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Kingsway Entertainment District

From too much vision to none at all

A little less than a year ago, city council, much to its own surprise and that of many others, decided to build a new \$100-million event center on the Kingsway. Tuesday night, to no one's surprise, council confirmed that decision with the vote to approve zoning for the project.

The only real departure from expectation was the concise and deliberate dismissal of the decision by the current chair of the city's planning committee. Deb Macintosh, also the councillor for Ward 9, was brief, polite and scathing. She outlined why the refusal of the council and the planning department to acknowledge their own hard work will undoubtedly send the issue back to council for reconsideration from the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal within the next year.

There is significant public resistance to the project as the implications (social, environmental, financial, administrative and strategic) have become more understood. Of course, there is also significant public support for the Kingsway

Entertainment District plan, too. Much of the angst has played out on Sudbury.com as contending factions had their say. The problem with this issue is that there is no middle ground. No win/win. Just win/lose.

It is now out of council's hands for the moment. It will be appealed.

We got into this situation because after many years of councils dithering on major projects with lots of visioning, but not a lot of action, Mayor Brian Bigger and his brand-new council wanted to deliver on something big for the people of Sudbury. They didn't appear to care where that something big was located. They didn't care if their decision conformed to city planning strategies developed over decades.

They cared about getting something done, but gave virtually no direction, which of course is their job. And now we are a city divided.

We went from too much visioning to no vision.

This created a vacuum. There was no context for the proposals that were to come. The vacuum was filled — brilliantly by two smart entrepre-

neurs who owned some land in what many, including us, consider the wrong place. But they sold that place well and most of council bought in, hook, line and sinker.

Many members of the public bought in, too.

But few, politicians or public alike, thought to consider the implications of ripping the arena out of the heart of the city, or the implications of creating a new economic zone out of whole cloth, and what that might mean for New Sudbury, for the big box development at Silver Hills, for downtown.

There is a metaphor sketched out by management guru Stephen Covey. Leadership is knowing which forest to work in. Management is choosing the right instruments to cut your path through the forest most efficiently. No amount of management can overcome working in the wrong forest. Council doesn't appear to have considered the impact to the city's existing retail and entertainment economies by creating a competing entertainment district and economic zone. It

Vision, no vision

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(event centre and hotel) on the Kingsway. The city should conduct a capacity audit to determine if the community can even support doubling up that way.

This is especially important given the challenges the Sudbury Symphony, Sudbury Theatre Centre and Theatre Cambrian have had financially and in attracting audiences.

If the Local Planning Appeals Tribunal rules against the Kingsway rezoning and official plan amendment, the city would be wise to consider what it might do in that circumstance.

The irony of opening Tuesday's city council meeting with a report on one of the city's most celebrated environmental successes (the re-greening of Sudbury that began 40 years ago) will not be lost on those of us old enough to remember. The decades long (and ongoing efforts) to rehabilitate the environmental devastation that was Greater Sudbury took leadership; it took planning. It took vision.

It was a different time.

IN FOCUS



Little lake near the bypass

Bob Blaney likes to take photos of this little lake. "I keep stopping on the southwest bypass, at this little lake. It seems to 'pose' for me quite often," he said in an email. Northern Life welcomes submissions of local photography for publication on this page. Send high-resolution images to apickard@sudbury.com.

LETTERS

Letters to the editor should be exclusive to Northern Life. Include name, address and daytime phone number. Keep letters under 300 words. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. E-mail: editor@sudbury.com

Humboldt tragedy brings back horrific memories of 1951 bus crash in Coniston

As a youngster growing up in Coniston, I can identify with the people in Humboldt and what they are experiencing.

I was 11 years old in 1951 when the tragic train/bus accident happened in our town of 2,000 people.

My sisters were waiting for the 8:15 bus for Sudbury to go to work, and my father was just sitting down for his breakfast (he never took the bus, always walked home from the smelter).

My sisters suddenly ran in the house to declare that there had been a bad accident.

My father got up and ran out the door, my brothers and myself getting ready for school, also ran out after him.

It was -40 F and the air was misty and eerie and bitterly cold.

The site we experienced will never be forgotten — bodies strewn all over the snowy ground, it was an image that, as an 11 year old, I will never forget.

Helicopters were hovering above us, from the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail as that time it was considered the worst train accident in Canadian history.

These were all Inco workers coming off the graveyard shift,

who were probably sitting in the middle of the bus.

Nine were killed.

Our school friends who lived near the smelter, mostly Ukrainian and Polish, were not seriously injured, thank God.

The funeral, at Our Lady of Mercy Church, will always be remembered, as across the front of the Church there were five open caskets for the parishioners to pray for.

This was a tragedy that stayed with the people of Coniston for a long time.

It was an image that has been ingrained in my memory forever.

Tony Sottile
Sudbury

Sudburians will pay a high price for building a casino

I, as a medical doctor, have spoken out against the new casino going in on The Kingsway on the east end of Sudbury near subdivisions. Four to five per cent of our local citizens, who will make up the attendees, not "tourists," will become addicted and result in problems at work, and creating dysfunctional families here in Sudbury.

A theologian and a daughter of

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