



January 12, 2016

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Att: Jennifer Forkes, Budget Committee Secretariat

RE: 2016 City Planning, and Toronto Building Budgets, and Consideration of Revenue Tools

Dear Councillor Gary Crawford and Members of the Budget Sub-Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. Cathie Macdonald and I are Co-Chairs of the Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA), an umbrella organization for over 30 resident associations in North Toronto and North York that are concerned about the planning and development of our City. We will address three areas of interest: City Planning, Toronto Building and Revenue Tools.

1. 2016 City Planning Capital and Operating Budgets

City planning is a critical city building function that is important to the future health, prosperity, and well-being of the whole City of Toronto. The City Planning Division has the task of ensuring the City provides both a longer term framework for land use decisions, and manage the day to day development applications. City Planning is also responsible for ensuring that development is balanced with protection of the City's cultural heritage assets, which add a historical sense of place to the city. The City has experienced a development boom for several years, and City Planning has been struggling to keep up with development, especially given the ability of the Ontario Municipal Board to overturn decisions made by the City.

Given this challenging context we feel that City Planning is constantly in a reactive situation, and unable to get ahead of development. Planning should not be driven by development activity alone - there is a need for pro-active area-based plans. Recently there has been over-reliance on "guidelines" (e.g. mid-rise, hi-rise, townhouses), which are sometimes being applied inappropriately. Preferably the

emphasis would be on doing area-based plans before the guidelines for particular types of development are applied. In areas of most rapid development, such as the Centres and Avenues, there is a need for comprehensive planning to figure out the cumulative impacts of development on all manner of services. In many areas, such as the downtown, and Yonge and Eglinton, developments are exceeding the existing service capacities. In the Neighbourhoods there is increasing concern over infill developments that do not fit with neighbourhood character, and the ineffectiveness of the Committees of Adjustment in adjudicating this process.

In 2014 City Council recognized for the first time that City funds should be allocated for Heritage Conservation District studies and plans. We understand that HCD studies and plans were delayed by uncertainty during last year's Budget process. However the program was reinstated and resources will be needed for ongoing management of the HCDs that will be produced. Last year at this time it was noted that there would be over 1600 new properties coming onto the Inventory of Heritage Properties (IHP) over the following 12-18 months from HCDs under study at that time. Heritage Preservation Services (HPS) is still at pre-amalgamation "staff to inventory ratio" levels, meaning the IHP has doubled, but permit staff number has remained the same. Council should be allocating funds now for new staff required to manage the new HCDs.

There is a need for planning to up its game using technology, and increase public access to information so they can be better engaged in planning decisions, for example, making available maps showing development applications and with the ability for the user to layer information.

Does the 2016 Budget address these issues? Frankly it does not. City planning is a complex matter requiring well educated and mature, experienced staff. Given this context, it is apparent that City Planning is under-resourced. Development activity continues to increase, yet there has been virtually no staff increase. 8 new staff were approved in 2014 and annualized in 2015. Only one new staff is added in 2016 for dealing with the new Provincial requirement re accountability for Section 37 funds (and the position is paid for using "stranded" interest in section 37 funding accounts).

2. Toronto Building Operating Budget

The development life cycle ultimately impacts on Toronto Buildings. We have noticed increasing concern by residents with respect to infill construction, involving "nuisance" issues, such as noise, dust and parking, as well as more fundamental issues of compliance with city and provincial legislative requirements. As such we strongly support the new Buildings staff included in the draft Budget for infill construction management.

3. Revenue tools

There appears to be an increasing consensus that the city does indeed have a revenue problem. As FoNTRA, we would request that revenue measures under consideration be assessed not just from a financial perspective, or for their ease of administration, but also for their contribution (negative or positive) to city building. In other words do they align with Official Plan objectives such as building a city that is more pedestrian and biking friendly, that is greener, and more equitable to its residents? In that regard we feel that the non-residential Parking Levy should definitely be considered by Council. It is apparent that there is a blatant inequity currently with respect to parking spaces. Public spaces such as those on main streets are charged for, yet private spaces such as big box parking lots and shopping malls are free. A parking levy on private spaces would start to rectify the inequity faced by small businesses and BIAs competing with shopping malls and big box stores.

Please approve the budgets of City Planning, and Toronto Building, but consider additional funds for City Planning to allow it to undertake more area planning and manage the new HCDs coming into existence. And we recommend that the Committee consider “contribution to city building” in its consideration of revenue tools.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these comments.

Yours truly,

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Cc: Peter Wallace, City Manager
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The Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization comprised of 31 member organizations. Its members, all residents' associations, include at least 170,000 Toronto residents within their boundaries. The residents' associations that make up FoNTRA believe that Ontario and Toronto can and should achieve better development. Its central issue is not *whether* Toronto will grow, but *how*. FoNTRA believes that sustainable urban regions are characterized by environmental balance, fiscal viability, infrastructure investment and social renewal.