

# Don Mills Friends

Concerned Don Mills Residents for Maintaining the Don Mills Centre Indoor Mall

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## **Response to City Planning re Don Mills Community Working Group General Principles Discussion Document February 2008**

1. **The Medical Building at 75 The Donway West.** We are disappointed that there is no mention of the urgent concern regarding Cadillac Fairview's plans to convert the medical building at 75 The Donway West to residential. The concentration of medical practitioners and facilities in this building is exceedingly important to the Don Mills community and must not be allowed to disintegrate. Yet, this is beginning to happen as some leases expire and the tenants affected are looking to relocate. We cannot rely on Cadillac Fairview's statement that practitioners will be able to occupy the first three floors of the building while it is undergoing renovations. This is completely impractical, and it is to be expected that tenants will seek relocation, rather than take a wait-and-see attitude. While they are medical professionals, they are also business people who will need to ensure the continued prosperity of their businesses and employees. **We are calling on the City and on all levels of government to take drastic action to stop these ill-thought-out plans for the disintegration of our medical building, which is an irreplaceable lifeline for many Don Mills residents.**

2. **Traffic and Environmental Concerns.** The higher density resulting from both the retail development (phase one) and the residential development (phase two) will substantially increase traffic flow to and through the area. The City has not produced a traffic study, and it is vitally important that this be done. Although one of the Working Group sessions dealt with traffic issues, not enough data was presented. The limited information that was provided appears to have been based on figures supplied by Cadillac Fairview. City representatives spoke about public transportation plans, but, of course, no new systems will be in place for quite some time. Gridlock is a major issue in Toronto, yet it is being ignored. We

feel that neither the issue of increased traffic nor the potential environmental impact of the development was adequately addressed in the Working Group. Most of the other meetings dealt with such issues as built form, streetscapes, and similar topics; they were cosmetic rather than addressing core issues. **We request that the City immediately produce a traffic study and an environmental assessment of the development as a whole as well as for the specific site plan.**

**3. Building Heights.** The Central Don Mills Secondary Plan states, "...no building or structure will exceed 8 storeys." (Point 4.3.2) It seems as though we are resigned to the idea of accepting considerably taller buildings and higher density in return for the promise of a community centre. However, there is little definition of the community centre itself, such as size, services, maintenance, and similar issues. Giving in to the developer's demands for extra floors violates regulations that were specifically put in place to protect the community and preserve its character.

But if we do agree to extra floors, why does it need to be more than three times the permitted height? Allowing between two and six extra floors would already be a significant concession. Why do we need to make it twenty?

And extra floors are not all the community is asked to "give." Already in Phase One, we were told that while we were losing our indoor mall, we would "get" a community centre instead. Now, in Phase Two, we are again told that we need to give something up in order to get the same indistinct community centre. This time around, we have already conceded to a multi-level parking garage, which was supposed to be discouraged according to the Central Don Mills Secondary Plan. We are already allowing through roads on the Don Mills Centre, which is also against the Secondary Plan. We are about to lose our medical building at 75 The Donway West. And as Jeanetta Vickers, the member of the working group who has been leading the fight for its preservation, has said, the community has been robbed of its identity. The character of our neighbourhood is being drastically and irreversibly altered. And now we are asked to give our blessing to monstrous heights, on multiple buildings, again for an uncertain community centre. We have already given more than enough! And all for an elusive, nebulous, and non-specified "community centre."

**Below are additional comments and statements regarding the discussion paper from members and friends of the Don Mills Friends community:**

**Comment #1:**

The discussion paper states that additional height and/or density "should translate into more open space and community benefits..." The community centre is NOT supposed to be the only such benefit. And there must be "more open space." At a meeting of DMRI, models done by Cadillac Fairview were brought out *after* their plans had been widely accepted by those in attendance.

These plans do not show any such benefits and open spaces. Nor do they show how “building heights should terrace or step down from the interior of the Don Mills Centre site towards the edge of The Donway West.” Instead, they show a very abrupt drop from the two 26-floor towers to the only row of buildings that would stand between these towers and the southeastern stretch of The Donway West. These buildings, too, would be higher than eight floors. The interior of the Don Mills Centre is located somewhat southwest of where the present Dominion store is; this is where, according to the discussion paper, the highest buildings should be, and not in the very southeast of the Don Mills Centre, close to The Donway West.

**Comment #2:**

The community centre should be argued for its own merits, and not as a pawn in the “how-many-stores” sweepstakes.

Any proposed centre should comprise sports and cultural facilities for young and old. It should perhaps become a recreational centre, although this proposal must have the support of the Don Mills Foundation. Also, the library should become part of this centre, as it would bring together valuable resources (such as a local community theatre). The land on which the present library is located must be quite expensive, and selling it would assist the whole adventure.

Cadillac Fairview will no doubt want the facilities to cater to the high-rise residents. This is okay, but any such facilities should be an add-on, and not an integral part of the centre.

There should be a workable section of the centre that will be enclosed, so that seniors, mothers with young babies, and the disabled can have an environment that is safe from the weather.

