



January 25, 2020

10th floor, West Tower, City Hall  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2  
Attention: Matthew Green

**RE: BU24.1 2021 Capital and Operating Budgets**

Dear Chair Gary Crawford and Members of the Budget Committee,

The Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA), an umbrella organization of over 30 resident associations in Midtown, North Toronto and North York makes the following submission.

FoNTRA advocates for making the City better through better planning. We therefore make recommendations for the City's budget in three key areas:

**1. Focus on Recovery and Rebuild Initiatives to become a Better Place**

**We recommend:**

- **that City Council direct its resources to Recovery and Rebuild Initiatives**

**2. Accelerate - not reduce - Planning Studies**

**We recommend:**

- **that City Council provide City Planning with additional funds to allow for Planning Studies to be accelerated**

**3. Raise Additional Revenues which align with Recovery and Rebuild Objectives**

**We recommend:**

- **that City Council ensure that "contribution to city building" is a key consideration in its consideration of revenue tools**

The above three recommendations are elaborated below.

## 1. Focus on Recovery and Rebuild Initiatives to become a Better Place

First, we recognize that this year the City faces fiscal challenges on a scale that is unprecedented. However the City also faces broader strategic challenges beyond the fiscal challenges. It is clear that how the City, the province, the country and the world work is being changed indelibly and permanently as a consequence of the pandemic.

Toronto needs not only to recover from the pandemic, and remain a good place to live for all its (diverse) people, but it has to recover and rebuild to become a **better place**. s “Better” in all the important things like health, safety, equity, affordability, vitality, space, and mobility, that make for a great city. And that means more useable open space, more bus transit for suburbs, more bike lanes, more popup restaurants, more affordable housing; but not expensive and inefficient subways, or a new alignment for the Gardiner Expressway.

**We recommend:**

- **that City Council direct its resources to Recovery and Rebuild Initiatives**

## 2. Accelerate - not reduce - Planning Studies

A creative and active City Planning function is vital to the “race to be better”. Planning studies are essential to becoming a better city.

City Planning Division’s activities basically consist of two streams: the Study Work Program, and Development Review. The Study Work Program, which includes such activities as Avenue Studies, Secondary Plans, Zoning By-law Updates, Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Studies, Community Heritage Resource Assessments (CHRA) and neighbourhood-specific Design Guidelines, is critical in order to advance the City’s strategic priorities, and also to strengthen the position of the City in dealing with development applications. It is also vital in dealing with a provincial government that does not respect the authority and jurisdiction of the City.

The development of secondary plans that take transportation and other required infrastructure needs into account along with the availability of parkland, schools, social services, heritage studies, Zoning Reviews, and neighbourhood-specific Design Guidelines. These are critical. It is important to get ahead of development applications with completed plans, as was demonstrated in both Midtown (OPA 405) and Downtown (OPA406).

However, examination of the Study Work Program proposed for 2021 compared with that for 2020 reveals some concerning trends. The waiting list for studies and plans is long, and getting longer. This trend appears to be especially true for studies which would protect established neighbourhoods, including Heritage Conservation (HCD

studies and plans, and CHRAs), and City-Wide and Area Guidelines (such as Neighbourhood Design Guidelines). The Study Work Program data for these categories are collated here by status (Completed, Forecast for 2021, LPAT Hearings, Active (beyond 2021), and Hold for 2020 (Jan. 2020 report) and 2021 (Jan. 2021 report) - see attached.

This chart indicates that while there are a couple of additions to the list in 2021 (e.g. Jane-Finch CHRA), several studies have fallen back from Active (2020) to Hold (2021), i.e. Elm Street CHRA, Fort York HCD, Sunshine Valley HCD. And multiple studies continue to be on Hold, for example, Lawrence Park West HCD and Leaside CHRA, which were authorized as HCD studies in 2016 and 2014 respectively. Meanwhile, the Neighbourhood Design Guidelines template project, which commenced in 2016, is now downgraded from Forecast (2020) to Hold (2021). The latter is especially concerning as, of two pilot areas (Long Branch and Willowdale) chosen for study, only one (Long Branch) was completed, and it appears now that the project is effectively abandoned?

The result of the inaction on these projects is that established neighbourhoods are left without policies and tools to protect their built form. Every two weeks, the Committee of Adjustment, in failing to take neighbourhood character into consideration, allows projects that do not fit the established character of the community (and what is refused by the CofA is likely to be allowed by the Toronto Local Appeal Body (TLAB) due to the same lack of neighbourhood protection policies and Council approved guidelines). Such guidelines will also be an important part of ensuring successful “Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods” projects.

Meanwhile, City Planning is facing the biggest threat to its ability to manage development applications with the province’s legislative changes for planning and heritage under Bill 108, and Bill 138. This legislation will disrupt City Planning’s agenda in ways which, at this point, we are not yet fully aware. Meeting the compressed processing deadlines for regular applications and preparing for hearings following an increased number of planning appeals will inevitably put pressure on City-wide and area planning. We are very concerned about the impact of the provincial changes, such as Community Benefits Authority coming out of Bill 138, and Official Plan/Growth Plan Conformity and Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), and we strongly support City Planning’s responses to these.

We believe despite (or even because of) the extraordinary fiscal challenges facing the City, these issues need to be addressed at a City-wide level – recognizing the strategic importance of City Planning, with increases to the City Planning budget, and also at the Divisional level by ensuring that resources be made available for the protection of neighbourhoods.

