

Comments to Members of the Toronto and East York Community Council, Tuesday April 4, 2017

From: Avrum Regenstreif, B.Arch., M.Arch., M.C.P., Ph.D., Chair, Urban Design Review Committee, Seaton Village Residents Association, Toronto.

The following comments identify serious concerns with respect to the Westbank Project currently proposed for the former Honest Ed's site, and on an adjacent block. Application No.15 188751 STE 19 OZ and 15 1888505 STE 19OZ.

1. TRANSPORTATION, CIRCULATION AND TRAFFIC CAPACITY: The capacity of major arterial streets, bounding the site, Bloor Street West and Bathurst, with their 20m. street widths, are inadequate to safely and efficiently carry proposed traffic flows generated by this project. This includes cars, taxis, trucks and vans, and street capacity, during the construction period (est. 5-7 yrs.) and following project completion. Bloor Street West, currently carries only a single lane of automobile traffic in each direction, while Bathurst carries barely 2 lanes N-S., as two of its four available lanes must carry increasing volumes of streetcar and LRT traffic. Thus, both Bloor West and Bathurst will be permanently, severely congested for surface traffic, including both pedestrians and vehicles. A serious adverse consequence will be vehicle traffic trying to avoid this intersection by attempting to find alternative routes through existing, local residential neighborhoods rather than being able to remain on existing major arterials.

In other major world cities, major bldg. redevelopments at the scale of this Westbank project are provided with much greater street width and lane capacity, than is currently available at this Toronto site. This includes major one way and two way streets, increased surface transit as well as subways and electric railways e.g. Chicago (see Water Tower project), and NYC (see Empire State Tower, served by 3 subway lines). Barcelona, Copenhagen, St. Petersburg, Stockholm, and Oslo also offer examples.

2. BUILDING DENSITY : The proposed density coverage @ FAI 5.33 -5.68 is too high for this site. It should be reduced to 4.5 -4.75 max., given the available street width and traffic capacity.

3. COMMERCIAL FLOOR SPACE : At 15,250 sq. m., proposed non res. commercial space area is too high and will aggravate surface congestion for both pedestrians and vehicles. Public Market and day nursery facilities can be achieved with lower total commercial floor areas. If developers still insist on increased commercial space, this should be provided within an underground pedestrian mall beneath the Bloor Bathurst intersection. This would link the project to the Bathurst Subway station and other corners and would *significantly reduce street level congestion at this critical intersection.*

4. PEDESTRIAN PROTECTION AND ACCESS : Pedestrians walking along the streets close to the high buildings along Bathurst and Bloor streets will receive little protection from objects falling from buildings. Without adequate protective canopies or arcades, pedestrians will also face severe wind blast effects from sidewalk adjacent high towers. Current wind studies are questionable, given recent wind turbulence evidence at similar 26 -29 storey residential tower corners in redeveloping Toronto residential neighbourhoods. With street level pedestrian access already severely congested, traffic and other problems will worsen as the Westbank project is under construction or completed, unless an under street shopping mall is simultaneously introduced to link to the Bathurst subway station.