

Richard N R Crossman  
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Dear Councillor Helmer et al;

As a long-time resident (20 years) of Old East Village I am writing to voice my objection with the ***possible land use change*** that the City of London is pushing for the former Lorne Avenue Public School grounds. I am disappointed with this proposed land-use change permitting the greater part of the site to be zoned for some form of housing.

This is a unique opportunity to dream big and bring about some interesting urban open space planning. It is rare within the confines of a city's boundary that a contiguous piece of land set within the middle of an established community becomes available for the possibility of park and open green space.

This area of East London, now referred to as Old East Village, has had no easily accessible open public green space since its early development which began in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century from the lands of the English Farm. That subsequent build-out and the prevailing thought at that time did not allow for local public open space in any form. The Lorne Avenue Public School grounds became the de-facto open space for the area and has been used in that capacity for well over a century, being used as such by local children and youth when the school was not in session. And used by a ball-hockey team of men every Sunday since the time I have been a resident here.

Though the residents/taxpayers here have been paying property taxes since introduction of them by the City, part of which went to finance park acquisition and development and maintenance elsewhere in the city, this area has received nothing in lieu of or toward that parkland commitment. My home/property has been paying taxes since it was built in 1877 (or as long as property taxes have been levied). To treat this area as if it were a post-war subdivision is both disingenuous and a wrong-headed formula. Those post-war subdivisions that have had their schools closed and the land purchased by the City for a 40/60 division between park and housing were built with parkland as part of the planning requirements. They have established parks and open space within their areas. We have none.

We have no park space within the large area bounded by Queens Ave, Quebec St, Adelaide St and the CPR yards. And all of those are big impediments for anyone trying to walk to park space elsewhere. Those close enough to be considered 'local' open space are absolutely inaccessible to reach for unaccompanied children or for that matter, seniors. The proposed Adelaide CPR overpass may compound that further for us on this side of the tracks for McMahon Park and East Optimist Community Centre.

This area is changing for the positive after a long decline that saw most businesses close or leave and many of the houses become multi-unit habitations. Old East is now attracting a new and welcome demographic of young people and young families bringing a vitality that has been missing here for over 30 years. The City of London has made admirable effort to help spur this 'renaissance'. It one of the few areas within the City of London that still offers affordable housing for new homeowners and especially young families on tree-lined streets within easy and pleasant walking distance to the downtown core and transit. As the population density grows the need for open green space will be a premium here.

I think it both short-sighted and ultimately damaging to Old East as it makes its come-back from a decades-old decline. There are other properties within the Old East area that could be better used for housing and in different forms than single-family or high-rise apartments. Planning has to begin thinking outside of the box and develop innovative housing-forms to various sites and not this suburban cul-de-sac module that seems to be the default for planning here in London. That the City of London in the past permitted The Western Fair Association to demolish an entire neighbourhood for a parking lot was unconscionable, yet it was done. The loss and continuing loss of tax base in that decision can only be imagined. It seems as if this proposed land-use change is to make amends for that earlier misguided decision.

The other limiting factor here, which is not shown on any of the proposals and conveniently left off of the illustrated concepts, is how to address Queens Place which presently is a narrow one lane access on to Queens Ave. This is a unique left-over from a bygone era. There is no other street in the city which has this constricted configuration and it deserves the utmost protection and respect. Any street pushed in from Lorne Avenue trying to make a connection through this heritage laneway to Queens Avenue hasn't been given serious thought as to the implications on that narrow 'gateway' entrance. Housing on the Lorne Ave. P.S. site will compound this issue and be perceived as an impediment to traffic generated by this proposal. My concern is that Roads and Traffic will push for the expropriation and demolition of one of the heritages houses flanking the entrance under the guise of 'safety' and/or 'convenience' or an 'impediment' to development.

What we in the area and the citizens of London will be left with should this proposal be accepted and passed by City Council is a 'postage stamp' at a corner, nothing more than a grassed open space used primarily by dog-walkers and there are many in the neighbourhood, myself included.

- Lost will be the opportunity to develop this into a real neighbourhood meeting place, Old East's Wortley Common equivalent.
- Lost will be the opportunity for community vegetable gardens, easily accessible for the neighbourhood.
- Lost will be the opportunity to use some really innovative park planning techniques.
- Lost forever, would be the possibility that down the road a school could re-occupy the space.

Please accept these remarks as by someone who is truly invested in this area by living in the area. I cannot reiterate enough that this is a rare opportunity that a contiguous piece of land has become available for much needed park space. This is a gift of an opportunity to give back to this much beleaguered community.

Respectfully,

Richard NR Crossman