

NOVÆ RES URBIS TORONTO

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■ CITY STAFF CITE INADEQUATE OFFICE REPLACEMENT IN REFUSAL OF PROPOSED MIDTOWN PROJECT

MAGNETIZING MIDTOWN

Marc Mitanis

City planning staff say a 65-storey tower proposed on the site of an existing midtown office building fails to provide the amount of replacement office space required by the local secondary plan, and are recommending city council refuse the application. Meanwhile, the area councillor and local residents' association are expressing concerns that the current rate of predominantly residential development occurring in the Yonge and Eglinton area risks turning the historically mixed-use neighbourhood into a dormitory community for downtown workers.

At its January 6 meeting, North York community council voted to accept recommendations from city planning staff requesting that city council refuse an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) application by **Lifetime Developments**. The OPA seeks to redevelop the site at 36-44 Eglinton Avenue West with a 65-storey mixed-use

tower. Located at the northeast corner of Eglinton Avenue West and Duplex Avenue, the 1,398-square-metre site currently accommodates a seven-storey commercial office building that was constructed in 1957. Associated zoning by-law amendment applications to permit the development were refused by city council in October 2020 and March 2021, and have since been appealed to the **Ontario Land Tribunal**. Lifetime Developments is proposing to demolish the existing office building and to

replace it with the new tower, which would accommodate 663 residential units, 303.9 square metres of office space, and 246.1 square metres of retail space.

Ward 8 Eglinton-Lawrence councillor **Mike Colle** said the property at 36-44 Eglinton Avenue West is too small to accommodate a 65-storey tower, adding that the 220-metre-tall development would cast shadows on nearby Eglinton Park, and offers no transition in massing between the existing high-rise context at Yonge and Eglinton and

the low-rise residential and commercial areas to the west.

"The site can accommodate a seven-storey office building, but it's not going to accommodate a 65-storey building, no matter what the use is," Colle told *NRU*. "They're trying to put Godzilla into a children's playground site."

In the refusal report received by North York community council on January 6, planning staff conclude that the proposed OPA is inconsistent with the general intent of the **City of**

CONTINUED PAGE 9 ■



Rendering showing the lower floors of a proposed 65-storey mixed-use tower for the property at 36-44 Eglinton Avenue West. The base of the building is proposed to contain a total of 550 square metres of office and retail space.

SOURCE: LIFETIME DEVELOPMENTS
ARCHITECT: WALLMAN ARCHITECTS

UPCOMING DATES

JANUARY

- 14 General Government & Licensing Committee, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)
- 17 Board of Health, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)
- 18-20 Budget Committee [2022 Budget Review], 9:30 a.m., (video conference)
- 21 Economic & Community Development Committee, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)
- 24 Toronto Preservation Board, 9:30 a.m. (video conference)
- 24-25 Budget Committee [Public Presentations on the 2022 Budget], 9:30 a.m., (video conference)
- 26 Executive Committee, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)
- 27 Design Review Panel, tba (video conference)
- 28 Budget Committee [2022 Budget Wrap-up], 9:30 a.m., (video conference)

FEBRUARY

- 2-3 Council, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)
- 7 Budget Committee [2022 Budget Final Wrap-up], 9:30 a.m., (video conference)
- 10 TTC Board, time TBC (video conference)
- 11 Executive Committee [2022 Budget], 9:30 a.m., (video conference)
- 15 Planning & Housing Committee, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)
- 16 Toronto & East York Community Council, 9:30 a.m., (video conference)



CITY TO CONSIDER MANDATING PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION FOR DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

GETTING TO THE SAME PAGE



Rob Jowett

The city is considering making pre-application consultation meetings a mandatory part of the development review process for some applications in an effort to improve the efficiency of the development approvals process and to help better align prospective development proposals with city planning policy and the city's overall planning vision.

At its meeting February 2-3, City of Toronto council will consider a proposal from city staff to make pre-application consultation meetings with planning staff a mandatory part of the development review process for every official plan amendment, rezoning, plan of subdivision, and site plan application. Currently, the city encourages development proponents to have pre-application meetings but participation in the meetings has been entirely voluntary to this point. The change is being made as part of Concept 2 Keys, the city's end-to-end

review of the city's development approvals process, which is meant to make the review process much faster and smoother for applicants. If approved by council, the pre-application meetings would be mandatory for all developments proposed on or after November 1, 2022.

"[We have] a very robust and established system, and most applicants do use it," City of Toronto strategy and business improvement manager Michelle Drylie told NRU. "What we find is that it really helps municipalities move towards improved application quality, as well as reducing the overall time to make a decision on applications. And then, by

extension, it helps achieve those better city building outcomes because people are able to get on the same page earlier in the process."

