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TE12.7.36

Dec. 7/15

To: The Honorable Mayor John Tory and all City Councillors,

CC: Jennifer Keesmaat, Chief Planner City of Toronto

Re: Application File No.'s

14 176221 STE 30 OZ (77-79 East Don Roadway)
14 176212 STE 30 OZ (661-677 Queen Street East)

Collectively: **Riverside Square**

I am writing to ask you to defer the vote on Dec. 9th for the rezoning application of:

Application File No.

14 176221 STE 30 OZ (77-79 East Don Roadway)
14 176212 STE 30 OZ (661-677 Queen Street East)

The applicant has submitted two applications that form a single development proposal. Phase 1 of the development applies to the lands at 77-79 East Don Roadway, while Phase 2 applies to the lands at 661-677 Queen Street East.

Further to the concerns raised by myself, other residents of the adjacent residential communities abutting the properties in question and the broader community during the East York City Council meeting of Nov. 10, 2015, I would formally request deferral of the upcoming vote to rezone the aforementioned properties in question.

This rezoning application and associated proposals concern a mixed use commercial residential "super-development" of 880 residential units, 6 auto malls and 52 service bays that seek to replace just one auto dealership and change the scale and scope of developments in our neighborhood for years to come. Effectively, the development in question starkly contrasts the mixed residential and midrise complexes currently situated in South Riverside in both density and height to a startling degree and all of this constitutes a proposal which is situated on a parcel of land with known heavy metal and POH contamination. Further, the property in question also resides within a geographical air-shed known to carry pollutants already documented to be in excess of environmental standards for a number of key parameters. I would respectfully submit on behalf of the neighborhood that the community consultation process allowing for reasonable public disclosure and discussion on these matters as well as others of a related nature has failed to date.

While notions of density vs profitability are all too recognizable to the larger community and acceptable for certain neighborhoods in the downtown core (see Feb 15, 2014 issue of the Globe and Mail titled “*Aggressive development: Inside the building and selling of a Toronto condo tower*”) The unrealistic density parameters required for developers to seek what they feel are appropriate levels of ROI in South Riverdale are simply not acceptable to the larger public and residents need to be given transparency, accurate information and an opportunity to voice their concerns in an influential manner.

I would like to further bring to your attention a number of issues of concern regarding public perception and media coverage of this super-development to date. In particular a recent Oct. 30th headline in Canadian Auto World states:

“Downtown Automotive Group planning **massive** six-dealership, residential development.”

Further, the Canadian Auto World magazine also states,

*The president of Downtown Automotive Group says his team and partners are in the final stages of zoning and city approvals for a **massive** project that includes several condo buildings, a handful of commercial spaces and six dealerships.*

“I’ve had people quietly flying up from the U.S. to check it out,” he adds.

*All the stores will be owned and operated by the Downtown Automotive Group, which currently runs eight stores in the city. **The vastness of the project** comes down to realities of real estate in major urban centres. Given that land values in the city are determined not by commercial venues but rather **residential density**, he says any dealership would have to generate an **unrealistic set of numbers to justify a location like that.**”*

The residents also feel this is an “**unrealistic set of numbers**” with no justification and further that the scope and magnitude of the commercial / industrial portion of the development has not been publicly communicated to a satisfactory degree.

As elected officials, I know that most of you are all too familiar with intent of the now impotent section 329 of the Canadian Elections Act which attempted to limit voting bias and the **bandwagon effect** through pre-emptive communication of electoral results. While knowledge of how PR and media communications suggesting a foregone conclusion can influence decision makers towards biased and pre-determined outcomes is widely documented in our electoral process, current legislation or lack thereof makes it only too common for developers such as Streetcar to bias and sway the public decision. This pre-emptive public pressure in the “Yes” box is all too easily garnered through strategic messaging and un-regulated advertising and marketing strategies.

