

North York Community Council

From: Graci Law Office <gtgraci@bellnet.ca>
Sent: Monday, June 12, 2017 3:23 PM
To: North York Community Council
Cc: Councillor Colle
Subject: Re: Columbus Centre Redevelopment

I wish to formally register my serious concerns and strong objection to the proposed Columbus Centre redevelopment. my reasons are many and detailed, but can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. History

- a) The centre is operated by a charity, and was built with the support of the community at large, and specifically the Italian community, with donated and with government grants.
- b) It is a centre of Italian culture, history and pride, although all are welcome and used by all.
- c) Its proposed replacement is a prison like structure, that at first view, crushes the soul and the spirit of the centre.
- d) Many of the social, cultural, artistic and sports programs do not appear to be housed in the new structure.

2. Process

- a) As a community centre, it appears that the community has been given little input into the redevelopment. All the employees, except a select special few, have been kept completely in the dark.
- b) There has been scant community consultation or involvement. At the only community meeting that I'm aware of, at the centre, no direct open questions or comments were allowed.
- c) In a cynical attempt to short circuit opinion, input and community involvement, it appears that the applicants have decided to apply directly to the OMB, avoiding the Committee of Adjustments altogether, at which all affected or interested parties can be consulted and can make representations.
- (d) The OMB process is complicated and legalistic, with little opportunity for community involvement, except generally through expensive legal representation. The Carriers have a right to expect that it be protected.

3. The J. carrier Art Gallery

- a) The spectacular Carrier Art Gallery is the crowning jewel at the Centre. Constructed with the financial support of Joseph Carrier and family, it was meant to showcase artists of Italian descent, and I believe it is the second largest and important public gallery in Toronto.
- b) The plans call for destruction of the Carrier Gallery, to be replaced, almost as an afterthought, by a small, sterile, rectangular room, a fraction of its size.
- c) The beautiful coliseum like interior's three storey atrium has historical and cultural merit and a deep history. Many fine Canadian, Italian/Canadian and international, (from Israel to Africa to South America) artists have exhibited there. Is it open to all. It is open for all, at no charge.

- d) Removal of this gallery and adjacent historical library, will remove the heart, spirit and cultural soul of the centre as well as its heritage. It will wipe out a significant portion of Italian/Canadian culture and history.
- e) The building and its interior's culturally significant spaces have historical and heritage value and should be protected as such. That is, as a heritage site.

All respectfully submitted.

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