

To: Toronto and East York Community Council
Item 34.8 University of Toronto Secondary Plan
Dear Councillors:

June 27, 2021

We are writing on behalf of the Annex Residents' Association and the Harbord Village Resident's Association, representing members who live on the western and northern flanks of the St. George campus.

This will be the first and only opportunity to depute on the City's draft University of Toronto Secondary Plan, which came into our hands for our consideration on May 13. We have since had two lengthy meetings with staff. Many of our comments and objections have been addressed in the draft before Council, however one significant element remains outstanding: the Secondary Plan's treatment of the south corners of Bloor and Queen's Park. In our opinion this is sufficiently important that, without resolution, our respective Boards have instructed us to oppose the plan in its entirety.

The issue is simple: do Lillian Massey and the ROM belong to a Bloor St. planning regime, or should the buildings be included in the Queen's Park character area as gateways to the heritage precinct and how can they be best protected?

Seen through the lens so far favoured by Planning, those buildings belong in the bustle and density of the Bloor Street business corridor. An as of right height of 48 m. would be permitted on Lillian Massey, completely altering the gateway.



In our opinion, and that of surrounding residents' associations, the Queen's Park Cultural Heritage Precinct Coalition and residents from across the city, these heritage buildings frame the Queen's Park corridor. They must be retained as a low-rise gateway to a unique historic precinct of pavilion buildings, greenspace, pedestrian walkways, creating a sense of space and contemplation. Photographs of the Bloor - Queen's Park Intersection are attached. This area is a precious heritage resource that should not be tampered with, now or in the future.

Language in the Secondary Plan must forever protect this important intersection marking the entrance to the Queen's Park Heritage Precinct.

At the time of writing, staff and the Councillor are considering our proposed amendment, but there is no resolution. With the support of the landowner, Victoria University, we would like to protect Lillian Massey and the gateway by amending the text of the secondary plan thusly:

Bloor Street West Character Area

Delete Section 5.11 (d)

'at the intersection of Bloor Street West and Queen's Park, include compatible low-scale institutional buildings and mid-scale institutional buildings only, which will reinforce and enhance the significant and sensitive gateway location and will transition from the taller institutional elements and generally higher scale permitted elsewhere along Bloor Street West to the Queen's Park Character Area with its generous parks and open spaces and generally lower scale;'

Replace with:

'The south side of the intersection of Bloor Street West and Queen's Park, is unique in that it is on the boundary of different character areas. Commercial uses in this area respond to the Bloor Street Character Area and at the same time they include significant low-scale heritage institutional buildings (Lillian Massey and the heritage portion of the ROM) which must remain without additional development on the footprint of these buildings. This will reinforce and enhance this important and sensitive gateway location.

Transition to taller elements and generally higher scale are permitted elsewhere along Bloor Street West.

This protection will preserve the Queen's Park Character Area with its generous parks and open spaces forming the cultural heritage precinct.'

Add to Section 5.16

(k) The institutional buildings, Lillian Massey and the Royal Ontario Museum, are an important northern gateway to Queen's Park.

These changes are endorsed by the landowner, Victoria University. A June 24, 2021 letter to us from Victoria University is attached. The bursar writes in part:

'Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the concerns regarding the proposals in the University of Toronto St. George Campus Secondary Plan. Given the complexity of the plan I felt the need to consult with the University's planning consultants, the senior administration and the Chair of the Property Committee of our Board of Regents.

I reviewed carefully the proposed wording you sent me for consideration. We have no concerns nor objections to any of the text in the proposal and have nothing further to suggest in terms of additions or changes.

Victoria University feels privileged to be the northern gateway to the Queen's Park district and we fully understand the importance of the iconic Lillian Massey building that intersects both the Bloor Street and the Queens Park character areas. The Board of Regents, since the acquisition of the Lillian Massey Building, has invested heavily in assessments, preservation, restoration and maintenance of this building primarily because it recognizes the important heritage characteristics that must be preserved for both Victoria University and for the City of Toronto not just at present but for the future. This same level of commitment applies to our historic buildings including, among others, Victoria College, Annesley Hall, Emmanuel College and Burwash Hall. These structures are vital to the fabric of our community and frame our campus as we continue to invest in them in order to preserve them.

Victoria University's Strategic Framework published in 2022 makes specific reference to creating and fostering a "Sense of Place" on our campus with a particular emphasis on the preservation and stewardship of our heritage buildings. Our commitment, in this regard remains consistent with our past practice and we will continue this for the benefit of future generations of the Victoria University community. The value of these structures to our institution is important to our history, our mission and our future aspirations.

Finally, we would like to inform the community that no discussions have taken place at Victoria University regarding any development on the Lillian

Massey site. While we have proposed several developments within the secondary plan currently under discussion, none of these involve the footprint currently occupied by the Lillian Massey Building.’ Signed, Ray deSouza, bursar, June 24, 2021.

We urge the TEYCC to support the recommendations put forward by the ARA and HVRA and other concerned residents and make the above changes to the draft OPA.

Further background to Secondary plan:

We also feel it is important the public record and discussions at TEYCC also reflect other concerns about process and content which have been raised to Planning and the Councillor in our earlier correspondence.

