

West Saint John Retail Development Forum Participant Feedback Summary

Over 100 citizens and retail community stakeholders gathered at the West Saint John Retail Development Forum on Thursday, May 28th, 2009 at Branch 69 Legion, 714 Wilson Street, to discuss and explore ways to retain and attract people, ideas and investment to West Saint John's retail sector. Guest speakers included developers, retailers and City of Saint John staff who shared their visions for infrastructure planning, retail growth and real estate management. Citizens were then invited to participate in working sessions to identify and prioritize desired retailers, infrastructure investments and amenities which would continue to build our Community where you can live life on your terms.



The forum was coordinated by Enterprise Saint John, in partnership with the City of Saint John and the Saint John West Business Association. It was promoted through e-letters, newspaper advertising, the Enterprise Saint John web site, and hand delivered invitations to businesses along Fairville Boulevard.



Guest Speakers

*Jay Reid, Economic Development Officer,
Enterprise Saint John*

Councillor Bill Farren, Ward 1

Councillor Peter McGuire, Ward 1

*Ken Forrest, Commissioner of Planning,
City of Saint John*

*Shayne Galbraith, Director of Works,
City of Saint John*

“It was very exciting to see the passion in the room... everyone wants to play an active role in shaping the growing prosperity of West Saint John's retail sector.”

Jay Reid, Enterprise Saint John

Current & Future Retail Projects

The forum provided citizens, businesses, and property owners the opportunity to learn about significant retail projects underway and planned, and to learn about City of Saint John's capital infrastructure projects planned along the Fairville Boulevard Corridor.

Highlights of the City of Saint John Infrastructure Projects Supporting Retail Growth for 2009

- Reconstruction of the Harding Street and Lancaster Mall intersection
- Reconstruction of the roadway on Fairville Boulevard between Catherwood Street and the Lancaster Mall entrance
- Surface reconstruction of the Catherwood Street and Fairville Boulevard intersection
- Simms Corner Phase 1 redesign

Discussion Panel

Special thanks to our panel participants:

Bruce Creber, VP Real Estate Operations,
Counsel Corporation

Madeleine Nicholls, VP Real Estate Leasing,
Counsel Corporation

Randy Pederson, Java Moose

Bruce Schnare, The Plaza Group

Joan Courtney, VP, Real Estate Development,
Eastern Canada, Canadian Tire



Madeleine Nicholls, vice-president of real estate leasing for Counsel Corporation, says the Lancaster Mall is poised to serve west siders better.

Brainstorming Working Sessions

Citizens were provided the opportunity to share in the long term vision for the West Saint John retail sector through their participation in two brainstorming sessions.

The information collected during these sessions will be used to:

1. Identify and attract retailers desired by the community; and
2. Help the City of Saint John determine the community's priorities as they plan future capital investments in West Saint John.

Session #1: What Stores Would You Like to See?

Identify and prioritize the top 5 types of retail stores that you feel are missing or wanted in West Saint John.

Key Findings

The top priority identified was the attraction of new family restaurants. Suggested restaurants included: Boston Pizza, East Side Mario's, Swiss Chalet and a seafood restaurant.

A very close second was the attraction of a movie theatre complex. Rounding out the top 5 priorities based on participant feedback were the addition of a new shoe store, hardware/building supply store and co-ed fitness facility.

Top 5

1. Family restaurant
2. Cinema
3. Footwear
4. Hardware/building supply
5. Co-ed Fitness

Many participants rose concerns over the lack of a quality footwear store on the west side. It was suggested that attracting a shoe store like Green Lee Shoes into the mall would fill that void.

The hardware/building supply stores that were mentioned as good additions to the west side were Kent or Home Depot.

With regards to the desire for a new co-ed fitness facility, many people suggested possible franchises like Nubody's and GoodLife Fitness.

Other retailers and types of retailers that were mentioned included: Princess Auto, Bulk Barn, Michael's, Fabricville, a new car dealership, and outlet stores such as Tommy Hilfiger and the Gap in an outlet strip mall.

It was also suggested that a gas station or Tim Horton's would be a welcomed addition off the highway on the route toward Point Lepreau to service the many people working in that area as those types of amenities are currently lacking.