The Planning and Housing Committee at its January 19, 2021 meeting supported our objectives through passing the following Motion:

- Requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, to prepare a budget briefing note to the Budget Committee presenting the backlog of planning and heritage report requests and the necessary resources that would be required from the appropriate Reserve Fund, to address the backlog of planning and heritage report requests and provide scenarios for completing the backlog of requests within 3 years and within 5 years.

**We recommend**

- **that City Council provide City Planning with additional funds to allow for Planning Studies to be accelerated**

**3. Raise Additional Revenues which align with Recovery and Rebuild Objectives**

We recognize that programs need to be funded and funds need to be responsibly sourced. We believe that revenue measures should be assessed not just from a financial perspective, or for their ease of administration, but also for their contribution (negative or positive) to “city-building”. In other words do they align with Official Plan objectives that are particularly important in the recovery from COVID at this time, such as building a city that reduces the need for travel, that supports affordable housing, that encourages true mixed use development, that is transit, walking and biking friendly, that is green, and more equitable for all its residents?

Some measures that we believe represent revenue sources that support responsible city-building are:

A Vacancy Tax would produce money which is badly needed for affordable housing. When this tax was introduced in Vancouver it raised \$38 million its first year. In our letter on this matter (link) we supported introduction of a 3% vacancy tax rate.

A Land Transfer Tax on “high-end” properties, that needs to be distinguished from increased property taxes on “high-end” properties.

A Water Runoff charge that penalizes those with large areas of impervious paving such as parking lots, that would tend to target large retail malls, and would not penalize retail on main streets.

In addition, above-minimum property tax increases must be considered at this critical time given that our taxes have been lower than those in surrounding municipalities.

**We recommend**

- **that City Council ensure that “contribution to city building” is a key consideration in its consideration of revenue tools**

Finally, we believe that the City should be bold, not shy away from making investments and raising revenue which will be required in order to protect its brand in the years ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our ideas, concerns and recommendations regarding the 2021 City of Toronto budget.

Yours truly,

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The Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization comprised of over 30 member resident organizations. Its members include at least 170,000 Toronto residents within their boundaries. The residents' associations that make up FoNTRA believe that Ontario and Toronto can and should achieve better development. Its central issue is not whether Toronto will grow, but how. FoNTRA believes that sustainable urban regions are characterized by environmental balance, fiscal viability, infrastructure investment and social renewal.

Attachment: Study Work Program 2020 and 2021

c.c. Mayor John Tory and City Council  
Chris Murray, City Manager  
Tracey Cooke, Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure and Development Services  
Gregg Lintern, Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division  
Will Johnston, Chief Building Official, Toronto Building  
Janie Romoff, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division  
Barbara Gray, General Manager, Transportation Services Division

## Attachment

**City Planning Study Work Program –  
Heritage Conservation/Design Guidelines  
2020 and 2021 Reports\***

<b>Heritage Planning Project</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Agincourt CHRA	Hold	Hold
Baby Point HCD	Active	Active
Beaconsfield HCD Study	Hold	Hold
Belmont-Hillsboro HCD Study	Hold	Hold
Bloor West Village HCD Study	Forecast	Forecast
Bloor-Yorkville CHRA	Active	Active
Bloor-Sterling CHRA	-	Forecast
Cabbagetown SW HCD Plan	Active/Approved	Forecast
Danforth Avenue CHRA (Broadview to Coxwell)	Active	Forecast
Distillery District HCD Plan	Active	Forecast
Elm Street CHRA	Active	Hold
Fort York HCD Study	Active	Hold
Garden District HCD Plan	LPAT Hearing	LPAT Hearing
Gerrard-Carlaw CHRA	Active	Hold
Glebe Manor Estates HCD Study	Hold	Hold
Jane-Finch CHRA	-	Active
Harbord Village Phase 3 HCD Study	Hold	Hold
Hilton Ave. HCD Study	-	Hold
Historic Yonge HCD Plan	LPAT Hearing	LPAT Hearing
Indigenous Heritage Engagement	Active	Forecast
Kensington Market HCD Plan	Forecast	Forecast
King-Spadina HCD Plan	LPAT Hearing	LPAT Hearing
Lawrence Park West HCD Study	Hold	Hold
Leaside CHRA	Hold	Hold

<b>Heritage Planning Project</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Liberty Village CHRA	Active	Active
Mount Dennis CHRA	Active	Forecast
Parkdale Main Street HCD Plan	Forecast/Approved	Forecast
Queen Street East HCD Study	Hold	Hold
Rosedale HCD Plan Review	Forecast	Forecast
Scarborough Centre CHRA	Active	Forecast
St Lawrence Neighbourhood Phase 2 HCD	Hold	Hold
Summerhill CHRA	Hold	Hold
Sunshine Valley HCD Study	Active	Hold
The Junction Phase 1 HCD study	Active	Forecast
Wells Hill Avenue HCD Study	Active	Hold
West Annex HCD Study	Hold	Hold
West Queen West HCD Plan	Forecast/Approved	Forecast
Weston Phase 2 HCD Study LPAT Hearings	Forecast	Forecast
Wychwood HCD Plan Review	Active	Forecast
<b>City-wide/Area Guidelines</b>		
Cultural Heritage Landscape Guidelines	Active	Hold
Historic Main Street Properties – Guidelines/best practices for conserving and enhancing	Hold	Forecast
Neighbourhood Design Guidelines Template	Forecast	Hold

\*Forecast = currently underway and targeted for completion by year end

Active = preliminary completion dates beyond the year

Hold = potential study on hold

Source: Attachments to City Planning Study Work Program Report - Jan 2020, Jan 2021