

Shaping the future of Barrie

Posted 4 hours ago

All the world's great cities have neighbourhoods. Why not Barrie?

A new initiative by the city is helping shape the future of the city's historic neighbourhoods.

Residents are invited to play a role in guiding the future of Barrie's residential core by taking part in the historic neighbourhood strategy (HNS), spearheaded by Ward 2 Coun. Jeff Lehman.

The first of two public meetings is being held Wednesday night at the Southshore Community Centre beginning at 6:30 p.m. The second meeting will take place at the MacLaren Art Centre, Saturday, at 1 p.m.

"The HNS has a simple philosophy:

people-led planning," Lehman said, Tuesday. "The idea is that residents be given the power to plan for the future of their neighbourhoods themselves, instead of staff or consultants."

The first public meeting of HNS was held in June 2009 to discuss the project and to begin the public-input process of naming the six neighbourhoods.

The area of the strategy stretches from Grove and Oak streets to the north (The Grove), south to the city centre and lakeshore (Downtown), northwest to Highway 400 (Queen's Park), along Highway 400 south to Vespra Street (West village), southeast to the lakeshore (Brock Park) and then south to Baldwin Lane (Allandale).

Lehman said these neighbourhoods, built before the 1950s, are designated as urban growth centres under the province's Places to Grow plan.

"We are giving the people of these areas a chance to tell us what is needed in their neighbourhood, so it becomes the place they want it to be," he said.

"The historic neighbourhood strategy is intended to provide a plan for these neighbourhoods that will guide council's decisions, both present and future," he added. "This would include decisions about facilities, infrastructure like roads, parks, etc. and planning decisions about revitalization."

Recent concerns about the future of Barrie Central Collegiate and its importance to the downtown may be voiced at Wednesday's and Saturday's meetings, Lehman said.

"Of course, decisions about schools like Barrie Central are up to the school board," he said. "But I hope that the HNS will provide residents an opportunity to express what they think is needed in their community, regardless of who provides it. Once the HNS is complete, we will share it with all other public bodies including the province, school boards and the federal government."

Community committees, made up of residents from the six designated

neighbourhoods, have been created, according to Stacey Forfar, project planner for the historic neighbourhood strategy.

"They will be guiding the project from its inception to the end," she said, adding, "HNS is premised on public participation."

Community committee members go out and meet their own neighbours for grassroots discussions, Forfar said.

"These meetings are neighbours getting together to discuss things that are important to them: what makes a neighbourhood livable and what doesn't," she said. "It's a livability plan for the residents."

For more information about the strategy, visit hns.barrie.ca.

imcinroy@thebarrieexaminer.com