

TE 28.2.21

T O R O N T O A R C H I T E C T U R A L C O N S E R V A N C Y



Branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

2013-12-16

Mayor and members Toronto City Council

Re: TE 28.2 Request for Direction – 266-270 King Street West and 274-322 King Street West-Zoning Amendment Application (Ward 20)

The Toronto Architectural Conservancy is asking Toronto City Council to oppose this development which has been prematurely sent to the OMB. Our key objection is the failure to integrate the four designated buildings into the development. We would also like Council to search its portfolio of properties to find an alternate site for the development if the project is unable to be realized without sacrifice of the legacy of past generations.

Every generation leaves its built legacy.

David Mirvish has said a lot about the Frank Gehry designed project for King St. constituting the Mirvish family legacy.

The heritage laws now in effect in Toronto (and throughout Ontario) were passed in the sixties and seventies—a time when urban renewal meant urban removal. Similar laws were crafted around the world to enable communities to grow and thrive without destroying the legacy of previous generations.

In Toronto we have become expert here at combining vibrant new design with traditional buildings to create our most urbane places. It is what we do best—in fact we can legitimately say we showed the world how it's done; the example of York Square also before you being an internationally precedent setting example.

Toronto builds best by addition not subtraction. Major cultural projects like The National Ballet School, The Art Gallery of Ontario, The Royal Ontario Museum, and Koerner Hall have all expertly and gracefully combined new and old. Housing projects like Dundas-Sherbourne and the Hydro Block did it. Big commercial projects like Scotia Plaza and Commerce Court did it, too. Almost everywhere you look in Toronto you can see a layered approach to city building. It is Toronto's other "better way". This project takes Toronto a giant step backwards.

Toronto also pioneered Doors Open in North America. The first honorary chair of Doors Open was David Mirvish, invited because of his family's history of preservation and sensitive infill, including not only the Royal Alex and Princess of Wales theatres, but all their buildings along King Street. The Mirvish family have made wonderful contributions to our city. That is a legacy that should be cherished, because of his family's

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involvement, but also because conservation honours the legacy of all the families who built all of those buildings.

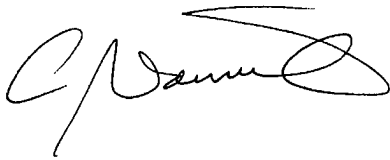
Mr. Mirvish is now arguing that his family will be better remembered by razing most of what his father spent a lifetime conserving in order to create a trio of new buildings by architect Frank Gehry. We find that position puzzling to say the least. Rather, it represents a glaring change in direction for the family, and runs against the grain of the very kind of city building Toronto does best.

Frank Gehry has built many, many projects that integrate new and old. In fact, the project that made him famous started with an ordinary house that he turned into something extraordinary. Here in Toronto, Gehry, reworked the AGO with great results.

It is incredible that these two figures stood before Toronto East York Community Council on November 19 and maintained with straight faces that the only way forward is to sacrifice the past. Their own portfolios argue against it.

Toronto knows better than almost any other city that projects and cities are better when the past is woven into the future. It is an approach that yields great places, and respects the legacy of all Toronto's city builders, from modest unknowns to famous international stars.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Nasmith', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Catherine Nasmith
President