



October 15, 2019

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

RE: PH9.4 Focusing on Building Design Improvements,

Dear Chair Ana Bailao and Members, Planning and Housing Committee,

We wish to provide comments and recommendations to the Committee in regard to Mayor Tory's proposed directions for Building Design Improvements.

The Mayor's letter presents a "summary" and five recommendations, but they are unsupported by a staff report, and lack any analysis of issues leading to the recommendations. Apparently the recommendations emanate from a meeting held this summer with "international talent from the development, architectural and planning communities". The lesson from the meeting was that "we must consider design in our policy development and procurement, and employ open and transparent competitions whenever possible".

This is fine so far as it goes – we agree that good design is a necessary condition to create a "beautiful and engaging city". It is not however a sufficient condition. Buildings exist in a context, in a community. Individual building design needs to consider the physical, cultural and architectural context, and how the building will relate to and improve the surrounding community. The lack of this focus in the deliberations of the City's Design Review Panel is its fundamental flaw. Another is the lack of public input to the Panel's considerations

For example the Design Review Panel agreed that the proposed 48 storey development at 1 Delisle Avenue (Yonge and St. Clair) was good design based on how it looked from Yonge and Davisville! While the design has some great features, the local context at St. Clair matters. Should we in fact be bringing the customary

heights from a Urban Growth Centre like Yonge and Eglinton to a lesser node? The Panel did not consider this, or hear from local residents.

On the one hand it seems that the City wants to focus on public design competitions for neighbourhoods, yet on the other hand residents are still waiting for the Neighbourhood Design Guidelines that were promised by City Planning three years ago. The idea was to develop guidelines for two neighbourhoods (Long Branch, Willowdale), and then create a template that could be adopted in neighbourhoods across the City. So what has happened?

- The Long Branch Guidelines were developed, adopted by Council, and implemented.
- The Willowdale Guidelines are well... who knows? So where is the template?

Without these enforceable guidelines developers will continue to act with impunity, with scant regard to neighbourhood character.

Another example of the lack of attention to context is the City's Committee of Adjustment, which accepts applications for "minor variances" which frequently contemplate demolition of the existing dwelling and replacement with one much larger, without requiring an elevation drawing that shows the building, at correct scale, in relation to the adjacent buildings. Consequently neighbours have no idea of how the building will line up with their homes.

Therefore, In addition to Mayor Tory's five recommendations, we request that the Planning and Housing Committee recommend that City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division to:

- (1) request the Design Review Panel to consider context, and provide for public input, as part of its design considerations;**
- (2) complete the Neighbourhood Design Guidelines template and expedite its submission for City Council approval;**
- (3) amend Committee of Adjustment application requirements to include submission of elevation drawings identifying the subject property application in the context of neighbouring properties.**

Yours truly,

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Cc: Mayor John Tory
Gregg Lintern, Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
FoNTRA Resident Associations

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.