

December 2, 2019

**Chair & Members of
Toronto and East York Community Council**

City Clerk's Office
2nd Floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2N2

Attention: Ms. Ellen Devlin, Administrator

**Re: Main Street Planning Study
City-initiated Official Plan Amendment
Meeting 11 – Item 11.4 – December 3, 2019**

We are writing on behalf of our client, Victoria Wood (Main Square) Inc. (c/o Talisker Corporation), the owner of Main Square on the southeast corner of Danforth Avenue and Main Street which is central to the City's Main Street Planning Study area and subject to the proposed City-initiated draft Official Plan Amendment (proposed OPA 478 (SASP 577)). The Main Square property includes municipal addresses ranging from 2575 to 2625 Danforth Avenue.

Talisker also own lands immediately east of Main Square that are leased to and form part of the adjacent Canadian Tire store and extend to approximately Guest Avenue.

We, together with our client, have participated and been involved throughout the City's Main Street Planning Study since its 2017 start. We appreciate this opportunity to provide Toronto and East York Community Council (TEYCC) with our comments and issues with respect to the City's Final Report and draft Official Plan Amendment now before you.

As Talisker and Main Square have a central and pivotal position with the Main Street Planning Study, we look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the City and other stakeholders to realize the vision, goals and objectives expressed in the MSPS and draft OPA.

In our opinion, further work on the draft OPA is needed prior to City Council's consideration and adoption.

Main Square's Planning Context

Main Square was originally approved and constructed approximately 50 years ago, about the same time as the Main subway station opened in 1968.

Main Square is a large, prominent corner property (approximately 3.2 hectares) between the Danforth subway and the Danforth GO Transit station which includes four buildings, 9 to 28 storeys in height, and approximately 1,123 rental apartments. Retail commercial uses are focused along Danforth Avenue.

The Main Square Community Centre was built by the City just over 20 years ago on leased lands within Main Square adjacent to the existing Danforth GO Station.

In 2006, after a comprehensive planning process involving considerable community and stakeholder consultation, City Council approved an updated site-specific zoning amendment to allow a 15-storey mixed-use building on the corner of Danforth and Main Street and a 32-storey residential building at the southeast corner of the Main Square lands adjacent the parking area of the existing Canadian Tire store and the self-storage facility at 6 Dawes Avenue. The site-specific zoning also includes various community benefits secured through a registered Section 37 Agreement with the City including a new daycare, landscaped open spaces, capital for community recreation facilities and the securing of the existing and new rental apartments. Approximately 512 new residential apartments were proposed within the approved 15 and 32-storey buildings.

Recently, Talisker has been focused on upgrading the retail space along Danforth Avenue and renovating and upgrading the existing rental buildings. The approved 15 and 32-storey rental apartment buildings have not been constructed. Talisker have paused their existing comprehensive site plan approval (SPA) application while the City has been undertaking the Main Street Planning Study. This would allow for consideration of the potential challenges and opportunities inherent to this recent City-led planning and design initiative as Talisker's lands play a central and pivotal role.

As the Main Street Planning Study has progressed, Talisker have participated in discussions with City staff and Councillor Bradford's office about the proposed daycare, the existing community centre lease, as well as potential enhancements along Main Street to improve the pedestrian experience and landscape between the Danforth subway and GO Station with Metrolinx and its consultant advisors. There have also been meetings and discussion between Talisker, City staff and the new owners of 6 Dawes Avenue (Carlyle/Slate Developments).

We note that a comprehensive Rezoning plan and application has just been submitted this week for the 6 Dawes site which is adjacent to Main Square and the adjacent Talisker land holdings. That Rezoning, which has the general consent and support of Metrolinx, proposes to integrate the Danforth GO Station at Main Street and to relocate and build a new 4-storey, city-owned community centre (5,224m²) at Dawes Avenue to the east. These facilities are proposed within the 4 to 6-storey base buildings (or podium) that extend along this large but relatively narrow site along the rail corridor. The tallest residential building is 49-storeys close to Main Street, with two additional towers of 46 and 40-storeys progressing to the east. Overall, approximately 1,425 residential units are proposed, together with a mid-block publicly-accessible open space (POPS) and a conveyance of a potential public street extending Dawes Avenue.

Draft OPA 478 (SASP 577)

We have had the opportunity to initially review the City’s Final Report and draft OPA.

Overall, our client supports the comprehensive planning vision and objectives of the Main Street Planning Study and the draft OPA. That vision is to encourage and facilitate a complete, diverse, mixed-use and transit-supportive and sustainable community with enhanced connectivity and a high-quality public realm.

