



July 9, 2020

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

RE: PH15.6 Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods

Dear Chair Ana Bailao and Members of the Planning and Housing Committee,

FoNTRA includes over 30 residents associations in the area bounded by Bloor, Sheppard, Bathurst and the Don Valley. Our member associations represent older neighbourhoods that currently are permitted the full range of housing typologies as well as suburban areas of North York, and two planned communities, Leaside and Don Mills.

FoNTRA supports the Yellowbelt initiative and participated in the City/ULI/Ryerson exploration of the issues and opportunities that led up to the work program set out in the report, "Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods." The report provides a good start to the comprehensive work program required to begin tackling the many complex issues to be resolved. We see the workplan as only the beginning of this important initiative.

The FoNTRA area includes a number of mixed use and apartment neighbourhoods, including Yonge and Eglinton, where the objective of the Midtown in Focus plan was to help ensure the high density residential area was liveable for its residents. We participate in the ongoing work to meet this goal. The intensification of neighbourhoods is a much needed alternative to increasing residential density in such areas.

FoNTRA's older neighbourhoods provide examples of how neighbourhoods across the City can evolve. They are complete communities, with a range of types of housing. There is good transit, and they are walking neighbourhoods with good retail and services and jobs nearby. However, despite the range of housing typologies permitted, we are only seeing new development in the form of much larger replacement single family housing, with some semis and townhouses. Such housing, often approved through the Committee of Adjustment and TLAB, is not intensification and does not always fit with the character of the neighbourhood.

We are pleased to see that the Workplan includes the following FoNTRA priorities:

- That the Yellowbelt initiative be undertaken in conjunction with building "complete communities". These are walkable communities with good transit, local shopping, schools, trees, parks, services and places to work. Complete communities can be more attractive to investment in new housing types, as well as to help meet the challenges raised by COVID and climate change demands. Priority must be given to

improving infrastructure, with priority given to transit in Etobicoke and Scarborough, such as through adding bus lanes.

- That new development fits with area character. New housing typologies can and must be designed to relate to the key aspects of the area character, such as prevailing building forms, heritage buildings, tree canopy, provision of and green front yards. Updated Official Plan policies and zoning regulations may be required to provide the framework for some areas of Yellowbelt changes, such as on major roads. Policies and bylaw regulations must be supported with area specific design guidelines to reflect key character matters. Or development permit bylaws could be used to combine zoning and development guidelines that can provide a simpler and faster approval process. Programs to protect mature tree and encourage more tree planting must be enhanced.

- That the current barriers be eliminated that prevent or discourage the building of the range of housing typologies we see in older neighbourhoods that continue to be permitted but no longer built. The building of additional typologies will help provide more housing choices and more affordable housing. As well as new as-of-right zoning permissions that permit multiple units, this will involve such steps as eliminating development charges on new low-rise projects in neighbourhoods and the re-establishing of federal and provincial social housing programs that provide more affordable housing, such as co-ops.

- That there be extensive consultation with the communities involved. Area residents provide an important voice. They know their neighbourhoods, what works, and what is needed. Local working groups should be established to provide advice. Once the new regulations are in place, the Committee of Adjustment will have an important role in dealing with minor variances, that sometimes are not so minor. It will be important that residents will have a real voice in the hearings both at the Committee and TLAB. FoNTRA has been advocating for much needed improvements to their operations to deal with the current barriers faced by residents,

We also note that FoNTRA has advised City staff as to concerns with the survey process used to obtain information from residents associations. There was a lack of clarity around which associations were asked to participate, who was representing them in their responses, and the deadline for submissions.

FoNTRA looks forward to continuing its participation in this important initiative.

Yours truly,

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Cc: Mayor John Tory, City Councillors and Gregg Lintern, Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning