

October 31, 2011

Councillor Sarah Doucette
City of Toronto
100 Queen St. West
Suite C46
Toronto, Ont.
M5H 2N2

Hello. I've been a resident of the High Park area for thirty-six years. I came here for the park, and then fell in love with this wonderful neighborhood.

Let me begin with the park. It's amazing. A forest in the middle of a city! You step off a busy city street, and follow one of the paths along a stream, or into a ravine. Within ten minutes, you have left behind traffic noise, city bustle, and all of your worries. It's very calming.

The neighborhood is full of history. The houses are mostly Victorian, with a sprinkling of Tudor Revival, Arts & Crafts, and some really delightful, quirky Queen Anne Revival. It is an adventure just to walk along a street, and admire the shape of the windows on one house, or the intricate brick detailing on another.

One of the currents of thought which runs through this community is that this neighborhood should never have been disturbed, that in the 60's and 70's, the houses should never have been demolished, to be replaced with characterless slab high-rises. And that the scale and style of these tall buildings has never been a good fit for this neighborhood, from the beginning.

Which brings me to the 1844 Bloor West development.

This neighborhood has high-rise fatigue. When I speak to my neighbors, they say "Please! No more. It's too much!"

The trouble with having been designated an Apartment Neighborhood is that it allows past mistakes (tall buildings) to serve as justification for future mistakes (more tall buildings). We already have sixteen tall buildings in this area. That's enough.

When one looks at a zoning map, and sees the label Apartment Neighborhood, it is easy to forget that this is also a community of century homes. This area is an important part of Toronto's past. If we squander it, we won't be able to get it back. We have already lost so many of our historic buildings. We need to be careful that any new buildings, especially along Bloor St, preserve the historic character of this area.

Until now, the park and the neighborhood have lived next to each other, in harmony. The park is the star attraction, here. The century homes have been a sedate and respectful complement to the park. The building design which was presented to us at the May 4, 2011 community consultation meeting is too tall, too brash, too full of its own importance. It does not belong in a historic neighborhood. It belongs in the club district. We should never allow a building to overwhelm or compete with the park.

Natural Heritage

I was very surprised that a Natural Heritage Impact Study was not required for this development. The proposed building would be situated right across the street from a forested area, spilling light from glass walls. How could it not affect the park ?

A conversation with a city staffer informed me that the site is not considered to be "adjacent" to the park. Not adjacent to the park ?

A Natural Heritage Impact Study was not required because it was felt that the development would not have a direct impact on the park.

High Park is part of the City of Toronto's Natural Heritage Inventory, therefore it is protected by Toronto's Official Plan.

Official Plan 3.4

Building the City while protecting and enhancing the natural environment is the aim of good stewardship.

The Natural Heritage system is made up of areas where protecting, restoring, and enhancing the natural features and functions should have high priority in our city-building decisions. *We must be careful to assess the impact of new development in areas near the natural heritage system. The size of this adjacent impact zone will vary across the city . . .*

My neighbors tell me that they would like to see a sort of buffer area between the existing high-rises and the park. No more tall buildings should be constructed south of the existing tall buildings.

The Trouble With Glass Buildings

Well, in the first place, a glass building does nothing to "preserve the historic character of this area".

A building containing so much glass will create a serious hazard for local birds and migratory birds. Bloor St. is only 16.5 meters from curb to curb. The tree canopy extends out over the street. The height of the mature trees in the park is 70 - 110 feet. 110 feet (33.5 meters) is the same height as 13 storeys. This means that the glass walls and glass balcony panels will be reflecting the trees for almost the entire height of the building.

Is the developer planning to treat the glass to the top of the building's south elevation, (fritting, sand-blasting, etc) so that it will not reflect the trees ?

The Toronto Green Standard states : if the site is *adjacent* to a natural area such as a ravine or woodlot or other natural feature, glass must be treated with a density pattern to the first 12m of the building *or to the height of the surrounding tree canopy at maturity.*¹

There's that word "adjacent" again.

San Francisco's Standards for Bird-Safe Buildings are more specific. For buildings located within a clear flight path of less than 300 feet (91.5 meters) from an Urban Bird Refuge, the glass facades facing the Urban Bird Refuge must be treated. Urban Bird Refuges are open spaces 2 acres or larger, dominated by vegetation, including vegetated landscaping, forest, meadows, grassland, water features or wetlands; open water; and green rooftops 2 acres or greater.²

Lots of glass walls mean lots of perpendicular glass corners, which the birds will perceive as open flight paths.

A glass building contributes to light pollution (sky glow and glare), unless all of the building's residents cover their windows every night.

