



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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Re: Official Plan Amendment 582: University of Toronto St. George Campus Secondary Plan

Dear Toronto and East York Community Council Members,

We are writing on behalf of Victoria University in the University of Toronto to provide comments on the Draft Official Plan Amendment to replace the existing University of Toronto Secondary Plan with a new University of Toronto St. George Campus Secondary Plan and accompanying Urban Design Guidelines as presented for Council's endorsement. In many respects, they correspond with the intent of Victoria University's Strategic Framework which commits to creating a "Sense of Place" not only for our students and University community but for our neighbourhood and the City of Toronto. We hope the following commentary is helpful to you as you consider the Draft Amendment. In the event that members of Staff are directed to make changes to the document prior to Council's adoption, we would request to be given an opportunity to comment further on any changes that may affect Victoria University.

Context

Victoria University, an independently chartered University founded in 1836, has been federated with the University of Toronto since 1890 and has established its presence on the St. George Campus since the construction of Victoria College in 1892. Over time, Victoria University has grown and evolved to meet academic and student needs, now comprising 15 buildings throughout its campus. Apart from the University of Toronto, Victoria University oversees the largest landholdings within the Secondary Plan Area.

In the context of this Secondary Plan update, Victoria University reviewed its recently published Strategic Framework, its academic objectives, projected student population growth, and changing needs to ascertain future development priorities over the near and longer terms. It is important that Victoria University, through Victoria College and Emmanuel College and working in a federated relationship with the University of Toronto, ensure that its physical campus and infrastructure are fully aligned with its desire to be a leading institution for undergraduate and graduate education. For this reason Victoria University continues to plan for developments that will provide the best facilities for its community. In addition to its academic infrastructure, Victoria University is also committed to providing a high quality experience for its students outside the classroom. This includes providing superior campus buildings and grounds, on-campus residence accommodation and other related services such as dining halls, study space and community interaction facilities. It also includes responsible custodianship of some of the finest buildings in the City of Toronto. The campus is shared with many City-wide cultural, arts, and community activities.

Evolution and Character of the Victoria University Campus

As part of long-term strategic planning for stewardship, growth, and enhancement of its campus, Victoria University commissioned a Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment report, prepared by ERA

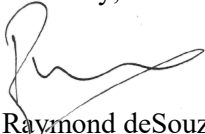
Architects Inc. The report was provided to City Staff in February, 2019 as part of Victoria University's input into the draft Secondary Plan. It describes the campus lands as "an expression of dynamic, complex and current programmatic needs, where Victoria University's prestigious role, status and identity are supported in a layered campus balancing stewardship with continual renewal."

The report recognizes Character Areas within the Victoria University Campus, described as "distinct areas that have shaped the form, role, and meaning of historic resources, including built resources and open spaces within its boundaries." Major themes of the campus include its place as the Eastern gateway to the University of Toronto, interconnection with Queen's Park, urban presence in Toronto, and layered architecture and landscape. The variety of forms and spaces across the Victoria University campus provides a transition in character, use, and scale between the serenity of Queen's Park and the intensity of the surrounding downtown. The careful maintenance, enhancement, and development of high-quality open spaces and architecture on its campus allows Victoria University to continue to provide a world-class learning, living, and working environment for members of the Victoria University and University of Toronto communities and their neighbours within the City of Toronto. Spanning from Bloor Street West to Queen's Park, the Victoria University campus includes historic and contemporary academic, administrative, and student residence buildings in addition to cultural, commercial, retail, office, residential, and mixed uses. The Draft Secondary Plan skilfully captures the nuances of the evolution and character of the Victoria University campus. However, the critical role of a cultural partner with neighbourhood institutions including the Gardiner Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum, and Royal Conservatory of Music that make up the Bloor Street cultural precinct should be recognized and celebrated in the Plan as a significant and distinct component of the Secondary Plan Area.

Block Plan Development

It is our understanding that the Secondary Plan update is being developed in two phases. Phase One includes the area-wide Secondary Plan and accompanying Design Guidelines. Phase Two will involve developing Block Plans that will provide further direction and detail for the evolution of individual blocks within the Secondary Plan Area. We understand that Phase Two will be undertaken following the successful adoption of the Phase One Plan and Guidelines. The Block Plans will have a significant and lasting impact on core campus activity, pedestrian safety, and vehicle circulation along the envisioned Charles Street West shared street. The Block Plans will also influence planning for future enhancements and redevelopments on the campus. Victoria University requests to be given opportunities to further engage with the City in conversations regarding the development of the Block Plans, facilitating alignment with Victoria University's 2016 Grounds Master Plan and the 2022 Strategic Framework, which provide design direction for the Charles St. West shared street and other key open spaces on the campus. Through a continued collaborative dialogue, Victoria University can ensure that its interests, including stewardship, enhancement, and sustainable, responsible growth continue to be protected into the future.

Sincerely,



Raymond deSouza
Bursar, Chief Administrative Officer and Secretary to the Board of Regents
Victoria University