The Staff Report to TEYCC dated June 21, 2018 stated that ‘extensive consultation and public engagement would continue as the final version of the Secondary Plan is developed by staff.’ because ‘this was particularly important given the area’s level of significance that extends beyond the immediate St. George Campus to include a broader city-wide scale.’

Yes, a credible start to the consultation process, but then, there was silence from April 2018 until on May 13, 2022, when the draft Plan and proposed Design Guidelines were circulated by email.

We had three weeks to discuss the plan and suggest changes. We do not understand the rush. Many projects are being rushed through approvals to capture agreed upon community benefits or Section 37 funding before legislative changes are made. However, in this instance the University of Toronto makes no such contributions with development permissions. All we ask is that the public domain be protected.

The lack of an update secondary plan has been no impediment to growth. The University of Toronto has proceeded with development applications and zoning by-law amendments to allow individual projects to proceed through ‘spot zonings’. Its capital projects have continued through the approval pipeline despite the outdated 1997 Master Plan.

It is difficult to argue more time might have led to a better outcome, but three weeks for consulting on a significant change in planning of such a large section of downtown

Toronto cannot be acceptable. Once in place, the University of Toronto Area Secondary Plan and Guidelines will govern development on campus for decades.

At a high level, we raised four areas of significant concern:

1. Queen's Park

The Secondary Plan proposes to shift the northern boundary of Queen's Park to the south by extending the Bloor Street West Corridor. The north entrance to Queen's Park from Bloor Street West is important and was recognized as such on Map 20-2 of the Secondary Plan now in force which identifies significant open space.

Areas within the Queen's Park Character Area are significant and must be protected. The terminus of Queen's Park at Bloor, framed by the ROM and Lillian Massey, is not commercial, but a continuation of the cultural heritage landscape from the south set apart from the active bustling city from the north. It holds great natural and cultural heritage value for residents of the City and the people of Ontario.

The incursion southward of Bloor St. planning and zoning characteristics began in 2016 when University of Toronto absorbed the buildings on the northwest flank of Queen's Park north of Hoskins to Bloor into a Bloor St. character area into their secondary plan application. The mindset of Bloor permeated the discussions around approval for their Planetarium site building at 90 Queen's Park. A mediated settlement at OLT reduced the University's proposed massing to better protect the Queen's Park corridor. However, from that time to the present, we have viewed area plans in the context that a Bloor St. characterization opens the door to undesirable heights and massing on a heritage landscape, such as Lillian Massey.

2. Heritage

Significant heritage landscapes must be identified. Attachment 7 to the June 2018 Staff Report identified buildings but not heritage landscapes as was initially indicated. Potential cultural heritage landscapes were also to be identified and evaluated to determine their significance and cultural heritage values. This has not been done, nor it seems is there a plan to do so. We are concerned Heritage considerations will be limited to individual buildings, excluding consideration of their context or relationship one to the other.

3. Open Space

The public realm network should not just evolve, as stated in the proposed Secondary Plan, it should expand. The June 2018 Staff Report stated that 'policy direction for

any landscape initiative will be to enhance, expand and better connect the public realm network. Intensification of any area a minimum amount of open space per block is to be identified in the Zoning By-law.’

Intensification of any area was to require consideration that space for additional parks and open spaces be provided. The primacy of ground-level open space was also identified as more welcoming and accessible over roof top space. While this was amended in the final draft, we remain concerned that implementation may see Open Space diminished and protections eroded.

4. Indigenous

There was a very minor mention (only once) in the June 2018 Staff Report stating that the Queen’s Park and Civic Precincts will incorporate placemaking that acknowledge Indigenous cultures and histories.

The University lands were Crown grants based on Indigenous treaties. City Council has mandated a strong reconciliation initiative. Four years later, the City’s draft which had one paragraph of Indigenous history, attributes or recognition has now been amended with a sprinkling of the words placemaking and placekeeping. We remain concerned that true Reconciliation needs more thought.

5. Monetization of institutional assets:

The temptation to sell off institutional assets is mounting. The Basilian Fathers are deconsecrating and selling 96 St. Joseph. The University of Toronto has an announced its desire to encourage significant retail occupancy of its planned development on Site 1, the southeast corner of Bloor and Spadina.

The University of Toronto itself has published its 4 Corners (4C) Annual Report summarizing its strategy to grow revenue from sources other than enrolment. ‘The 4C strategy aims to generate \$50 million annually in operating funding over the next 15 years through the development of roughly 4 million square feet.’ A detailed annual cash flow after debt service chart in the report identifies \$51,000 in 2021 growing to \$52,000,000 annual net income by 2036. At what cost?

This anticipated trajectory should not diminish the institutional holdings of the University.

Without question, universities are vital to the success of our City, Province and country. Its global contributions are of utmost importance. For close to one hundred years, successive University of Toronto administrations have protected and conserved the institutional use of its lands as honouring a public trust. But the City's framework for development also has a central role to play to protect the public interest by ensuring the character and institutional mandate of the St. George Campus is secured for future generations.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Sisam
Annex Residents' Association

Sue Dexter
Harbord Village Residents' Association



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June 24, 2022

Dear Elizabeth,

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Sincerely,

Ray deSouza.
Bursar, CAO and Secretary to the Board of Regents