



November 15, 2017

10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Attention: Nancy Martins

Dear Councillor Shiner and Members, Planning and Growth Management Committee

RE: PG24.10 Midtown in Focus: Proposals Report

This is to provide preliminary comments on the Proposals Report, which we are pleased to acknowledge is a step forward in planning and managing growth and its implications in the Yonge Eglinton area. We support the intent and general direction of the Proposals Report and the Recommendations in the staff report, and have some specific comments on a number of items, which are intended to be helpful and constructive.

The plan provides an informative planning vision for Yonge Eglinton that can effectively engage the attention of the diversity of decision-makers at the outset, as over time, many decisions by many people will incrementally unlock the area's future outcome. We also find the Proposed Plan to be highly readable, which is significant, as the plan needs to be an informative 'reader' that can influence thinking in the early stages of development - providing the vocabulary for discussion and decisions, rather than a boring statutory instrument that is primarily read in response to a development initiative that has already crystallised.

[1] YESP BOUNDARY CHANGES

There are a couple of boundary changes in the Proposals report which represent changes from the earlier documents,

a) Mt. Pleasant Cemetery is removed, although the reasons for doing so are unclear. This area offers a substantial open space amenity that is worthy of attention.

b) The Plan has been extended to include the eastern side of Bayview (Leaside) and also incorporates Howard Talbot Park. As such the part of the Plan dealing with community facilities should also include Leaside High School, as it addresses community purposes interlaced into other school facilities.

c) Some boundary changes appear to be related to current site-specific considerations, rather than the broad brushstrokes of a long-term vision. Does this risk limiting the Plan, to a degree, to as-built planning?

[2] GROWTH CENTRE BOUNDARY CHANGES

The supporting diagrams and statements of this Plan make the changes to the Growth Centre's boundary more understandable than the previous delineation which never articulated what the line meant, on either side.

[3] REFERENCES TO 'CONCEPTUAL'

a) It should be clarified as to what is meant by 'conceptual'. For instance, the 'conceptual' extension of Dunfield Avenue north of Eglinton Avenue appears to have been thwarted by the 89-101 Roehampton Avenue proposal whose outdoor amenity space has been positioned in direct conflict with Dunfield Avenue 'conceptual' alignment. This development is still subject to further considerations, and relocating the amenity space to the site's central area would preserve the prospect of the 'conceptual' road alignment.

b) 'Conceptual' school locations need to be included in the Plan. At present, Yonge Eglinton's education capacity is breaching the meniscus level, resulting in the ubiquitous postings about denial of education services in the area. Future school sites are not indicated in the Plan beyond references to 'satellite school facilities'. Meanwhile, population growth is just now starting to be realised, as more and more buildings are completed. At a minimum, new schools need to be given a presence in the Plan. It may make sense to include an additional map that identifies potential school 'localities', in a fashion broadly mimicking the identification of 'priority park areas'. The 'special study' areas should be noted as including future school considerations, for instance, the decking areas over the transit cut and the Davisville yards.

c) The indication of 'conceptual' squares and the through-block connection matrices should be similarly applied to bicycle paths in order to produce a more extensive lattice of fine-grained local routes, in addition to any city-wide network. For instance, Belsize Drive is strategically located to provide neighbourhood cycling value as it connects various community services and amenities while providing a scenic ride, meanwhile, the street's chicanes discourage vehicular through-traffic.

[4] NEIGHBOURHOOD TRANSITIONS

The Plan identifies areas where Apartment and Mixed Use designations will be extended into Residential designations. Appropriate enhancements along transition edges need to be expressed, as these are essential. We would expect the Plan to clearly state these, and similarly, the identification of potential future lanes. At present, the Plan vaguely states: "4.2.1(b) Eglinton East Apartment High Street will continue to be a residential neighbourhood ...Landscaped setbacks will maintain and enhance the open and generously landscaped neighbourhood character".

Please note: The current Apartment proposal for 492-494 Eglinton Avenue East is not providing any landscaped edge. This is instead being pushed off, presuming that Midtown in Focus is planning a further intrusion into the Neighbourhood to establish these lanes.

[5] REDPATH REVISITED

'Redpath Revisited' needs to be revisited. This is an important north-south roadway in the Growth Centre's circulation network involving, cars, pedestrians, bicycles, and buses. We cannot foresee how this narrow street is going to accommodate the characteristics that the Plan describes.

