

May 13, 2015

PG4.2 – Ward:16, 22, 25 **Midtown in Focus – Official Plan Amendment – Final Report**

Chair David Shiner, and
Members of the Planning and Growth Management Committee (PGM),
City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

Dear Members of the Planning and Growth Management Committee

I would like to express my full support for Planning's recommendations to PGM:

1. to amend the Official Plan with OPA 289,
2. to undertake further review of the Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan (YESP), and
3. to propose implementation of specifically 'quick hit' projects

For the past 40 years throughout my design-build and planning career, I have been actively involved with the YESP area. I have lived in this area for the past 30 years. For the past 15 years I've actively participated in community associations, including today: CORRA, FoNTRA, MPAG and SPRA.

Much has changed within the YESP area since the Minto Towers were introduced. A development surge has outpaced planning in the form of an accelerating spiral that continues on through into today. At this point in time – whereas before the future of the YESP area could only be envisioned in historical terms – the magnitude, the extent and the scale of Midtown's transformation is clearly visible in the area's current developments.

OPA 289

Midtown in Focus is a commendable planning production, recognised both by the community, and likewise by the industry. The industry's response is evident in recent development proposals adopting features from this planning exercise before they have even crystallised into policy. This indicates to me that planning is restoring its direction over development events. This is why I support OPA 289.

FURTHER REVIEW

However, there is much more planning required, as is equally evident today in the degree and the pace of YESP area's transformation. In particular, by my estimation, the Growth Centre is currently experiencing

construction activity at 40% of the level which will soon arrive with the commencement of the Yonge-Eglinton LRT station works in concert with oncoming developments. There are many critical decisions for planning to address, in order to ensure that desirable and orderly growth and change occur, and to bring about a comprehensive, beneficial future outcome for the area. This is why I support the Further Review.

I have outlined 10 points in the 'Sustainable Planning for the Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan Area' appended below, which will be discussed further in the ongoing consultations with the community.

QUICK FIX

I will limit my remarks today to what has been referred to as near term 'quick hit' projects, as their timeliness is of the essence.

1. The degree of construction in the Growth Centre warrants a joint City-Industry-Community construction committee to meet monthly: addressing safety, temporary construction and co-ordination issues. (as was the practice during the Minto Towers' construction)
2. Community consultation is immediately required with respect to the imminent Yonge-Eglinton Transit Station works to address: its configuration, its pedestrian dispersal network and how it will be integrated with the surrounding developments. (a step up on the recent direct Econdo-community consultations to include Metrolinx and City Planning)
3. The establishment of a permanent planning facility within the Growth Centre to better facilitate the frequent meetings that occur, to enable permanent installations of an informative nature, and improve overall communications between City Planning and the community.
4. I would like to request that PGM accept the *Towers Forecast* (which is endorsed by CORRA and FoNTRA and available online at: <http://midtownplan.ca/TowersForecastPDF.shtml>) as an informational background report to be circulated to departments and agencies involved in the *further review* and the report on *implementation strategy* as called for in Staff's recommendations.

I look forward to PGM approving Staff's recommendation and forwarding this matter to Council.

Sincerely



Terry Mills
B.ARCH RPP MCIP

May 13, 15

(appended)

SUSTAINABLE PLANNING FOR THE YONGE-EGLINTON SECONDARY PLAN AREA

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|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1) A COMPLETE COMMUNITY APPROACH | 6) RETAIL-SERVICES STRATEGY |
| 2) EXPANDING THE PUBLIC REALM | 7) HOUSING STRATEGY |
| 3) ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN | 8) URBAN PLANNING |
| 4) TRANSIT REALITIES | 9) GROWTH CENTRE EDGE CONDITIONS |
| 5) YONGE-EGLINTON TRANSIT STATION | 10) TEMPORARY WORKS |

INTRODUCTION

This is a preliminary outline which has been prepared as an informative background tool. It is intended as an assist to constructive discussions addressing practical and insightful planning affecting the Growth Centre's future outcome. This outline includes ten topics. It is not intended to be a complete list, nor are all matters may be considered as having equivalent weight. Within each topic there is a brief commentary with some possible directions. Hopefully this outline will enable comfortable discussion drilldowns into specific considerations within an overarching framework.

1) A COMPLETE COMMUNITY APPROACH TO PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

The 'Complete Community' approach to planning and management (as called for in the Provincial Growth Plan's intensification strategy) is an appropriate tool for planning the Growth Centre's future outcome, and is in fact the required approach. The Growth Plan for the Golden Horseshoe states that:

“An appropriate range of community infrastructure should be planned to meet the needs resulting from population changes and to foster complete communities”. *

* Complete Communities meet people’s needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime by providing convenient access to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, a full range of housing, and community infrastructure including affordable housing, schools, recreation and open space for their residents. Convenient access to public transportation and options for safe, non-motorized travel is also provided.

- Strategic modelling should be undertaken to illuminate, explore and effectively address the variety of possibilities and opportunities for the Growth Centre's future outcome.

2) EXPANDING THE PUBLIC REALM

The Growth Centre has been formally recognised as being park-deficient for the past 50 years, meanwhile the area's population has doubled, and may well redouble over the next 20 years.

