

TE18.32.4
Submission from
John Wilson

TEYCC – Item TE 18.32

September 7, 2016

Good afternoon, and thank you. I am John Wilson, co-chair of the West Don Lands Committee, and I'm here to ask Community Council to reject the sign variances that are proposed on 380 Front Street at the gateway to the new West Don Lands.

The West Don Lands Committee is a coalition of eleven community residents', business and civic groups that has been working since 1997 to achieve the positive redevelopment of the West Don Lands. Since the end of the Pan Am Games last year, the Athletes' Village has transformed into a largely residential, walkable, transit-oriented neighbourhood with a new YMCA, a George Brown students' residence, affordable housing and small storefronts. Traffic through the neighbourhood is largely local and slow-paced, like other residential neighbourhoods throughout the city. The West Don Lands is emerging as the neighbourhood we have worked so hard for so long to build.

The application for sign variances to implement a Signage Master Plan at 380 Front Street East follows a pattern of viewing this neighbourhood in an entirely different light – as essentially a vehicular drag or strip for drivers fleeing the downtown. The proposed signage and the earlier variances the applicant proposed are for signs designed to distract drivers' attention from far away as they whiz along a suburban motorway at 50-plus kilometers per hour. They are large, flashy and bright – entirely inappropriate for a neighbourhood developing with condos,

townhomes and seniors' residences – pedestrian and cycling traffic – streetside patios, public art, street trees and benches.

But this is exactly the kind of neighbourhood you see coming to life in the West Don Lands. The signage in the Distillery District nearby and in the new Canary and River City storefronts bears no resemblance to signs like those proposed – designed for car sluices lined with strip malls and massive surface parking lots.

The Sign By-Law has been created to govern signage that is appropriate to the business activities in a variety of neighbourhoods. The By-Law should be honoured as it stands, it shouldn't be subject to variances whenever the commercial signage industry escalates its competition to capture the attention of distracted drivers.

We ask Community Council to reconsider the Sign Variance Committee's decision and uphold the Sign By-Law as it stands for this location and throughout the West Don Lands.