



Friday, July 15, 2022

Re: GL32.19 Bulk Room Accommodations Agreement at 3 Park Home Avenue (Ward 18)

Dear Members of Council,

The Willowdale BIA has recently become aware of a proposed agreement to convert the Novotel Hotel into a shelter for refugee claimants. We are in favour of supporting refugee claimants in Toronto's neighbourhoods, and we believe that welcoming refugees to Canada and the Willowdale community has the potential to be mutually beneficial.

However, we only learned of this proposed agreement through a newsletter distributed by Councillor John Filion three weeks ago and have not received any communication from city staff. Before Council makes a final decision, the Willowdale BIA would like to schedule further consultation and communication between staff, community stakeholders, and the business community, to ensure this plan will foster successful long-term outcomes for all involved.

As a BIA, it is important for us to strengthen relationships between the business community and local government officials, and it is our responsibility to keep our members informed. We represent a diverse business district serving over 1,600 commercial business and property owners. Many of these businesses have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of this week, we are now aware of two confirmed upcoming public meetings (as per the latest newsletter distributed by Councillor John Filion) to discuss the proposed agreement. The scheduled times for these meetings (July 18 and July 27 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.) are during peak times for many businesses, particularly restaurant owners, in the Willowdale neighbourhood. We would like to see more dates and times scheduled and available to members of our community, so we can cultivate a collaborative and integrated approach to discussing this proposed agreement.

The Willowdale BIA would also like Council to consider the following amendments to the proposed agreement, if approved:

- 1) A review of the project on an annual basis to ensure best outcomes for all involved
- 2) A provision providing the opportunity for City Council to restore the hotel in the Willowdale business district sooner, should the use of 3 Park Home as a refugee shelter no longer be needed during the five-year duration
- 3) A commitment to a broader discussion with the Willowdale BIA regarding what strategies would be brought back for Council review to mitigate impacts on local economic recovery and development due to the absence of a hotel in the district

This is a critical decision for our community. We all remain hopeful that the global situation and personal situation for refugees being welcomed to Toronto continue to improve. In the meantime, the Willowdale BIA is calling for further consultation and a longer timeline prior to the Council's vote on this matter so that we can make sure this plan leads to the best long-term outcomes for all involved.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors for the Willowdale BIA

www.willowdalebia.com

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