Drylie says pre-consultation meetings provide an opportunity for city planning staff to go over planning policy and expectations for developments on specific sites. She says that the meetings are important for planning staff and applicants to coordinate early on, and that when applicants do not undertake the meetings, it can often lead to major issues like misunderstood policy that can add months or years to the approvals process as

CONTINUED PAGE 3

It's really quite critical at the outset to understand what the objectives of the proposal are, and then also, what's possible for the site. And when that doesn't happen early on, you start to see the consequences of that through the review.

- Michelle Drylie

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the city and applicant try to address disagreements or take their dispute to the **Ontario Land Tribunal**. She adds that apart from the meetings being mandatory, there would be no changes to the expectations or goals of pre-application meetings the city currently holds.

“First and foremost, [the meetings are about] just establishing a joint understanding of the proposal,” says Drylie. “It’s really quite critical at the outset to understand what the objectives of the proposal are, and then also, what’s possible for the site. And when that doesn’t happen early on, you start to see the consequences of that through the review.”

Drylie says the city is following the lead of a lot of other Ontario municipalities, which have been making pre-consultation meetings mandatory for the past decade. The province made mandatory pre-consultation meetings an option for cities in the 2006 *Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act*. That same act specifies that pre-consultation meetings can only be required for the four application types the city is proposing, and that any other pre-consultation meetings cannot be mandated

without changes to provincial legislation.

The pre-application meetings are often an important opportunity for proponents to discuss projects with planners as professionals, without worrying about the political aspects of a project, **Smart Density** architect and urban designer **Naama Blonder** told *NRU*. Blonder says Smart Density recommends that all its clients go through the voluntary pre-application meetings and says that establishing an early understanding about a project with city planning staff makes the actual development review process very simple, as generally, there are not many issues to be worked out and negotiated with the city.

“Every project has the professional aspects of it, and that is what city staff will support. And there’s the [political] aspect of [whether] the councillors support it [and] what the community has to say,” says Blonder. “So, going for a [pre-application consultation meeting] and getting the input initially is very helpful. It could really save you time on the nuance and the site plan.”

Blonder says her main concern with the proposed meetings is ensuring that the

planning department has the capacity to take on more meetings. She says the biggest risk for the city is that it takes a long time for meetings to be scheduled and that the meetings could become just another bureaucratic hurdle that adds even more time to the city’s already long development review process, which Concept 2 Keys is meant to reduce.

“We like this idea, but [the city] has to do a better job defining how it’s going to work,” **Residential Construction Council of Ontario** president **Richard Lyall** told *NRU*. “It needs to be a disciplined process. So, there’s a lot that is sort of left to be determined later.”

Lyall says he wants to see more specific information, such as how much time there can be between a request for a meeting and the meeting being scheduled. He says that pre-application consultation meetings have a lot of potential to streamline development review but without a clearly organized process he shares Blonder’s concerns that it could simply be another step adding more time to the process.

York Quay Neighbourhood Association planning committee member **Carolyn Johnson** told *NRU* that for the meetings to be as effective as possible, they should involve members of the local community. She says that when development proposals are presented to local residents a lot of design work has already gone in and there is

not much flexibility to make changes, and that residents can give proponents valuable information on local issues that can be addressed through development, or specific factors to be avoided.

“The community gets quite upset when they’re presented with something that they feel is a *fait accompli* and that the consultation is just going through the motions now and isn’t really genuine,” says Johnson. “So, if they had a chance to talk to developers as soon as they have the first ideas of what they might do with the site, it would avoid a lot of angst.”

Drylie says that the same Act that gives the city the right to make pre-consultation mandatory only allows the city to make the meetings mandatory with city planning staff, not with community groups or other stakeholders. She says the meetings can serve as an opportunity to encourage proponents to meet with community members on their proposals as soon as possible.

If approved by council, Drylie says city staff will make improvements to the pre-consultation meeting process to make the process as simple and useful as possible in advance of the meetings becoming mandatory on November 1. 🌸

GETTING INTO THE MID-SIZE ZONE



Marc Mitanis

An eSports arena and performance venue planned for Exhibition Place is expected to fill a need for mid-size entertainment facilities in the city while advancing an emerging master plan vision for the Exhibition Place property as a public gathering place for entertainment and for economic development.

At its December 15 meeting, city council approved a lease agreement with **Lakeshore Princess West Limited Partnership** and the Exhibition Place board of governors to enable the development of a second hotel building and a new performance venue on the 78-hectare Exhibition Place property. The 404-room Hotel X opened to guests in March 2018 on the property immediately east of the planned site for the new hotel and performance venue. Preparing the site for the arena and hotel complex will require the removal of 756 existing surface parking spaces currently occupying the site. At least 550 parking spaces—including 350 underground parking spaces—will be provided as part of the development.