Light pollution has a negative effect on human health. It has been implicated in depressed immune system and increased cancer rates.³

Light pollution disrupts the life cycles of plants⁴, birds, animals, and insects.⁵

Toronto has a tree protection policy. It carefully lays out procedures to protect trees. Yet, across the city, many trees are bathed in light, all night long, disrupting their growth cycles.

We would like to see an Urban Star Park^{6,7} in High Park. In order to have an Urban Star Park, we need to begin to *decrease* the amount of light pollution in and around the park. Lights on the tennis courts, baseball diamonds, and swimming pool need to be turned off when people go home at night. Wasteful street lights, path lights, and parking lot lights inside the park, as well as street lights on streets around the park, need to be replaced with full cut-off lights. It would not be helpful to have another source of light pollution--a glass-walled building--across the street from the park.

Glass panels are available which make use of triple or quadruple glazing, gas fills, low-e coatings, and composite frames, but most developers choose to use less sophisticated products, such as dual pane tinted glass and commercial aluminum frames.⁸ They use them because they are less expensive. These glass walls usually have R-values of 2 or 3. This results in energy being wasted for heating in winter and cooling in summer. The heat escaping from these buildings can also contribute to the city's heat island effect.⁹

Of course, still fresh in all our minds are the shattered glass balcony panels which rained down on Torontonians in the past few months.¹⁰ One of those buildings was Daniels Festival Tower.

Future Vision

Here, there is a connection and a balance between our park and our neighborhood. We don't want to lose that.

The park itself attracts people from all over the province. The addition of an Urban Star Park would increase the value of the park, making a wonderful educational opportunity available to children and adults alike.

This building will be situated on the highest elevation point along this section of Bloor St. It will have a large footprint. Consequently, it will set the tone for Bloor St, from Keele to Ellis Park. Let's not put the cart before the horse. First, we need to decide what "tone" we want. Then, we can decide the architectural style of this building.

The buildings on Bloor St. are the "front doors" to our neighborhood. They should reflect the history of the area. This doesn't mean that they need to be replicas of Victorian buildings. They can still be modern buildings, but they should contain design elements from the past.

In conclusion, we would like this building to be subtle, elegant, and understated. It should reference the past. Grey stone, or something which looks like stone, would be appropriate. And it needs to be no taller than 25 meters, so that it complements the park, rather than trying to compete with it.

Sincerely,
E. L. Cramp
Chair

This Is My Park
A committee of the High Park Residents' Association (HPRA)
70685--2938 Dundas St. West M6P 4E7
info@thisismypark.ca

cc : Philip Carvalino, City Planning
Mark Coady, Astronomer, RASC, Light Pollution Abatement Committee
John Crossens, Astronomer, Buckhorn Observatory
Jeff Derksen, HPRA
Design Review Panel
Chris Ganowski, HPRA
Peter Hiscocks, P. Eng.
Allan Killin, Architect
Susan Krajnc, FLAP
Michael Measure, FLAP
Sarah Poirier, Astronomer, Ontario Science Centre
Kelly Snow, City Planning
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Footnotes

- ¹ Toronto Green Standard for Mid to HighRise Development, page 15
- ² www.sf-planning.org/index.aspx?page=2506
page 28, 29
- ³ www.starrynightlights.com/lightpollution/light_pollution_and_human_health.html
- ⁴ www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-FAQ-7.pdf
- ⁵ www.ee.ryerson.ca/~phiscock
click on Astronomy click on powerpoint presentation on the effects of light pollution on animals, birds, and insects
- ⁶ www.rasc.ca
click on Light Pollution click on Dark-Sky Site Guidelines
- ⁷ www.ee.ryerson.ca/~phiscock
click on Astronomy click on powerpoint presentation on Astronomy in Toronto parks
- ⁸ www.wbdg.org/references/jbed.php
Journal of Building Enclosure Design
click on Winter 2010 issue. The entire issue is about glass.
- ⁹ www.treehugger.com/files/2010/04/professor-sees-red-over-green.php
- ¹⁰ mse.utoronto.ca/news/features/20110819.htm

Technical

Lighting

As part of the design process for this building, we request that the lighting design be modelled in a computer-aided design program. The vertical and horizontal illuminance at the property boundary should be predicted, and kept to less than 1 lux over the existing ambient light levels. Once the building is constructed these light levels should be measured to confirm the predictions.

We further request that no light source on the building exceed a brightness of 1500 candela per square metre. Direct viewing of sources of light (such as bulbs or LEDs) must not be visible from any position outside the property boundary.

Sound

The building systems shall not raise the ambient noise level at the property line according to the following: The measurement shall be taken with an A-weighted sound level meter and with a third-octave spectrum analyser. The relevant reading for the building shall be the largest of the A-weighted reading or the reading in any of the third-octave spectrum bands. The measured reading shall indicate an increase in noise level by no more than 1 db at any time during the day or night.