

# Response to the Don Mills Community Working Group, relating to the Don Mills Centre redevelopment

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It is my opinion, and that of many Don Mills residents who have consulted with me, that Cadillac Fairview (CF) is taking Don Mills to the cleaners. Assisted by the DMRI, the City is now handing over on a silver platter the last of the planning legislation that past representatives of Don Mills have worked so long and hard to maintain. Marie Labatte, Cora Urbel, and other past DMRI presidents will turn in their graves. If you have any doubt, just read the latest DMRI newsletter and listen to City staff.

Instead, **the City should now cash in on all the favours** extended to CF over the past few years. Any other community-minded developer would already have responded and built a community centre with all the bells and whistles, but CF, the arm of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, is looking for every penny it can squeeze out. The City does not seem to understand how to convert the favours into results for the citizens who pay the bills. I also take exception with the DMRI and Councillor for their poor bargaining talents. Where is "our" Councillor when he is needed?

**1. In 1994**, the City added residential uses to the all commercial site. **Such uses were never intended for the Don Mills Centre** site because it was to be the core of the community, with as many civic uses as possible. This was the first concession by the City to Cadillac Fairview. Obviously, the Councillor and his current staff are unaware of this fact, proving that City Hall memory is very short.

**2. In 1994**, while preparing the Secondary Plan, the City added above-ground parking structures to the Secondary Plan. This is the second concession by the City to Cadillac Fairview. Where is the planner who added the paragraph and promised residents that these structures - *if any* - will be small and hidden between commercial buildings? Now the City permitted a huge 5-storey monster parking garage. The task was left to the Committee of Adjustment, which promptly approved it. **The sad truth is the monster parking garage will be front row centre along the Donway W. staring the residents in the face like the similar concrete monstrosity at Fairview Mall. A CF representative promised shops and notably trees in front of the huge structure.** The question is, can you plant natural trees into a concrete sidewalk or asphalt on City property and will they grow?

**3. Over the years**, the City has permitted the demolition of all community and recreation facilities on CF's site without securing *any* replacement facilities. In fact, the City has been contemplating to remove the only and last recreation facility from the site and sell the lands to the developer. In terms of recreation facilities, **Don Mills is now the "ghetto" that Flemington Park used to be.** Obviously, the City neglected to monitor Parks and Recreation requirements, as well as intensification in Don Mills. How else could this community be without recreation facilities, while intensification has already added over 2350 units!

**4. In 2001**, the City had 1.5 acres of Moccasin Trail Park replaced with a Storm Water Management Pond, such that, along with two other developers, C F now can pave/build over most of their lands. This is exactly what they are doing, without any green space. **Residents of the SE quadrant are now without any park**, not to mention the exceptional number of young trees in the valley that have been lost in the process.

**5. The City failed to process the total core area as one.** Instead, they are looking at it in a piecemeal fashion. The urgent need, type, and proper location of community and civic facilities is falling through the cracks. Had it been planned properly as one area, all the objectives of the Official and Secondary Plans would be addressed and in proper perspective. Why do we have planning documents that are not followed?

**6. In 2006**, the City in its shortsightedness approved the massive inward-focused commercial development that is highly car-oriented and makes it difficult for people to access major public transit facilities. The proposed upscale stores at the same time will lure car-oriented customers from outside into the community to clog local and major roads. This is contrary to the Secondary Plan principles, which called for mixed-use development. It is also working against the plans to make Don Mills Road a major transit route. Now the retail-warehouse store uses take up too much space, squeezing the proposed residential buildings onto too little space. **Why and for what is the City preparing planning documents and By-laws that will be changed with every development?** It appears that local residents have to continue to use their cars to go shopping and take recreation elsewhere miles outside the community?

**7. In 2007**, the City permitted the cut of several healthy 25-year old trees along Lawrence Ave E. and the Donway W. to make way for oversized retail warehouse-style box stores to be squeezed to the edge of the property line. Why did the City permit zero setbacks, when they are required by the Secondary Plan and Zoning. This is beyond comprehension! **Why did the city eliminate any chance for street trees along Lawrence Ave E. and the Donway W.? Obviously some staff at the City are not aware that within the road right of ways, there is no room for street trees, nor for any wider sidewalks nor any bicycle path.**

**8.** The City is already talking about 8- and 12-storey residential buildings on the Donway and 16-18 floors on Don Mills Road, when the Secondary Plan permits only 6 floors on the Donway and 8 Floors on Don Mills Road. **Is the City running its own agenda, and if so, why don't they tell people not to waste their time to go to Community meetings?**

**9.** In tandem, the DMRI goes all out to accept 26 floor skyscrapers in the hope to sway CF to build a community centre. This is sad news because the DMRI taskforce in 2004 had calculated that no building needed to be higher than 10 floors and most units could be accommodated almost within the Secondary Plan restrictions. **Obviously, the DMRI is not aware of the oldest developers trick –“Take the highest floor, double it and present it to the people, then reduce it to half when there are too many objections and say, look how we cater to your wishes.”**

10. The City failed to apply sustainable development standards as set out in the City's own TGDS and Official Plan.

In my humble opinion, from my perspective as urban designer of cities and communities worldwide over several decades, **it is high time the City cashes in all the favours provided to Cadillac Fairview.**

