

City must stop destruction of Don Mills Centre

Recent letters and articles suggest the community and the city are helpless to stop the dismantling of the Don Mills Centre. Is it lack of ideas or good professional planning that cannot stop the arm of the Ontario Teachers Pension Fund - Cadillac Fairview - to rip out the heart of this healthy and stable community? Don Mills is a landmark in the history of planning in Canada.

The city must:

1. Reject the current proposal on the grounds of bad faith and deception of the public and city officials. The current plan as shown on the Internet has changed considerably from the earlier proposal presented to the public in the past year.

2. Reject the proposal on the basis that the core area is a landmark, essentially a heritage site, its character and ambience must be protected and perpetuated in some form or another. Don Mills as Canada's first modern planned community, is the winner of three Massey Silver Medals and five national and 18 regional Canadian Design Awards. The current proposal deliberately seeks to change the character by introducing a totally new and foreign concept.

3. Stop the insanity of moving the arena three to four kilometres away from the core of the community. Instead, the city must concentrate on a multi-purpose community centre within the core.

A community facility must be in the centre where seniors and young parents can walk to and not have to jump into their cars to get their kids or themselves to skating or dance lessons.

4. Create the essential park space in

the core by vigorously pursuing long-standing existing policies embedded in the new official plan and the North York official plan and the North York parks and recreation master plan and the Planning Act of Ontario.

5. Stop the cruelty of forcing residents and the 150 merchants alike to find new places, being locked out for a period of two to three years in the interim and then expect them to come back and spend their money. On the other side of the coin, is it fair to develop high-end retail shops in Don Mills for the tourists of the GTA and elsewhere, who bring with their automobiles more traffic and pollution?

6. Create a comprehensive master plan prepared through an idea/design competition possibly sponsored by the Ontario Heritage Foundation with the prerequisite to retain the historic character and ambience of the core.

7. Stop the use of through roads and stop the use of minimal or no setbacks on major roads as both of these applications are contrary to the original design principles.

8. Stop accepting one-storey buildings for retail only in the centre, which are prone to become a tax burden. Instead, the city must encourage mixed-use buildings that ensure a better continuous tax base.

I, and the many residents who I have spoken with, strongly recommend the city set the wheels in motion and act urgently on all of the above mentioned points. The results will make Don Mills and its centre, once again, a shining jewel in the urban fabric of the City of Toronto.

Karl Frank