Entertainment and eSports

organization **OverActive Media** is spearheading the performance venue and eSports arena project, which will serve as the official home of OverActive Media's professional Call of Duty and Overwatch league eSports franchises. One-time capital investments in the project are projected to produce approximately \$124 million in government revenues, including over \$26 million to the **City of Toronto**. Once operational, the complex will yield an additional \$39 million in annual government

revenues. Tourists visiting the proposed venue are expected to spend approximately \$186 million annually elsewhere across the city and the province.

"This whole explosive nature of competitive gaming is a very large untapped opportunity that will drive a lot of tourism and travel," OverActive Media senior vice-president **Bob Hunter** told *NRU*. "We see ourselves as adding a fairly significant economic impact once we get up and running, so needless to say, we're quite excited about that."

With 180 to 200 events expected to be booked at the facility every year, the venue is expected to function not only as a hub for the burgeoning competitive gaming industry, but also as an entertainment and performance complex capable of attracting mid-range sized concerts and speaking engagements.

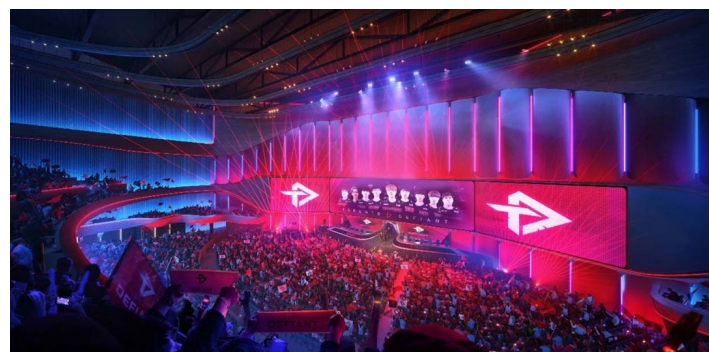
Hunter noted that currently, the city lacks a mid-size speaking and performance venue of between 5,000 and 10,000 seats, which the proposed facility seeks to remedy.

CONTINUED PAGE 5 ■



Image showing the three proposed program areas for Exhibition Place identified in an emerging master plan for the 78-hectare entertainment, convention, and trade show site. The central 'Entertain Zone' would prioritize the development and enhancement of gathering spaces and multipurpose public plazas. OverActive Media has proposed the development of a 6,600-7,000-seat eSports arena and performance venue within this zone.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO



Rendering showing the interior of a proposed 6,600-7,000-seat eSports arena and performance venue at Exhibition Place. The venue could host over 200 music, entertainment, eSports or speaking events every year.

SOURCE: OVERACTIVE MEDIA
ARCHITECT: POPULOUS

GETTING INTO THE ZONE

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

“We see this as serving somewhat of a unique-sized market where there isn’t anything in the city that’s this big, from a smaller venue standpoint,” Hunter told *NRU*. “You have **Roy Thompson Hall**, you have **Massey Hall** just coming back online, and you have the **Meridian Centre**. There are a bunch of venues in the 3,000-seat range, but we have nothing in the 7,000-seat range. In our discussions with promoters, they think that this has great appeal to certain artists, and people that can draw a certain size fan base. We could have built a 3,000-seat venue, or we could have built even a 5,000-seat venue, but we decided that with the explosive growth of eSports, and the concert business being so strong in Toronto and the GTA, we’ll serve two masters, and hopefully it works out.”

Exhibition Place chief executive officer **Don Boyle** said the eSports arena and the proposed 400-room hotel will be critical in providing Exhibition Place with the amenities and facilities necessary to attract and support mid-sized meetings and conventions.

“This performance venue is going to fit a niche market and for us, it helps us with [attracting] meetings and

conventions, because one of our big drawbacks is [that] we don’t have a large auditorium to be able to host speakers for events. This facility would provide that to us right on site,” Boyle told *NRU*. “And the new hotel would put us at over 800 hotel rooms [when added to the existing capacity of the neighbouring Hotel X], which allows us to compete in the convention and meeting business in a way we’re unable to now.”

The proposed eSports arena and hotel closely align with the historic role of Exhibition Place

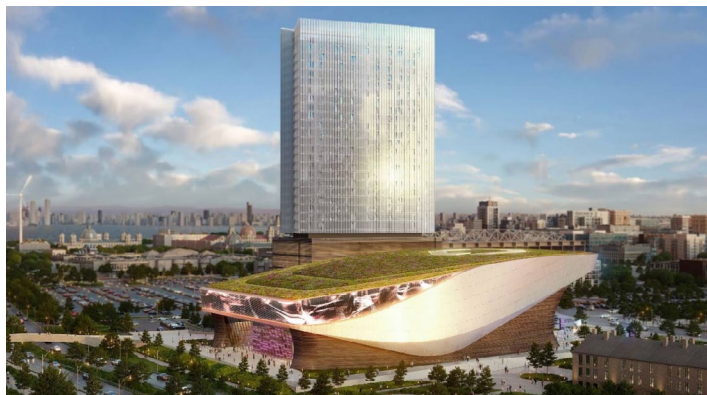
as an entertainment gathering space and as an incubator for economic development, said Boyle, noting that the complex also advances the emerging master planned vision for the Exhibition Place site currently being polished by city planning staff. In September 2020, city council adopted a proposals report for the Exhibition Place master plan, which outlines a vision to “re-establish Exhibition Place as Toronto’s preeminent gathering place, where visitors from near and far can experience spaces for relaxation, entertainment, and exhibition.”

