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City Councillor | Ward 10, Spadina-Fort York

January 24, 2020

Planning and Housing Committee
City Hall, Committee Room 1
100 Queen St W
Toronto ON M5H 2N2

Dear Chair and Members,

Re: Building Affordable Housing in CityPlace at Block 36 North

As the crisis of homelessness and housing affordability continues in Toronto, building new affordable housing has become, rightly, one of this Council's priorities – which I strongly support. A wide spectrum of urgent initiatives is needed to address the many dimensions of the crisis, which is intertwined with poverty and inequality, including adequate emergency shelter capacity, supportive housing, deeply affordable housing geared to income, and purpose-built market rental housing.

Despite the reality that the City of Toronto cannot completely solve the crisis alone, without more support from our government partners, we must do everything possible with the resources at hand. An important tool available to us today is leveraging City-owned parcels of land for new affordable housing construction.

Block 36 North is the last block of undeveloped land in CityPlace, located immediately north of the Fort York library branch. It is owned by the City of Toronto and earmarked for new affordable rental housing. I have been working to have this affordable housing built for a number of years and, with City staff, even secured City Council approval for construction in 2016.

At its meeting on December 9 and 10, 2015, City Council requested the Director, Affordable Housing Office, to fast-track construction of new affordable rental housing on Block 36 North in the Railway Lands through the then-new Open Door Program (EX10.19). Subsequently, City staff reported to City Council on July 12, 13, 14, and 15, 2016, recommending approval of a successful proponent to build and operate 80 affordable rental homes for 50 years (EX16.27). Rents were to be affordable to households with an annual income between \$34,000 and \$61,000. City Council adopted the staff recommendations. Unfortunately, the project ultimately did not advance to construction.

More recently, the Province of Ontario's public transit agency Metrolinx expressed interest in securing – through licence or expropriation – access to the property to facilitate planned construction in the adjacent rail corridor. I have been advised that, as a result of negotiations between the City's Transit

Expansion Office and Metrolinx, the Block 36 North property is no longer under consideration by Metrolinx. This provides the City with enough certainty to re-start the planning process to build new affordable rental housing on the property.

It is time to get moving on building new affordable rental housing in CityPlace. I am requesting that City Council direct City staff to re-initiate this project and urgently report back to City Council with recommendations to build new affordable rental housing at Block 36 North in CityPlace.

Recommendation:

1. Planning and Housing Committee request the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat:
 - a. Report back to Committee by Q2 2020 with recommendations to advance the construction of new affordable rental housing on Block 36 North.
 - b. Explore opportunities, in consultation with appropriate staff and the ward councillor, to incorporate additional needed community facilities into the base of the new building, such as non-profit childcare.

Sincerely,



Joe Cressy