

MIDTOWN CRIER

Councillor Michael Walker

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New Official Plan Allows ‘Trojan Horse’ Developments in Our Neighbourhoods

When I look at the city these days, it pains me. Our neighbourhoods are being overshadowed and fractured by new developments that should never have received a second look. Developers are conquering our neighbourhoods with precedent-setting developments that are as dangerous as a Trojan Horse. The new precedent is then replaced with a newer precedent and so on, building higher, wider and closer. Cherished aspects of our quality of life in Midtown Toronto are slipping away before our eyes.

The City’s Official Plan is the most important guide for planning the future of this city. The **old** Official Plan did contain prescribed heights and densities to regulate the new buildings in a specific area or neighbourhood. The new Official Plan does not contain prescribed heights and densities: there are no prescribed “envelopes” a new building is required to fit into.

Without these regulations, one cannot have an objective discussion. Without them, the discussion is reduced to an opinionated, subjective judgment call. The problem is this new Official Plan does not protect the existing character of the city by restricting the heights and densities of new buildings.

The new Official Plan was passed by City Council in 2002, so it is not new. What is new is that we’re beginning to see the effects of the deficiencies of the Plan: inappropriate, irresponsible developments that are too tall or too dense and are not properly transitioned into our neighbourhoods. We’re seeing real estate speculation on properties that could not have been developed so intensely under a more rational, rules-based regime.

The new Official Plan is used by City planners to justify almost anything that developers suggest. In St. Paul’s, Avenue Road just north of St. Clair has become desirable for developers given the profit they can churn. On lots zoned for 2 times coverage of the lot, these developers are asking for 6 times coverage. If a developer can get approved at 6 times coverage, he is rewarded for overbuilding the site to maximize profits.

As mentioned above, the development proposals for 609 Avenue Rd. (17 stories), 587 Avenue Rd. (14 stories), and 215 Lonsdale Rd. (17 stories) concern me with their proximity to one another and to the low-density residential neighbourhood, and the fact that they were made almost simultaneously. I oppose these applications and will be seeking amelioration of the issues based on input identified by you.

Please check www.MichaelWalker.ca for public meetings and information on these and other developments. (Word Count: 410)