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Development changes top stories in 2009

By Craig Campbell, News Staff News

Jan 01, 2010

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Dundas councillor Russ Powers enjoys a meal at the new Bangkok Spoon Deluxe, opened in December.

The year 2009 saw perhaps more suggestion of change than any previous 12-month stretch. But the community responded. And as Dundas faces its second decade since amalgamation into the City of Hamilton, you might say the state of the community, the state of Dundas, is as strong as ever. There's plenty of important stories to choose from in 2009. But these 10 issues required ongoing coverage and in-depth investigation. And each of these "Top" stories will have far-reaching impacts on the community of Dundas. Several other infill development proposals within the core of Dundas could change the face of the community as we know it – and it all started in 2009.

School Board sells surplus property

The Hamilton Wentworth District School Board completed sales of Dundas District and Central Park schools – with historic District picked up by developers planning to protect the façade and construct condos within the building's shell, and Central Park remaining a centre of education thanks to Dundas Valley Montessori School. After a Freedom of Information request and appeal, the school board agreed to release lists of rejected offers for the two schools, as well as two other schools – Pleasant Valley and University Gardens – sold a couple of years ago.

Historic Post Office

Years of speculation about this 96-year-old building and landmark clock tower came to a head in 2009 when Canada Post announced plans to build a replacement letter carrier depot in Ancaster.

A Freedom of Information request turned up email exchanges which showed the downtown Dundas landmark's historic significance was well-known by the Crown Corporation. The property went on the market and community speculation increased. The sale closed just before the end of the year but the new property's owner was not yet ready to discuss her plans.

Biedermann Packaging

Ontario's environment ministry decided not to charge anyone for environmental damage caused by a fire at a Head Street pesticide plant two years earlier. Then the MOE took the surprising step of releasing the entire crown brief – the ministry's research for the crown prosecutor. The ministry's findings pointed the finger away from Dundas company Biedermann Packaging and towards the local fire department, suggesting it was responsible for containing and controlling contaminated fire down water flowing off the site and into Spencer Creek. But, the ministry's document explained, city employees were granted immunity from prosecution. Also in 2009, it was discovered manufacturers of some pesticides stored in the Dundas building during the fire had not reported that fact as required by Federal law. The outstanding reports were filed before the end of the year, but not before raising questions about the federal government's regulation of pesticide incident reporting.

Rona Sold and Shoppers Proposal

This year saw the long-running hardware store and lumber yard on King Street close its doors and the large downtown property purchased by a group of Toronto lawyers. After denying any interest in the property, Shoppers Drug Mart began negotiating a lease with the new owners. Shoppers released early plans for a two-storey big box store, which contradicted several local planning guidelines. Shoppers submitted an amended plan which took into account some concerns. The proposal still includes a parking lot between the main entrance and King Street sidewalk, raising concerns about abnormal building setbacks downtown.



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Do you believe government should interfere with Labatt's decision to close down Lakeport Brewing?

Yes No



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Storage Facility Rejected

City councilors rejected a bid for a storage facility at the corner of King Street East and Olympic Drive, after vocal opposition from many area residents and concerns from the Hamilton Conservation Authority and Royal Botanical Gardens. An OMB appeal by the proponent sparked a large, organized community response and a hearing is scheduled in January.

Pleasantview proposal

A huge development application for natural lands in the Pleasantview neighbourhood was ignored by city staff, then eventually rejected by provincial planners after several months. After long delays, provincial legislation was passed that provides for the possibility of the land being added to the restrictive Niagara Escarpment Planning Area.

Deluxe Rises Again The downtown Dundas landmark that had been closed for three decades was leased to a Toronto Thai restaurant operator. The contents were auctioned to the highest bidders and the historic diner was renovated. By December, the Bangkok Spoon Deluxe was serving meals.

Hydro Clears Conservation Land Hamilton Conservation Authority staff was apparently caught off guard when Hydro One cleared an access road through protected property to a hydro corridor. Environment Canada investigated potential disruption of bird nesting areas, issuing a secret warning letter to Hydro One. The utility later cleared a second access road from Cootes Drive, this time through its own property, but used both access roads to complete pole replacement work later in the year.

Villa Estates Proposal

Another development proposal created a large, organized opposition group when St. Joseph's Villa applied for a zoning change to allow two high rise condo buildings next to two existing condominiums.. Suggestions of high-density development in an area where it was never planned, brought in-depth, persuasive arguments against the project at a city of Hamilton planning meeting. Afraid of an OMB appeal, but convinced not to approve it, committee members handed it off to Dundas councilor Russ Powers. An agreement could not be negotiated and the issue will come back in the New Year.

Shell Contamination Spreads In 2009, Hydrocarbon contamination found under a former gas station on King Street West several years ago was confirmed to have spread off-site to the parking lot of the Dundas Community Centre next door. Off-site testing continued. Meanwhile, the City of Hamilton entered negotiations with Shell to possibly purchase the recently remediated former gas station site itself for a municipal park.



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