

**629, 633, and 675 Eastern Avenue - Zoning By-law Amendment Application – Status Update**

<b>Date:</b>	May 29, 2015
<b>To:</b>	Toronto and East York Community Council
<b>From:</b>	Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District
<b>Wards:</b>	Ward 30 – Toronto-Danforth
<b>Reference Number:</b>	13-195390 STE 30 OZ

**SUMMARY**

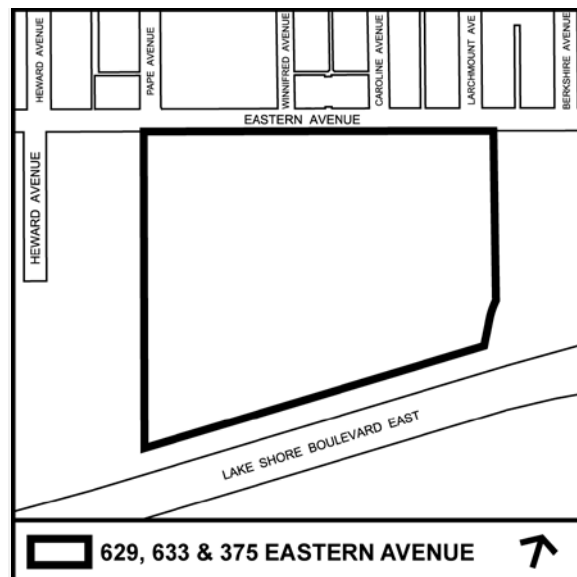
This application proposes redevelopment of the property located at 629, 633 and 675 Eastern Avenue. The proposal is to maintain approximately 16,540 square metres of existing space for film studio and production purposes and to construct approximately 75,632 square metres of new office/flex space, 7,292 square metres of hotel space, and 14,066 square metres of retail space.

This report provides a status update of issues under review in anticipation of a final report on the September 1, 2015 Toronto and East York Community Council agenda, subject to resolution of these issues.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The City Planning Division recommends:**

1. Subject to resolution of the issues outlined in this report, dated May 29, 2015, from the Director of Community Planning, Toronto and East York District, that notice for the public meeting under the Planning Act be given for the September 1, 2015 meeting of Toronto and East



York Community Council, according to the regulations of the Planning Act.

### **Financial Impact**

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

There is a long decision history for this site which is outlined in the Preliminary Staff Report for this application. The report was considered at Toronto and East York Community Council, at its meeting on November 19, 2013. A copy of this report can be found at: <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-63123.pdf>

Since that time, there has been progress with respect to the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) of Toronto's employment lands. The MCR was completed and Official Plan Amendment No. 231 was adopted by Council in December 2013. On July 9, 2014 the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing approved, with some modifications the majority of OPA No. 231. The OPA is under appeal to the OMB. It should be noted that the Ministerial decision on OPA No.231 was withheld for policy and land use designations changes applying to lands located within the flood plain of the Lower Don SPA, of which this site is a part; however, as the proposal complies with the Employment policies of the Official Plan in-force at the time of the application, an amendment to the SPA is not required. City Planning staff have met with staff from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to discuss this site as well as others impacted by SPA.

### **STATUS UPDATE**

While it was anticipated that a final report on the rezoning application would be ready for consideration by City Council prior to the summer recess, there are still matters which the applicant is refining and finalizing.

The major elements of the application has not changed: the retention of studio uses on site with a mix of other employment uses included office, hotel and some retail. The proposal is for 6 new buildings alongside the existing film studio and production uses. New buildings will include: two 10-storey office buildings, two 4-storey office buildings with retail at grade along Eastern Avenue, one 4-storey above grade parking structure with retail at grade along Lake Shore Boulevard, one 9-storey building with retail at grade, above grade parking and a hotel. The breakdown of floor area for each of the proposed uses is highlighted in Table 1 below:

**TABLE 1: Proposed Uses for 629, 633 and 675 Eastern Avenue**

<b>Proposed Uses</b>	<b>Square Metres</b>	<b>Square Feet</b>
Office	75,632	814,095
Retail	14,066	151,405
Hotel	7,292	78,490
Existing Studio & Office	16,540	178,035
<b>Total</b>	<b>113,530</b>	<b>1,222,026</b>

The redevelopment of the site presents several technical challenges including but not limited to its location within the flood plain of the Lower Don Special Policy Area (SPA) and connections to the larger transportation network. The applicant's proposal also provides for a north/south road through a public easement connecting Eastern Avenue and Lake Shore Boulevard south of Caroline Avenue.

City Planning is supportive of the rezoning in principle; however, there are technical issues to be resolved before the Division can report out with a final recommendation. While some issues can be dealt with through a Holding provision in the zoning bylaw, there are issues requiring resolution prior to a final report. These include the phasing of development and the transportation and parking implications, timing of park land dedication, and zoning provisions for the protection of studio uses on site.

### **Community Consultation**

There has been a series of consultations that have happened with respect to this file. Prior to submitting an application, the proponent held an open house in May 2013 on the site to inform community members and other stakeholders about the proposal. On October 3, 2013, City Planning staff attended an open house hosted by the Ward Councillor where the applicant displayed some drawings and answered preliminary questions about the proposal.