Given that the land on the Fairville Boulevard is ideally suited for further expansion of the retail sector in West Saint John; some people expressed that they felt that there should be some effort exerted to help re-locate the existing industrially-based businesses to the Spruce Lake Industrial Park.

Listing of all submissions

- Family Restaurants (Boston Pizza, East Side Mario's, Swiss Chalet, Seafood)
- Movie Theatre
- Shoe Stores
- Hardware/Building Supply Store (Kent or Home Depot)
- Co-ed Fitness Facility
- Princess Auto
- Attract a shoe store like Green Lee Shoes to the mall
- Craft/Fabric Stores (Michael's, Fabricville)
- Outlet Stores (Gap, Tommy Hilfiger etc.)
- Bulk Barn
- Outlet Strip Malls (i.e. Kittery)
- Outdoor Recreation/Amusement (Tree Go)
- Amenities such as a Tim Horton's or Gas Station heading west toward Point Lepreau
- New Car Dealership
- Push OUR Industrial Park

Session #2: Infrastructure Investments & Amenities

Identify the infrastructure investments and amenities you feel are required to create an environment that will attract more retail development to West Saint John.

Key Findings

The responses gathered during this session reflected traffic and pedestrian safety issues, capital investments into roads, population density ideas, recreation opportunities and other.

Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

A common theme amongst the responses gathered was the need to create safe linkages from the residential areas of Greendale, Quinton Heights, Island View Heights, West Gate Park and other neighbourhoods to the shopping area on the Fairville Boulevard. They felt that these linkages could be created through the construction of a new sidewalk on the Kierstead Road and an expansion of sidewalks toward Gault Road.

Other suggestions to improve pedestrian safety included the addition to street lighting to follow the new sidewalks suggested and more crosswalks to ensure safe street crossings.

Although safe driving and appropriate safety measures are recognized by the citizens, some suggested that they would like to see fewer traffic lights to eliminate the stop and starting that is common in the East Saint John shopping district.

Capital Investments into Roads

With regards to future investments into the road network, the participants mentioned the need to remediate potholes and ensure proper maintenance of the road infrastructure and they suggested improvements to Westfield Road to make it safer for residents in the Grand Bay-Westfield area to access the West Saint John shopping district.

Population Density Ideas

In order for a retail area to be successful, it needs to attract shoppers. One of the suggestions to create more density in the area was to construct a senior citizens complex comparable to the Loch Lomond Villa with various levels of assisted living available and located on a bus route.

A second idea that was presented was the construction of new housing targeted for the 55 yrs. + age group. This could be in the form of new garden homes or upscale apartments.

Recreational Opportunities

A number of participants expressed the importance of creating additional recreational opportunities in West Saint John to attract more people to want to live in West Saint John and in turn, draw more people to support the retail sector.

The suggestions gathered at the forum included the creation of more walking, hiking and biking trails, expansion of the west end of Harbour Passage, a gymnasium accessible to the public and the expansion of rinks.

Other

Some participants felt that there needs to be better recycling programs and better access to blue bins as communities are becoming more environmentally conscientious.

Listing of all submissions

- Family Restaurant (Arby's, Swiss Chalet, Seafood)
- Gymnasium
- Fewer traffic lights
- Expand rinks
- More walking, hiking and biking trails
- Better recycling programs (Blue bin accessibility)
- More Crosswalks
- Walking access from Manawagonish Road to Fairville Blvd. (street lighting and benches)
- Expand sidewalks etc. to complete Gault Road
- Improve the road between Grand Bay (Westfield Road) to West Saint John
- Senior complex comparable to Loch Lomond Villa (nursing, assisted living and senior apartments with access to public transportation.)
- Expansion of Harbour Passage
- Construction of housing and upscale apartments for people 55 yrs. +
- Fixing pot holes and roads
- Sidewalks for Keirstead Road

Next Steps

1. Enterprise Saint John and the Saint John West Business Association will work with developers and retailers to promote the priorities identified during the forum.
2. Ward 1 Councillors will meet with City of Saint John staff to look at ways of strengthening pedestrian infrastructure required for linkages between neighbourhoods and the shopping areas on Fairville Boulevard.
3. Enterprise Saint John will update progress of action items at a future ward meeting.