“We’re really trying to transform Exhibition Place to play even a broader role in the city where people can come and enjoy national and international events like the

2026 **FIFA** World Cup,” Boyle told *NRU*. “The grounds are quite open and we have a lot of multidisciplinary event space. When the Canadian National Exhibition is on, all the grounds are taken, when the **Honda** Indy comes on, the grounds become a racetrack that attracts hundreds of thousands of people. There is really nowhere else in the city that you can host that many people and be that close to the downtown core. With the growing population in Parkdale and Liberty Village and just the city in general, we actually now have this opportunity of providing a space for people to just go and visit and partake in activities on the site on a daily basis.”

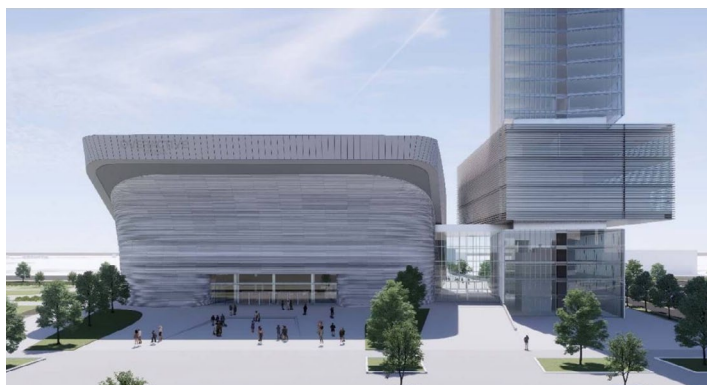
The Exhibition Place

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Rendering showing the exterior of a proposed 6,600-7,000-seat eSports arena and performance venue (bottom centre) and proposed 400-room hotel (top centre) development on the Exhibition Place property. The proposed hotel is being advanced by Princess Gate Hotel Limited Partnership, which previously developed the 404-room Hotel X complex on the neighbouring property to the east. Hotel X first opened to guests in 2018.

SOURCE: OVERACTIVE MEDIA
ARCHITECT: POPULOUS



Rendering of a proposed 6,600-7,000-seat eSports arena and performance venue (left) and proposed 400-room hotel (right) development on the Exhibition Place property, looking south from Princes' Boulevard. The development will require the removal of 756 existing surface parking spaces on the site. At least 350 underground parking spaces are proposed for the project.

SOURCE: OVERACTIVE MEDIA
ARCHITECT: POPULOUS

GETTING INTO THE ZONE

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

master plan divides the site into three program areas focusing on relaxation and recreation, entertainment and gathering spaces, and exhibition and trade functions. These three distinct zones would be intertwined by a network of public realm improvements and open spaces. The proposed performance venue and hotel would sit in a zone explicitly defined in the master plan for entertainment, said Boyle, adding that other existing facilities on the Exhibition Place grounds are being examined for future renewal to support an expected surge in visitors and events.

“We’re looking at the future possibilities of underutilized assets like the Food Building and the Better Living Centre so we can bring those alive on a more regular basis,” Boyle told *NRU*. “When an event like FIFA comes in, they take over all our buildings and our site for media, hospitality, and logistics. For a lot of these buildings, there’s that pull and tug of dedicating them to one function, and yet being able to be there to host these events that offer themselves to the city.”

Boyle and Hunter also tie-in the proposed performance venue with development

plans for Ontario Place, which include a reimagining of **Budweiser Stage** as a year-round performance venue [See *‘Revitalizing the Water’s Edge’ NRU October 29, 2021 Toronto edition*]. Hunter said the proposed Exhibition Place performance venue would work together with **BMO Field** and Budweiser Stage in forming a broader sports and entertainment-based precinct, and Boyle imagines a seamless connection between the Exhibition Place and Ontario Place properties.

“We see Exhibition Place and Ontario Place as becoming a 350-acre destination site,” Boyle told *NRU*. “That’s what I’m pushing for in our master plan. We see great promise in Exhibition Place.”

