

Strip Plaza Rehabilitation

Date:	June 28, 2007
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	City Solicitor Mike Major, Acting Director Economic Development, Culture and Tourism
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The Acting Director, Economic Development, Culture and Tourism (the “Acting Director”) and the City Solicitor recommend that the matter of how to rehabilitate strip plazas and industrial corridors be deferred until the Economic Development Committee meeting of November 29, 2007. There are complex legal, administrative and budgetary issues that must be explored with input from various staff, in order to attempt to overcome the obstacles presented by these issues. In order to explore solutions that address these issues, the Economic Development Division will undertake a series of roundtable discussions with City Planning, Finance, Municipal Licensing and Standards, Solid Waste, and Legal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Solicitor and the Acting Director recommend that:

1. The matter of the rehabilitation of strip plazas and industrial corridors be deferred;
2. The Acting Director consult internally with City Planning, Finance, Municipal Licensing and Standards and Solid Waste, and Legal staff with respect to possible

solutions to the problems with strip plazas as set out in Councillor Moscoe's communication dated April 10, 2007; and

3. The Acting Director report to the Economic Development Committee on November 29, 2007 with specific proposals regarding the rehabilitation of strip plazas and industrial corridors.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommendations in this report will have no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

The City Solicitor submitted a report dated May 22, 2007 to the Economic Development Committee at its meeting of June 7, 2007, on the communication of Councillor Moscoe for the creation of "Special Policy Areas" for strip plazas. The Committee deferred consideration of Item 5.12 in relation to Strip Plazas as Business Improvement Areas to Improve Private Property, and requested the City Solicitor to re-examine the issue with respect to the creation of Special Policy Areas consisting of strip plazas, and report further on what the City can do in this regard.

The Committee decision can be viewed at:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/ed/decisions/2007-06-07-ed05-dd.pdf>.

The communication from Councillor Moscoe can be viewed at:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/ed/decisions/2007-04-11-ed03-dd.pdf>.

City Council, while considering Executive Committee Item 8.10 at its meeting on June 11, 2007, requested the General Manager of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism, in consultation with the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning and the City Solicitor, to report back to the Economic Development Committee on several motions made by Councillor Moscoe on the rehabilitation of strip plazas and industrial corridors, including the feasibility of using sections 28 and 29 of the *Planning Act*. Other aspects of the motion pertain to Municipal Code Chapter 19, Business Improvement Areas, to allow for the lending and borrowing of money and funding of improvements to private property, if authorized by Council. In addition, Councillor Moscoe moved that repairs ordered through work orders to the exterior of commercial properties should be declared a public nuisance similar to graffiti. Execution of work orders to the exterior of BIA properties "that are the collective responsibility of the BIA are to be treated in the same manner as graffiti removal".

The Council decision can be viewed at:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/cc/decisions/2007-06-11-cc09-dd.pdf>.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The ongoing issue of how to rehabilitate strip plazas originally arose as a result of Councillor Moscoe's communication, dated April 10, 2007, to the Economic Development Committee, in which he outlined the many maintenance and repair problems associated with strip plazas. There have been in the past a number of requests for reports relating to strip plazas, which have resulted in the following reports being submitted by the City Solicitor:

- 1) Report dated October 26, 2001 to Planning and Transportation Committee of November 12, 2001:
"Licensing of Strip Plazas (Strip Malls) in Order to Regulate their Maintenance".
The report can be found at:
<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2001/agendas/plt.htm> by clicking on the November 12th meeting date, and then on item 8;
- 2) Report dated March 8, 2002 to Planning and Transportation Committee meeting of March 25, 2002:
"Incentives for requiring Business located in Strip Plazas (strip malls) to Maintain Common Parking Areas". The report can be found at:
<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2002/agendas/plt.htm> by clicking on the March 25th meeting date, and then on item 20;
- 3) Report dated March 10, 2003 to Planning and Transportation Committee of March 24, 2003:
"Strip Plazas (strip malls) with Right of Way Easements and the Enforcement of Property Maintenance and Property Standards By-laws".
The report can be found at:
<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2003/agendas/plt.htm> by clicking on the March 24th meeting date, and then on item 15; and
- 4) Report dated May 22, 2007 to Economic Development Committee meeting of June 7, 2007:
"Strip Plazas as Business Improvement Areas to Improve Private Property".
The report can be found at:
<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/ed/decisions/2007-06-07-ed05-dd.pdf>.

COMMENTS

The report requests to date have been directed separately to the General Manager of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism and to the City Solicitor, and have dealt only with certain perspectives attempting to solve the strip plaza problem. For example, the Economic Development Committee believed that the report from the City Solicitor did not offer satisfactory solutions to the strip plaza problem, as it was approached only from the perspective of trying to establish strip plazas as mini business improvement

areas for the purpose of improving private property. As there are several complicated issues that must be addressed, including property standards and planning matters, legal issues and the problem of multiple ownership of strip plazas, it is recommended that a more consolidated approach is required in order to develop possible solutions and bring forward alternative proposals in a comprehensive manner.

The City Solicitor and Acting Director are of the view that engaging in internal consultation with a broader representation of staff from a number of different divisions to examine all aspects of strip plazas, is a comprehensive, problem solving approach that is more likely to result in concrete solutions for their rehabilitation. The consultation process will take time as many different City divisions should be involved in order to determine a particular policy direction. Accordingly, staff recommends that a report be brought to the Economic Development Committee meeting on November 29, 2007.

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SIGNATURE

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