- What measures can be taken to alleviate this deficiency?
 - Redefine what is understood in general by 'parks', 'open space' , 'public realm'
 - Extend the 'public realm' to involve more than just the ground level
 - Introduce publicly accessible 'public realm' purposes into new buildings (POPS)

3) ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

We are seeing a new form of building – a new typology – being built in the Growth Centre. Innovations are occurring in design and construction techniques (as for instance, Rockport's Post Office project is utilising a ground source heat pump system). Considering the intensity of development occurring within the confines of the Growth Centre over the short time-span of 20 years, the opportunity exists for improvements in environmental design – for smarter building solutions – to be introduced on an incremental basis, learning from earlier initiatives where each new building solution essentially models future designs.

- Create an ongoing open forum addressing sustainable design.

4) TRANSIT REALITIES

The Growth Centre is bounded by transportation realities which need to be reflected in the Growth Centre's composition.

- The arterial road network is limited in opportunities to expand its vehicular capabilities.
- The subway system is presently overloaded by upstream demands during rush hour, and this condition will worsen with further intensification upstream as well as within the Growth Centre, meanwhile there is no currently proposed relief which will relieve the Growth Centre's need.
- 'Immediate Relief' needs to be introduced – starting today – to alleviate peak period denial-of-service conditions by utilising a robust dedicated express bus service network and/or other alternatives.

- The LRT corridor is being developed as a dormitory-tributary, seen as channelling its ridership onto the already overloaded subway, rather than configuring development along the LRT corridor as an inclusive Complete Community, so as to diminish its reliance upon the overloaded subway.
- Complete Community measures should be introduced into the Growth Centre, balancing the residential and work place offerings, in order to reduce excessive peak period transit demands.

5) YONGE- EGLINTON TRANSIT STATION

The Yonge Eglinton Transit Station is about to undergo a profound reconstruction, becoming the most up to date station on the 60 year old Yonge Subway Line.

- The Transit Station is the principal access route in and out of the Growth Centre, and should be configured accordingly as an iconic Gateway (meaning it looks like what it is).
- The Transit Station complex should include a comprehensive pedestrian dispersal network lacing through the surrounding emerging developments to extend out into the Growth Centre.
- It should invite transit riders passing daily through the Growth Centre to access retail, services and work places, so recognising them as added-value foot traffic ensuring a robust commercial offering.

The extent of the Transit Station's works involves a 400m open cut extending past Duplex Avenue and Dunfield Avenues excavated to a depth of 21m. The current intention is to backfill the majority of this volume after installing the LRT track level rather than applying this 'Void' to any higher order purpose. The magnitude of the Void is capable of accommodating a 600 space multilevel car park interlaced with the abutting new developments, representing a commercial value between \$15 and 30 million dollars. There are higher and more beneficial uses possible including the potential of installing an underground park as in New York.

- The opportunities for utilising this 'void' should be full explored before any dismissal.
- The window of opportunity for such a development is quickly closing due to the progress of construction.

6) RETAIL-SERVICES STRATEGY

The surge of new developments along both Yonge Street and Eglinton Avenue will create a substantial increase in retail and service space, while disrupting and displacing much of the existing enterprises.

- A Retail Strategy should be established addressing transformation during redevelopment and the resulting comprehensive and robust outcome ensuring
- it is 'fit-to-purpose' for customers, both within the Growth Centre and arriving by transit, and for the merchant enterprises alike.

7) HOUSING STRATEGY

The extent of development may very well reach an occupancy of 30,000 new people within 20 years. New buildings are currently producing only a restricted range of primarily small residential units (and resulting in existing work place environments being diminishing). Demographic shifts occur over time, placing new and different demands upon accommodation and supporting services.

- The Complete Communities approach to intensification requires sustainability to be planned into building designs.
- It is Smart Growth to ensure that new buildings have the built-in capability – the sustainability – to accommodate changing housing requirements.
- Narrowly-designed buildings may serve current market conditions, but they result in impasses and/or expensive remedial efforts.
- There already exists a chronic inability to provide the necessary educational facilities within the Growth Centre, as evident in the School Board's formal requirement that new building residents consent to the fact that their children will not receiving education within this school area.
- Affordable housing is not being incorporated into the housing offering, while developers are being granted substantial increases in densities without charge.

8) URBAN PLANNING

The Growth Centre represents a substantial development initiative, equalling the Eglinton LRT expenditure being in the order of six billion dollars. Furthermore, the Growth Centre is projected to accommodate a new population of 30,000 people all within a 75 hectare area, built-out over a twenty year interval. Such an undertaking represent a significant planning initiative.

- It is not Good Planning to proceed with the current administrative planning framework, with the responsibility divided between two separate and remote faculties.
- The scope of planning work would be better served by a single dedicated planning faculty situated within the Growth Centre, and be funded accordingly.

- The existing local community represents an expert resource, and should be provided full access to the Growth Centre's planning and decision making process.

9) GROWTH CENTRE EDGE CONDITIONS

The Growth Centre's boundary line has been drawn but never defined, as to what is intended to occur along its length in any depth. This line by itself without explanation has proved problematic.

- The interior and exterior transition conditions to be observed need to be defined.


10) TEMPORARY WORKS

Constructing 60 substantial projects built-out over 20 years within the Growth Centre's confines resulting in a doubling of the existing population to 800 people per hectare, raises concerns about safety and the practicalities of the construction phase.

- A standing construction committee should be instituted as existed during the Minto Towers' construction, to ensure that all interests are engaged in the overall construction process.
- The extent and duration of 'temporary' hoardings, stagings, pedestrian and road detours and closings should be considered as an integrated design solution in its own right, to reduce the chaos and ensure a seamless legible pedestrian and vehicular environment.

I hope this proves helpful.

Sincerely



Terry Mills
B.ARCH RPP MCIP