Land uses at Exhibition Place are not subject to a municipal zoning by-law, and no zoning approvals are required to permit the proposed development. Public consultation meetings typically triggered by rezoning processes will instead be required following the submission of a site plan control application. Although public consultation is not typically required as part of site plan approval, a motion by local ward 10 Spadina-Fort York councillor **Joe Cressy** and

adopted by the Toronto and East York community council in April 2021 requests city planning to undertake public engagement on the proposed development. A site plan control application is expected to be submitted to the city by January 30, with a community meeting to be scheduled soon thereafter.

Construction of the performance venue could begin later this year. Completion is targeted for 2025. 🌟



Senior Reporter, NRU Publishing Inc.

NRU Publishing Inc. is a small, Toronto-based publishing company, established in 1997 and is privately owned. With a mandate to share news about the people, development activities, policy changes, and services of municipal government related to urban planning, it offers a limited circulation news service. Two newsletters are distributed electronically to subscribers by email on a weekly basis, ensuring the news is current, concise, relevant, and timely.

We are seeking to fill a full-time position for a Senior Reporter for our two publications, *Novae Res Urbis – City of Toronto* (published Fridays, 50 weeks per year) and *Novae Res Urbis – Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area* (published Wednesdays, 50 weeks per year).

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SPRUCING UP SHEPPARD AVENUE EAST



Rob Jowett

A new secondary plan for Sheppard Avenue East is meant to support and guide growth along the transit corridor and help to create a complete community for new and existing residents.

At its meeting February 2-3, **City of Toronto** council will consider a proposed secondary plan for a stretch of Sheppard Avenue East near Willowdale Avenue. Dubbed the Sheppard Willowdale Secondary Plan, the plan sets planning policy for all the lands along between Bonnington Place and Clairtrel Road. The plan is meant to allow moderate, generally mid-rise intensification of the area, to bring in new residential and employment uses and to make the area more pedestrian-friendly.

“[The plan] will hopefully provide a bit of stability. We haven’t had a whole lot of applications in there, but they would have been coming,” City of Toronto ward 18 councillor **John Filion** told *NRU*. “[It’s] providing some guidance to anybody who does want to redevelop their properties, and also coming up with the set of rules that gives the

neighbouring residents some protection.”

The plan would replace the eastern part of the existing Sheppard Avenue Commercial Area Secondary Plan, which has not been updated since 1987. It works in concert with the Sheppard Lansing Secondary Plan, which was approved by the **Ontario Land Tribunal** (OLT) in September 2019.

“An update is necessary to align the development framework with a variety of provincial policies and the official plan to support additional housing and jobs on Sheppard Avenue East and to create an attractive public realm that is supported by complete street principles,” City of Toronto planner **Jenny Choi**

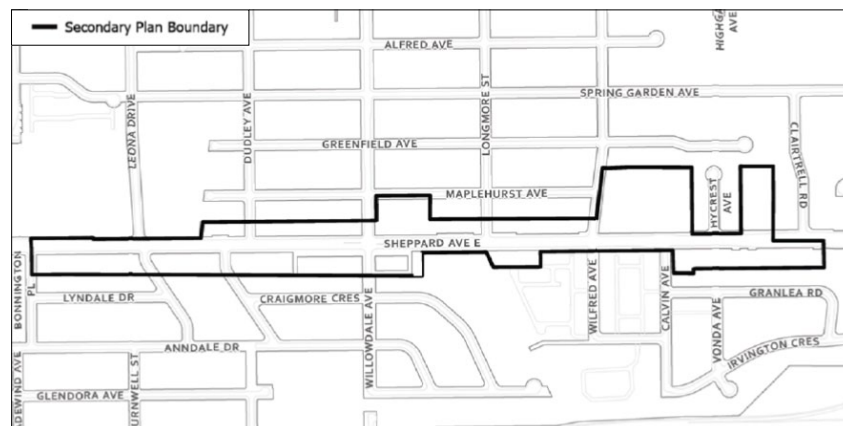
told *NRU*. “An update is also necessary to remove low-scale land use permissions that do not optimize the use of lands and do not contribute to street-oriented retail use within a mid-rise built form.”

Filion says the new plan is needed because the city was slow to prepare the Sheppard Lansing Plan and some new development proposals came in ahead of the new policy. The area is experiencing significant development interest coming from the North York Centre, a provincially-designated urban growth centre at the intersection of Sheppard Avenue and Yonge Street. North York Centre has seen major growth over the past several years, and that growth

is now beginning to creep out along both Yonge Street and Sheppard Avenue. Additionally, Sheppard Avenue East has been seeing significant growth since the Sheppard subway line was completed in 2002.

