

Agreement Reached on Shoppers Rezoning

Between March and June 2009, the Trend Arlington Community Association in partnership with the Craig Henry community actively opposed the rezoning application for the vacant property immediately opposite Greenbank Road from the Knoxdale School exit. The rezoning application, which would allow a retail designation, had been filed by Shoppers Drug Mart in tandem with a development proposal that would result in a stand-alone Shoppers Drug Mart store being constructed on the site.

While the application was filed in December 2008, it was not until February and March 2009 that a broader awareness of the proposals became known within the Trend Arlington and Craig Henry communities. At an information meeting held on April 1 at Sir Robert Borden High School it was clear that residents of the two communities were opposed to the zoning change and development proposal.

Several concerns were raised, including traffic and school safety issues and the precedent that could be set by allowing retail zoning to expand north of the Bellman/Bateman intersection. Furthermore, residents did not see the need for a stand-alone store when they were well served by the existing store in the community mall at 250 Greenbank. This community opposition was again voiced at an April 21 meeting at 50 Bellman attended by our City Councillor Gord Hunter.

Over the month of April, a web site was created to oppose the zoning change and the Shoppers development, a petition was circulated among the Trend Arlington and Craig Henry communities, and on April 28 community representatives appeared before the City's Planning and Environment Committee meeting to make representations opposing the zoning change. The Committee nonetheless voted to recommend the change to City Council.

By the time City Council considered the matter on May 13, the petition opposing the application had grown to over 700 signatures reflecting a level of concern and opposition virtually unheard of among a population of less than 5000. Despite our best efforts, however, Council approved the zoning change in an 18-4 vote.

Notwithstanding overwhelming community opposition, Councillor Hunter was a key proponent of the development since its inception and voted with the majority in support of the application in both the Planning and Environment Committee and on City Council's final vote.

Following Council's approval, community representatives considered an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) while at the same time began working with Shoppers Drug Mart and City officials to improve the site plan. These site plan discussions continued through until mid-June with considerable progress being achieved toward making the new building as unobtrusive as possible.

These discussions resulted in an agreement reflected in an exchange of letters between Shoppers Drug Mart and the Trend Arlington Community Association. Shoppers offered to incorporate many of the site plan changes that had been requested; in return, the communities agreed not to appeal the zoning change to the OMB.

Construction of the new retail facility is expected to be completed by the end of 2009 at which time Shoppers Drug Mart will relocate from its current location in the Hunt Club Greenbank Center (250 Greenbank) to the new retail facility.

Shoppers Drug Mart has given a verbal commitment that the new store's hours of operation will be from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. While Shoppers is free to extend those hours without formal community agreement, the communities will continue to oppose any proposed extension, especially in consideration of Craig Henry residents living on Elvaston Avenue whose properties are immediately adjacent to the new store.