



January 4, 2018

10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Attention: Josephine Archbold

RE: 2018 City of Toronto Budget

Dear Councillor Gary Crawford, Chair, and Members of the Budget Committee

We provide this correspondence on behalf of the Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA), an umbrella organization of over 30 resident associations in North Toronto and North York. Our comments are divided into two parts: those directly related to planning and development of our communities, and the City; and those from a broader standpoint as residents with an active interest and concern for the wellbeing of the City.

A. Demands on City Planning and Need for Enhanced Area Based Planning

FoNTRA understands the importance of a vital and active planning function to the long-term health of stable residential neighbourhoods and the whole city. Planning activities such as Avenue Studies, Secondary Plans, Zoning By-law Updates, Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Studies and neighbourhood-specific Guidelines are urgently required, yet the waiting lists for such studies and plans are long.

The City Planning Division is swamped by site-specific applications, including Zoning By-law Amendments (ZBAs), and minor variance and consent applications to the Committee of Adjustment. Meeting the processing requirements and deadlines for these applications inevitably pushes down the priority given to city-wide and area planning, notably the development of Secondary plans that take transportation and other required infrastructure needs into account along with the availability of parkland, schools, and other social service requirements, Heritage Conservation District (HCD) studies and plans, Zoning Reviews and neighbourhood-specific Guidelines. The Division lacks the resources to develop and update any but the most critical Secondary plans. Planning for the City's future - for the population and jobs growth that is expected - necessarily suffers.

And the lack of updated Secondary plans with clear population targets/densities and development guidelines necessarily means that too many planning decisions are left to be determined on an ad hoc basis by the Ontario Municipal Board and its successor organization.

We are not opposed to growth. But we are opposed to growth beyond what can be supported by Toronto's current and currently planned infrastructure. With development effectively out of control in the Downtown and Midtown portions of our city, there is an urgent need for the formulation of an updated Official Plan to impose development controls that are in line with provincial population targets, new provincial policies regarding development near transit stations (Building Better Communities... Act), and available infrastructure. Doing so requires resources, notably more staff.

The 2018 Preliminary Budget **includes** only one significant change to the City Planning Operating Budget; the addition of 12 positions to the Committee of Adjustment (CofA) function in order to bring the number of applications reviewed per CofA staff closer to the 100 application per employee benchmark. We strongly support this minimal additional staffing to deal consents and minor variances.

Beyond City Planning, we note that the 2018 Preliminary Budget **does not include** the funds required to convert 6 temporary Tree Protection Enforcement positions to permanent, and add one more position (\$197K gross, \$0 net). This is essential to protect the tree canopy and restore respect for the City's tree protection laws.

We recommend that:

- **City Council provide additional funds in the 2018 City Planning Division budget to accelerate pro-active planning of Toronto's development, particularly in areas affected by the Province's minimum density targets in areas within 500m of higher order transit.**

B. Responsible City-Building Requires Plans to be Funded and Revenues to be Sourced

Several policies and plans have been developed and approved by City Council, this term, to respond to important issues that reflect real needs of Toronto as a caring and forward thinking community. These include TransformTO, Toronto's climate action plan, which identifies how we can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and improve our health, grow the economy, and improve social equity. In July 2017 City Council unanimously approved a set of long-term, low-carbon goals, and strategies to reach them. However there is NO money in the Budget for the TransformTO plan, which needs \$2.5 million to get started. It is critically important that the City take the climate action steps required.

Another program, Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy is a 20-year plan that was unanimously approved by City Council in 2015. It contains 17 recommendations linked to a set of actions to be carried over a four-year period. The strategy focuses on housing stability, services access, transit equity, food access, the quality of jobs and incomes, and systemic change. A key part, developing a Community Benefits Framework for key City capital investments to increase community well-being and job opportunities for residents, is currently stalled. It is important to move forward not waste a year pending a municipal election.

We recognize that programs need to be funded and funds need to be responsibly sourced. We remain concerned about the need to address the longer term finances of the City, and concur with the increasing consensus that the City does indeed have a serious revenue problem.

We also believe that revenue measures should be assessed not just from a financial perspective, or for their ease of administration, but also for their contribution (negative or positive) to “city building”. In other words do they align with Official Plan objectives, such as building a city that reduces the need for travel, that encourages true mixed use development, that is transit, walking and biking friendly, that is green, and more equitable for all its residents?

We recommend that

- **City Council (a) follow through with funding for implementation of several previously approved major commitments and (b) consider “contribution to city building” in its consideration of revenue tools.**

Thank you for the opportunity to express our ideas, concerns and recommendations regarding the 2018-City of Toronto budget.

Yours truly,

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The Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization comprised of over 30 member organizations. Its members, all residents' associations, include at least 170,000 Toronto residents within their boundaries. The residents' associations that make up FoNTRA believe that Ontario and Toronto can and should achieve better development. Its central issue is not whether Toronto will grow, but how. FoNTRA believes that sustainable urban regions are characterized by environmental balance, fiscal viability, infrastructure investment and social renewal.

c.c. Peter Wallace, City Manager
John Livey, Deputy City Manager
Gregg Lintern, Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning
Division
Will Johnston, Acting Chief Building Official, Toronto Building
Janie Romoff, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division
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