

Build a Better Bloor Dufferin

21 February 2024

Toronto and East York Community Council

Re: 2024.TE11.2 1141 Bloor Street West, 980 Dufferin Street, and 90 Croatia Street - Official Plan Amendment

By email to teycc@toronto.ca

To members of Toronto and East York Community Council,

[Build a Better Bloor Dufferin \(BBBD\)](#) is a group of residents, local business owners, artists, service organizations, and members of the local school communities dedicated to the sustainable development of the Bloor Dufferin neighbourhood.

BBBD has worked since 2017 to advocate for community benefits from the sale and redevelopment of the 7.3 acres of public land at Bloor and Dufferin, including affordable housing, community and cultural space, and sufficient park space for our growing neighbourhood.

BBBD was a party to the December 2019 Local Planning Area Tribunal settlement between the City and developers that saw the creation of a \$15-million affordable housing land trust and the dedication of \$2 million for community and cultural space, alongside a 59-unit affordable housing building, public park, and 30,000 square foot (2,787 square metre) community hub to be conveyed to the City.

After dedicating thousands of volunteer hours to winning these benefits for our community, we were shocked to learn of this report and its recommendation to diminish the community space from 2,787 square metres to 2,525 square metres. While a difference of 262 square metres (2800 sq. ft.) may seem small, it is close to ten percent of total space originally agreed to, and is equivalent to an auditorium large enough to seat more than 200 people. Though the planning report depicts this as a technical amendment, the loss of such a significant space is far from minor for our community, and is simply unacceptable.

We wish to correct the report's claim that the intent was always to locate the hub in the two bottom floors of Kent School, and that this amendment doesn't meaningfully alter the spirit of the original agreement. This contention renders invisible the efforts of residents over many

years to ensure the replacement of the many amenities lost with the demolition of Bloor Collegiate, including vast playing fields surrounded by mature trees, gymnasiums, a swimming pool, and a historic auditorium that witnessed almost a century of graduations, performances, and neighbourhood gatherings.

In this regard, the wording of OPA Amendment 489 in the OLT decision was very deliberate in holding open the possibility of more and better space for the community hub:

"h. Include a community hub with a **minimum size of 2,787 square metres (or 30,000 square feet)**, inclusive of a child care centre, conveyed in fee simple to the City at no cost. The community hub should include, among other permitted uses, a variety of community services and programs (educational, health, recreational, employment, social services) and such services to be provided to the public. **The community hub will be located either as part of an existing building retained on the lands retrofitted for the community hub or in a new building on the lands.**"

That wording reflects the persistent demands of the community for a 70,000 sq. ft. community hub, going back to the Community Hub Visioning Report produced by a multi-stakeholder group convened by the City which consulted extensively with diverse local residents over a ten-month period. BBBD's [goals for the site](#) brought forward this community consensus and it was emphasized in our negotiations with the City and developer. In BBBD's survey of 152 respondents in summer 2019, a large majority wanted to see a minimum of 5000 square metres in the development dedicated to community and cultural space.

BBBD, along with local community services and arts groups, also repeatedly raised concerns about the Kent building as the location for the community hub due to its inaccessibility, as well as its immovable walls and other structural issues that would pose barriers to the intended uses of the space. After the City completed its RFP process to select tenants for the Hub, dance groups who were to have been members of the tenants' collective were forced to withdraw due to the problems with the building.

It is lamentable that neither BBBD nor the community at large were consulted regarding this proposed amendment. Had such a consultation been conducted, the recommendation could have taken into account the long history surrounding this site, and residents' ongoing sense of loss of these cherished public buildings and lands. The City has a responsibility to honour this history, and to uphold the agreement entered into in good faith on behalf of the community.

Despite repeated requests by BBBD and later by prospective tenants, architectural drawings and engineering studies of the Kent building were never provided. BBBD was a party to the LPAT decision, yet was not informed of the proposed amendment and learned by coincidence, less than two weeks ago, that this report was coming to Community Council today. The report provides no information regarding alternative solutions explored with the developer, nor the fair market value of this significant volume of community space.

Fortunately, there is still time to correct these omissions. BBBD has had productive meetings with the Councillor, planning staff, and developers. As we have done in the past, we have come to these discussions ready to work together for a beneficial resolution. We look forward to working with the developers, our councillor, community and City staff to find a solution that we can all feel proud of, instead of something that falls short of what we all agreed to.

With hope and determination,

Build a Better Bloor Dufferin

