

November 13, 2008

Toronto and East York Community Council
100 Queen St W
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

Dear Councillors:

Re: Queen Street West Fire Site – Developing a Community Improvement Plan

I am writing to you today to seek your support on the rebuilding process for six Victorian buildings that were lost to the tragic fire that occurred in my ward in February 2008.

Background

The buildings at 611 – 625 Queen Street West were part of the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District (HCD), which encompasses Queen Street West between Bathurst and Simcoe Streets. This is the city's first HCD in a commercial district, and street-related commercial uses are a key characteristic of the heritage buildings on Queen West.

This collection of two and three-story mixed commercial and residential buildings were home to about 26 residents, six businesses, and 125 jobs. Since the fire, I have been working with the residents, business owners and property owners to assist them in rebuilding what was lost to the fire.

As heritage buildings on one of the city's oldest commercial strips, the property taxes for these buildings were all subject to tax caps, so that the annual taxes payable were less than the full CVA taxes.

Through the process of working with the six property owners of these buildings in the aftermath of the fire, I have discovered that any new buildings constructed on the fire site would pay property taxes at the full CVA rate, and would be ineligible for capping protection.



The reality of the significant tax increases facing these property owners threatens the viability of redeveloping these properties with street-related commercial uses. The longer the fire site remains vacant, the more severe the social and economic impacts facing Queen West and the broader neighbourhood become. This is why it is in the City's interest to facilitate a timely and appropriate replacement of the lost fabric of this street.

Recommendation

In order to provide assistance to these property owners and help facilitate the rebuilding process, I would like to propose the development of a Community Improvement Plan for this area, as set out under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*. This is the only avenue for the City to provide financial assistance to support the new street-related commercial uses within the Heritage Conservation District.

Motion

In order to initiate this process, I would like to request that:

Toronto and East York Community Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, in consultation with the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer, to report on the feasibility of establishing a CIP to provide financial assistance for the redevelopment of the properties at 611- 625 Queen St West with ground floor commercial space and in a building form that is consistent with the Guidelines for the Queen West Heritage Conservation District.

I hope that you will provide your support on this initiative. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Adam Vaughan, Councillor
Ward 20, Trinity-Spadina

