse out of city cores, PACE Credit Union's decision to remain is "gratifying to us — this town is still a place to do business," Mayor Wayne Emmerson told The Sun-Tribune.

The credit union will occupy one of the building's three commercial spaces. Also housed within the five-storey building will be 67 residential units.

By giving the go-ahead to this project, more jobs will come to town, specifically 114 person years of construction and 74 person years of supplier involvement, some of which may be local, according

to Mr. Hargrave.

Residents who move into the building, which is in Mr. Hargrave's ward, will pump \$3 million into the downtown's retail economy, he told The Sun-Tribune.

"It's a real positive from that perspective," he said.

'We need to move forward. In 10 to 15 years, it will all blend in.'

For residents who argue the building is too modern for downtown Stouffville, Mr. Hargrave noted some of those heritage buildings people cite — such as the Sanders Block and Pastaggio Italian Eatery — were actually private investment re-builds. Other historic-style rebuilds include Nineteen on the Park, which was funded by the town, and Card's TV and Appliances, which is now located in the former fire hall.

"We need to move forward. In 10 to 15 years, it will all blend in," Mr. Emmerson told The Sun-Tribune.

Mr. Hargrave was the only member of council who spoke on the matter during the meeting.

For more on the plan, go to townofws.com

Neighbours unhappy with council

Sunsets will be replaced with views of a brick wall.

A quiet parking lot will be turned into a garbage room and access to underground parking.

With council's unanimous approval of the proposed PACE/Geranium building, this is what residents of Buckingham Manor and the McGowan family have to look forward to.

"It's patently unfair to allow something like this," Manny Simon, owner of Buckingham Manor told council Tuesday night in a last-ditch effort to plead his case against the project.

"I literally am the one in their back yard, their front yard and the side yard," he said.

Because of this and the accompanying construction, Mr. Simon informed councillors residents have told him they will "probably leave".

Mr. Simon purchased the 59-suite retirement home in 1985. A few years later, it underwent a renovation, which had to strictly abide by the zoning bylaws — something he said the PACE/Geranium developers do not have to do.

When Lynda McGowan saw the staff recommendation, which was to allow the project to go ahead as proposed, the longtime Lloyd Street resident knew it was a fait accompli.

But it doesn't mean she has to accept it.

Going to the Ontario Municipal Board is "certainly something I'm thinking about," she told The Sun-Tri-

bune immediately following council's decision Tuesday night. Mrs. McGowan first wants to talk it over with her neighbours.

If the project moves ahead as-is, her main floor bedroom view will consist of a garbage room and the underground parking garage entrance. Right now, the view is of a quiet parking lot.

The McGowan home is directly behind the development property.

Large trees are to be planted between the McGowan home and the PACE/Geranium property, but it doesn't change the stigma of living beside a garbage room.

"I doubt any of the councillors would like to live in my house," she told The Sun-Tribune.

If Mrs. McGowan or any other resident fights council's decision at the OMB, as Mayor Wayne Emmerson told The Sun-Tribune he anticipates, Councillor Rob Hargrave said they will have a tough time overturning the decision. There is precedent to permit construction within the downtown of a structure that exceeds the maximum height allowance of 14 metres, set by Free Lane's Stouffville Creek Retirement Residence, which is 16.8 metres tall.

The PACE/Geranium building will be 18 metres tall if built according to this plan.

"It's five storeys. We're not talking the Trump tower," Mr. Hargrave told The Sun-Tribune.

— Sandra Bolan

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