

May 14, 2020

BY EMAIL

Toronto City Council
Toronto City Hall, 2nd Floor
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
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E: councilmeeting@toronto.ca

Attn: Marilyn Toft

Dear Mayor and Members of City Council:

**Re: Queen Street West Planning Study – Bathurst Street to Roncesvalles Avenue – Official Plan Amendment No. 445
(Considered by Toronto and East York Community Council on March 12, 2020, Agenda # TE14.5)
723 Queen Street West – Florence Booth House**

Gladki Planning Associates are the planning consultants for the Salvation Army in Canada (“the Salvation Army”), owners of 723 Queen Street West (the “Site”) and operators of the Florence Booth House, a shelter for homeless women. The Site is located on the southeast corner of Queen Street West and Tecumseth Street.

The Salvation Army has been present on the site since 1913. The current building was originally constructed as a worship and community meeting space by the Salvation Army in two stages: in 1913 (along Tecumseth St.) and in 1920 (along Queen St. West).

In 2000, in coordination with the City of Toronto, Florence Booth House was converted to become a shelter for women who are homeless, intended then as a short-term, temporary measure to help address what was perceived as an emergency. Twenty years later, the short-term emergency measures have run their course. The existing building is not suitable for its intended use, and is in critical need of replacement. The necessity for this type of facility in our community, as one aspect of a broader strategy to address our affordable housing challenge, has only increased over this period.

Over the past number of years, the Salvation Army has consulted with City of Toronto staff in the Shelter, Support & Housing Administration Division and City Planning Division, including Heritage Preservation Services, to create a redevelopment proposal that increases the capacity of the shelter, improves the experience of its users and is sensitive to the planning and heritage context of the area.

After years of effort and problem-solving to address site challenges, the Salvation Army is preparing to submit an application to the Committee of Adjustment to request Minor Variances to the Zoning By-law to allow the redevelopment to proceed.

Official Plan Amendment No.445

Official Plan Amendment No.445 includes Site and Area Specific Policies pertaining to Parkdale Main Street and West Queen West. The policies included in Official Plan Amendment No.445 address built form at a high level of detail. The proposed design for Florence Booth House does not meet all these policies. However, as the product of extensive consultation with City staff carefully considering the site, surroundings and heritage value of the original building, as well as the distinct requirements of the shelter use, the proposed design meets the overall intent of Official Plan Amendment No.445.

If adopted by Council, the policies pertaining to street wall, step backs and rear setback, among others, would present additional barriers to the successful redevelopment of the Florence Booth House. By including such a high degree of specificity in the policies, variances required due to site characteristics, use and context must be addressed through an Official Plan Amendment rather than variances to the Zoning By-law. This process is generally more onerous, expensive and time-consuming. The implications of the OPA for Florence Booth House are an additional delay and cost in providing an essential upgrade to a facility that exists as a public good and critical element of the housing spectrum.

Conclusion

The proposed redevelopment of Florence Booth House at 723 Queen Street West is a context sensitive design for a use that is provided with support from the City. Our client requests that the City consider the concerns set out above and remove the Site from Official Plan Amendment No.445.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,

Andrew Davidge
Senior Planner

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