

October 29, 2015



WARD 2 COMMUNITY UPDATE: CLARKSON VILLAGE STUDY OPA 9

Since my last update to the community on the subject of the Clarkson Village Study, I have had numerous e-mails, calls, letters and meetings with a number of residents passionate about the various issues. These residents have expressed to me a variety of positions and, as your Councillor, I am doing my best to take all of these views into account.

A few of the residents have made statements that I feel the need to address directly. In particular, some have accused me of not having a clear or consistent position with respect to the Clarkson Village development.

My position has been consistent from the moment I decided to run for City Council and in every meeting I have had since then. My position has not, however, been one that could boil down to a single sound-bite. This is a complex issue with many dimensions.

I have long believed that the Clarkson village neighbourhood is overdue for revitalization. On this I think nearly everyone agrees. It is a commercial district that borders some of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the entire region, yet features run-down building facades, empty stores, poor streetscaping and businesses that are inconsistent with a "downtown" village vibe. Businesses and residents alike have told me over and over that this neighbourhood is not living up to its potential.

The facts are this: The Provincial "Places to Grow" Planning Act, passed into law in 2005 by the McGuinty government, requires intensification along certain corridors and in particular near transit hubs.

Following the receipt of a Planning Study which considered this Provincial policy direction, the previous City Council voted to cap new development at four storeys. RioCan and a few other land holders have challenged this decision of Council at the OMB and that is where we stand today, with a hearing scheduled for November 23rd, 2015.

With respect to the lands known as the RioCan site (also known as the Homesense Plaza), the unique planning history for this property with past decisions by both City Council and the OMB raise significant challenges as to what position can best be supported at the OMB. I have been repeatedly advised by legal staff that because of a previously agreed to settlement between the City and RioCan, as well as a previous OMB decision for the RioCan site, that a cap of four storeys would almost certainly be overturned.

That is why a negotiated settlement with community benefits is so important: because the alternative is much worse. This isn't "fear mongering". This is the reality. If we lose this battle at the OMB, then we have no leverage to ensure that the concerns of local residents are respected.

The negotiated settlement for the RioCan site includes an eight storey residential building, which would be at the street and support ground-level commercial retail uses. The building would be stepped back to overcome any shadowing concerns for neighbours to the north. The settlement plan also calls for the development of a community square on the site that would become a hub for the entire Clarkson Village. This also means that RioCan narrows their appeal from the entire study area of the Village to their specific site.

Furthermore, if and when RioCan does eventually bring a site-specific development application forward, I can assure residents that I will be working with them and RioCan to mitigate any potential impacts.

This is why, in part based on input from legal staff and in part based on what I heard within the community including many voices favouring the resolution to the RioCan appeal, I endorsed and Council supported the proposed settlement for the RioCan site.

This is not the entire story, however. There is another party to the OMB hearing and that is the land holders of properties to the east, on the south-side of Lakeshore at Meadow Wood Road. In their appeal, the landowners are asking the OMB to uphold the previous staff recommendation to build up to six storeys.

I see the planning context for this site as presenting different challenges which raise specific concerns. Given the small footprint of this particular set of properties and the close proximity of the potential buildings to residents immediately to the south, I remain steadfast in supporting every effort to hold potential development on this site at two to four storeys. This is a legal fight where there is the most potential to be successful based on sound planning principles. **I am pleased that my Council colleagues were able to support me instructing staff to fight this appeal.**

To be clear, for these two areas, there are no immediate plans to develop, so there are no short-term impacts no matter which way the OMB decides.

This matter is far from completed and I know there may be many twists in the road ahead.

I am determined to ensure that we get this right and build a Clarkson village that is worthy of the neighbourhood we love.

**Karen Ras
Councillor, Ward 2**

Karen Ras
Councillor, Ward 2
905-896-5200
karen.ras@mississauga.ca

City of Mississauga
300 City Centre Drive
MISSISSAUGA ON L5B 3C1
mississauga.ca