**Comment #3:**

It is not a good thing to be an old person in the Don Mills area any longer. If you are wealthy and have someone to look out for you, good. The medical services that serve the huge number of seniors in this area are being ignored. Shopping for food, gifts, clothing, general stuff, and just having a tea or coffee in a safe, [climate-controlled] environment on a daily basis are gone. If you are a homeowner in the close vicinity of the core area, you will be overshadowed by these large, tall, and dense structures. And the traffic? Enough said.

**Comment #4:**

Have you read the DMRI questionnaire to the community? The height of the buildings has already been accepted at 26 stories. There is no clarity about the community centre. It is going to be run by a non-profit organization with no apparent budget at this time.

**Comment #5:**

As a Don Mills resident, I am appalled by Cadillac Fairview’s plans to convert the medical building at 75 The Donway West to residential. This building is of utmost importance to the Don Mills community. How is it possible that a large Canadian

corporation like Cadillac Fairview would fail to understand the significance of this building, with all medical practitioners and facilities under one roof? Don't they recognize that the emergency departments at Toronto's hospitals are overflowing? I feel extremely disheartened about the planned changes.

**Comment #6:**

- **With respect to items 1 - 6:**

I don't think that any building should exceed the current height restriction of eight storeys but, if an exception is made for Cadillac Fairview, then I agree that said height increases should be allowed only if Cadillac Fairview adheres to items one through six of the General Principles.

**With respect to item no. 7:**

I believe that the Community should be granted compensation for the great increase in building height and density created by Cadillac Fairview's proposed condominiums. This could easily be worked into the plans if Cadillac Fairview eliminates one of its proposed condominiums and adds more parkland and a large, all-encompassing community centre.

**With respect to item no. 8:**

Locating the community centre and parkland along Don Mills Road not only makes it more central and visible to the community but it would then be accessible to public transit users, vehicular traffic and pedestrians. As well, it could be incorporated with the existing Don Mills Civitan Arena, making it a sports/social complex, and a wing could be added for our much-needed medical practitioners and medical services.

The amount of parkland could then be increased running along the north side of the Donway West (where 49 The Donway W. now stands), and the remaining condominiums could then be built as shown in Cadillac Fairview's plans.

**With respect to item no. 9:**

I agree that the community/medical centre should be provided in the early stages of the development, preferably prior to the start of phase 2, thus allowing our medical practitioners and medical services time to move there prior to the beginning of renovations on 75 The Donway West. And said practitioners and medical services should be given notice now that these facilities will be available so that they won't move to other locations outside the community.

I am also in agreement with [Don Mills Friends'] comments and would add as follows:

**1. The Medical Building at 75 The Donway West**

The easiest solution for Cadillac Fairview would have been to have let 75 The Donway West remain as an office building, thus leaving our medical facilities and practitioners intact, but they prefer to do otherwise, so the next obvious choice is to incorporate said medical facilities and practitioners into the proposed community centre.

And [Don Mills Friends is] right that we cannot rely on Cadillac Fairview. They never told the residents they were tearing down our shopping mall, leaving that instead to the merchants who were given notices to vacate. Their vague promise to reinstate some sort of enclosed meeting place has never come to fruition and, although they have held community meetings, they've never listened to any ideas or suggestions put forth at same.

**2. Traffic and Environmental Concerns**

[The Don Mills Friends statement is] right that the higher density created by both the retail and residential developments will greatly increase both local and through traffic in the area, making driving and especially walking more dangerous, particularly for those

who are elderly and use carts, walkers and canes and the physically challenged in their wheelchairs. I live on the Donway East and our tiny side street is already backed up for several hours in the morning and again at night, with drivers using it as a shortcut to get to and from the downtown core instead of Don Mills Road. I can envision the congestion that a major increase in vehicular traffic will create on both The Donway East and The Donway West, which is also used by through traffic, not to mention the pollution, etc.

### 3. **Building Heights**

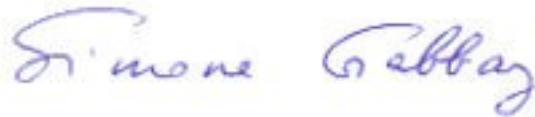
I agree with [The Don Mills Friends statement] that no building should exceed the height of eight stories. There is a relatively new condominium building on the corner of The Donway West and Lawrence and a major subdivision going in on the south side of Greenbelt Drive, but none of them has challenged the laws regarding building heights in Don Mills, so why should Cadillac Fairview be the exception? I would like to think that the City and the OMB would restrict Cadillac Fairview somewhat, but so far they seem to be allowed to do whatever they please.

It is sad to think that, because of Cadillac Fairview's insistence on building their inadequate Lifestyle Centre, the residents of this once close-knit community have had to go their separate ways for shopping, social activity and to seek medical attention.

### **Comment #7:**

Why do we bother with this? The whole exercise is fruitless and represents a completely disingenuous effort on the part of those organizing it because they have no intention of listening. They will proceed with their own agenda no matter what we say, and they will not take any other ideas on board.

DON MILLS FRIENDS



Simone Gabbay  
Founder