

OK in Saanich

\$150-Million centre approved

Kim Westad

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Saanich council approved a \$150-million-plus development last night, the biggest commercial project in the municipality's history.

The massive overhaul of the Town and Country shopping centre, at Saanich Road and Douglas Street, is to be completed in four years. When finished, it will be a place where people can live, work, shop and be entertained, its developer says.

Council voted unanimously in favour of the development late last night after a public hearing. Demolition of the current Town and Country, built in the 1960s, will start in March or April. The new 600,000-square-foot centre — almost triple the size what is now on site — is to be done in two phases. The first is to be complete in two years. The second, which includes a residential tower, is to take another two years.

"It's a significant investment for the entire region," said Mayor Frank Leonard. If this project is done right, it will attract both tourists and locals, becoming a spot for anything from a coffee to an outdoor concert, he said.

"It shouldn't just be a place to shop but to gather," Leonard said.

The new Town and Country is a so-



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New Town and Country development will feature a town centre feel



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The site will include detached buildings, streets, sidewalks and a town centre.

called "life style" centre. It will mimic a small-town centre, featuring a main street with angled parking, sidewalks, bike paths and a town square.

"It's a showcase development for Saanich and all of Canada," said Geoff Nagle, spokesman for developer Morguard Investments Ltd. "There is no other property comparably planned in Canada." Several such centres are in the U. S., and Park Royal in West Vancouver is a scaled-down version.

The new centre will be home to one of Wal-Mart's mega-stores. The existing 125,000-square-foot store will be replaced with a two-storey, 200,000-square-foot building. So far, Wal-Mart and Shoppers Drug Mart are the only confirmed anchor tenants. Wal-Mart will remain open throughout construction, as will Shoppers' pharmacy.

Landscaping is an important element of the development, council heard.

Plans call for topiaries in the shape of geese — apparently in honour of the nearby Galloping Goose, even though that was named for a railroad, not the bird. Several councillors suggested the developer rethink the topiary shape.

The town square will have sculptures, public art, an outdoor fireplace, multi-layered waterfall and a musical fountain. Blanshard Street will have extensive landscaping to cover the blank wall that is now the back of Wal-Mart.

Morguard has agreed to pay for underground wiring on Carey Road, and on Blanshard and Douglas Streets and Ravine Way, although not on Saanich Road, something Coun. Vicki Saunders said she was very disappointed with. Morguard will also provide \$550,000 to improve Tattersall Drive. A plaza will be created to connect the Galloping Goose trail to the shopping centre.

A residential partner has been found, although Nagle would not say who it is. Because Morguard uses pension money, it cannot invest in residential developments. The site allows for an additional 300,000-square-feet of development. That could be used by the residential development, likely



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Geoff Nagle, spokesman for Town and Country developer Morguard Investments Ltd. "It's a showcase development for Saanich and all of Canada," he says.



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The existing Town and Country shopping centre was built in the 1960s.

resulting in at least 300 units.

Dean Murdock of the Sierra Club of Victoria said while he supports the concept, it could make more use of its location at the junction of major roads to become a transportation hub. It doesn't include provisions for light rapid transit, Murdock said, and could better knit together the nearby trail system and public transportation.

Others worried about how increased traffic will affect nearby residential streets, and said the project is still too auto-centred.

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