Under the Sheppard Willowdale secondary plan, most of the lands along Sheppard Avenue East are designated mixed-use. The plan sets a maximum building height of five storeys on the north side of Sheppard and seven storeys on the south side. Lands on the north side of Sheppard would have a floor space index (FSI) of 2.5 and buildings on the south side would have an FSI of three. The secondary plan also designates special policy areas

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Map showing the area subject to the city's proposed Sheppard Willowdale Secondary Plan. The plan is meant to guide moderate intensification along the transit corridor and to help revitalize the area.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO

SHEPPARD AVENUE EAST

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

where Sheppard intersects with Willowdale Avenue, Wilfred Avenue, and Clairtrell Road where more development can be accommodated.

“The plan encourages the intensification of residential and commercial uses in mid-rise built form,” says Choi. “The plan maximizes intensification based on the specific lot characteristics and surrounding land uses, with flexibility for additional heights and density should the lot characteristics permit and should other important principles of the plan be met.”

While the city is generally setting good policy for the area, greater levels of intensification should be allowed on some sites near the west side of the plan area, close to North York Centre, **Borden Ladner Gervais** partner **Isaac Tang** told *NRU*. Tang represents **SheppBonn**, which owns a land parcel at 25 Bonnington Place at the southwest corner of the secondary plan area. He says SheppBonn plans to redevelop the site with a building around 14-storeys tall, and its vision for the property would be greatly constrained by the new policy. A development proposal has not been submitted for the site.

“[In] North York Centre... there are towers 30-storeys plus... the [OLT] has approved

development proposals in the North York Centre Secondary Plan up to eight [or] nine FSI,” says Tang. “We’re not asking, certainly, for the density North York Centre has, but I think there must be a medium between 3.0 and the eight or nine FSI.”

Filion says the area is in need of revitalization and new growth, especially residential. He says the retail environment along the street needs to be improved so that it is more attractive to businesses and customers alike, and that he hopes that through the plan, the corridor becomes much more of a local main street that the city has been pushing for in its policies all across the city. He adds that the area is especially in need of affordable housing.

“I hope development happens and happens fairly quickly along the lines of the plan,” says Filion. “Sheppard now is not a terribly attractive street to either walk down or even drive down. You have these lovely neighbourhoods in the interior, but the main street could certainly use some sprucing up.” 🌱



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MAGNETIZING MIDTOWN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Toronto Official Plan and the Yonge-Eglinton secondary plan—adopted by the **Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing** in June 2019—which imagines midtown as a vibrant mixed-use node with a range of office, institutional, residential, and cultural uses. The site is designated under the secondary plan as ‘Mixed Use Area A’, where a broad mix of residential, retail, office, institutional, entertainment, and cultural uses are desired by the city.

City staff say the development proposal fails to achieve secondary plan policies designed to maintain and expand office space in Midtown. The proposed OPA seeks the city’s approval of a new site and area specific policy (SASP) to exempt the property from policy 2.5.4 of the secondary plan, which requires the replacement of 100 per cent of the existing office gross floor area on the site.

“[The applicant] is proposing substantial residential intensification, yet are not making efforts to meet the office replacement obligations [of the secondary plan],” City of Toronto senior planner **Jason Brander** told *NRU*. “No compelling rationale has been provided as to why more office space cannot be

provided on site. The secondary plan also provides for potential off-site replacement. The applicant has not proposed any off-site replacement in connection with its application, although the City would be open to exploring that with

them in accordance with policy 2.5.5.”

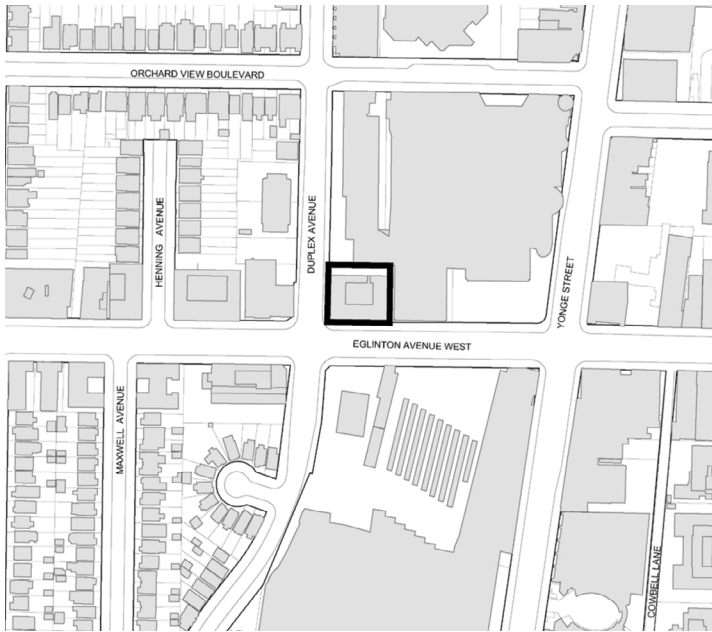
In materials submitted to the city, planning consultant firm **Bousfields** says a site-specific exemption from office replacement policies is reasonable and appropriate, noting the relatively small size of the site.

