

444 Yonge Street Development  
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Participant Witness Statement  
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## 1. Overview

The McGill-Granby Village Residents Association, after various meetings and representations, takes the position that the proposed development of 444 Yonge Street in its present format would adversely impact the surrounding communities. We, therefore, do not support the proposal.

Specifically, we are concerned about and oppose the following major elements of said proposal along with ancillary impacts:

- Height and design of the tower and the size of the floor plate
- Design of the podium
- Proximity of said podium to the existing Liberties complex

These points negatively impact the McGill-Granby neighbourhood, College Park, Yonge Street, Gerrard Street and the Liberties. Our concerns include the above and invasion of privacy, loss of sunlight, wind effect, safety and traffic.

Such concerns are outlined in this Participant Witness Statement and will be further detailed in verbal representations to be given at the scheduled hearing.

## 2. The Interest, Background and Experience of the McGill-Granby Village Residents Association in the Proposed Development.

The Association membership consist of some 200+ house forms and 3 condominium apartment buildings on Carlton Street. This is a neighbourhood which has been designated, for many years, as an area which merits planning attention to preserve residential house forms in the City core under By-Law 283-83.

Given the nature of this and the immediate area it would be desirable to have a quality development to complete this site. It would be beneficial to have a development that complements the existing buildings and adds to the general

quality of life to the present and future occupants of this overall complex. The proposed design does not meet this criterion and is unacceptable.

We have been attending the Working Group Committee meetings as participants since March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

### **3. List of Issues**

Living in a downtown area has its concomitant problems which most of us can adapt to or work and live within its constraints. This leads to elements of vitality and the excitement of living in an urban setting. It is understood that vacant sites or in-fill sites will be developed and that densities will increase. However, it is reasonable to expect that any such development will be given due consideration and that it will not have adverse impact on the quality of life of the current residents. We have outlined below our concerns.

#### **3.1. The Tower**

An amendment to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law in its present form is being sought to allow the building to exceed the building height in the by-law by over 100m and to double the number of residential units. This, we feel, is out of character for the community.

The proposed tower is too tall and has a floor plate that is twice that specified in the Tall Building Design Guidelines.

If this massing is allowed, as proposed, this tower will intrude and loom over the surrounding communities. Especially McGill-Granby which is already being encroached on and being overshadowed by other new high rise development. With this large floor plate and minimal articulation we are concerned that the face of the building will create a towering wall over Yonge Street, Gerrard Street and College Park. We would prefer to see a smaller floor plate and thereby a tower with a height of no more than 45-50 stories.

#### **3.2. The Podium Placement**

The commercial podium as proposed presents particular problems and concerns in that it crowds the Liberties project. Residents facing east will be looking directly into a commercial building 13 metres from their living rooms, bedrooms and kitchens. The proposed roof design of the proposed building will present inherent noise factors and further loss of privacy up to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> floors of the Liberties as well as loss of morning sunlight.

The Podium also creates a narrow and potentially unsafe walkway environment between Gerrard Street West and College Park. This also decreases visibility into the park and further increases the negative safety factor.

### **3.3 The Podium Design**

The scale and impact of the proposed three storey commercial podium is without character or definition and does not relate well to the existing blocks of retail space which are set at street level. No design setback has been presented to open up the natural entrance at Yonge and Gerrard (remember the fiasco created by the original Eaton Centre design).

The design of the outlook onto College Park presents a blank wall. This has implications for all users of this park and does not contribute to any animation or safety features of “eyes on the park”.

A design alternative should see a mixed residential/commercial use to address some of these concerns.

### **3.4 College Park**

There are some 1420+ households near the park plus the proposed development along with the general public on a daily basis. As more development and increased density occurs we lose more open space. We have a dearth of parks and green space as it is in the Downtown Core. This proposed development, whatever its ultimate density, provides an opportunity to redevelop this existing park as an integral feature for this overall area to enhance the quality of life of all the residents and visitors.

### **3.5. Vehicular Traffic**

We are concerned about the impact of the proposed development on several levels, not the least of which is the immediate effect on Gerrard Street. This is already a major problem area especially at rush hours. We are still unclear on how much resident, visitor and commercial parking will ultimately be provided. Parking downtown is a perennial problem as we continue to lose more and more public parking spaces. The proposed development will undoubtedly have an overspill effect which will bring more traffic into the already overburdened McGill-Granby neighbourhood where a majority of the homes rely on street parking.

## **4 List of Evidence that Will be Presented**

Our concerns as delineated will be supported by evidence taken from the following sources:

- a) Design Criteria for Review of Tall Building Proposals, City of Toronto, July 2006
- b) Toronto Staff Refusal and Directions Report, file 04-130483 STE 27 OZ

#### **4. Conclusion**

We concede the need for development of this site but feel that, in its present format, it does not adequately address the concerns of the community and will have a negative impact on our unique neighbourhood, users of College Park, the Liberties and residents in the general area. As it stands it is completely unacceptable to the McGill-Granby Village Association. Once the development is completed it is the long term residents who must live with the consequences of any bad planning decisions.

We are hopeful that the developer can create a proposal that will satisfactorily address all the issues and respect the existing buildings and community, that it will also enhance rather than detract from the quality of life of community residents.