

February 18, 2010

Don Mills settlement includes one 32-storey tower and one 24-storey tower: DMRI

At the DMRI public meeting Thursday evening, **the DMRI's president revealed** the major points of the strictly confidential Don Mills settlement agreement (that Don Mills Friends has opposed), and stated them to be as follows:

- One 32-storey tower (this elicited an incredulous gasp from the audience)
- One 24-storey tower
- No change in overall density from the application that was rejected by City Council in October
- The arena will be located off-site (essentially it will be swapped for a community centre)

It is easy to see that this settlement is not much of an improvement over the previous application, which was rejected by City Council based on the excellent [Staff Report](#) issued by the Director, Community Planning, North York District, in June of 2009.

You will recall that we previously reported that the settlement agreement was subject to confidentiality requirements, by which all parties had agreed to be bound. Even though our group disagreed with the settlement, we respected these confidentiality requirements. You will also recall that at a North York Community Council Meeting on February 9, 2010, Councillor Minnan-Wong made a motion requesting full public disclosure of the settlement details. The motion, which can be viewed [here](#), states in part: "Given the importance this development will have on the Don Mills Community, the terms of any proposed settlement must be made public. Residents and other interested parties must have the opportunity to provide input and comments with regard to any Application that will be approved by Toronto City Council." However, this motion was rejected when it was agreed to keep the settlement details confidential, thus preventing Councillor Minnan-Wong from arranging the public meeting he wanted to organize. But the DMRI, although having agreed to the confidentiality requirements, did not feel bound by them. One can't help but suspect that it wanted a "public meeting" on its own terms, attended mostly by its loyal followers who are prepared to pay any price for a community centre.

High price for a community centre

The price, as we can see, is high in the truest sense of the word. At the meeting, Councillor Minnan-Wong pointed out that last fall, when Cadillac Fairview's phase two application first went to City Council, the DMRI claimed that it was a "now-or-never" deal and Cadillac Fairview said there would be no further negotiations. The new settlement offer is proof that this was not so. We need to remember that Cadillac Fairview wants a community centre at least as much as the community does. It even mentions in its brochure for the "Residences at Don Mills" that there will be a community centre, and a Don Mills resident who enquired about the condos was told that there would be a community centre on a membership or shared basis. So, there will be a community centre regardless of whether or not this settlement offer is accepted.

Turning Don Mills into a tall-building district

Also at the meeting tonight, Councillor Minnan-Wong reminded the audience that the approval of one 32-story tower would likely result in additional applications (and approvals) for tall buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Don Mills Centre. It would set a strong precedent that would forever change the face and nature of the Don Mills community. Karl Frank, an experienced and accomplished landscape architect who has been a Don Mills resident for more than 45 years and who worked closely with Don Mills Master Planner Macklin Hancock, pointed out that it is possible to achieve the density Cadillac Fairview desires with far lower heights that respect the [Central Don Mills Secondary Plan](#). He has the plans to prove it.

The Central Don Mills Secondary Plan

One resident who spoke in favour of the settlement claimed that the Central Don Mills Secondary Plan no longer applied. This begs the question as to why, then, the Director, Community Planning, North York District, would have based his professional [Staff Report](#) on the Secondary Plan, including the height restrictions mentioned in it. In October, City Councillors based their vote in large part on this report and thus on the Secondary Plan.

The OMB question

The DMRI states that Cadillac Fairview is certain to win at the OMB. Think again. If they were so sure of winning at the OMB, why would they try so hard to achieve a negotiated settlement? If the City used the valid arguments laid out in the above-mentioned Staff Report, it could make an excellent case at the OMB, where even neighbourhood groups have won a number of cases in recent months. It could do this even more effectively with the support of strong neighbourhood groups.

What you can do

The "confidential" settlement (whose details have now been revealed by one of the parties who had agreed to be bound by confidentiality) will go before Toronto City Council on February 22 and 23, 2010. All Toronto councillors will be asked to vote on this settlement. You can e-mail them all; see contact details at <http://app.toronto.ca/im/council/councillors.jsp>. In particular, however, e-mail Councillor Minnan-Wong and tell him that you don't want Toronto turned into a tall-building district. Copy Councillor Jenkins and Councillor Parker. Find their e-mail addresses on the "Contacts" page of our website: <http://donmillsfriends.org/contacts.htm>.

The DMRI president stated that this matter is effectively between the City and Cadillac Fairview and that ultimately the community has little say in it. But we ask, who is the City? The city is made up of individual residents. Every resident has a voice. Make yours heard.

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