

HARBORD VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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Toronto and East York Community Council
Item TE25.21

Request for direction/rezoning: 698-702 Spadina

Sept. 5, 2017.

Dear Committee Members:

Harbord Village Residents' Association supports the Planning Report and its request for direction for City staff to attend the University of Toronto's appeal to the OMB of its rezoning proposal for a residence in our neighbourhood.

HVRA represents members in a catchment that extends from Bathurst to Spadina and College to Bloor. We are a virtually intact community of 2.5 storey Victorian Bay 'n' Gable houses, along with several groups of Barton Cottages. We have a long and strong devotion to the preservation of heritage. This application is for a development on a property on the northwest corner of Spadina and Sussex kitty-corner across a public lane from the Harbord Village Heritage Conservation District Part 2. We could hardly be closer.

Today we sit on the threshold of hearings about and around this matter.

First, the University's student residence proposal calls for the demolition of the Ten Editions Bookstore building which was designated heritage by Council in March 2017. 698 Spadina is the gateway to our community. For 33 years, the building has housed a bookstore which is a prized local cultural institution. We were astonished to see the University appeal the building's physical and cultural designation to the Conservation Review Board.

Second, the tower height of 82.7 m., including mechanical, would encroach on the heritage silhouette view of the Knox College spire and ridgelines from College St. Two weeks ago, the University became an appellant to an appeal at the OMB of OPA 368, which protects the viewshed.

Third, the proposal for a 549-bed 25-storey residence with two floors of commercial for predominantly first-year students, and ten townhouses on Sussex Mews laneway, does not fit. A density of 9.46 tells the tale. If that sounds like wanting too much out of a site that is too small, you are correct. (Mirvish Village is 5.68)

From the initial meeting on this site, convened by Councillor Vaughan Dec. 4, 2013, the community has expressed concerns around:

Preservation of heritage: this is a galvanizing issue
Mixed demographic, reduced population,
Height,
Massing,
Lack of greenspace,
Interim and re-housing for tenants.

Three years later, these core community issues remain unaddressed.

Now the University has taken the position it is eager to enter into mediation.

As an association in the Downtown, we have actually experienced collaborative negotiations with developers. At the Waverley Hotel, a satisfactory settlement involving reduction in density was reached with the assistance of the City and Councillor Cressy. At Mirvish Village, Westbank went through three complete iterations of plans and in the end included substantial community benefits—including affordable housing, public realm improvements and a collaborative ongoing process with community partners. This was only achieved with substantial input from City Planning, Heritage, Urban Design and Councillors Cressy and Layton. And we are almost days away for agreement on a nearby Spadina property. In that case, the proponent quickly embraced neighbourhood comments and will shortly come forward with revised plans that are enthusiastically supported by the community.

It is a pity that so far, the Daniels Corporation, an imaginative and socially-sensitive developer, and the University of Toronto, a significant institution, together have not found a way to enter into a creative dialogue with our community. But we live in hope.

Sue Dexter and Carolee Orme
Harbord Village Residents' Association
Planning and Development Committee.