“On smaller sites such as the subject site, it is challenging to simultaneously achieve significant residential intensification and

accommodate a substantial amount of office gross floor area,” reads Bousfields’ planning rationale submitted in support of the proposed development. “Typically, in order for office space to be viable, it requires a separate lobby as well as separate elevator access for security and profile/marketability reasons. On a smaller site, the size of the building core required to accommodate both office and residential elevators takes up a disproportionate amount of the achievable floor plate.”

The planning rationale also makes reference to a 2013 decision by the then-**Ontario Municipal Board (OMB)** that issued development approvals to **Premium Properties Limited** for a 39-storey predominantly

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Map showing the 1,398-square-metre site at 36-44 Eglinton Avenue West, where Lifetime Developments has proposed a 65-storey mixed-use building. An existing seven-storey commercial office building on the site would be demolished to accommodate the proposed development. City staff are recommending refusal of the Official Plan Amendment application on the grounds that it fails to achieve the office replacement requirements outlined in the applicable Yonge-Eglinton secondary plan.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO

Rendering of a 65-storey mixed-use tower (centre) proposed for the site at 36-44 Eglinton Avenue West. The proposed development would accommodate 663 residential units, 303.9 square metres of office space, and 246.1 square metres of retail space.

SOURCE: LIFETIME DEVELOPMENTS
ARCHITECT: WALLMAN ARCHITECTS

MAGNETIZING MIDTOWN

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

residential building on the site. While Premium Properties’ development proposal before the OMB had included 2,000 square metres of office space at the city’s request, the Board and area residents expressed concern that the provision of office space would come at the expense of indoor residential amenity space. The Board concluded that it was not feasible to accommodate both a 2,000-square-metre office component and the required

amount of indoor residential amenity space, and thereby reduced any non-residential component to a minimum of 338 square metres of gross floor area. Lifetime Developments acquired the site in June 2019. Bousfields notes that the combined 550 square metres of office and retail space proposed in Lifetime’s development plans are considerably greater than the minimum 338 square metres of non-residential gross floor area required by the in-

force zoning by-law. But the city says the OMB decision and the site-specific zoning regulations predate the current office replacement policy framework provided by the Yonge-Eglinton secondary plan. As the Yonge and Eglinton area experiences explosive residential growth, maintaining and expanding office space is important to ensure a balanced mix of land uses to facilitate a complete community, said Brander. “With such an influx of residents, we need to maintain and create places of employment, especially in areas well-served by transit, such as this site, to promote walkability to the workplace, particularly as

the population grows in Yonge-Eglinton and the demand for employment space increases,” Brander told *NRU*. “Growing midtown’s employment base supports a key provincial policy direction to direct office uses to urban growth centres and major transit station areas. It also promotes shorter work trips made by walking and cycling, and reduces the need for longer trips to other employment areas, especially to the downtown.” Brander says the loss of employment spaces in midtown and a declining ratio of jobs to residents could contribute to more people travelling outside the area for work, which would

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MAGNETIZING MIDTOWN

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

put more pressure on the area’s transportation and transit infrastructure.

The planning rationale for the proposed development acknowledges that the residential intensification occurring in the Yonge-Eglinton area may support renewed market interest in the development of office space, but notes the “relatively weak” Yonge-Eglinton office market, which recorded an office vacancy rate of 6.1 per cent in the second quarter of 2021.

“Especially in secondary markets such as Yonge-Eglinton, it is not clear that vacancy rates will bounce back quickly following the COVID-19 pandemic,” the planning rationale reads. “The [secondary plan office replacement policies] will not address the vacancy issue and—to the extent that it acts as a disincentive for residential intensification and the repurposing of older office buildings—it may act to keep office vacancy rates high and, ultimately, to discourage the development of new office space.”

Councillor Colle said Midtown has been a residential destination and an employment destination for years, but he said that is changing in step with the densification of the

neighbourhood.

“The developers want to make it a total dormitory community,” Colle told *NRU*. “Why not let some people live there and work there too, which was the one of the secrets of success at Yonge and Eglinton? Everybody’s essentially forced to leave the area to go to work.”

Eglinton Park Residents’ Association (EPRA) chair **Tom Cohen** said Midtown risks becoming a zone of civic monoculture with too many residential units and too many commuters travelling downtown. Cohen said the area has experienced lopsided growth, with residential units “ad infinitum”, but with no corresponding growth in employment. The vision for a complete community at Yonge and Eglinton is eroding as office buildings are demolished, Cohen says, citing the removal of mid-rise office buildings previously located at 123 Eglinton Avenue East and on the Minto Midtown site at 2181 Yonge Street.

