

Covered food court a possibility for Don Mills Centre?

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The outdoor mall concept remains, but residents might get a covered food court when the Don Mills Centre is redeveloped, pending retailer interest.

That was the message Anne Morash, project manager of Cadillac Fairview, owner of the Don Mills Road and Lawrence Avenue area mall, delivered to councillors and about a dozen concerned residents at Tuesday's North York Community Council meeting.

Morash told councillors the corporation would look into a covered eat and greet area, but fell short of promising the addition.

Ward 26 Councillor Jane Pitfield (Don Valley West) pointed out residents' No. 1 concern with redevelopment plans is retaining as much indoor space as possible.

Simone Gabbay, who has collected more than 5,000 signatures for a petition against the outdoor mall concept, said the possibility of a covered food court was "a nice change," but it does not meet the needs of the petition to develop a covered mall.

"The community's wishes should be taken into consideration," Gabbay told councillors Tuesday night, after waiting four hours for the item to be dealt with by councillors.

Eileen Gollert said the Don Mills Centre is the only place her disabled son can get to on his own.

"I moved to The Donway West so I can walk to the mall," she said. "I don't want to be isolated in a community centre, I want to be integrated."

Councillors were dealing with a site plan control application, including layout and landscape, and what the city's position will be at an upcoming Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) meeting May 29.

Ward 34 Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong (Don Valley East), whose ward borders Don Mills Road, noted residents are not satisfied with the development and moved to refuse the entire report. That motion was ultimately defeated,

"It does not come anywhere close to what residents want," he said. "Cadillac Fairview has given the community nothing so I think this community council should give them nothing. I want a guarantee there will be indoor space."

Councillors passed a motion brought forward by Ward 25 Councillor Cliff Jenkins (Don Valley West) for the city solicitor to seek the inclusion of indoor retail space at the OMB meeting.

"I was really encouraged to see our councillors stand up for us," Gabbay told The Mirror after the meeting, adding she's still holding out hope for a covered shopping centre.

Gabbay said residents are planning a second peaceful demonstration Saturday from 1:30 to 3 p.m. on The Donway West to protest the outdoor mall concept.

After 50 years in the community, the Don Mills Centre will close its doors May 31 to make way for construction on the new mall, which is expected for completion in August 2008.

Once the retail aspect is complete, which will include a Town Square, Cadillac Fairview will focus on the residential component of the project, which includes condominium buildings.