

June 11, 2021

ATTN: City Clerk

CC: Councillor Ana Bailao, Chair and Committee Members

RE: Planning and Housing Committee Consideration of the Final Report for Geary Works Planning Study and City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment and Zoning Amendment

We (TAS) are the owners of the lands at 259 Geary Avenue. We have been an active participant during the Geary Works Study as a stakeholder and property owner, and we appreciate the thoughtful and hard work the City has done thus far to further support the growth of Geary Avenue.

On January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021, TAS submitted a letter (included herein) to Thomas Rees offering input on several items proposed in the study. We thank Mr. Rees and City staff for considering and implementing some of our ideas.

For context, TAS has expressed to the City our future redevelopment plans for the lands at 259 Geary for additional office, retail and commercial space. This redevelop plan would include an application to allow for density in addition to what is proposed in the draft Official Plan Amendment and Zoning Amendment being considered today.

The purpose of this letter is to offer TAS' formal position on three items in the draft by law that in our opinion negatively impact the future growth of our lands at 259 Geary Ave.

- 1. Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Open Space (POPS) "Privately owned, publicly-accessible spaces (POPS) will be encouraged as part of applications for new development along Geary Avenue, and in particular at the location generally identified on Map 2 at 259 Geary Avenue" (Draft OPA, Guiding Principles, Sec #3)**

This policy specifically identifies our lands as a location for a POPS. While we are aligned with the intent to create public gathering space on this site as part of the future redevelopment, identifying the west portion of the site is too prescriptive. This will unnecessarily restrict and limit the master plan process by tightening the site and limiting where the commercial/office space can be constructed. TAS would suggest the language be changed to "specifically identifies the west end of 259 Geary..." to "specifically identifies a portion of the lands at 259 Geary Avenue as a planned location for a new POPS".

- 2. Setbacks from Dufferin "New development on corner properties with frontage on Ossington Avenue, Dovercourt Road, Bartlett Street, Salem Avenue North, and Dufferin Street will generally provide a minimum 7.0-metre wide publicly-accessible pedestrian zone" (Draft OPA, Guiding Principles, Sec #9)**

A 7m setback along the east portion of the lands will be limiting to the master plan and design of future office space. The employment users that are drawn to this neighbourhood are often in the creative or tech space; these industries command office space with larger than average floor plates. The intent of our redevelopment is to design to accommodate and foster this type of economic development. Limiting the developable area on this site by 7m setbacks to the east and requiring a POPs to the west (see above) shrink the amount of office space we could otherwise achieve. These overly prescriptive measures will limit the economic development achievable here. We encourage the City to allow for a reduction from the 7m setback proposed off Dufferin.

3. “New development within the lands outlined on Map 1 will generally:... have a maximum height of 4 storeys and 18 metres” (Draft OPA, Guiding Principles, Sec #8)

*And*

“Amend zoning label E 2.0” (Draft ZBA, Diagram 2)

While we understand the intent to maintain Geary as a neighbourhood and avoid high density development, we also believe there is an opportunity to subtly increase density allowances to allow for growth. This is justifiable based on the growing market demand for creative and flex office space in this node. Our market findings have indicated that anywhere from 6-10 storeys of creative office space would be absorbed by users. Industries ranging from tech, media, arts and music and IT are gravitating towards this neighbourhood and we believe that growth should be facilitated. We also understand that the City has indicated through the Geary Works Study meetings that the TAS land at 259 Geary may be viewed differently than other sites and could accommodate more height and/or density, due to its unique size and location. We would encourage the City to consider increasing the FSI and/or height maximums on this property and in general.

We appreciate both the opportunity to participate in the Geary Works Study and your consideration of this letter today.

Kind regards,



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January 8, 2021

Mr. Thomas Rees  
Community Planning  
City of Toronto  
City Hall, 100 Queen Street West  
18<sup>th</sup> Floor, East Tower  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mr. Rees,

Thank you for the ongoing invitation to attend and participate in the Geary Works consultation meetings. We (TAS) are the owners of the lands at 259 Geary Avenue. As a stakeholder and property owner, we appreciate the thoughtful and hard work the City has done thus far to further support the growth of Geary Avenue.

Given the information presented and the City's open request for feedback, we thought it would be an appropriate time to formally offer our thoughts and ideas on the work to date. Our feedback is meant to facilitate discussion between ourselves and the City. Our hope is that we can contextualize some of the potential recommendations and summarize why we believe they would have a positive or negative impact on the overall growth of the Geary community, based on our position as an existing landlord and future developer of this site.

