

Residents worried about apartment proposal for historic property

They spoke out on the potential impacts a proposed apartment complex at Yonge and Irwin would have on their older homes, now residents are once again raising their voices on a similar proposal just steps away.

Council, at last week's Public Planning meeting, considered a revised plan for a four-storey apartment building behind a heritage brown brick home that lies just south of Hillary House National Historic Site.

In the works since 2017, the proposal has undergone a number of changes since it was first floated, but for neighbours on Machell and Irwin Avenues, not enough has been done to ensure the development won't negatively impact their properties.

‘If the project moves forward, one of the questions my neighbours and family have is what plans do the builder and developer have to protect our property from the construction process?’ dirt, debris and privacy concerns?’ asked resident Glen Payne, who tempered his concern with praise for the developers for reducing the overall scale of the proposed building. ‘This isn't a building in the middle of nowhere, it is a neighbourhood and seeing it is such a deep property it is going to negatively affect a lot of us for a long period of time.’

In addition to dirt and debris, the proposal would loom over his backyard, he says, and what was on the table failed to meet minimum landscape standards put in place by the Town.

‘We want to be involved in these design choices,’ he said. ‘It is very important to us.’

Similarly, Sadisha Galappati voiced worries about the impact long-term construction might have on his 70-year-old home nearby as well as the environmental consequences of such a build.

‘The proposal suggests the rezoning of an environmentally-protected piece of land being converted to Downtown Promenade Shoulder, which is concerning for myself and all my neighbours as well,’ he said. ‘My main concern would be about capacity that is going to be increased on the sewage and the stormwater connection, as well as the stormwater run-off which is coming down the hill. Now is not the best time to be disregarding the environment.’

Parking was also at issue for Mr. Galappati who said the one parking spot per unit plan, plus two visitor spots, as proposed, was not enough.

‘The parking situation is becoming very difficult to deal with,’ he said.

This was an issue highlighted as well by Bonnie Chan Bynoe, who said construction vehicles would likely have to park on Irwin and Machell, making an already difficult traffic and on-street parking situation worse.

‘As a long-term [view], if the project actually does go through, we'd like to know what's happening with the parking,’ she said. ‘There is not enough parking spaces for the amount of people that will move in. When they run out, where are they going to park? They're not going to be able to park on Yonge; they will park on Irwin and inevitably they will park along Machell as well, and there is only a limited amount of space on Machell.’

Added Ben Pourdad: ‘We all have small kids and we are really concerned about the traffic and parking spots. Especially in the summer time, I have never seen my front yard without any cars during the day and night. Whenever we raised this issue with Bylaw, the answer I got is they are taxpayers as well. What about us? We are taxpayers and I can never use my front yard to park my cars or my guest cars. It is going to be the same issue when we have another big project. We all know that each family nowadays needs more than two cars and one parking spot is not enough for one unit.’

Proponents of the plan assured residents that a construction mitigation plan is required for all development applications and will be reviewed by the Town. Construction is slated to take place over a span of 12 to 16 months and will include vibration monitoring equipment to mitigate impacts on existing homes.

Parking at nearby Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church for construction vehicles in the church's off hours is also an opportunity being explored, they added.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter