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From: **Mark Seasons** mark.seasons@uwaterloo.ca
Date: Apr 15, 2024
Subject: Development Proposal: 171 Lowther Avenue, Toronto
Council Item 2024.TE12.5

Dear Mayor Chow and Members of Toronto City Council:

I'm writing with regard to the development proposal for an 11-storey residential building to be located at the corner of Lowther and Dalton Road. I've been following this issue with considerable interest in the media (i.e., Alex Bozikovic's opinion piece in the *Globe and Mail*, April 8). I expect that you're received a lot of correspondence about this proposal. (I write in my role as a professional planner and educator, and (in full disclosure) as a relative of someone who lives in that area).

As you know, the proponent seeks an OPA and zoning change of the site from Neighbourhood to Apartment Neighbourhood. Apparently, this is a revised application; I gather that the original development proposal conformed to current policies for the Neighbourhood category (i.e., 4 stories).

This really is a complex urban planning challenge. The City is under considerable pressure to increase the supply of residential units as quickly as possible - and so, by extension, are City Councillors. As you know, there are many factors, variables, and interests that you will need to consider and address with these proposals, especially in established inner-city neighbourhoods.

I think that context always matters in situations like this one. I would argue that planning objectives regarding increased density can be achieved in ways that meet larger, community-wide goals while respecting neighborhood residents' needs and values. That's a difficult thing to balance and achieve, but it's well worth the effort.

Dalton Road and streets to the west comprise a variety of housing types. Interestingly, this community already has a significant level of population density that's been achieved within the current land use policy and zoning framework. Anecdotally, residents seem quite OK with "gentle density." Things seem to be working well in that community.

A few questions come to mind here that could be considered when making a fully informed decision. To wit:

- The project is proposed for a location where the Neighborhood land use is in effect. Is this project a test of the City's commitment to the Neighbourhood land use policy?
- Can we expect to see more of this kind of thing in other inner-city communities in Toronto?
- Is this Neighbourhood designation a relic of the past, no longer suitable for current and anticipated pressures?
- Who "wins" and who "loses" with these projects? Will inner-city communities have to assume/accept a disproportionate share of the negative externalities associated with large-scale residential projects?
- Will this project increase the supply of desperately needed affordable housing?
- What is a "fair" share of density for established inner city neighbourhoods compared with other districts across the city? Might there be an equity or distributional issue at play here (or the perception thereof)? and,
- Do we need to take a look at the design and management of community consultation processes in the context of these complex urban (re)development pressures?

In summary, the status of the Neighbourhood land use designation generally, and specifically in this community, should be reviewed and revised (if necessary) so that planning policy can facilitate this change in urban fabric if that's what's required. Otherwise, incremental, site-specific decisions that might be made for proposals of this nature will be interpreted as unfair and inconsistent application of planning policy. The preferred and, I think, wiser approach would be to carry out that policy review process with lots of consultation before considering projects such as this one.

For your consideration.

Yours sincerely,
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