

ARTICLE – local – June 2009 --- CRIER

Councillor Michael Walker, St. Paul's, Ward 22

Among the initiatives Mayor Miller has pushed through is a new City corporation named “**Build Toronto**”. With the Mayor as Chair of the Build Toronto Board for the first two years, it is charged with the disposal of City owned property to maximize profit and employment opportunities for the City by entering into long-term public-private partnerships. To some, this may seem to be a laudable goal until one tries to balance the principles of responsible city planning that protects our neighbourhoods with maximizing profit for the City.

Build Toronto is immediately taking over control of several City owned properties, two of which are in St. Paul's: 1) the TTC land at Yonge & Eglinton, and 2) the Deer Park Public Library at 40 St. Clair Avenue East.

Some have known since November's inception of Build Toronto that the Mayor wanted the fallow TTC lands in the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Yonge Street at Eglinton Avenue as his potential “signature site” to first try out his new corporate development scheme. This is why I am so adamantly insisting that the new Zoning Bylaw and Official Plan for this quadrant include the proper development controls. There needs to be a maximum height limit (or “strata plan”) on whatever TTC land is sold or leased in order to remove the possibility of the developer appealing to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) since a “strata plan” only sells land up to a certain height. The Zoning Bylaw that was approved by City Council in February 2009 after 7 years of consultation with the Yonge & Eglinton community, calls for a maximum of 40 storeys (120 metres) on the TTC land that fronts along Eglinton Avenue West; 40 storeys must be the maximum height of any development on this portion of the site.

Until last month, the Mayor and City Council thwarted my efforts to impose a “strata plan” on these lands. At City Council's May meeting, I was successful in placing a “strata plan” on these lands at the point of turnover to Build Toronto. So, whatever deal Build Toronto arranges with a private developer, the proposal cannot be over 40 storeys.

In addition, everyone should be aware that the South Eglinton Residents & Ratepayers Association (SERRA) has appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) the City's Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw specific to the Yonge & Eglinton area. These documents were adopted by City Council without the controls mentioned above and that is the basis for its appeal to the OMB. SERRA residents and others want to make sure the Official Plan explicitly requires the use of “strata plan” and so continues its appeal of the documents themselves. To date, no OMB hearing has been scheduled.

However, Build Toronto's takeover of the Library site at 40 St. Clair Avenue East is a surprise. I am concerned with what may become of our library and if it is to be replaced,

that it is not out of commission too long. Also, how big will Build Toronto's new building be? I invite you to write the Mayor (mayor_miller@toronto.ca) and me (councillor_walker@toronto.ca) with your concerns regarding these two important sites of public interest and how these lands should be developed by Build Toronto.

Another initiative the City is proceeding with is the long-overdue update to the City's **Zoning Bylaw**. In anticipation of City Council approval in Fall 2009, City staff have a first draft of the new bylaw and I have held two ward-wide townhall public meetings for you and your neighbours on June 1st and June 8th at Christ Church Deer Park and the North Toronto Memorial Community Centre, respectively. More than a hundred residents attended each meeting and we delved into this proposed bylaw effectively. Concerns were raised by residents and many questions were answered. This is a complex revision of an all encompassing bylaw so the 'devil may be in the details'. We need to ensure that our neighbourhoods are protected from the ever-present onslaught of Committee of Adjustment applications as well as condominium developments; a proper new Zoning Bylaw should help us fight against unreasonable development in our neighbourhoods. For a copy of the City report, City staff's meeting presentation, and further information on this issue please visit www.toronto.ca/zoning, www.MichaelWalker.ca, or contact my office at 416.392.7906.

Update on a different topic: A proposed **swimming pool in our new North Toronto Collegiate Institute (NTCI)** complex which consists of a new high school with two condominium towers on site. Overall, I have been fighting for City funding to keep our school pools open until a new funding deal can be struck between the Province, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), and the City. But specifically, since 2005, I have been working with residents, the TDSB, and the developer to try to find a way to build a new community pool as part of the new school/condo complex for NTCI. A new pool could be built by the City and a cost-sharing agreement for operation funding could be worked out. Unfortunately, earlier this year, City staff provided an estimate for building a new pool that was far above previous estimates: instead of \$6 million, the estimate is \$16.9 million, which puts this new pool way beyond our financial reach. I have notified the Chair of the TDSB, the Trustee, TDSB staff, and involved residents that this the new school cannot include a new pool complex. I am greatly disappointed. I will continue looking for other ways to improve the public facilities available to us in St. Paul's.

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