

Sutton

GROUP

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AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER BROKER

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LIFE CYCLE OF A CHURCH AND THE PROPOSED ZONING IMPACT

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Harvey Sawh and I have had the privilege to work with numerous churches of various denominations and ethnicities over the past 20 years. During that time we have worked within city guidelines in the various boroughs to locate churches in industrial, residential and commercial zones.

The life cycle of a church is unique and is fully dependent on its members to initiate, support financially and maintain its various community based programs. In most cases a minister armed with a vision for a specific community and the blessing of his head office embarks on establishing a church in that community. He usually starts off with very little finances and a handful of people. One of his first priority is to find a place to worship. He goes to the other churches, local library, community centre seeking space to rent. He is not in a position to purchase a church facility. He may find a church willing to give him some time on Sundays from 2 – 5 p.m. and maybe a couple of hours on one other evening of the week. He excitedly signs a contract with the host church, erects a sign on the allotted signage and begins his work of reaching out in that community. Within a 3 – 5 years period he grows to about 70 – 100 people, sometimes up to 200. During that time with frugal use of the donations, monies are set aside towards a building fund. As the church grows, space sharing becomes a problem and he cannot initiate further community programs because he has limited time at the host church. This small church most times decides at that point to purchase their own facility. These churches find their first home in industrial units, because that is all they can afford financially. They would retain an architect who would secure an occupancy permit from the City and then they would commence worship. Over the next 5 – 10 years they concentrate on furnishing the unit, paying their mortgage etc. and reaching the community with other programs. As they grow, eventually it is time to move again and they may purchase a free standing industrial building. Again they would seek city approvals. The presence of a church in a light industrial area offers security to the adjacent building since the church members are present on Sundays and the evenings when industries are closed. As well during the day the joining industrial owners use the church parking to accommodate some of their vehicles.

As time progresses, an existing church located in the nearby residential area comes up for sale. The church located in the industrial building seizes the opportunity to return back to the residential neighborhood and purchases the church building. They would in turn sell their industrial building to another congregation. Sometimes the church building purchased may be too small for the new congregation and an addition is required. Again they would secure proper building permits and complete the work.

Another 10-15 years later, with sufficient equity in their building and extra resources they would purchase a parcel of vacant land. Most of these vacant lands would be zoned industrial, residential or agricultural. They would build a new facility that meets all of their requirements including sufficient parking. This church will now continue to serve the community for the next 20-50 years before they start dwindling in size or start new churches in other areas.

In Toronto, there are hundreds of churches in different stages of the above process. The fact that based on finances, a church can start from renting to owning an industrial unit, then move to a freestanding industrial building, then to a church in a residential zone and then onto building on vacant lands is a reflection of the city's foresight in allowing places of worship in these various zones. The city has seen the enormous positive impact churches have on the community. As the city grows, the tasks of churches become more challenging and closer partnering with the city is necessary. Traffic and parking has become a concern for many of the members administering these community outreach programs.

Under this new report, places of worship would not be a permitted use as of right in industrial, residential, and certain institutional zones. The enactment of this new report would stifle growth of new churches, stagnate growth in the smaller churches and stop the flow of monies to community outreach programs.

I hope this committee would accept staff report regarding a harmonized zoning bylaw but segments of the report pertaining to places of worship should be subject to the following changes:

Places of worship be a permitted use in all zones "as of right."

The parking ratio be 10 spaces per 100sq. m. of worship area.

Yours respectfully,

Harvey Sawh