

Toronto, October 13, 2021

Dear Members of Council:

Re: Proposed Redevelopment of 145 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario:
Applications for Zoning By-Law Amendment (application number 21 155923 STE 11 OZ)
and Site Plan Control (application number 21 155930 STE 11 SA)

As tenants of the apartment building at 145 St. George Street, we are writing to Council to let you know of our firm opposition to the Application to amend the Zoning By-laws for the purpose of the demolition of our homes. Our reasons for opposing the Application include the following.

As one of our neighbours has said:

I'm worried for all of what awaits us. Where will I go, it's so terrifying... I am poor and would never be able to come back here... I feel there must be a lot who feel same...

We understand that any developer is welcome to present an Application for Rezoning. But it is our hope that the City will consider its own right and obligation to its citizens as well. It is not a matter of the City just being "flexible" - as it all-too-often has been in regards to developers - but that the City understands that its citizens deserve to have their homes protected, to literally have a roof over our heads. Have the experiences of homeless people in tents not been enough to prove that Toronto needs housing, and, in particular, affordable housing? As one of the seniors in our building said in an email to our Committee:

I have financial difficulty to find a place to stay which is similar to my current place. I have low fixed income and receive GIS each month. I cannot afford the market renting cost even [if] the landlord provides a few months' rent as moving compensation. Besides, the new possible landlord will not let me in since I cannot provide a sufficient income proof to them.

My wife is sick and weak. We cannot move. Moving is a heavy job and might kill me during this process. We do not have any relatives or friends to help us.

Even [if] I can find a new place to stay, which will bring difficulty to my daily life (grocery shopping, go to hospital, safety, etc.). I do not think it is easy to find a similar location to support my current life style. If I have to stay in a remote area (even rent affordable), the life style might be harmful to our health.

In short my most concern is that such moving process will definitely jeopardize our health condition and very possibly shorten our life. This concern is beyond our other concerns. I will support any action to stop the demolition and I will join such action and any other activities.

While we appreciate the City's commitment to top up the minimal rent compensations mandated by the RTA, the City's default rent compensation still falls well short of what tenants actually

will need, but, more importantly, we are concerned that we will have no protection, beyond a City's "fine" if the developers do not hold up their end of the bargain regarding the right to return to the new building.

Neighbourhood Impact. The north side of Prince Arthur, where our building stands, is part of a stable apartment neighborhood where significant growth by such a large redevelopment is not anticipated. Approval of the application as filed could - and likely would - open the door to not only the demolition of 145 St. George Street, but other rental apartment buildings north of us. The precedent of the City permitting this proposal could also have a major impact on community safety, traffic, services, etc.

Zoning By-law Amendment. We should expect approval of any Zoning By-Law Amendment to conform with the Official Plan. The property at 145 St. George Street is located within an Apartment Neighborhood land-use designation under the City of Toronto Official Plan. When the Official Plan refers to redevelopment in Apartment Neighborhoods it is in the context of setting out criteria intended to evaluate situations of *underutilized* or *vacant* sites. The redevelopment application describes the site as underutilized, but the Official Plan's Apartment Neighborhood land-use designation text in section 4.2 distinguishes underutilized or vacant sites from established, already-developed built and stable Apartment Neighbourhoods. Given the distinction, the site is presumably not an underutilized or vacant site, for it is already established. An underutilized or vacant site refers more so to parking lots, empty land, and unoccupied buildings.

Demolition of Viable Housing. The preliminary issues outlined in the City's preliminary report specifically relate to achieving a proposal which is compatible with the surrounding context and that provides rental replacement and an acceptable tenant relocation and assistance plan to mitigate hardship for existing tenants. Our concern is that the discussion for achieving the redevelopment of this site may overlook the importance of the existing site's identity. It must be confirmed whether or not the Official Plan intends for the redevelopment of Apartment Neighbourhoods only in under-utilized or vacant sites. The existing apartment building should not be considered as an under-utilized or vacant site in the city's review of the Application's consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), conformity with the Growth Plan, and conformity with the Official Plan. If an already established, already developed, occupied and stable Apartment Neighborhood rental apartment building can be approved as an underutilized or vacant site, then what does the Apartment Neighborhood land-use designation stand for, and what does that mean for all Apartment Neighborhoods?

