



**Submission from the
McGill-Granby Village Residents' Association (MGVRA)**

**to the
Toronto and East York Community Council (under the *Planning Act*)
Re:
Request to Amend the Official Plan Application Number 21 125701 STE 13 0Z
412-418 Church Street and 79-81 Granby Street
Applicant: Fitzrovia**

July 10, 2024

The McGill-Granby Village Residents' Association (MGVRA) represents the homeowners and tenants living in the area of Downtown East bounded by Yonge Street on the west, Carlton Street on the north, Jarvis Street on the east and Gerrard Street on the south. We are one of the most densely populated residents' associations in Toronto. As the local Residents' Association, the MGVRA is regularly a recognized participating party in hearings before the Ontario Land Tribunal concerning applications and development proposals in our catchment area. We have previously submitted comments to the Planning Department concerning this application.

The subject of this application is located in the very heart of the McGill-Granby Village, filling the street frontage on Church Street (our Village's "main street") between McGill and Granby Streets. We are writing to you to express our association's qualified support for this application.

Note: Local residents may be making their own submissions or in-person representations to the July 10 public meeting to consider the approval of the subject application. This present submission represents the opinion of the Board of Directors of the McGill-Granby Village Residents' Association (MGVRA). We do not wish to pre-empt or in any way disqualify the personal opinions and concerns from any neighbourhood residents to Council in this matter.

1. Design, Height, Density and Massing

The MGVRA does not oppose the proposed development on any consideration of design, height (32 storeys), or massing. We appreciate and accept the City's and the Province's prioritization of high-density development at this site, in the heart of downtown and adjacent to major transit lines and subway stations. We compliment the applicant on the attractive design of the tower, and especially the "horizontal stepbacks" along the Church St frontage, creating a small public plaza-like space along Church St north of McGill. We also like the contrasting colours of the three vertical slabs, which will add some interest to the neighbourhood skyline.

Ideally, we would like to see a greater percentage of units in the residential tower as 2- or 3-bedroom units. (Currently, 45% of the units are multi-bedroom units.) A greater number of multi-bedroom units would provide greater opportunity for families to establish themselves here in the downtown heart of the city, significantly contributing to the variety of communities in the McGill-Granby Village. And if – as is often the case so near to Toronto Metropolitan University and the University of Toronto – the potential tenants of the new tower should be students, the provision of multi-bedroom units would provide more affordable accommodation for them, because students can join together to share the cost of rent.

We are also pleased that allowance has been made for a “signature” restaurant presence at the SW corner of Church and Granby Streets (the heritage structures at 414-418 Church Street, formerly housing The Barn/The Stables) and also for a café or other retail enterprise in the base of the tower at the NW corner of Church and McGill Streets. Given our central, downtown location, it is important that provision be made for a thriving retail and commercial sector. These non-residential uses have the potential to significantly enliven the street, bringing “visitors” into the neighbourhood and increasing foot traffic. This puts “eyes on the street” and enhances safety and security in the neighbourhood.

2. Heritage

We are pleased that the façades of the designated heritage houses at 414-418 Church St (the Stephen Murphy Buildings and Store, former home of The Barn and The Stables, a popular gay bar and club) are being restored and incorporated into the base of the residential tower. In view of the extensive interior interventions that have been made to these structures in the course of the past century, it is unrealistic that more than the façades be restored. The added cultural significance of these structures from their role in the history of Toronto’s gay community will be discussed below.

We are especially pleased that the designated heritage houses at 79-81 Granby St (the Robert Kidney Houses) are being restored as “stand-alone” structures and not incorporated into the base of the residential tower. Granby is a designated low-rise “neighbourhood” street, and the restoration of these structures as standalone “houses” will contribute significantly not only to retaining but to restoring the residential, neighbourhood quality and “feel” of the street. According to documents, the intention is that these restored houses will be committed to public services as a medical clinic and a Montessori school. Community services and facilities are the building blocks of our neighbourhoods. And again, these “destination” services will bring visitors into the neighbourhood and further enliven the street.

We are agreed that protection, restoration and integration of the heritage properties associated with this application have been addressed and more than adequately met.