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1. **The Community' Civic Centre must be built a.s.a.p. Don Mills residents cannot wait another 5 years and longer.** CF has to provide public park land. Fortunately, the parking lot in front of the arena on Don Mills Road has no structure and can readily be built upon. It should be easy for CF to renegotiate parking with Dominion Stores on the north side of the store, where parking is available. This is now the only possible central location that remains for the Centre which will assure public and easy access to and from public transit, as well as essential access for busses and automobiles. The Community Centre and arena lands must be joined to minimize operating and maintenance costs. Parking will be an absolute necessity and may require to be placed under or on the building. Renewal of the arena must be concurrent with the Community Centre. Twin arenas—mainly for hockey—should still occur elsewhere.
2. **Residential building heights along the Donway should *not* exceed 6 floors unless the builder agrees to start a Community Centre in 2008. Buildings should however not exceed 8 floors.** The buildings should be in the same architectural character as those apartments of 1200 Don Mills Road. A 33-degree incline from the opposite side of the road should be the guide for the setbacks. A minimum setback of 10 m is essential in order to permit trees to grow and expand to full size.
3. **The heights of buildings elsewhere on the site should also not exceed 8 floors.** Already in 1994, the impact of skyscrapers on the site had been foreseen, hence the restriction of 6 floors on the Donway and 8 floors on Don Mills Road. Forced onto the community, the height of 75 the Donway has always been an eyesore and unacceptable.

Square buildings higher than those existing will have a profound impact on the whole community. They will create wind tunnel and turbulence conditions that will impact people, especially children and the elderly on the ground plane. They will create continuous problems for migratory birds in the air. The reduction of sunlight, coupled with wind conditions, will impact the surrounding buildings such that they would require additional insulation on windows, doors, and walls. The impact of the excessive intensification of commercial and residential will result in traffic congestion of the single lane Donway W. such that movement will come to a standstill. The impact of more traffic on Don Mills Road will result in a stop-and-go movement, constantly spewing pollution into the air, affecting the health of everyone in the area. There are already 60 000 automobiles per hour crossing the intersection at Lawrence Ave E. Even the few trees along the roadway that are there to help reduce pollution are overwhelmed and die. Traffic studies are always overoptimistic, and the faulty hypothetical criteria should be changed to reflect actual local conditions. Observe for yourself how many cars can make left turns on Don Mills Road, then compare that with the reports. Obviously, the City has

no record that intensification is ongoing in Don Mills. There already have been over 2350 residential units built, of which about 50 % are inside the Donway ring road. When will the City come to its senses?

The only exception to the height limits described above could be a 10-floor residential building south of Clock Tower Road (Overland Drive ext.), maybe as an adjunct to 75 the Donway West. A second exception could be a building at the south-east of the site, at the Don Mills Road- Donway West intersection with possibly 16 floors, creating a visual landmark from Don Mills Road. Due to the low topography at this location, the impacts mentioned above should be minimal. Any increase over the given height should only be agreed to in the event that the Community's Civic Centre is being build before 2010.

4. **The City must also secure a neighbourhood park space for the thousands of new residents.** Central for the new residents, the park should be located to the west of the arena, where it could be combined with the other public facilities to reduce costs and maintenance. Don Mills is already short on neighbourhood park space in all but the Norman Ingram quadrant. Since landscape space that will surround the new buildings is insufficient for kids and adults, neighbourhood parks are essential. Ironically, the combining of recreation and other civic facilities was an invention in the planning of Don Mills. Failing the securing of a park, kids may have to play street hockey on the Donway!

5. The City now should not permit any residential-commercial mix buildings or commercial, since the developer has opted for a large portion of his site for single commercial uses. Now, parking, play space for children and access to residential buildings have become a problem. **Simply, either the site will be all commercial, or it should be properly shared with residential.**

6. **The number of residential units on the site should be reduced to less than 1000 and limited by the given height limits in conjunction with the required landscape space as per zoning By-law and the setbacks. No amendments should be permitted.** Intensification would then be at an all-time high of over 3500 units

7. **Rental accommodations and family units should be reflected in the mix of residential units. Since the Centre is surrounded with seniors housing, such use should now be only in conjunction with the Don Mills Foundation.**

8. **The City must cause the upgrading of the Donway West to accommodate Cadillac Fairview's induced automobile needs;** the City must ensure that people can walk and bicycle around the centre. A widening of the median and more street trees should be part of the upgrade to complement the other sections of the ring road. A bicycle path system must be part of the upgrade. Councillor and staff may not be aware, **that despite of several rewrites of the Secondary Plan, a bicycle system was part of the plan from the inception in 1994.**

9. **"Green development standards" (TGDS) as set out by the City, must be applied to the residential portion of the development. Wherever TGDS standards**

**are already Official Plan and Zoning By-law policies, they must be adhered to.** Applying the LEEDS system, as advocated by the DMRI, will only rate how many requirements towards environmental sustainability may have been accomplished.

10. **The gated city appearance, i.e., gates, fences, posts, applied in the most recent new developments of Don Mills, should be scrapped** in order to encourage better access to the commercial stores. Trees should be planted instead.

11. **The number of trees proposed by the developer to be planted should be tripled to offset the loss of shelter and oxygen production which the previously cut trees provided.**

12. The City's decision makers should remember **that Don Mills is not downtown nor is it a major centre like North York Civic Centre.** Please adhere to your own Official Plan policies. Don Mills is only a low-rise community that had exceptional features.

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