



Monday, June 21, 2021

- **Re: PHC: 25.10 - Multi-Tenant (Rooming Houses)**

Dear Planning and Housing Committee Members:

As the President of the Bayview Cummer Neighbourhood Association, which represents the residents south of Steeles Avenue, west of Bayview, east of Willowdale and south of the hydro corridor, I wish to convey my concerns about the proposed multi-tenant housing initiative on behalf of my Association's members.

It was only five years ago that a boy was shot and killed at a rooming house when a five-bedroom house had been rented out in our neighbourhood on Glenalia Ave in our catchment area. The City's enforcement system failed to address the proliferation of rooming houses on the AirBnB platform and our residents paid the price. We believe that the City's current activities which are reducing the hospitality stock through the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) purchases combined with loosening the rules on rooming houses without adequate enforcement may expose our Willowdale neighborhoods to more transient single residents, while reducing housing available for families.

Some of my board members participated in a video conference call on this issue for the public on May 11, 2021. During this call, City of Toronto officials outlined a two-stage plan as part of the City's objective to provide more affordable housing, upgrade MTH standards and increase compliance and enforcement. The first stage would be to create stricter rules and enforcement policies for existing rooming house landlords. The second phase would be to allow multi-tenant housing (MTH) in all parts of the City which permit residential use. This would mean that MTH would be allowed in North York, which up until this point in time has not allowed MTHs. We also understand that the City is considering raising the fees for landlords and offering an incentive program that would assist landlords in financing retrofits.

A number of issues were raised during the video conference on May 11 about which BCNA members remain concerned:

- **Enforcement:** During the May 11 video conference call, City officials told the participants that the City would be hiring 20 more enforcement officers. City officials admitted that it is difficult to determine an adequate number of enforcement officers because the exact number of MTHs is not known since there are quite a few unlicensed MTH operators. We remain concerned that more enforcement officers will be required.
- **Safety:** There is an ongoing issue about tenants violating safety rules by using hot plates. City officials indicated that this problem could be addressed by requiring more rooming houses to have sprinkler systems. We remain concerned about not only the rooming houses but the danger this problem could pose to surrounding residents.
- **Tenants' Rights:** Several participants on the May 11 call emphasized the need to make MTH tenants more aware of their rights. We understand that the City Housing Secretariat is working on materials that outline tenants' rights. Many MTH tenants are students. We support a better understanding of tenants' rights.

- Minimum room size requirements: Participants in the May 11 call expressed concerns about the small room dimensions of most current rooming houses and recommended that City introduce rules include a minimum size for rooms. We support such an initiative.
- Infrastructure: Participants on the May 11 call asked about the impact of the increase in population density (because of the new MTH policy) on infrastructure but City officials dismissed this concern by stating that the existing infrastructure was built at a time when families were larger and claimed it would not have to be enhanced. Existing and new landlords will have to submit waste management plans to the City. We remain concerned about the impact of the proposed MTH on the existing infrastructure.
- Parking: The City is proposing that parking not be offered to MTHs in areas where there is good public transportation and only two spaces per MTH be allowed in areas where public transportation is limited. We view this limit as providing too few parking spaces but at the same time we are concerned about traffic congestion in our catchment area.

While we understand that many City planners view suburban residential dwellings as underutilized space, we are of the view that it is important for families to have space rather than being cramped into condos. The housing stock in our neighbourhood is designed for families which form the bedrock of our community. A business climate should not be created for foreign investors which allows them to purchase property and rent out rooms for profit or transient travelers.

The BCNA would like to emphasize that significant negative externalities could be created by such an initiative, especially at a time when the City is considering the recommendations of the Yonge Street North Planning Study which will reduce many major thoroughfares to one lane and increase traffic congestion.

In closing, we would strongly advise you to reconsider this initiative which will only lead to higher housing prices and, therefore, less affordable housing as speculators purchase houses that they otherwise could not afford and finance their mortgages by renting rooms. If you have any questions about our comments we would be pleased to provide more details.

Yours sincerely,

Nathan Gomes  
President, Bayview Cummer Neighbourhood Association