Cohen and Midtown-area councillors are working to introduce a post-secondary presence at **Oxford Properties’** multi-tower Canada Square redevelopment located directly south of 36-44 Eglinton Avenue West [See ‘*Future of Midtown*’ *NRU* July 2, 2021 *Toronto*

edition]. They believe a post-secondary institution could act as a midtown destination that offers places for work, culture, education, and civic assembly.

“We have to turn Midtown into something somebody wants,” Cohen told *NRU*. “We need a magnet. We need synergies. We need civic sponsorship—in coherent, institutional ways—to champion this part of town and to cash-in on the extraordinary change that Line 5 (the Eglinton Crosstown LRT) will bring, as this now somewhat remote piece of Yonge Street will suddenly be connected to almost every north-south GO line, to the UP Express, to Richmond Hill as Line 1 goes north, and to the Ontario Line.”

The recommendation from North York community council and city planning staff to refuse the OPA will be considered by Toronto city council at its February 2 meeting. Cohen said the fate of the site hinges on mediation between the city and the applicant, but in the event that current development

plans for 36-44 Eglinton West are abandoned, Cohen believes the site could be an appropriate site for the introduction of an incubator hub that would complement a potential post-secondary presence at the Canada Square property.

“One solution would be to give up on [residences] and design something for the new, enlivened Midtown we hope to invent,” Cohen told *NRU*. “Maybe join the move to build a post-secondary complex here, or an incubator hub in dialogue with it. That would take time, imagination, initiative, vision, and collaboration. And it might serve everybody well.”

Lifetime Developments did not respond to a request for comment by publication time.



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OLT NEWS

SETTLEMENT APPROVED FOR FRONT-YORK TOWER

In a January 11 decision, OLT member **Mario Russo** allowed appeals, in part, by **20 York Inc.** (Allied REIT & Westbank) against the **City of Toronto's** failure to make a decision on its official plan and zoning by-law amendment applications for 149-171 Front Street West, 7 Station Street and 20 York Street.

The site has a history of prior development approvals. In 2007, city council approved a proposal for a 36-storey office tower and technology centre on the property. Building permits for this proposal were not pursued. In 2014, city council approved a new proposal for a 48-storey office building (239 metres in height) involving alterations to several existing heritage buildings on the site, as well as the existing SkyWalk elevated pedestrian link.

In March, 2019, Allied/

Westbank submitted revised applications for a 52-storey office building with a new design by architect **Bjarke Ingels**. This proposal sought to accommodate approximately 117,000 m² of new office space in the new building and 32,000 m² of retained GFA in several existing buildings on the site. In August, 2020, Allied/Westbank appealed council's non-decision on the revised applications to the Tribunal.

In June and September, 2021, Allied/Westbank submitted a without prejudice offer to city council to settle the appeals on the basis of revised architectural plans that addressed the city's outstanding issues with the applications. The revised plans consist of a 54-storey tower (maximum 300 metres in height) with a reduced east-west length of 87 metres, containing approximately 135,000 m² of new office, retail and data centre uses, in addition to the retention of the

existing 28,500 m² data centre on the site.


The settlement offer and plans—which continue to conserve existing heritage resources, provide a replacement SkyWalk pedestrian connection, and allow for a \$5-million *Section 37* contribution—were accepted by city council.

The Tribunal convened a settlement hearing and heard planning evidence from **Benjamin Hoff (Urban Strategies)** on behalf of Allied/Westbank. Hoff testified that the revised proposal represents appropriate non-residential intensification of the site that supports employment growth in the Financial District, adjacent to major transit infrastructure at Union Station.

Hoff opined that the proposal will improve the public realm in the area with streetscape enhancements and a new elevated SkyWalk connection, and will conserve

the integrity of the site's existing cultural heritage resources. The retention and expansion of data centre uses will support crucial internet and telecommunications infrastructure, contributing to the city's economic competitiveness.

The Tribunal accepted Hoff's uncontroverted expert planning evidence and allowed the appeals, in part, subject to finalization of various implementing conditions.

Solicitors involved in this decision were **Jonathan Cheng** and **Calvin Lantz (Stikeman Elliott)** representing 20 York Inc. and **Alexander Suriano** and **Michael Mahoney** representing the City of Toronto. [See *OLT Case No. PL200354*.] 

PEOPLE

Toronto architect and **Zeidler Partnership Architects** senior partner emeritus **Eberhard Zeidler** passed away last week, a few days shy

of his 96th birthday. Zeidler designed numerous iconic structures in Canada and internationally, including Toronto's **Eaton Centre** and

Ontario Place. *NRU* will have a longer piece on Zeidler's impact on urban planning in Toronto in an upcoming issue.

Brendan O'Callaghan has been appointed **Aird & Berlis** partner and member of the firm's Municipal and Land Use Planning Group and

Expropriation Law Group. Previously, he was **City of Toronto** solicitor 1.