For decades, unfortunately, the rail corridor and Danforth GO station has been relatively obscure and hidden, the “back” to Danforth Avenue’s “front”. With the significant public investment and enhanced level of service planned for the Danforth GO Transit, there is a wonderful opportunity to create a more complete community with new public streets, parks, public open space, enhanced public boulevards along Danforth Avenue and Main Street, and better integration between the Danforth subway and GO Station. Such public investment and opportunity also demands more optimal land use and significant intensification.

The following highlights some of our client’s issues and concerns with respect to the proposed draft OPA policies including:

Public Realm (2.0)

- Map 2A (Streets and Block Plan) – it appears that much of the proposed local public road linking Dawes to Danforth Avenue would require conveyance from Talisker lands. This includes a private mutual right-of-way with Canadian Tire, the Canadian Tire parking area and lands owned by 6 Dawes. There is no specificity as to the width of the proposed public street, nor how this could be achieved (other than future redevelopment and landowner agreement). Greater specificity is needed.
- Policy 2.1.2 – minor land use and building expansions – Main Square has substantial existing zoning entitlements that could be impacted by the proposed public road, POPS and mid-block links as shown.
- Policy 2.2.1 – the curb to building face references would more appropriately refer to “boulevard” rather than minimum “sidewalk” widths of 4.8 and 6 metres.
- Implementing the mid-block POPS and connections and the central public park will require comprehensive block planning and agreements between owners. It is also unclear what assumptions have been made by the City to determine the size of the proposed public park in Character Area C.

Community Services and Facilities (3.0)

- The Main Square Community Centre and its lease is a key part of Main Square today and the future area planning. Discussions have only recently occurred with City staff and the proposed relocation as part of the 6 Dawes redevelopment needs further planning study and financial consideration (3.1 & 3.6)
- While community services and facilities are an important part of building complete communities, it may not be feasible to include all required facilities as part of the first phase of any redevelopment (3.4)

Sustainability and Resilience (4.0)

- While environmental sustainability, energy efficiency and resilience are important, particularly for new development, it is difficult to achieve in 50-year old residential buildings such as Main Square, despite the policy encouragement (4.3)

Parking and Loading (5.0)

- While supporting the reduced parking demand goals and policies (5.1) in such a transit-supportive place, the consolidation and coordination of public street and access points will need to be carefully considered (5.4).

Land Use (6.0)

- Main Square already has substantial approved zoning entitlements that are already supported by sufficient infrastructure without upgrades or mitigation (6.1).

Built Form (7.0)

- Main Square's existing approved zoning should be acknowledged as part of Character Area C.
- Flexibility should be afforded with the base building and tall building heights, with specific measures included in zoning rather than the OPA.
- While the principle of a tall building height “peak” and “transition” is understandable, flexibility should be afforded where it can be demonstrated that an overall urban structure aim is being achieved with no adverse planning impact related to that built form. There are various references to transition throughout the OPA such as “may, will, gradual and appropriate” that should be reconsidered with respect to objectives and implementation. Not all buildings may have to transition down, literally building-by-building, to achieve the overall intent of such transition from an urban form and planning impact perspective.
- Minimum tower separation needs to appropriately consider the approved 32-storey tower at Main Square.

Housing (9.0)

- While providing a diversity and range of housing in a complete community is an important objective, it is unclear whether the City's policy intent and implementation is to have each new residential development provide a diverse range and mix of housing including seniors and affordable suites (9.1).
- Clarify the basis for using 80 units as the threshold for minimum percentage of suites and why an amendment to the SASP would be needed if that quantum was not met at slightly above or below such a threshold.

Maps

- Clarify how the Streets and Block Plan (Map 2A and 2B), Employment Priority Areas (Map 3), Parks and Public Realm Plan (Map 4) and Tall Building Transition Height Map (Map 6) relate to property ownership within Character Area C

Conclusion and Recommendation

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments to Community Council and look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with City staff and other community stakeholders to realize a vibrant and complete mixed-use community that optimizes the significant public investment and opportunity inherent to the Main Street Planning Study area.

To that end, our client will be continuing to work with its architect and urban designer to further explore and refine an updated master plan for Main Square and its adjacent lands to the East for review with City staff and other stakeholders as the basis for a potential rezoning application.

In our opinion, the draft OPA 478 (SASP 577) needs further Staff review and amendment prior to City Council's consideration and adoption, particularly related to lands within Character Area C including Main Square. The ability to facilitate and implement policy is critical to good planning and achieving the sought-after vision and objectives.

Yours truly,
HUNTER & Associates Ltd.



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