



January 25, 2023

Councillor Chris Moise
Councillor's Office, Toronto-Centre (Ward 13)
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West, Suite A5
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

RE: TE2.14 - Request to Approve Settlement: Creation of New Housing Units and Space for At-Risk Youth and Protecting Covenant House's Long Term Financial Viability

Dear Councillor Moise,

We are writing to seek your assistance with a matter that directly relates to the long-term viability and success of our non-profit organization and the near-term delivery of a substantial number of new housing units for at-risk youth.

Covenant House Toronto is the owner of the property at 20 Gerrard Street East, located within your ward. For more than forty years, Covenant House has maintained a steadfast dedication to our mission: supporting the vulnerable youth who come through our doors. As one of Canada's largest agencies serving youth who are homeless, trafficked, or at risk, we offer a wide range of services to hundreds of young people every day. As a not-for-profit organization, Covenant House provides 24/7 crisis shelter and transitional housing on-site and in the community, along with comprehensive services including education, counselling, health care, employment assistance, job training, and after-care.

Covenant House has reached a settlement agreement the owners of 399-405 Yonge Street, which would not only protect the long-term financial viability of Covenant House, but also provide two floors of podium floor space within their new development to Covenant House at no cost. This would allow us to substantially expand and upgrade our housing services to at-risk youth in the near term.

The Need for an Official Plan Amendment that Protects Covenant House

Our property is the largest undeveloped parcel of land within the Yonge and Gerrard Street area, which is currently undergoing substantial redevelopment. It is also by far the most valuable asset of Covenant House and represents the future viability and potential of the organization in Toronto. Currently, proceedings are ongoing at the Ontario Land Tribunal which contemplate the redevelopment of the lands at 399-405 Yonge Street and 409-415 Yonge Street, immediately to the north and northwest of Covenant House. If these properties are developed without a comprehensive official plan amendment that secures appropriate block planning, tower setbacks, and proper regard for the future development potential of the Covenant House lands as also a potential tower site, the financial consequences to Covenant House in lost land value and opportunity cost of its primary asset would be catastrophic.



The Current Challenge

Although City Planning has informally expressed general support for Covenant House's goals of preserving its critically important status as a tower site in order to create a substantial amount of new affordable housing for at-risk youth, City Legal acting formally on behalf of the City has not yet been co-operative.

On the contrary, at the most recent Ontario Land Tribunal case management conference (CMC), the City as represented by City Legal publicly expressed troubling opposition to the notion of protecting space for a future tower on the Covenant House lands, and formally opposed the proposed official plan amendment negotiated by Covenant House and the adjacent developer specifically for that purpose. This position taken by the City is frustrating and disappointing. We do not believe that represents the will of City Council.

Our Request

We are humbly requesting you to support the settlement with 399-405 Yonge, which ensures the long-term success and viability of Covenant House and provides a substantial amount of housing for at-risk youth in the near term, and to instruct City legal not to be openly hostile to Covenant House's interests as outlined above and to instead attempt to work collaboratively with us.

We would like to meet with you to discuss this very important issue. If not handled sensitively, the ongoing planning process for the northeast quadrant for the Yonge and Gerrard Street area could potentially result in devastating financial losses in land value for Covenant House and no new housing for at-risk youth. However, if handled properly and with your guidance, the on-going planning process could result in a near-term substantial new supply for affordable housing for at-risk youth, and a guarantee for the long-term viability of Covenant House's most important asset.

If you are willing to meet with us, we would be most grateful and will work around your schedule. We would be pleased to invite you to our offices to see our facility in action. We are also available to meet at your office or by videoconference, if more convenient for you.

Sincere thanks,



Mark Aston
Executive Director

cc: Cindy Metzler, Associate Executive Director, Covenant House
Michael Foderick, Partner, McCarthy Tétrault LLP (Counsel to Covenant House)