

MAXIMIZING EMPLOYMENT LANDS



Leah Wong

As Aurora nears residential build out, the town is turning its focus to attracting new businesses to its vacant employment lands.

“We’re [transitioning] from a small growing town to a more mature mid-sized town. That requires a different approach [to economic development],” Mayor **Geoffrey Dawe** told *NRU*. “As we start to approach build-out in our residential areas we are looking for a little more focus on the business community to ensure we retain the business that is here and do our best to attract new businesses.”

In the fall council approved a new economic development model in which the town will be supported by a non-profit development corporation that will advise it on economic development matters. At its meeting last night, council was expected to direct staff to start assembling the corporation’s first board and approve its terms of reference.

The board’s mandate, as recommended by staff, is to provide advice on the expansion of current businesses and the attraction of new ones, recommend programs that promote business opportunities in Aurora and offer guidance on funding programs to encourage

initiatives related to downtown revitalization and cultural services.

By changing its approach to economic development the town will be able to focus its efforts on attracting new and expanding businesses to its almost 160 ha of vacant employment lands.

Aurora chief administrative officer **Doug Nadorozny** told *NRU* that economic

development has always been “part of someone’s job” in Aurora, but it hasn’t been a dedicated role in the past. The new model includes a dedicated economic development officer, to be hired in April.

Staff will start recruiting board members as soon as it has the go-ahead from council, with an expectation that the board will be up and running by June. The board

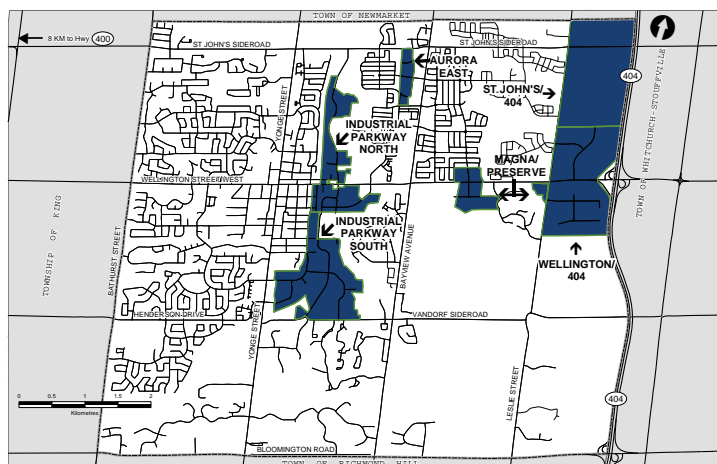
will comprise the mayor, two councillors, Nadorozny, Aurora’s long-range and strategic planning manager **Anthony Ierullo** and up-to-eight local residents or business owners representing a range of economic sectors and geographic locations in Aurora.

Staff has prepared a skills matrix to guide the recruitment of board members. It identifies the need to have representatives from a mix of small and large businesses and the types of skills that board members should have, including finance and legal.

“It’s basically all of the supporting intellect you would see involved in building businesses, as well as a good cross section of existing businesses in the community,” said Nadorozny. “You’ll have people that know the community and people that know what it takes to be in business and thrive in business.”

To ensure that it includes a broad range of business voices the **Aurora Chamber of**

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Map of Aurora employment lands

SOURCE: TOWN OF AURORA

Aurora is reviewing its community improvement plan, which applies to its Yonge Street corridor

SOURCE: VICTOR ADAMO FOR *NRU*

EMPLOYMENT LANDS

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Commerce is asking to be represented on the board.

“Our business community includes everyone from a one-person shop to Bulk Barn [head office],” chamber chair **Javed Khan** told *NRU*. “We have very strong connectivity and voice within the business community.”

Khan said that the makeup of the corporation’s first board will be important to the success of Aurora’s new economic development model. The board

will be responsible for defining what economic development really means in Aurora and what the town and corporation can do to better support existing businesses.

“As a chamber representative... I want to see [the corporation] help and support businesses in this community develop, not only economically, but also support them as they are growing,” said Khan. “Let’s not forget about those businesses that are at

that next level of their business evolution... We find from our research... there is a gap. Businesses grow to a certain level and then they are not supported.”

Once it is launched, the board will start working on an economic development strategic plan. Expected to be completed by the end of the year, the plan will set out new economic development programs and highlight industries that the town should be trying to attract.

Given the proximity of the Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket to some of the town’s employment lands, Nadorozny said there may be opportunities to attract medical

research and health science businesses.

And Dawe sees opportunities to attract more corporate head offices to the town.

“Over the years we have been very successful in attracting head offices. We have Magna [International], State Farm [Canada] and Bulk Barn, in the private sector and in the public sector we have both school boards and York Region police,” said Dawe. “We have a good mix of public and private sector head offices and I think like tends to attract like. I see some good potential there.”

Aurora council’s meeting concluded after NRU deadline.



HAMLET OF BELFOUNTAIN

POTENTIAL FOR ESTATE LOTS

TOTAL ACREAGE	±226.3 acres
DEVELOPABLE ACREAGE	±119.9 acres
CALEDON OFFICIAL PLAN	Settlement Area; Environmental Policy Area

HIGHLIGHTS

- Concept plan proposes 49 estate lots with lot frontages ranging from 56 feet to over 300 feet
- Future development to be serviced by private well and septic systems — suitable aquifer available
- Top of bank staked in 1994, reviewed in 2014

ASKING PRICE: \$6,450,000

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CONTACT US

<p>Ian Hunt* Vice President 416 495 6268 ian.hunt@cbre.com</p>	<p>Jason Child* Vice President 416 495 6249 jason.child@cbre.com</p>	<p>Mike Czeszochowski** Executive Vice President 416 495 6257 mike.czeszochowski@cbre.com</p>	<p>Lauren Doughty* Vice President 416 495 6223 lauren.doughty@cbre.com</p>
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