[6] TEMPORARY WAYS (FOOTPATHS)

The Plan refers to 'temporary enhancements' and other interim considerations. This needs to be extended to sidewalk diversions and hoardings associated with construction projects which represent a significant, extensive and protracted occurrence in the public realm. It's a problem that needs to be encoded in the Plan in order to provide the prominent attention it deserves, and kick-start immediate 'implementation' as otherwise the present conditions will simply endure. For more details see <http://arris.ca/sidewalk-measures>

[7] LIGHTING

Lighting gets mentioned in terms of 'appropriate', 'adequate', 'pedestrian-scaled' and as well as 'sunlight'. It does not get addressed in terms of:

- a) Excessive lighting of vehicular driveways and truck loading areas. Where these massive portals encounter the sidewalks, at night screaming-bright light intrudes upon the ambiance of the public realm.
- b) Pedestrian scaled lighting means more frequent lamp posts with lower light-levels located on lower lamp posts. This requires underground servicing to feed such arrangements, and these need to be incorporated into the electrical utility's ongoing service works in order to be cost-effective and hence doable.

In the absence of any future sidewalk plan, utility poles are currently being installed in the midst of sidewalk areas which are expected to be widened in the future. If we are to see an astute public realm outcome, then the incremental work beforehand needs to be comprehensively orchestrated.

[8] RETAIL STRUCTURE

Retail considerations have been incorporated into this new Plan, and even more should be included.

- a) Access to second-storey retail, services, and offices should be referred to as a common element, whereas the Plan limits mention to only internal accesses within an individual big-box multi-level store: "3.4.5(c) restrict retail stores with a gross floor area greater than 3,500m² at grade".
- b) In general, if we are looking to expand the public realm (and the semi-public realm) then comprehensive connectivity is required between the principal levels near and at grade. It should be considered that in comparison with the existing practice of narrow stairways leading up to individual second-storey enterprises as found in older main street buildings, this Plan is about full-block and half-block Mid-rise Mixed Use buildings. Delisle Court provides a good example of creating a common access to its second-floor space offerings.
- c) Likewise, big-box stores should be described as sleeved behind smaller street-fronting premises to eliminate things like the 'Shoppers Drug Mart' (SDM) effect. SDM provides a bland expanse of storefront, whilst pushing its secondary tenants to the rear of the floor plate in order to create in-store foot traffic patterns of movement. The Plan should take propriety over foot traffic arrangements to ensure better-activated streetscapes.
- d) Furthermore, considering the amount of displacement of the existing retail structure and the introduction of new retail 'raw' floor plates... a substantial retail restructuring is in the wind. Some consideration needs to be given to providing a comprehensive overarching retail

strategy. This is not unlike what the “big-boys” do with places like Yorkdale, and it is an integral part of planning practice in other places such as Australia.

[9] REPLACEMENT

a) 'Replacement' is currently applied to housing and services, and this same practice should be extended to retail. We've recently been through the experience of a vast amount of the existing retail space on Yonge Street north of Davisville being temporarily gutted in anticipation of construction. Meanwhile, the Allure's ground floor stood empty for roughly two years trolling for a big-box tenant, before installing smaller shop slots. When an area has a reduction in available retail space then the new construction projects should be tailored on completion to offer small floor plate tenancies – somewhat similar to the practice of residential replacement.

b) As regards 'Residential Replacement', this should be revised to include the ability of displaced tenants in other projects to locate in newly completed replacement units whenever units are not taken up by the original tenants. Frankly, a lot of tenants don't return because they've found alternative accommodations in the interim. To effectively 'bank' these replacement units would support other 'replaced' tenants efforts to remain in the community.

[10] BICYCLE-ORIENTED BUILDINGS

Bicycle usage needs to be considered as a main-stream element within new buildings, where bicycles are readily accessible by means of the main lobby, rather than as an around-the-back-and-down proposition (hurdle) and the various locations of dubious storage. The number of surface spots is useful to visitors, as too are bike-share facilities.

[11] BAYVIEW LEASIDE VILLAGE EXTENSION (NORTH)

Information in the Plan about the northern extension of the Bayview-Leaside Village Character Area is a bit scant, which may arise from it being a new extension to the Plan's boundary. The Plan calls for this segment of Bayview to be designated Mixed Use. There are heritage concerns, however meanwhile, there is a current Application to be addressed that proposes to demolish a double-duplex, and instead build a pair of semi-detached homes. This represents de-intensification where intensification is intended. If this were to occur then this segment of Bayview Avenue would be destined to a protracted condition of instability and disarray. It is not a matter of freezing the double-duplexes in time, rather a concern that this pattern of built-form may fall through the cracks, and the segment become a long-term 'transitional' area.

It needs to be explained how the Plan will effectively guide this segment through to an appropriate outcome, recognizing the divergent potential courses involved.

In closing we thank Terry Mills, ARRIS for his intense and thorough analysis of the newly released document. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on, and hopefully enhance the long-anticipated Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan, and thank staff for their work.

Yours truly,

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The Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization comprised of over 30 member organizations. Its members, all residents' associations, include at least 170,000 Toronto residents within their boundaries. The residents' associations that make up FoNTRA believe that Ontario and Toronto can and should achieve better development. Its central issue is not *whether* Toronto will grow, but *how*. FoNTRA believes that sustainable urban regions are characterized by environmental balance, fiscal viability, infrastructure investment and social renewal.