3. Cultural Recognition / Recognition of LGBTQ+ Community and History

In prior comments to the Planning Department, we asked that there be some form of recognition extended to the role of the designated heritage buildings at 414-418 Church St in

the history of the gay community in Toronto. For more than 20 years (1990-2012), these buildings were the site of The Barn/The Stables, a prominent gay bar and dance club. The applicant is proposing to make this recognition in two ways. First, a large memorial plaque will be installed on an exterior wall of the restored buildings at 418 Church St describing its history and role in Toronto's gay community. Second, the mural commemorating the bathhouse raids on the south wall of the heritage structure at 414 Church St (facing the surface parking lot) will either be restored or replaced with a new queer-themed mural or other public artwork. (The façade (west front) of the house with the mural is being restored as a heritage structure and incorporated into the base of the new tower.) From the renderings provided by the applicant, it appears the wall with the mural or other queer-themed art will form the north wall of the tower's residents' lobby. The tower lobby will have a full-glass façade and the artwork will be clearly visible from the street. Given these two provisions, our community-cultural request and "queer memory" condition are addressed and satisfactorily met.

4. Traffic and Parking

We are pleased that no provision is made for residential vehicular parking, while significant provision is made for residents' bicycle parking. This is in keeping with Council initiatives to reduce traffic in the downtown core and to reduce dependence on cars generally as an environmental priority.

Very few of the houses in our neighbourhood have a driveway or garage, and many are multi-unit properties. The demand for on-street parking by residents, combined with the immediate proximity of our small, residential streets to major retail and entertainment opportunities, already results in a shortage of parking in the McGill-Granby Village. Consequently, in keeping with established precedent for our neighbourhood, we request that the City exclude the residents of the subject development (412-418 Church Street and 79-81 Church Street) from the availability of on-street Permit Parking. Our association has requested and received this exclusion in other applications before Council and before the Ontario Land Tribunal. Historically, the City has always recognized our situation and provided for this exclusion for all other high-rise developments in the area.

Regardless that residents of the subject proposal will in theory not have cars, there will inevitably be an increase in the amount of traffic in our neighbourhood. Granby and McGill are narrow one-way streets, densely populated, currently with no traffic calming. They can be dangerous not only to residents of the streets, but also the large numbers of people passing through from Yonge to Church. Speeding is common. Currently, no provision is made for traffic-calming on Granby or McGill Streets. For our full support of this application, we respectfully ask the City to recommend the developer works with the community to install suitable traffic calming measures on McGill and Granby Streets.

5. Trees and Tree Preservation

As a consequence of age, disease, development, destruction, and lack of by-law enforcement, our downtown neighbourhood has far too few trees. The application proposes the removal of

11 street trees: 8 street trees along the McGill Street frontage and 3 along the Granby Street frontage. There are currently no trees along the extensive Church Street frontage (a full city block). The applicant proposes replacing only 2 of the 11 street trees being removed, both on Granby Street. We find this unacceptable.

Due to the loading entrance and exit being located on the Granby Street and McGill Street frontages and a Bike Share Station on McGill Street, only 2 street trees are proposed to be replaced, both along the Granby Street frontage. According to the Planning Department's recommendation to Council for approval of this application, Urban Forestry is satisfied with the proposal. **We are not.** We find it hard to believe that Planning is prioritizing the provision of a Bike Share Station over the provision of street trees. In our opinion, they have their environmental and planning priorities wrong.

In response to our negotiations with the developer of 396 Church Street (Podium – who have approached us independently and voluntarily for input), that developer proposes to plant 5 new street trees along significantly shorter street frontages: 2 new street trees along the Granby Street frontage and 3 along the Church Street frontage. Further, they have agreed to install “silva cells” beneath the pavement to ensure the trees thrive in the challenging urban environment.

We must insist that the current applicant be held to a similar level of responsibility for preserving and contributing to the urban forest. Especially in view of the proposal's widening of the sidewalk along Church Street and the plaza-like space at the NW corner of Church and McGill Streets, it is unacceptable that no provision is made for planting trees on the block-long frontage along Church Street. And though we recognize the importance of providing for additional Bike Share opportunities in this densely-populated neighbourhood, we insist the City reconsider the placement of the Bike Share Station on McGill Street to allow for the replacement of some if not all of the 8 street trees being removed. The installation of “silva cells” beneath the pavement should be common practice in the city – and is increasingly the norm (e.g., as proposed for the 396 Church Street application and around the intersection of Bloor and Yonge Streets, where The One is currently under construction).

Aside from considerations of urban beautification, as global warming advances, the presence of trees on our streets to provide shade and some level of relief from the sun becomes ever more urgent. We do not want to live in an urban desert.

Respectfully submitted,



Kelly McDonald, President
McGill-Granby Village Residents' Association