The Human Factor. While the applicant appears to be prepared to accommodate tenants if the application were to be approved, including in part providing the right to return to a similar rental replacement unit post-rebuild, such accommodations do not reflect the real cost to each tenant, and are not guaranteed but merely promised. Demolishing and redeveloping 145 St. George Street would disrupt the lives of singles, couples and families who will be forced to relocate during construction, and who would not be able afford the market rent at comparable housing for such time, even with accommodation.

Our building has a significant senior population, many of whom have been living in the building for over 20 years. A significant proportion of them also have disability issues and many are on fixed pension incomes. For older tenants and tenants with special needs, the relocation may also jeopardize their health and may very possibly shorten their lives.

If we are forced to leave our neighbourhood, we will be giving up community, security, access to our medical care, friendships, cultural life, and so much more that we have developed and nurtured. Eviction would indeed create a lonely world for many of the long-term tenants, as pointed out in this verbatim quote from a tenant:

If you ask me how I feel the next two or three years to feel like to live in my apartment till they get approved... every day when I come [home] I feel like living in the shelter, the only difference is we are paying the rent... knowing that we will be evacuated I don't feel homey feeling, not interested doing anything in my home... they just took every feeling that I had the past [many] years of my life... Simply they just destroyed all the memories that I had... remember life is all about memories...

Sustainability. It is now an acknowledged fact that tearing down large size buildings that are still meeting their usability objectives has a significant impact on the environment. The existing residential apartment building at 145 St. George Street was built in 1959. It is one of the largest mid-rise buildings in the area. There are very real environmental consequences with relation to the amount of carbon and other pollutants that will be released into such a dense residential area with so many two-storey residential houses within the immediate vicinity. In addition, the impact of the proposed building height on Taddle Creek Park must be addressed and the continued loss of mature trees should the project be approved by the City. Finally, the existing building at 145 St. George Street is considered a modernist architectural gem in the local Annex area and the wider Toronto area among architectural critics along with conservationists.

Key Questions: Based on the above, we have a number of direct questions for which we look forward to answers from City Planners and City Council

1. Does the Official Plan land-use designation for Apartment Neighborhoods intend for the redevelopment of Apartment Neighborhoods only in underutilized or vacant sites?
2. Of what purpose is the designation of Apartment Neighbourhoods if the edges can be chipped away. What is there to stop the next chipping away if the precedent of this Application is set?
3. Are the luxury condominiums or rental units that will take up the new height of the building any help whatsoever in terms of the Toronto housing crisis? Certainly, there is no consideration being given to the very real and very personal crisis in housing the City is experiencing. The approval of this Application will serve to further exacerbate the problem.
4. To what ends and in whose interests is the Application being made? Certainly not the community. Absolutely not the tenants. Every tall building that goes up is a fresh source of taxation to the City, but at what cost to community?

5. How does one pick up and leave rented premises temporarily, i.e. for three-to-five years or whatever number of years it would realistically take to rebuild on the site? With extreme difficulty, and for some it would be devastating.
6. What guarantee do the tenants have that the Applicant would fulfil its promises on the completion of a new building. After all, they are but promises. How could the tenants' right to return be enforced? How will tenants gather to protect their rights in three-to-five years when they have been scattered across and well beyond the City?
7. Where is there to go for so many people in one neighbourhood? For some, due to high rental costs, there is nowhere to go in the City we love.
8. What purpose is being served by displacing so many people? We shall leave that to Council to answer.

In summary, we oppose the Application because:

- It would destroy our homes, leaving over 100 tenants in a situation of precarious housing. We implore the City to consider the lives and well-being of the tenants who live at 145 St. George Street.
- Such “development at any cost” would in the longer term serve to set an example of destruction of viable apartment buildings in “Apartment Neighbourhoods”, and in the case of 145 St. George Street, fully-inhabited housing in an established dynamic, vibrant community. It behooves the city to respect the Official Plan.
- The environmental costs alone would put a lie to the concerns for sustainability that the City has developed. This is not 1959. It is 2021. We know better now.

Respectfully submitted,



David Steinman
Chair, 145 St. George Tenants' Committee

cc:

Mayor John Tory
Councillor Mike Layton
Councillor Joe Cressy
Councillor Kristin Wong-Tam
Councillor Josh Matlow
Councillor Jaye Robinson
Councillor John Fillion
Councillor Ana Bailao
Councillor Gord Perks
Councillor Mark Grimes
Director Community Planning, Lynda Macdonald
Fontra, Geoff Kettel and Cathie MacDonald