

Covered section hinted by developer

(Posted Date: Wednesday, May 10, 2006)

Suggestion for roofed eat-and-greet area at new Don Mills Mall met with skepticism at local meeting

By Sandie Benitah

Cadillac Fairview hinted they may be willing to put in a covered eating and greeting area in the new Don Mills Centre.

The suggestion made at the North York Community Council on May 9 however was greeted with skepticism by residents and politicians.

The idea was put forward during a deputation at the meeting where council debated the developer's site plan for a new outdoor shopping centre to replace the 50-year-old indoor mall.

Anne Morash, vice president of development for Cadillac Fairview, told elected officials and about 40 local residents she was currently negotiating a deal for a covered food court section, although it would depend upon support from retailers.

Councillors pounced on the suggestion and questioned Morash's sincerity.

"She was using weasel words and giving anything but a commitment," said Don Valley East councillor Denzil Minnan Wong shortly after Morash made her deputation. "It was like trying to make Jell-o stick to the wall."

The proposal, a site plan application dealing with minor logistics such as landscape, pedestrian crossings, walking paths and general urban design was rejected by the councillors, who agreed with city planning staff that it was out of touch with the character and needs of the community.

Cadillac Fairview is appealing the issue to the Ontario Municipal Board at the end of the month.

However, that won't stop the corporation, which owns shopping centres and condominiums across North America, from tearing down the mall on May 31. The city issued them a demolition permit on April 24, as the company has the legal right to



CENTRE OF PROTEST: Residents opposed to demolition of the Don Mills Shopping Centre make their views known at a demonstration at the centre on April 29.

demolish their property.

But Leaside councillor and mayoral candidate Jane Pitfield said she still has hope. She said she was the one who contacted Morash after a public meeting last month which saw about 500 [there actually were around 1,300, with many more unable to find parking] residents come out to protest the proposal.

Pitfield and Morash worked together previously on a site in her ward and back then, she saw how sympathetic the businesswoman was to the community.

While Pitfield said she wished Morash would have been firm in her position on the food court, she could see why she was being cautious.

"She probably just doesn't want to promise something she can't deliver," she said. "But the point is, Cadillac Fairview's focus shouldn't just be on bringing in new shoppers, which I understand they need to do but they shouldn't be forsaking the business of the bread and butter that's been feeding businesses in that mall for the past 50 years. These people are from the local community."

Simone Gabbay, a Don Mills resident, spoke up at the meeting after waiting more than four hours, as council ran extremely behind the planned schedule.

She presented the room with nearly 5,000 signatures from people who want an indoor mall instead of an outdoor one, simply so they could have a place to go during the city's infamous smog days and snowstorms.

However she questioned whether Cadillac Fairview's latest suggestion for a covered area would be enough.

"It's not going to satisfy consumers," she said. "It's only going to satisfy a part of our need for a covered space. It wouldn't help those who have difficulty shopping, like the elderly or disabled."

Residents still plan to apply pressure to stop the demolition of the existing centre. One protest was staged last month and another is planned for May 13.

Most of the people who live in the area are seniors who have fought to convince mall officials to keep at least part of the mall covered so they could enjoy the daily walks and social meetings they have become accustomed to.

Residents waited more than four hours to have their voices heard at the council meeting. One of the women choked back tears as she told the meeting how her disabled son would be left without a place to socialize in.

This article also found in:

[Bayview Mills](#)

Posted Date: Wednesday, May 10, 2006

Story Location: <http://www.towncrieronline.ca/main/main.php?direction=viewstory&storyid=5463>