A City Planning hosted community consultation meeting was held on January 27, 2014 at the Revival 629 studios on site. Per Council direction, the notice area was expanded beyond the usual 120 metre area and 6,772 notices were mailed out. There were approximately 75 community members in attendance. Staff made a brief presentation outlining the agenda for the meeting and providing the planning framework for the site, and SmartCentres presented the proposal to the community. The presentations were followed by an open forum (Q&A) session. There was general support for the proposal in particular because of the retention of the studio employment use on the site. Concerns raised included:

- Traffic infiltration and impact on the local streets;
- Concerns about how proposed private open space would function;
- Mix of uses – the right mix of hotel, retail and office and how can these support the studio use on site;

- Parking and associated vehicle storage – whether there is there sufficient parking on site to support the studio and other uses;
- Transition of built form from the residential character of the north side of Eastern Avenue to the development proposal on the south side; and
- A desire to see more green space as part of the proposal.

A second community consultation meeting is being scheduled for June 2015. This second community consultation meeting will provide an opportunity for the community to understand the revisions and progress that has been made so far and how the applicant has addressed concerns.

In addition to the broader community consultations, the proposal was discussed with the Toronto Film, Television & Digital Media Board (Film Board) on May 12, 2014. The Film Board is an executive group with 14 industry members and six City Councillors that provides advice to the Mayor and City Council on matters of concern and gives voice to Toronto's interests on local, provincial and national issues. Concerns around parking and security for the studio were raised as critical to ensure the viability of the studio component of this project. Further meetings with representatives of the film community were held on July 7, 2014 to discuss parking for the studio and on May 13, 2015 to review the revised proposal.

### **Studio Uses**

The intent of the redevelopment is to foster an employment environment that maintains physical production activity while providing for digital media in support of the studio function that exists on site, with hotel, office and retail/services. Revival 629 studios is rebuilding and improving the existing sound stages of the former Toronto Film Studios site at 629 Eastern Avenue and recently a major visual effects studio, Pixomondo Inc., moved into the renovated spaces creating approximately 30 new jobs for Toronto with a potential for expansion.

The zoning bylaw will be crafted to allow for uses currently not permitted in the I2 zoning but which could complement and support the studio use on site. Uses such as *office, film and media training facility, artist studio and software development and processing* would be permitted and heavier industrial uses currently permitted as-of-right would be removed, including *metal wares factory, printing plant, packaging plant and plastic products factory*.

City Planning is also working with the Film Commissioner and Director, Entertainment Industries, to ensure the zoning definition for the studio use clearly distinguishes between spaces for physical production and other types of film uses such as post-production and digital media. Concerns about how the studio can retain a secure perimeter as well as adequate and appropriately located parking for studio trailers, trucks and employees are still issues which need resolution.

## **Parking**

The issue of parking was identified early on as a challenge to this employment site, with a particular emphasis on the needs of the studio uses. While City staff are generally supportive of the parking ratio for the studio uses and the applicant's intent to implement an active parking management scheme, representatives from the Film Board and other industry representatives continue to have concerns. This group has articulated that the amount of space reserved for film workers and parking for trailers and large trucks may not be sufficient if there is more than one production on site at the same time. The applicant is working to provide more detail on the parking allocation for the studio and an update to active parking management scheme, which maintains supply as development is phased in over time.

## **Site Access & Traffic Management**

In addition to the issue of site access with respect to a secure perimeter for the studio, City staff remain concerned about the number of vehicular access points along Lake Shore Boulevard and Eastern Avenue. Concerns are with the space between driveways along Eastern Avenue and the number of interruptions to the bike lane on Eastern Avenue as well as the Lower Don Recreation Trail adjacent to Lake Shore Boulevard. These issues tie in to ensuring good pedestrian and cycling connections through the site as well as implication on traffic infiltration to the neighbourhood to the north of this site. A complete review of the most recent update to the Transportation Study prepared by the applicant's consultants and received by City Planning on April 1, 2015 is still underway.

## **Parkland**

Due to challenges that an on-site parkland dedication presents, the applicant has agreed to provide an off-site park. Directly north of this site at 652 Eastern Avenue is a property currently owned by Toronto Hydro. While not yet finalized, City Legal along with staff from Parks, Forestry and Recreation will work with the applicant to determine how the site can be purchased from Toronto Hydro and transferred to the City for the purposes of a neighbourhood parkette.

## **Flood Proofing**

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority has indicated further information is required with respect to flood proofing. The subject property is subject to flooding in a Regional Storm Event, and is located within the Lower Don Special Policy Area (SPA).

While the flood-proofing of the site to the regional flood elevation appears to be feasible, the larger issue is the provision of safe ingress/egress to the development via the surrounding public road network. In addition, consideration of whether the proposed additional office and hotel uses, combined with the removal of the potentially contaminating activities from the underlying Industrial zoning permissions, results in similar or reduced risk compared to the existing zoning.

These must be acceptable to the City of Toronto in the context of the City's Risk Specific Plan for Flooding and will be reviewed with the City's Office of Emergency Management.

### **Next Steps**

A community consultation meeting will be held to update the community and work will continue with the applicant to address issues. Provided these matters are addressed, notice will be given in early August for a September 1, 2015 Toronto and East York Community Council statutory meeting to consider a Final Report.

### **CONTACT**

Angela Stea, Senior Planner  
Tel. No. (416) 392-7215  
Fax No. (416) 392-1330  
E-mail: [astea@toronto.ca](mailto:astea@toronto.ca)

### **SIGNATURE**

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Gregg Lintern, MCIP, RPP  
Director, Community Planning  
Toronto and East York District

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