

September 14, 2020

Scarborough Community Council
City Clerk's Office, Scarborough Civic Centre
150 Borough Drive
Toronto ON M1P 4N7

**Re: Item SC17.2 - Scarborough Community Council Meeting, September 15, 2020
Royal Crown Academic School Student Residence - 4620 Finch Avenue East
ZBLA (19 243786 ESC 23 OZ) and SPA (19 262864 ESC 23 SA) Applications**

The Planning Partnership ("TPP") acts for Royal Crown Academic School (Royal Crown) for this application to amend the Zoning By-law and for Site Plan Approval to permit a 10-storey, 252 room student residence at 4620 Finch Avenue East (Subject Property).

Royal Crown is a well-recognized, international high school that provides students with a strong, but well-balanced focus on academics that is designed to facilitate their entry into the top universities in Canada.

Given the international make-up of the student population, Royal Crown is dedicated to providing the most safe and stable living environment for each student. Currently, the students are housed in off-site temporary (hotel) accommodations, which is not ideal.

The proposed student residence will serve to rectify this situation and provide the students with new, safe, purpose-built accommodations and a range of ancillary academic and amenity functions that will allow them to live and study on site while under supervision.

The current school building portion on the Subject Site is a former City of Toronto Police Services academy building that was suitable to be repurposed for educational uses upon being declared surplus by the City of Toronto.

Royal Crown is located directly adjacent or in close proximity to a cluster of similar institutional uses, as well as commercial and low, medium and high-density residential located along Finch Avenue East generally between Brimley Road and McCowan Road.

Nearby institutional uses include Albert Campbell Collegiate Institute, Frances Liberman Catholic High School, Brimwood Boulevard Junior Public School, Scarborough Our Lady of Grace YMCA, Toronto Fire Station 242 and a former Toronto Police Services property.

Beyond this institutional cluster, Royal Crown is surrounded by a mix of residential and commercial uses, including existing mid- and high-rise buildings, with the taller buildings in range of 10-20 storeys. Commercial uses include Woodside Square Shopping Centre.

The Subject Site is well served by a number of existing transit routes, including 4 adjacent TTC routes and one GO Transit bus route, as well as an expanding active transportation network. Finch Avenue East is a Surface Transit Priority Segment in the Official Plan.

Under the Official Plan, the Subject Site is identified as an “Institutional Area”, one of four growth designations in the Plan anticipated for increases in population and employment. The existing school and proposed student residence are permitted by the Plan.

Zoning under former By-law 12707 and current By-law 569-2013 is Institutional, which normally permits a student residence. However, Site Specific Exception 77, which is still in place only permits the former Police College use, necessitating the Zoning change. The existing private school use was later permitted by way of a minor variance.

The proposed residence will be added to the rear of the existing school on a portion of the property which is underutilized. At current, the site is almost 100 percent paved, which promotes run-off and provides little opportunity for groundwater infiltration and recharge.

The proposed residence has been situated and scaled appropriately on the site, and the school provides for a significant separation from a transition down towards Finch Avenue. Thoughtful building design, articulation and varied materials will create greater interest.

Positive site and building design features of the new residence that evolved as the result of collaboration with planning and urban design staff include a separate and prominent residence drop-off and lobby with a pedestrian connection to the Finch sidewalk, a new landscaped courtyard linking the residence and the school, permeable paving around the site and a new vegetated edge at the north end next to Brimley Woods Park.

Significant effort throughout the planning and design process and the City review process focused on the physical and functional relationship of the new residence to Brimley Woods Park and the associated features to ensure a positive and beneficial outcome.

As a result of that process, the design will have a net positive impact as parking has been moved away from that area of the site to the perimeter. The building footprint has been pulled south away from the dripline of adjacent trees with an additional 10 metre building buffer being added. Impermeable paving that previously took up almost this entire area will be removed and replaced with permeable paving materials and soft landscaping that will reduce run-off and allow for increased infiltration. In addition, this area will now have increased activity and opportunity for enhanced security and thus safety.

A complete application was prepared and submitted which was supported by a significant number of studies and reports. Working through the planning process with City and agency staff through pre-consultation and meaningful working sessions around design and technical issues brought positive refinements to the site and building plans. Upon approval of the Zoning by Council, we welcome the opportunity to continue to work with Staff on finalizing remaining items through the Site Plan approval process.

In summary, the Zoning Amendment provides an appropriate opportunity to establish a student residence that is desirable and needed to safely house the existing student population, that conforms to and implements Provincial Plans, the City's Official Plan and the intent of the Zoning By-law, that is well designed and massed and entirely consistent with the existing and emerging surrounding uses and built form context. Further, it will have a positive, sustainable effect on the natural heritage features and systems. This will also allow Royal Crown to deliver a high quality, integrated student life and education and continue to have a positive impact on the community. In our opinion, the application is both reasonable and represents good planning.

We have reviewed the City Staff report dated August 24th, 2020 and we concur with both its findings and recommendations, including the proposed draft Zoning By-laws which are attached to the report. We will also be present at the meeting on September 15th to speak to this matter and will be able to answer any questions that Scarborough Community Council or others might have.

Yours respectfully,
THE PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bruce Hall", with a stylized, flowing script.

Bruce Hall, MCIP, RPP, Planner & Principal