

**Site Plan Control Proposal (File D07-12-13-0225)
93-105 Norman Street**

Submission from the Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association (CHNA)

The Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association (CHNA) has reviewed the site plan proposal and is registering its strong opposition to the application.

This proposal is problematic in that it appears to be designed to contribute to intensification when there is no requirement to do so as the intensification targets for the Preston-Carling district would already be met by existing development potential.

While CHNA supports intensification, this proposed building project is an example of the types of development proposals that are driving discontent throughout the city concerning the current approach to intensification.

In addition, some residents believe the current funding formula for public realm enhancements (without the City spending its own money and so dependent on height and development) is a perverse incentive for residents to approve out of scale developments such as this. Many of the residents, given the trade off, would rather have less intensification and fewer improvements. The benefits of any improvements are far outweighed by the detrimental impact of these developments on residents.

93-105 Norman – Specific concerns

As indicated above, CHNA is opposed to this proposal. Among the myriad of issues, the following are most problematic:

Scale – in relation to surrounding housing:

The size of the building would be out of scale to the surrounding houses. The proposal does not include a meaningful transition from the 9-storey building to the 2 storey homes that would surround it. Townhomes would be much more appropriate within this neighbourhood.

Allowing a mid-sized building in a R4T zone sets a precedent that will inevitably lead to the destruction of the character of the neighbourhood, and the demise of Little Italy, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in the city.

As the Dalhousie Community Association has pointed out, and we echo: “Urban Strategies... and City Planning staff... recommended that the height be raised from 4 to 9 stories ONLY if a “mews” lane connected the end of one dead end street to another. Even though Council, contrary to the professional advice of these planners, overturned the “ONLY IF”, the fact remains that allowing 9 stories... is bad planning.”

Much more appropriate would be a proposal of a scale similar to the 3 story condominium building at 95 Beech Street or townhomes that reflect the character of the neighbourhood.

Impact on surrounding homeowners / residents:

A consideration that is rarely, if ever, considered when evaluating proposals of this scale is the actual impact on current residents. How noisy and disruptive would the air intake, air conditioning and exhaust be to current residents? What would they see when they look out their windows? What impact would the proposal have on their gardens because of the shade? Would their street be significantly busier? Would there be an impact on their privacy?

The impact of this scale of building on neighbouring residents would be negative and would be significant. For example:

- There would be considerable shading from the proposed building that would affect the abutting properties to the north. They would have less privacy. Their back yards would be dominated by the proposed building. Their surroundings would be noisier.
- Neighbours to the south of the proposed high-rise would see a dramatic increase in traffic on their streets and increased use of their properties (driveways) as turn-arounds. They would also have less privacy and suffer from more noise.

Scale – in relation to the street:

As noted above: the small street on which this proposed building would reside is completely inadequate for the number of units and the expected increase in traffic resulting from this proposal. The street is too short and too narrow for this scale of building.

Scale – in relation to the MUP:

This building would not be situated on an arterial, where zoning for a 9-story building would make sense. Instead, it is situated by a multi-use pathway that has been designed to help “green” this downtown neighbourhood. A 9 storey wall of a building would have a very detrimental impact on the MUP. 95 Beech is a better example of a much more appropriate building both in scale and style for this neighbourhood.

Because CHNA strongly opposes the proposal, little time was spent reviewing the parking amenities or landscaping plan. However, in quickly reviewing these components of the proposal, a few inconsistencies stood out:

Parking, car:

One of the rationales for the city's intensification of the districts around rapid transit nodes such as O-train stops is that the close proximity to transit encourages residents of the new buildings to use rapid transit for work, shopping etc.

It is therefore surprising that this proposal includes a 60% increase in required parking spaces for residents, from 59 to 94 spaces. This completely contradicts the rationale for intensification around this rapid transit node.

At the same time, the proposal would reduce the number of visitor spaces by more than 110%. The result of this reduction is obvious; even more non-resident cars would be vying for the very limited parking spaces in the Beech & Preston vicinity.

When will the City start thinking ahead and put incentives in place to discourage cars and encourage the use of such things as Vrtucars? Is the city serious about achieving its mobility targets and reducing car traffic?

Bicycle parking:

Once again, the city talks about discouraging car traffic and encouraging cycling and the use of rapid transit yet does not encourage or enforce practices or strategies that would reinforce this change. The bicycle parking in the building, at 60 spaces, is inadequate.

Assuming half of the one bedroom units require one bicycle parking space (which is a conservative guess as it is likely many one bedroom units accommodate 2 individuals), that would require 30 bicycle parking spaces. Assuming half of the multi-bedroom units require 2 spaces, that would require 46 spaces. Therefore, a minimum of 76 spaces would be the minimum number of bicycle spaces that should be available for a building of this size in a downtown location. Anything less shows that the city is either inattentive to the details of this proposal or not serious about reaching its mobility targets.

Landscaping / Canopy:

The city should be continuously enhancing its canopy for the benefit of its citizens and the good of the environment. When looking at the plant material, it is evident that the selection of trees for the plan would not significantly contribute to the city's canopy. The city's mature neighbourhoods generally include at least a few trees such as oak, ash and beech which could grow to almost 100 feet or more in ideal locations (although likely not that tall in the city).

Most likely because of the narrow setbacks in the proposal, the tallest tree identified for this proposal is the balsam fir, which grows to about 60 feet in ideal locations (though

likely not that tall in this location). Most of the other trees proposed (such as the ironwood, autumn gold and honeylocust) grow to approximately 40 feet in ideal locations – less than half the size of the trees in other mature neighbourhoods of the city and these would be lucky to grow to 25 feet in the proposed landscaping plan.

City planners should demand that developers allow for setbacks that will support the planting of large tree species that complement or mirror the existing canopies in other established, historic areas of the city such as the Civic Hospital neighbourhood or the Glebe.

Conclusion:

Properties in the Preston and Carling district are very appealing for developers. The reason for this is obvious: it is an attractive, diverse, downtown neighbourhood featuring mixed housing, residents with a wide range of occupations such as small business owners and professionals, fine dining establishments and local eateries, and varied streetscapes that would likely appeal to the sensibility of urban specialists such as Jane Jacobs.

Unfortunately, development in the district is beyond what the community can accommodate; and the characteristics that attracted the developers to the district are, ironically, being lost with each additional, out of scale building the developers propose for this district.

Commentary on Consultations Process and Documentation:

Besides commenting on the specifics of the proposal, CHNA would also like to offer a resident-oriented perspective to this and other intensification proposals that the city is asking community associations and citizens to evaluate. The consultations process the City employs is not conducive to informed analysis by residents and is skewed in favour of the developer/owner, as follows:

- Residents and community associations are generally brought into these proposals too late to have any meaningful role in influencing the design and providing background to the developer/owner re: community concerns.
- Potential neighbours of this proposed structure are being asked to comment on architectural drawings and site section plans (formats with which they are not familiar) that have been produced by the developers and, naturally, present subjective, and very favourable perspectives.
- The timeframe for consultations is inadequate, offering citizens limited time to properly study proposals, keep up with changes and offer informed commentary.

In CHNA's opinion, better processes would:

- Demand that developers bring citizens and community associations into the discussion at the initial stages of the process when there is still an opportunity to influence a design;
- Require developers to include drawings that, for example, present the scale of a building from a prospective neighbour's back yard. This would be informative and demonstrate the actual impact of the development proposal; and
- Provide more time for citizens to review proposals.

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