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Planning & Housing Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

RE : PH2.9 - Villiers Island - Affordable Housing Update

Planning & Housing Committee,

Our **HousingNowTO.com** civic-tech volunteers – are happy to see that the affordable housing strategy for Villiers Island will now include a target of 30% affordable rental homes on public lands, secured as long-term or permanently affordable housing. As we have seen on the City's HOUSING NOW sites, these affordable housing targets are hard to turn into actual projects under-construction – if the outcomes of the City's planning development review process are untethered from the economic realities of 2023 construction costs, interest rates – and available supports from the Provincial and Federal governments.
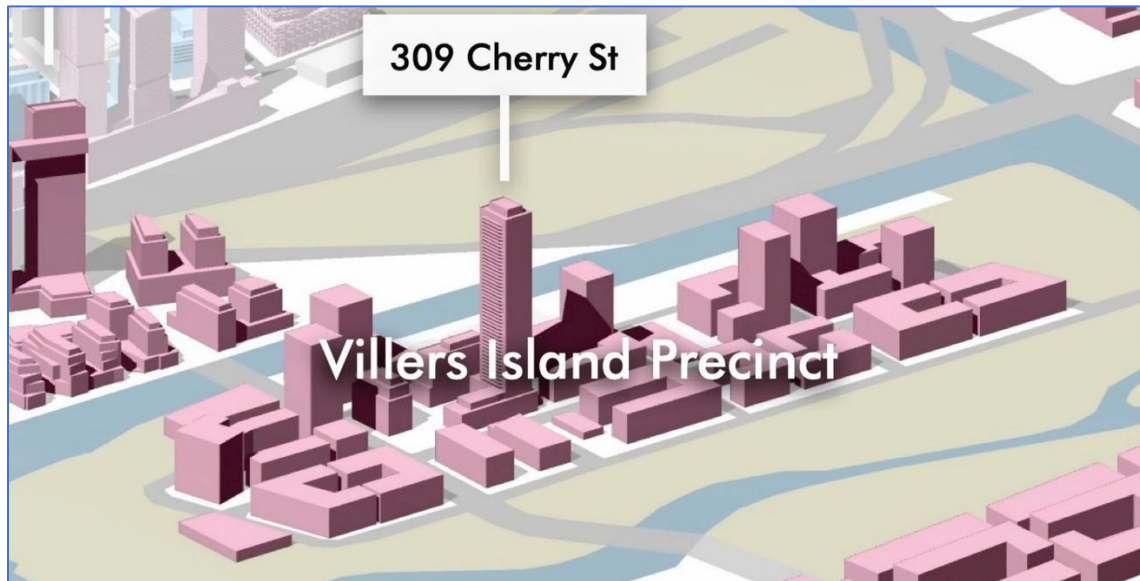
Today, the old 2017 Villiers Island Precinct Plan is <u>not</u> fit-for-purpose if the City's focus and priority during your 2023 review is to achieve that target of 30% affordable rental homes on public lands within the next decade.

We agree with the Staff Report that height and massing on Villiers Island will need to increase density on lands within public ownership by <u>at least</u> 30% above the 2017 Precinct Plan. The difference between the proposed use of public lands - and the proposed private lands density (309 Cherry Street) are clear in the image above from FutureModelTO based on current planning submissions and plans.

In 2023, the added density on Villiers Island will likely need to be multiples of the 2017 Precinct Plan, rather than the suggested 30% increase. The City is likely looking at an approximate ~150% increase in density. The 2017 Precinct Plan envisioned 4,865 units of new housing on Villiers Island. Our volunteers estimate that your 2023 review will need to look at a target of at least **12,000** units of total new housing on Villiers Island in order to achieve the goal of 30% affordable rental homes (**4,000** affordable units) on these precious and well-located public lands.

The City of Toronto has already learned the challenges of leveraging public lands for new affordable rental housing via the HOUSING NOW programs. Multiple sites that were rezoned by City Staff and approved by Council in 2019 are now classed as "On Hold" in the Concept 2 Keys report. In many cases those HOUSING NOW sites that are "On Hold" will need additional height and density – and additional Federal funding - before they will be able to break ground on new construction. We encourage Council and City Staff to learn from that HOUSING NOW experience – and look at Villiers Island with fresh eyes and a clear focus on the real-world economic-challenges of new residential housing development in Toronto in 2023 when revising the Precinct Plan.

As CreateTO has recently done with the review of the Danforth Garage Master Plan (2018) for the HOUSING NOW program, we would encourage the City to engage with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program in order to stress-test and sanity-check any assumptions that are being made in their 2023 Villiers Island Precinct Plan revisions against current industry best practices and construction economics.

- **ULI TAP DANFORTH GARAGE REPORT** (June 2022) - https://ulidigitalmarketing.blob.core.windows.net/ulidcnc/sites/14/2022/10/ULI-Danforth-Garage-Technical-Assistance-Panel-Report-June-202255.pdf

As always, our open data and civic-tech volunteers are happy to answer any questions the committee or city staff may have on affordable-housing development best practices – and how to make most effective use of Transit-Oriented Lands to help alleviate Toronto's rental-housing crisis.

Yours,

Mark J. Richardson
Technical Lead – **HousingNowTO.com**

*Proposed redevelopment context along Bayfront East & Villiers Island (via **@FutureModelTO**)*