

Leaside Residents Association Incorporated
1601 Bayview Avenue
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November 4, 2020

North York Civic Centre
 Main floor, 5100 Yonge St.
 Toronto, ON M2N 5V7
 Attention: Carlie Turpin

RE: NY19.5 Preliminary Report - Zoning By-law Amendment Application - 126-132 Laird Drive

Dear Chair and Members of North York Community Council,

The Leaside Residents Association supports the above noted staff report which provides a very comprehensive summary of the applicable policies and the potential issues regarding this application for redevelopment of the two properties located south of Stickney Avenue on the west side of Laird Drive. (The application at NY19.6 is for the property (134 Laird) on the north side of Stickney Avenue). Our comments are as follows:

1. Context – West Side of Laird Developments

The context for this application is very important. Laird Drive has in place two approved plans and two submitted plans for a total of four contiguous 7-8 storey mid-rise buildings that will stretch almost 300 metres from just south of McRae to well south of Stickney, a distance which amounts to about one third of the length of Laird Drive from Eglinton to Southvale. And we are aware that this type of redevelopment on the west side of Laird may be only the beginning.

The properties at 146 Laird Drive, site of the former Metropolitan Separate School Board administrative offices, and 150 Laird Drive, the former headquarters of the Durant Motor Car Company, were approved by the Ontario Municipal Board in October 2016, for a 7-storey condominium building, and an 8-storey seniors rental building respectively. In the latest site plan submission, the condominium uses have since been removed from the plan for 150 Laird, replaced with additional rental retirement uses, bringing the development's total retirement rental unit count to 248, divided between 74 assisted and 174 independent units.

The properties at 126, 132 Laird, south of Stickney Avenue, and 134 Laird, north of Stickney to the property line with 146 Laird Drive, have applications submitted for two “complementary” 8 storey mid-rise buildings, both condominiums, with a unit count of 106 and 143 respectively.

The properties at 126, 132 and 134 Laird Drive are currently occupied by low-rise auto-related buildings—Gyro car dealership and automobile service centre on the north and south sides of Stickney Avenue, and another automobile service centre next door. Gyro is expected to move across the road to the new premises under construction on the east side of Laird.

2. Conformity with Laird in Focus Plan vs. differentiation

On the one hand, it appears that what the Laird in Focus Planning Study ordered (mid-rise development)

is being delivered! However Official Plan Amendment (Site and Area Specific Policy – SASP 568) and Urban Design Guidelines which include such measures as angular planes, setbacks and stepbacks (front and rear) apply. The densities of the proposed 126, 132 and 134 developments (4.21, 4.13 FSI) exceed those approved in the earlier 146-150 Laird development (3.48), despite being further away (over 700 metres) from the LRT station!

On the other hand, we are concerned that the “mid-rise march” of sets of “complementary” buildings, and developers “building to the guidelines” may be at risk of producing a street wall comprised of non-descript and repetitious developments! We would encourage differentiation through use of variable design, different materials, ornamentation and accents.

3. Animated Street?

While the Laird mid-rise developments, like Bayview, are in the “Mixed Use” designation, unlike Bayview, they have no retail at grade, being totally residential (or institutional in the case of 146-150 Laird). On the one hand this is understandable, given that the other side of Laird has now largely converted to retail/commercial uses, including the Smart Centre and the Laird Village. However, the accepted wisdom regarding the purpose of retail at grade is to create an animated vibrant community friendly streetscape. So if not retail, how can that desirable condition be realized? The 126-132 and 134 Laird applications both propose “live-work” units fronting on Laird. It is unclear whether and how these would produce the desired results. Perhaps there should be consideration of alternative uses, such as community/medical services?

4. Neighbours at Rear

And what is the impact on the residential properties to the rear? But first - how many adjacent properties are there? There are 13 properties abutting to the rear of 126,132 and 134 Laird (and 10 properties to the rear of 146-150 Laird Drive. We will be working closely with Randolph Road neighbours (west and east sides) to ensure that the setbacks are appropriate, and overlook over the neighbouring residential properties is limited.

5. Access

We support the access to each building from Stickney Avenue - rather than Laird. Access from a lane off Stickney would have been helpful to the earlier development at 146 Laird too.

6. Applicant’s LPAT Appeal

We note that the applicant has appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) the Laird in Focus Policy 7.5 minimum setback of 3m. from the Laird Drive ROW, despite it being recommended by the Laird in Focus Planning Study with community input and City Council approval. This is disappointing as the applicant committed in a pre-application meeting over a year ago that they would be compliant with the policies and guidelines in place. We did not expect them to appeal the policies that were being put in place!

7. Toronto Green Standards (TGS)

The application commits only to TGS Tier 1 – the mandatory minimum level. We would support the development being built to a higher TGS Tier to appreciably reduce or eliminate GHG emissions. In addition the applicant should be encouraged to provide ample facilities for electric vehicle charging and

electric car/bike rentals in an effort to make efficient use of the parking space allocations - which do not appear to be generous.

8. Streetscape Improvements

We note that Laird in Focus recommended major streetscape improvements (wider sidewalks, bike lanes) facilitated in part by redevelopments underway. We urge the City to fund and proceed with these ASAP.

Respectfully submitted,

Geoff Kettel and Carol Burtin Fripp
Co-Presidents

c.c. Giulio Cescato, Acting Director, Community Planning, North York District
John Andreevski, Manager, Community Planning, North York District
Sarah Ovens, Planner, Community Planning, North York District