



**MORE NEIGHBOURS
TORONTO**

Dear Members of the Planning and Housing Committee,

RE: PH13.6 - Strategic Opportunity at 267 and 275 Merton Street

About More Neighbours Toronto

[More Neighbours Toronto](#) is a volunteer-only organization of housing advocates that believe in building more multi-family homes of all kinds for those who dream of building their lives in Toronto. We advocate for reforms to increase our city's ability to build more homes in every neighbourhood. We are a big-tent organization with members across the political spectrum who are committed to counterbalancing the anti-housing agenda that has dominated Toronto's politics, created an affordability crisis, and cost burdened a new generation of aspiring residents. We are firmly committed to the principle that housing is a human right and believe Toronto should be inclusive and welcoming to all.

Position

More Neighbours Toronto is excited about this opportunity to leverage underused city land to build affordable housing that Toronto desperately needs. We applaud the work undertaken to date by CreateTO and CollecDev-Markee to come to this agreement in principle. More Neighbours urges the Planning & Housing Committee to support staff recommendations and move this project forward. As this project moves forward, More Neighbours Toronto urges City Staff, Councillor Matlow and the developer to learn from the mistakes made at 140 Merton to ensure that this project moves forward quickly and provides the greatest benefit to Torontonians suffering with housing precarity or homelessness.

Lessons Learned

267 and 275 Merton St. is just a block away from the City's 140 Merton St. Housing Now site. More Neighbours Toronto is supportive of that project as it exists today. We are optimistic that Missanabie Cree First Nation will be able to break ground this year. However, the path to get to this point has been far too long. The initial zoning amendment brought forth in 2019 by CreateTO envisioned an 18-storey building. When the project was brought to market, it was

quickly determined that the 18-storey height was insufficient to provide the amount, depth and tenure of affordability that the city wanted. Almost three and a half years later, the city brought forward a new plan for a 28-storey building that better aligned with market conditions and the city's goals. More Neighbours Toronto does not want to see a similar false start with 267 and 275 Merton St.

However, the project at 140 Merton remains undersized compared to other developments on Merton Street and in the broader Davisville Apartment Neighbourhood. The Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan contemplates heights of between 14 and 40 storeys on Merton with heights generally decreasing from Yonge in the west to Mount Pleasant in the east. However, Council approved a 40-storey condo tower at 214 Merton which is east of the Housing Now Site at 140 Merton. We hope the city is at least as permissive on its own land as it is to developers. The intent of the Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan and the Midtown in Focus plan that preceded it was that if you were to send a drone up at the corner of Yonge and Davisville, heights should generally be lower as you went further south and east. This site benefits from sitting at the bottom of a hill and would appear relatively shorter than its neighbours to the east and west. We point to the infill rental building currently under construction at 265 Balliol (one block north of the subject site) as a good template for density and scale. It will be 27-storeys at completion. More Neighbours Toronto urges all parties to be ambitious.

Other Opportunities

It is disappointing that the City of Toronto did not identify this 2-storey office building in its inventory of potential sites for redevelopment. The City should not have to rely on the ingenuity of the private sector to find opportunities for affordable housing. More Neighbours Toronto urges Create TO, Planning and Housing Secretariat staff to work together to see if there are other sites across the city that could be similarly leveraged.

We urge you to approve the item so that we can move forward with building out the homes that Torontonians desperately need.

Regards,



Aaron Ginsberg

More Neighbours Toronto