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Chair Kristyn Wong-Tam and Members of the Toronto and East York Community Council
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RE: 540-544 King Street West and 1-7 Morrison Street
Applicant: Great Gulf and Allied Properties Reit
Request to amend the zoning by-law application no. 18 125163 STE 20 OZ

Dear Chair Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, and other Councillors of the Toronto and East York Community Council,

We are writing to you as members of the board residing and representing the residents of 19 Brant Street. We want to express our opposition to the proposed development of 540-544 King Street West. We understand that a proposal for a new commercial and residential building has been submitted for consideration. We have reviewed the plans for the building and we have several important concerns with the development as currently proposed.

Development of the neighbourhood

In recent years, the area around our building has experienced a tremendous amount of construction and experienced a great deal of gentrification. This has brought new business to the area and changed the dynamics of the neighbourhood, including a significant increase in the amount of people residing and/or working in the area. The current infrastructure in the area does not support this increased density. For example, the streets are crowded with cars/taxis and the increase in traffic has impacted the residents of our building and neighbouring buildings due to the constant congestion. In addition, the overcrowding of people in the area has caused security



concerns as residents cannot comfortably enjoy their evenings and weekends without encountering intoxicated revelers and fights around our building. The density has caused increase in violence within the neighbourhood with several shootings and deaths occurring on our street. The addition of another massive complex on King St. will worsen these issues and will detract from the historical charming neighbourhood that is King St. West.

Size and Height of the Proposed Development

The size and the height of the proposed building is unacceptable for this neighbourhood. The King-Spadina Secondary Plan requires that new buildings achieve a compatible relationship with their built form context through consideration of matters including height, massing, scale, setbacks, and stepbacks and architectural expression. The proposed development is a massive L-shaped concrete and glass building that will create unacceptable shading on the existing school and create a cavernous feel to the neighbourhood. The residents of our building and the surrounding buildings purchased their condominiums with the expectations that development could be limited to similar low-rise buildings that would fit in with the charm and original design of our historic neighbourhood. The proposed building is excessively large, both tall and long. It will tower over 2 of the 4 sides of our local school, a gem of our neighbourhood, with no breaks for light to pass: it's a monolithic concrete and glass giant.

The developers have used all available square footage for the proposed development to the detriment of the neighbourhood. The architectural plans currently indicate that the elevators for the building will be placed on a very thin stretch of land between the commercial and residential portions of the building. Outside, this will result in a 50-meter-high concrete wall along a third of the east and west sides of the development. This development should be separated into two buildings, where there is ample room for elevators within each respective building, thus avoiding the creation of the proposed 50-meter wall. Given that King St. West is considered a heritage area, we do not comprehend how such a development could be in keeping with the King-Spadina Secondary Plan or other applicable development plans/guidelines.

City Planning Division staff have recommended approval of the proposal development based on their determination that the applicant's proposed density, height and massing is appropriate. They seem to reach their conclusion by determining that the surrounding neighborhood includes buildings, the BIG development and the King Portland Centre, with similar heights to those proposed by the applicant. As staff should know, the BIG development is made up of numerous "mountains" which will allow for greater light to enter the area. The maximum height of that proposed development is only reached at the very top of these "mountains". The height of the proposed development at 540-544 King St. runs through the entire footprint of the building (once minor setbacks are accounted for). As for the King-Portland Centre, the building has significantly changed the nature of that part of King St. and should not be used as a model to follow. Furthermore, the building was built on a large lot that is relatively far from other buildings. This is not the case with regards to this proposed development in the heart of King St. The proposed development is being built on small lots that have been put together in a zig-zag fashion to convenience the developers, not the community. Contrary to indications in staff's report, no buildings on the blocks to the east or west of the proposed development run the entire length of the block (from King St. to Adelaide St.). Furthermore, staff seems to place importance to the setbacks proposed by the applicant. However, setbacks alone cannot mitigate the negative impacts of the height and length of the proposed development. Therefore, we strongly disagree with staff's determination relating to the proposed development's height and massing, and urge councilors to reconsider this determination.

Initially, Allied was satisfied with the OMB-approved plans for 544 King St. (on a smaller plot of land than the current proposal) with two separate smaller commercial buildings. The two commercial buildings were approximately 1/3 shorter than the current proposal and were separated by a 9-metre gap. This gap was essential



as it created a light corridor to penetrate across a development otherwise runs almost the full length from King to Adelaide. The opening softened the impact of adding more mass and height to such a small footprint.

Alpha Junior Public School

It's important to note that this proposed project will have negative impact on the Alpha Junior Public School – a great little school found on Brant Street, in the heart of our King West neighbourhood. The school is in a heritage building and is small – it has no gymnasium inside, and the schoolyard is the primary space for many of the activities that would happen in a gymnasium. Every week, rain or shine, Monday mornings start with the entire school gathering outside for assembly. In the schoolyard, the students hold welcome breakfast every September, and the grade 6 graduation every June. They make use of outdoor space as much as the indoor which is why the Alpha community has spent a lot of time 'greening' the schoolyard. They have planted maple trees to teach about sustainable farming – the teachers and kids tap the maples and make maple syrup each year. Wild local plants are grown and the kids observe urban biodiversity. Being shaded by the proposed development will undoubtedly create issues with their outdoor activities and nature. The atmosphere from the proposed building will likely have negative impact on the children and their enjoyment of their school.

We are aware that councilors have taken an active role in protecting the neighbourhood's enjoyment of St. Andrews Park. We ask that when considering this proposed development, you place equal importance and protection to the children's school as you have done for the park.

Alternatives

To be clear, we are not opposed to development of the area, we are simply asking for a design that acknowledges the existing community, acknowledges the importance of the site as the heart of King St. and the sensitive environment in which Alpha Junior Public School is located. This site is not fit for an oversized office tower/ condo. There are alternative approaches to the development of this space. We support a reasonably sized commercial building along 540-544 King St., and a shorter residential tower off of Morrison Street, with a clear separation between the two. Such a separation would allow for greater light flow in the area and for the development to include a green space between two towers. This green space could be used to include more trees, which are missing from the development as currently proposed. There is no justification for approving a single building for these sites. Both sites are large enough to house two independent buildings.

We ask that you protect Alpha Junior Public School as a welcoming public space, refuse to approve the development as currently proposed, and request a design that strives for more than maximum utilization of a footprint - we as a community (developers, planners, parents, neighbours) can do better.

Kind regards,
Board of Director, TSCC No. 1796
19 Brant St, Toronto ON

