

## **DPRG Summary, January 16, 2008**

### **Proposed Development at 30 Alvin Avenue**

#### **The first proposal**

- Last winter some members of our community attended a City public meeting about a proposal by Wittington, the development arm of Weston, for a project on the parking lot on Alvin Avenue and other properties they own in the Yonge, Heath, Alvin, St. Clair block. Many concerns were raised at the public meeting about the size (density and unit count) of the proposal and the implications of these on the immediate neighborhood as well as on the greater Deer Park area.
- The proposal was for a development of two large condo towers (39 and 32 stories) where the parking lot currently is, as well as a 14-storey condo building on Yonge Street. (For comparison, the Weston Tower is 22 storeys: commercial storeys are generally higher than residential.) Alvin and Heath were to have townhouses and low rise apartments. Parking, both for the Parking Authority and the project, is underground. Along with building on the parking lot site, Wittington proposes to use this opportunity to help improve traffic conditions on Alvin. New trucking docks and a delivery area will be added for the existing office buildings on St. Clair, and the queuing for the Parking Authority lot will be in the underground garage. As well, the project includes public safety improvements for the TTC.

#### **City planning context**

- Currently the City looks at large projects like this one on a site-specific basis, with what some call "let's make a deal" planning. The new Official Plan is very general and has no density and height limits. The current zoning for height and density are yet to be updated to reflect the new Official Plan and are therefore considered obsolete.
- One Official Plan policy for a site like this is to intensify the area because it is located near a subway station. Another is to ensure that a new development adequately addresses and scales down to the adjacent houses. The issue at hand here is that these are conflicting focuses for City planning. On the one hand, St. Clair is a major subway hub, but on the other hand, there are houses opposite with typical set backs from the street.

#### **Formation of a working committee**

- Because of the proposed magnitude of this development, Councillor Walker asked for a working committee to get the input of a range of Deer Park people. (These working committees rarely happen, so we were lucky.) The committee consisted of residents and business owners from the immediate vicinity (north and south Alvin, Heath East, Ferndale and Glen Elm), as well as from the broader Deer Park neighbourhood. The meetings also included the developer, their consultants (architects, transportation consultants and landscape architects), Chris Sellors from Councillor Walker's office, and Tim Burkholder, the City planner responsible for the project, and other City staff.
- The working committee met six times to review different aspects of the proposal and make recommendations for changes and express concerns for how this development will affect our lives.

#### **Gains made by the working committee**

- Changes were made that benefit both the neighbourhood and the project, enhancing its design and marketability.
- The height of the proposed North Tower was reduced from 32 to 16 storeys. Wittington also agreed to a density reduction of 10% from their original proposal. The building on Yonge was not discussed.
- Yonge Street and the neighbourhood will be improved with the addition of a small public park abutting Yonge Street, with a walkway extension to Alvin.
- Alvin will be widened near St. Clair to allow for drop off/ pickup, including Wheel Trans.
- Parking access has been adjusted to reduce the traffic impacts on Heath and Alvin.

### Issues and concerns

- At the working committee we discussed many issues, including (*but by no means limited to*) the proposed density of 7.3. Although the group did not unanimously agree as to what an acceptable height/density/number of units should be, there are concerns that a 10% reduction in density simply is not enough and that the developer's proposed new density (6.6 times the lot area) is still too high.
- Our concern about density was two fold – the size of the project and the number of units. The size of the project affects how long it will take to build, the amount and type of green space, wind and sunlight disturbances, to name a few areas of concern. The number and type of units affects the number of cars and traffic on already congested streets and Deer Park school, which is already at capacity.
- Access to this development will be from Alvin Avenue and Heath Street East. Alvin, Heath and Glen Elm are all narrow and Heath and Glen Elm are dead end streets. While some of the new residents will be using the subway, all the additional car traffic will be using these narrow residential streets. The intersections of Heath and Yonge and Alvin and St. Clair are already crowded and hard to navigate. To further complicate the situation, the streetcar construction on St. Clair has resulted in shifting traffic to Alvin and Heath.

### Next steps in the process

- The final working committee meeting will be held early in February in order to review and comment on the revised proposal before the planner completes his report.
- Then another City public meeting will be held locally. This is an important opportunity for the community to get together with Councillor Walker and comment on the project, as well as on the planner's report. The planner's report will include recommendations for City Council to consider.
- Then there will be a formal Community Council public meeting at City Hall, where the public is entitled to make short deputations or send in written comments. The Community Council then will send its recommendations to City Council to make its decision on the application.
- Council's decision can be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) by the developer or by individuals. A residents' group like DPRG would have to get incorporated to be able to make an appeal. Hearing can be expensive (\$100,000 plus), and residents are often not successful.

### What you can do to help

- The DPRG and the Working Committee will make every effort to ensure that City Council approves a project that works for our neighbourhood. We will keep you informed.
- **The neighborhood needs your help and involvement. We need you to show up at the local public meeting and the Community Council meeting. We need you to let your views and concerns be known. Although you may feel that this does not affect you because you may not live near Alvin, Heath, Ferndale or Glen Elm, it does affect you. This is a big project. Construction will clog our streets for several years. Then the extra traffic from as many as 500 new apartments will add to the current congestion on Heath Street West, which is already congested and hard to navigate, as well as on other streets including Yonge, St. Clair, Avenue Road, Delisle and Deer Park Crescent. What happens here will set a precedent for what will happen on other properties in Deer Park.**

### For more information

The following working committee members would be pleased to provide further information, you may contact:

- Cathie Macdonald, DPRG President, at [deerpark@sympatico.ca](mailto:deerpark@sympatico.ca) and
- Ted Mercer at [tedmercerc@rogers.com](mailto:tedmercerc@rogers.com) and John Shepherd at [john@eternalchaos.com](mailto:john@eternalchaos.com), residents of Heath Street East.

See <http://30alvin.blogspot.com> to share information and ideas.