



**Final Report - 1-11 Bloor Street West, 760-762 Yonge Street and 768-784 Yonge Street
Zoning Amendment Application
TEYCC, May 10, 2016
Meeting Agenda Item TE16.10**

Members of the Toronto and East York Community Council,

I am here today on behalf of GYRA, the Greater Yorkville Residents Association representing the interests of over 5,000 owners and residents living in 34 condominium buildings within an area bounded by Yonge, Charles, Avenue Rd. and Davenport.

The mid-town Toronto area, which incorporates Greater Yorkville, is undergoing major transformative change with unprecedented development, growing vertically with intense densification.

To be clear, we are not against development and its attendant densification. In fact, we view densification as a good thing for residents, businesses and of course, City revenues.

Development goes hand-in-hand with the experience of living in an urban environment. What we are against is ill-conceived development, which we're afraid describes 1 Bloor St. West as it is currently proposed.

As with all neighbourhoods, Council has an obligation to ensure that the essence of mid-town Toronto as a community is not only maintained but enhanced. What this means is that we must not consider each development in isolation.

Rather, each development must be informed by the context of its immediate surroundings, its neighbourhood and the area's future development. The projected development projects for the Greater Yorkville Area are nothing short of breathtaking. In fact, at community consultation meetings, the City's Planning Department provides this context, which should equip it to ensure responsible development.

The Bloor and Yonge intersection is one of the most important in the GTA, if not in Canada. What we need is development that takes into consideration the future liveability for neighbourhood residents. Unfortunately, this proposed development does not meet this first-order criteria.

Other speakers today are addressing this project's many shortcomings in much more detail; issues such as density, traffic, laneway access, safety, are all concerns that to date have not been adequately addressed.

We wanted to provide an overview of a number of our concerns.

Of immediate concern, we believe that before this development is approved, an overall plan must be developed for the entire block from Bloor to Charles, instead of simply addressing the corner in isolation and then have to go through another process when the south end of this parcel is proposed for development. Only with comprehensive planning of the entire block can we hope to properly address all of the issues inherent in large developments. To us that is what comprehensive City planning is suppose to do.

It must also be considered in context of an overall plan for the area and future buildings that are already being planned and/or at various stages of being built. Why is this building with a smaller lot size being allowed 304 metres when the building at 1 Bloor East was permitted to build to approximately 295 metres and was in fact built to approximately 255 metres?

Shadowing and wind are already serious issues in the neighbourhood and every effort must be made to mitigate future negative impact. The Four Seasons facility should serve as a hard lesson learned when these are not properly addressed.

We have yet to hear about a construction plan that uses a six metre wide laneway as its sole access. Specifics have not been provided as to how deliveries, staging, lane closures, access for the current residents of 35 and 21 Balmuto St. will be handled.

Going forward, we think that a far better solution to the current proposal to add a traffic light at Balmuto and Bloor would be to make Charles Street from Yonge to Balmuto a 2-way street, which would provide some traffic relief for the area residents. With the recent elimination of the scramble at the Bay/Bloor intersection, the traffic along Bloor has become somewhat tolerable.

Adding another traffic light in such close proximity to both Bay and Yonge streets would put the traffic congestion right back where it was. It has been suggested that the traffic won't be adversely affected because the lights can be sync'd. That is what we were told when the scramble went in at Bay and Bloor. It didn't work because you can't sync regular traffic lights with a scramble. We would be more likely to go along with adding a light at Balmuto if and only if, the scramble at the Bloor/Yonge intersection was eliminated.

While we support the heritage building, we take issue with allowing the building to remain in its current place. The existing sidewalk width in front of the heritage building is insufficient for current pedestrian traffic let alone for the projected increase in traffic. The current sidewalk width may have been sufficient in the 18th century, but certainly is not for the 21st century.

We will not have another chance to get this right. We are suggesting the building be moved back by 1.5 to 2 metres, which would mean that it would still stand stately from the new tower. There have been other heritage buildings that have made this type of change to the benefit of the public realm.

All of these issues are of major concern to area stakeholders and we ask that the developer continue to work on these issues before approval is given. Yonge and Bloor is just too important to get it wrong. We must take the time required to address these and other outstanding issues for the benefit of area residents and not just the developer.

Stakeholders have participated in five working group meetings, met numerous times with our Councillor and Planning staff and expressed numerous concerns about this development in its current form. We commend City Planning staff and the developer for making some changes to their original plan. However, as we heard at our most recent working group meeting, there are still significant issues that need to be addressed.

The most disconcerting aspect of this entire process is that the area stakeholders were informed at the most recent Working Group meeting that the staff report had already been written, meaning that not all of the concerns expressed by the large numbers of area stakeholders were addressed.

We have heard on several occasions that the developer has signed a lease with Apple for a flagship store, which apparently has a firm occupancy date. Well, every developer wants Apple. We have not seen the lease document, which is an agreement between the developer and tenant. More important, it should not be driving the timing or planning of this development. If it is driving a rush for approval, it is misguided – it does not drive good development or a good planning process.

Perhaps there's another reason to explain the rush to push this project through before the full vetting process is completed. The staff report was written before the completion of the working group meetings. It raises questions; why? what was the rush? why were concerns of the neighbourhood not fully addressed?

What is the purpose of having working group meetings with neighbourhood representatives if their serious concerns are not completely addressed? If this development is approved at this time, it questions the relevancy, intent, integrity and legitimacy of the entire neighbourhood consultation process.

We are therefore requesting that this motion be deferred until the community consultation has been completed and the many issues raised have been adequately addressed and remediation conditions included in the staff report.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our position.

Michael R. Landry
President
GYRA