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April 24, 2014

Nancy Martins
Secretariat, Planning and Growth Committee
City of Toronto
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Ms. Martins:

The new Residential Apartment Commercial (RAC) Zone in Pape-Cosburn Neighbourhood

We are writing to support the proposal to approve the new RAC zone and its application to the apartment buildings in the Pape-Cosburn neighbourhood. Our support is based on our recent work with community residents and organizations in this neighbourhood. Both our research and on-the-ground community engagement have provided us with a good understanding of the challenges people face around accessing health and social services and community-based programs; as well as, the potential positive impact that this new zoning would have on strategies to address these challenges.

A few years ago, South Riverdale Community Health Centre (SRCHC) expanded our catchment area to include residents living north of Mortimer Street, between Broadview and Donlands and south of O'Connor Drive. Previously, residents of this area were not served by a community health centre. SRCHC has worked since that time to develop ways to provide primary health services to residents in that neighbourhood. We also provide support to residents who are initiating their own community projects, including a community kitchen and youth arts programming. One of the major challenges we face is the lack of accessible space for community programs and for community members to come together to plan and to hold events.

Research completed in June 2012¹, affirms these same issues and describes the ongoing needs of the community. The Pape-Cosburn area, sometimes called Pape Village and called NODA (North of the Danforth) in the research, is an area of mainly privately-held buildings that has become a settlement area for newcomers from Eastern Europe and parts of Asia. Almost half of the households in the area have incomes under \$40,000, and educational attainment is slightly below the city average. A clear majority of NODA residents are tenants. Nearly half of residents live in high-rise buildings.

Key issues facing NODA residents include household financial insecurity and lack of appropriate and accessible (local) employment supports; food insecurity; lack of affordable child care spaces; barriers to accessing primary healthcare/dentistry; and child and youth programming that exceeds the capacity of the East York Community Centre. This Centre is the primary provider of child and youth programs.

¹ *From Neighbourhood to Community: Health and Social Supports North of the Danforth. South Riverdale Community Health Centre, Woodgreen Community Services, Massey Centre for Women and The Wellesley Institute were the lead organizations for the research. It can be found on www.srchc.ca.
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There are very few social services within walking distance. The rising costs of public transit make it even more difficult for residents to access health and social supports. Our experience is that residents may decide not to come to our current site on Queen Street East for primary health care and health promotion programs, in part because they have to use and pay for two buses to get here. This is even a greater issue for adults with children.

There is also a lack of indoor and outdoor public space for social connections amongst friends, family and neighbours. Such spaces are vital in cultivating community anywhere, and are even more important for apartment-dense communities where space is at a premium for most residents. Our research found that residents are interested in creating a central community space for social gatherings. They are also interested in developing a facilitated, informal skills exchange program where neighbours can teach one another and learn in a collaborative environment.

Through the research and on-going outreach, SRCHC has connected with community-minded property management companies and helpful, caring superintendents. Combined with the desire and commitment of many residents to come together to work for community improvement, the time is ripe for exploring options that will increase opportunities for community space. The RAC zoning is an important step as it removes some of the legal impediments to creative use of space within apartment buildings and on private land.

In addition, many apartment buildings in the Pape-Cosburn area do not have 100 units. We want to reinforce the need for flexibility in the RAC zoning to ensure that it is possible for interested landowners of buildings with less than 100 units to offer space for community programs and use. The process required to apply through the Committee of Adjustments may discourage landowners and limit the potential positive impacts of the RAC zoning for this community.

If you have any questions regarding our submission, please contact Lynne Raskin, Chief Executive Officer at lraskin@srchc.com.

Respectfully submitted by,



David Willis
President, Board of Directors

c.c. Mary Fragedakis, Councillor City of Toronto
Peter Tabuns, MPP
Craig Scott, MP