



Young Avenue District Heritage Conservation Society

Councillor Wayne Mason

Halifax City Hall
1841 Argyle Street, Fourth Floor
PO Box 1749
Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

October 24, 2019

Dear Councillor Mason (Waye),

RE: Young Avenue development proposals (ZZap)

Recently a small group of Young Avenue residents and neighbours met with planner Greg Zwicker (ZZap) who presented 2 options for redeveloping the vacant lot owned by the Tsimiklis family.

Apparently the current land owner has been working with a Toronto multi-residential development/investment company, Starlight Investments, owned by Daniel Drimmer. This company is focused on multi-residential developments that will return maximum returns to their investors. They own property in HRM.

The first option presented by Mr. Zwicker was for 5 multi-unit buildings, 4 of them facing Young Avenue on a common podium with underground parking. The 5th structure is on Mclean St. They are massive structures with no element that resembles any other structure on the street, mansion, or otherwise. Optionally, the podium could also support fewer but taller structures, such as a high rise, which was mentioned, but not presented.

In excess of 40-50-60 units is envisioned. This exceeds what is permitted under current zoning (single family), so re-zoning would be required. Of course, if rezoning is approved to allow this, nothing would stop the developer from later amending his concept to build one or 2 even larger towers on the proposed podium, since multi-unit approval would already be in place. This is where the profit is made, by flipping a property with new and generous development rights built in. As in the recent Tsimiklis development agreement on Wellington St., once he sold the development rights to an Ontario company the final product underwent numerous changes, even different architects, ultimately bearing no resemblance to the original concept. And similar to what was done on

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Wellington St., where the development rights were sold to an out of province development company, the exact same model is being proposed for Young Avenue. Changing the zoning is a dangerous and slippery slope for established neighbourhoods.

Several years ago the current land owner floated a similar multi-unit concept on Young Avenue, going so far as to seek an amendment of the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and other amendments to allow higher density. At that time the community strongly opposed any changes, and the developer's application was eventually withdrawn. We continue to oppose any monstrous changes that will diminish the established single family and distinctive character of Young Avenue.

Any residential development option that does not conform to current zoning is entirely unacceptable on Young Avenue and adjacent streets. The current option floated at the recent meeting would require a change in zoning, not only to the R-1 of Young Avenue, but also to the R-2 zoning of McLean St.

Any change in zoning to allow higher density in these 2 well established stable neighbourhoods would be very destructive, not only to these 2 streetscapes, but because of the precedent it would set, it could also apply to any other low density residential neighbourhood. Developers and land speculators could use this as the precedent to extract preferential development agreements and zoning changes anywhere else in order to maximize their profits.

Recently, Alec Halef used this same example to argue for his high density Banc development on Wellington St., stating that the streetscape is already compromised with comparable multi-units and therefore he should be permitted to build the same. Sadly, once some high density is approved this begins the downward spiral of destroying and re-inventing established neighbourhoods.

The recent Young Avenue lot width By-law was an exhaustive effort by you and the community to protect the character of the streetscape, but that effort will largely be undone by allowing zoning changes in favour of high density housing.

We cannot let the existing vacant property, bought for speculative purposes set the precedent for the erosion of established family neighbourhoods, in the South end and elsewhere.

This is an exceedingly important decision point and it is our understanding that Package B of the City Centre Plan will protect established low density neighbourhoods from exactly this sort of speculative land accumulation and re-zoning.

As Halifax council begins deliberating on Package B of the City Centre plan, the residents of Young Avenue and surrounding area request that no consideration be ever given to land speculators who only wish to enrich themselves by changing zoning to allow high density housing in established stable neighbourhoods of significant character and heritage value. Young Avenue is a single family neighbourhood and we will not accept any change in zoning that will compromise this important zoning feature.

Waye, you have been a vocal champion for preserving established neighbourhoods, for which we are appreciative. As recently stated by you in the Chronicle Herald (June 25,

“Part of Halifax Centre Plan, drafted in 2016, nears first reading” written by Francis Campbell): “We are no longer entertaining applications for redevelopment in the Package B areas... The existing zoning, you can build a R1 house, you can build a R2 house... That would stay intact but we wouldn’t be looking at any significant development that isn’t already enabled in the Package B area”.

The second option presented showed 9 identical buildings (supposedly single family) on the 9 lots along Young Avenue and 5 multi units in McLean St. Mr. Zwicker claimed that this is the “as of right” for which the developer holds active building permits. We were astonished to discover these “single family” structures are 60 feet high, exceeding the as of right zoning (35’), by 25’, almost twice as tall as permitted, and equivalent to a 6 storey building. Even an additional penthouse feature could not explain this massive height exceedance. See dimensioned pic attached (Figure 1).

Waye...can you advise if this really is the case? Can you please confirm if active building permits have been approved for these 60’ high structures, and if so, how can the city have approved such an exceedance over the maximum height guidelines? We ask that you investigate the permitting process that may have allowed this to happen.

These grossly out of scale and excessively high boxes for proposed “single family” structures seem designed to intimidate the local community into accepting the multi-unit option as the lesser of 2 evils.

We don’t know how an architectural firm, in good conscience, could stand behind these designs, or even put their names on any of the proposed options. Clearly no regard for context, established residential patterns, or the community.

Despite the appalling proposed design of these 9 buildings (and others on McLean St.), we still believe that single family homes are the only appropriate solution for Young Avenue. Once the developer fully understands this and abandons any ideas of multi-unit, we believe he will be motivated to design appropriate single family homes that may actually be marketable, and that will improve his reputation.

We look forward to seeing a variety of distinctive single family home designs along this stretch of Young Avenue. Homes for which the neighbourhood, the city, the designer, and the developer would be proud.

We look forward to hearing from you and assuring us that the city will not allow any change to the established zoning on Young Avenue and McLean St. as well as a comment on the existing building permits.

Sincerely yours,

Alan North (original signed)

Young Avenue District Heritage Conservation Society

Attach.

cc: distribution list

Figure 1.



A portion of the ZZap drawing showing 60 foot height dimension noted for 9 proposed single family homes facing Young Avenue (Zoning by-law maximum height is 35 feet).