**1. "Allow a broader range of non-residential uses that encourages and supports an organic evolution of businesses and cultural enterprises (SASP, ZBA)" (Page 25)**

TAS Comment: We support this line of thinking and would encourage the City to create flexibility in the permitted uses to allow for a broadened range of commercial and employment uses. Specifically, we would encourage adding retail as a permitted use across Geary Ave and creating greater flexibility (or eliminating entirely) for the size restrictions currently in place for restaurant uses.

The future development of the 259 Geary site will include both new development and the redevelopment and rehabilitation of the existing Brick warehouse space. This space, located on the corner of Geary and Dufferin, is well suited for local retail space as well as restaurant and entertainment/cultural uses that would further the organic growth of the Geary corridor.

Currently, these uses are not permitted without an amendment to By-law 569-2013. Retail and restaurant uses are becoming the heart of the Geary Ave community. We believe that land and business owners should not be subject to a zoning by-law application to allow for these intuitive and natural uses along this street.

**2. "Allow front yard patios, even using required parking spaces; reduce restrictions on patio size" (page 79)**

TAS Comment: We would strongly encourage the added flexibility for patio space along Geary Ave. Patios create better flexibility for restaurant tenants and allow them to operate at an added capacity well into the colder seasons. This has become particularly important given the restrictions imposed on small restaurant owners during COVID in 2020.

Additionally, the activation that comes from patios and its positive impact on the public realm is deeply in line with the goals and vision for this community. Patios have the ability to blend public and private space and create a sense of place for the community. We would heavily encourage the City to provide the flexibility to facilitate them.

**3. “Apply a front angular plane to new development on the south side of Geary Avenue.” (page 63)**

TAS Comment: We strongly discourage the implementation of an angular plane as a mechanism to maintain sunlight in this case. Angular planes are meant to be used as a tool to control the over build of sensitive, particularly residential, uses. In this case, an angular plane enforced on the south side of Geary (a narrow strip of land as it is) would severely limit the ability to design viable employment space of any substantial size. The objective instead should be to encourage employment growth and the development of creative office space to further enable the growth this corridor is already seeing.

We would ask that the City consider eliminating the potential angular plane recommendation and instead implement a requirement to produce shadow studies for an application for any proposed development. This would allow the City to manage the shadow impacts of any new development without creating a blanket policy that is likely to severely limit future employment growth anywhere on the south side of Geary.

**4. “Provide for gentle intensification on non-residential uses” (page 65)**

TAS Comment: For context, 259 Geary Ave is zoned Employment Industrial (E2.0 (x312)) Zone with a maximum non-residential density of 2.0 times lot area and a maximum height of 18.0 metres in City-Wide Toronto Zoning By-law 569-2013.

We understand there is appetite to subtly increase density allowances to allow for growth. We believe this is justifiable based on the growing market demand for creative and flex office space in this node. Our market findings have indicated that anywhere from 6-10 storeys of creative office space would be absorbed by users. Industries ranging from tech, media, arts and music and IT are gravitating towards this neighbourhood and we believe that growth should be facilitated. We would encourage the City to consider increasing the FSI and/or height maximums on this property and in general.

**5. “Consider new parkland acquisition at south end of Lightbourn Avenue” (page 45)**

TAS Comment: TAS supports the intent to expand and provide for public gathering and green space. We are requesting further clarification on the above point regarding an acquisition of land for parkland at the south end of Lightbourn. We are the owners of the land at the south end of Lightbourn, and therefore would like to express our concern at the suggestion of an acquisition. We would like to formally state we are not supportive of any form of parkland acquisition of our land. However, as mentioned above, we echo the City’s desire to implement more community amenities and gathering space and expect to provide private public space as part of the future development of this site. Our preliminary development plans have been heavily focused on providing for public gathering space and greenery (this has been shared with the City). We would be happy to work with the City staff to determine the best form of public space for the community and how it might be integrated into our future development plans.



Finally, we would like to thank the City for its ongoing work on the Geary Works planning study and for inviting us to participate in the process. It is our hope that the above points be considered for implementation into the future planning framework and any area-specific policy. We look forward to continued consultation and engagement with the City and the community.

Kind regards,

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