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Waterscape project will change skyline

Cambridge Times
Ray Martin

Galt's skyline will soon change following council approving plans for Waterscape on the Grand River.

The \$120-million project will reclaim a 3.7 acre site on Water Street across from Shoppers Drug Mart which has sat untouched for nearly 30 years due to its contaminated soil.

Developer Haastown Group of Companies has worked for almost two years on a design for two 12-storey condominium towers that make up the first phase of the project.

The towers will house a total of 230 studio, one- and two-bedroom suites. Commercial space is available on the ground floor for a potential café or bistro, rooftop fitness centre, lounge and entertainment centre. Parking will provide space above and below ground for 299 vehicles.

"I can't think of a more important site to demonstrate Brownfield redevelopment in the city of Cambridge," said Chris Pigeon, planner for Haastown Group of Companies.

It is expected that more than 1,200 tonnes of contaminated soil will be

removed from the site and trucked to a site approved by the Ministry of the Environment.

Company engineers are continuing to work with Ministry of Environment officials on remediation plans for the site. The required certificate of site record is slated to be issued in a few months time and construction will start next spring.

Pigeon told council that plans for the two towers have been modified with help from the University of Waterloo's School of Architecture. Instead of the initial slab design, the towers will have a stepped appearance to better fit in with the surrounding neighbourhood. The towers have also been repositioned on the site to improve the view for surrounding residents.

As part of the site redevelopment, Haastown has agreed to make the Water Street sidewalk safer for GCI students and provide access to the riverbank trail system.

The developer will be making use of the city's core areas' incentive package and will not have to pay \$640,000 in back taxes, which city officials say are uncollectible.

Several residents and Coun. Pam Wolf are irked by the incentives being offered by the city to the developer and

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renegotiate its deal with Haastown.

“My strong recommendation would be to table it and renegotiate it,” said Preston resident and former city councilor Uwe Kretschmann.

Coun. Ben Tucci said the city’s action is “in keeping with past practice,” and Galt core has “taken its share of social housing.”

“This project will bring a balance to development in the core,” he said.

Coun. Gary Price noted that the site has sat vacant for 30 years, a previous project had failed because there was no city assistance, and would cost the city more in tax dollars if it had to tackle the job itself.

“This is a very important project that needs to get off the ground,” said Coun. Karl Kiefer. “We need to go ahead with this.”

While redevelopment of the first phase has now been approved by the city, Haastown has also announced what it will do with the remainder of the property. Owner Paul de Haas announced that he intends to build two low-rise seniors’ apartments adjacent to Riverbank Mill restaurant. The apartments will be called the Kingsway Arms.

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