



Saint John developer downplays retail aspect commercial proposal

Some retail developers are opposing Horizon Management's plan for mixed-use project for Ashburn Road

[CBC News](#) | 2016/02/24

A Saint John developer is arguing a proposed retail and commercial project will help boost shopping in the area and not "cannibalize" business from existing stores.

The proposed development, known as "The Crossing," would mix retail, commercial and recreational activities on a 73-hectare plot between Highway 1 and Ashburn Road.

Horizon Management Ltd. is behind the project. The provincial corporate registry lists Troy Northrup as the company's only director.

"I like to think of The Crossing as a community," said Joel Levesque, a spokesperson for Horizon Management.

"It would be a place where people live, work and play."

In its original pitch to city council, the developer touted the proposed construction of 500,000 square feet of new buildings, which would add millions to the city's property tax base.

Levesque said it would include "high-density residential housing" in the form of townhouses and condominiums, as well as walking trails, and speciality shops.

"Think of a nail salon perhaps, or a neighbourhood pharmacy, a bakery, a dry cleaner, a professional office like a dentist, and then some commercial development," said Levesque.

"The buildings are of high quality and are themed, so that they have a certain look or appearance to them. It'll be unlike anything seen in eastern Canada."

Horizon is considering non-industrial developments, such as distribution warehouses or courier businesses, which do not need to be close to the highway.

In addition there would "perhaps be a hotel cluster," public washrooms, an information centre, gas station and restaurant to attract travellers off the highway.

'The Crossing is designed to complement, not cannibalize any shopping that already exists.' - *Joel Levesque, spokesperson, Horizon Management Ltd.*

The plan has been referred to the Saint John Planning Advisory Committee, along with three letters of opposition.

The letters, written by the owners of Lancaster Mall on the city's west-side, and McAllister Place and Wal-Mart on the city's east-side, detail concerns about retail projects falling outside of the traditional retail zone.

But Levesque said this development is meant to enhance the retail district in the McAllister Mall area.

"The Crossing is designed to complement, not cannibalize any shopping that already exists," he said.

"There's going to be infrastructure ... to get people off the highway, get them into The Crossing area, and then make it easier for them to get into Rothesay Avenue, where they can patronize other services and businesses."

Studies on transportation impacts, environmental impacts, flood risks and a storm water drainage plan still need to be submitted to the city.

Marsh Creek, which runs through the property, is subject to flooding.

WSP Canada Inc., an engineering firm, completed a hydrological study for the site. It estimates the project will have no negative impact on flooding in the Marsh Creek watershed, and found over 400,000 cubic metres of water storage space on the site.

The development would use approximately 17,000 cubic metres of flood storage — a small fraction of what is available, said Levesque.

Levesque also says a provincial traffic study and city transportation study are both underway.

"We recognize that changes have to be made to make this work. This will not happen overnight," he said.

The project will have to go through a number of approvals, including a review by the city's planning advisory committee.

A public hearing is scheduled to be held on April 4.