When I and a number of other concerned citizens approached Streetcar directly very early in the process to ask questions about their intentions of scale and magnitude, we were kindly told by Streetcar representatives that the city had already agreed to support their development and that furthermore, if we were interested in investing pre-build, we would have to wait as the proposed tower (then 24 stories) had already been sold through private listing agents to VIP clients. While self-admitted ignorance can possibly explain a lack of understanding of a

legal framework which would allow for the bulk of glass tower, one far in excess of the current 18 meter height restriction for the property in question to be fully sold privately and exclusively before even the first public consultation has taken place, What has come as a great surprise to me however is less the PR and marketing tactics used by Streetcar. Nor has it been articles such as that cited above which self-acknowledge the unrealistic scale of the project as proposed but the lack of clear communication on what little process the public has had access to thus-far.

As I write this letter of request, the notifications by the City which are posted on the properties in question and which are intended to advise the public about a statutory meeting for the purposes of allowing citizens to voice their concerns, remains starkly void of any communication. While making inquiries into this issue during the recent East York City Council meeting of Nov 10. 2015 (the date and time of which I had to determine through my own investigative means), I was subtly made aware that the city had opted to put a notification in the local newspaper rather than declare its intention through public signage.

I have to wonder why this development, arguably the most contentious of the many developments in the area was unique in its nature of communication. The conclusion I am sadly forced to reach is one of bureaucratic manipulation in support of a foregone conclusion. Why else would this development, arguably the most contentious of any occurring within our district, be starkly unique in its disclosure of the public forum if not to unfairly bias public participation towards a limited turnout. Concerns over this were also echoed by city staff who I consulted with during a recess of the Nov. 10th meeting and who agreed in principle that due to the low readership in the district combined with public expectation and precedent around signage being the expected means of communication regarding other developments in the area, a newspaper article would likely be largely ineffective in its intent in providing public transparency solicitation of involvement.

Despite these concerns, I would emphasize that the Riverside Ratepayers Association is not anti-development. We are for appropriate and well planned development. Development that allows for evolution of the city construct to realize appropriate use of space and scale consistent with maintaining the concept of distinct neighborhoods which preserve the intended use and enjoyment of the citizens who chose to live there in the first place. To this end we are committed to working with city planners, the developer, and the community to address an appropriate realization of Streetcar's proposal. First and foremost however, the community needs time to make decisions about the facts, scale and likely impact of the proposal in question. These facts include but are not limited to, access to Transportation and Congestion studies, Air Quality Studies, yet to be completed. Soil remediation plans, and most importantly transparent communication about process and how the public can realistically participate in and influence outcome.

The Riverside Ratepayers Association has booked a space at the local community center in January to gather all residents for open discussion and to inform them that they still have a say in the evolution of this development proposal. Our primary goal is not to oppose development entirely but to establish just how much density is too much. At 6.77x, as requested by the developer, it is almost 3 times the allowable scale. Glass residential towers are proposed up to 20 stories, this area is not considered to be downtown, and there are no other towers of this magnitude in Riverside. Issues of shade, pollution, traffic and air quality studies are still pending.

As such and in conclusion, I would respectfully ask for a delay in the upcoming vote for re-zoning such that the public can have access to due process, with due transparency and due consideration of the current scale and intent of the development in question. This shall include but not be limited to a discussion and review facts concerning:

- Environmental degradation (results pending an independent air quality study)
- Further compromises to the already fragile and overburdened infrastructure.
- Pre-existing unsuitable levels of public transit.
- The overarching impact current residents will suffer to the enjoyment and use of their existing properties and finally
- The overall drastic departure in scale and appropriateness for the neighborhood.

As councilors I would hope that the value of this deferral is recognized in so far as its necessity for allowing the public access to consistent information, due time for consideration and in the spirit of community one which leaves the residents with a sense of satisfaction that participation carries a possibility of influence, rather than leaving one with a sense of being simply the byproduct of a bureaucratic illusion in the face of a foregone conclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'H. R. Manson', followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that extends across the page.

Harry R. Manson
Riverside Ratepayers Association