

WDGPH Orangeville Proposal Open House !



Health unit proposal unveiled WDGPH Open House.

The health unit held an open house in Orangeville on Monday (Jan. 30). Maybe prominent Orangeville citizen James May isn't turning over in his grave after all. Maybe he would be okay with Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) destroying the old saddlery he built, lived and died in on Broadway, one of a few buildings left in Orangeville that predate Confederation, to make way for a new public health office downtown.

"Perhaps James May was a person who embraced change. I don't think he ever expected his building to last forever," remarked Orangeville resident Wayne Townsend, curator of the Dufferin County Museum & Archives. "Although I work in the heritage business, I certainly don't mind change."

On January 30th, WDGPH held an open house in Orangeville to unveil its new building plans. Despite Heritage Orangeville's attempts to stave off demolition, town council granted WDGPH a permit to knock down May's saddlery structure, which was built in 1864. "It is going to make a statement, that is for sure," said Patricia Sproule Ward.

"I get they're trying to differentiate between a residential structure and an office building, but it does look big." The health unit needs a new office in Orangeville, as WDGPH feels the facility it is currently leasing at 71 Broadway is inadequate.

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Amanda Rayburn, chair of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH), shows off an architectural rendering of the agency's building plans. Photo by Chris Halliday

There is no elevator to access the second floor, clinic rooms are not accessible for those using wheelchairs, and the existing building presents severe space constraints. “It is non-accessible for any persons with disabilities.

“We really need more functioning spaces,” said Amanda Rayburn, chair of WDGPH. “We have to come to our capacity — and over capacity — we’re spreading out and we really need a better facility to deliver our services.”

According to WDGPH’s architectural consultant Paul Sapounzi, managing director of The Ventin Group, three different styles of architecture — Greek Revival, Italianate and Georgian — can be found downtown.

At this point, the health unit is leaning towards constructing a three-storey building of the Greek revival style, which would mimic the Mill Street branch of the nearby Orangeville library. Since it is early in the process, however, Sapounzi said WDGPH could end up constructing an Italianate.

“This is an institutional building, which should be in the same league as your Carnegie Library, the city hall, churches, other institutional buildings in the downtown,” Sapounzi said. “It should stand on its own.”

Some residents at the open house expressed concerns about how large the building was, as its projected height towers above the commercial stores beside it.

As Sapounzi explained, however, the building’s cornice actually exudes more historic heritage than the adjacent storefronts. “It may look out of place, but that is actually correct. (Cornices) were removed years ago for weather or pigeons or whatever,” Townsend said.

“Maybe it will actually encourage people to put the beautiful decorative tops back on their buildings.” As the largest urban area in Dufferin, Orangeville has undergone steady growth. In addition, the province’s Places to Grow Act projects Dufferin County’s population could increase 47 per cent to 80,000 by 2031.

The health unit has taken that into account, as its plans include a three-storey structure equipped to meet expansion needs. At this point, WDGPH plans to use the first two floors, and rent out the upper level until it is needed.

The demolition of May’s building is expected to take place in the spring; it is anticipated construction of the 20,000-square foot health office will be complete by early 2013.

“It is so important to our staff that they have an accessible, nice building to work in and for our clients to come in and access our (services),” Rayburn said. “I believe this is a really positive look for the streetscape.”

