

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING COMMENTS

3.5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING – 84-86 St. George and 175-197 Ann Street (OZ-9127)

- Councillor Cassidy: So you know the drill Mr. Soufan, you will have five minutes to present to the Committee.
- Ali Soufan, York Developments. Thank you Madam Chair and Committee members. I'd like to start by saying we've got many members of our professional consulting team here to answer any questions that you may have on a technical basis and what we would like to do, I think we provided by e-mail a letter outlining the vision and the merits of the project including some several renderings but what we would like to do is give you a glossy package as well, if that is ok, some larger scale packages. Thank you. We're going to put on a video here in a minute and if we do hit over the five minute mark I'd like to request a little bit of an extension. I don't know how long the video is exactly but I would like to continue with a bit of narrative. *(Councillor Cassidy: So Mr. Soufan that will be up to the Committee if they want to grant the extension so we will, when we get to that point, I will look to the Committee about that.)* I am in your hands. Thank you Madam Chair. *(Councillor Cassidy: and I am in their hands so thank you.)* Thank you. I'd just like to clarify the request for the commercial zone was not to cater to the general public, it was more of a complimentary and an ancillary use to the residents of the building so it is not open to the public so if its ok, we would like to request that we remove the commercial zone from the request because that wasn't the intent. I think we can work within our current or the proposed zone without the commercial designation and still be able to offer the services to our proposed residents. Also, I'd like to allow David Yuhasz, our Architect, to answer some of the questions or to give you a brief commentary. (See attached presentation). *(Councillor Cassidy: You actually have one so you better speed it up.)*
- David Yuhasz, Zedd Architecture: Thank you to the Chair and the Committee members. Where do we advance this? It's not coming up. Can we get that up there? Thanks. I just wanted to touch very briefly, I'll speak quickly on the context. You can see the location of the site that is highlighted in yellow surrounded obviously by a lot of commercial high density residential, mixed commercial and that's tending to kind of fill. In this context, you see the fourth quadrant where we have three existing apartment buildings and this would be the fourth existing apartment building. You can see the view from below from Richmond Street. Most of the building from that side is pretty much hidden by the existing structures that are already in place. Just in respect to the project itself, it's being presented as a really purpose built amenity students apartment building with abundance of amenities as you can see in the video itself; 274 beds, sorry, 759 beds in 274 units. Here's, the amenities are as you could see again in the video, a lot of rooftop terraces, pool lounges and then on the interior a whole host of amenities that is in the file.
- Councillor Cassidy: So I'll just interrupt you there. So you're over your five minutes if you'd like to continue I can look to Committee to see if they would like to grant an extension. How long more do you think you would need?
- Ali Soufan, York Developments: Not more than two or three more minutes.
- David Yuhasz, Zedd Architecture: Well, if that is the case I will step out and you step in.
- Ali Soufan, York Developments: Five minutes.

- Councillor Cassidy: Committee are you interested? Anybody wishing to move an extension of five minutes for the applicant?
- Councillor Hopkins: Can I suggest through you Madam Chair, to the applicant to see if they can do it within three minutes at the most and I would be happy to move that.

Councillor Cassidy: So Councillor Hopkins will move three minutes which I will strictly enforce. If that's okay and do I have a seconder? Deputy Mayor Helmer. Let's vote by hand. Oh, Councillor Turner, go ahead.

- Councillor Turner: Thank you Madam Chair. Could I recommend to the applicant that you spend that time trying to convince us why we need to ignore our zoning policies in this circumstance? We recognize, we get the sense of what the application is and what the building is, the arguments are what we're looking for here and those aren't clear and they weren't clear in the first five minutes.

- Councillor Cassidy: So I'll just do a hand vote for a three minute extension. All in favor? The motion carries with everybody in favor. Three minutes. Go ahead.

- Ali Soufan, York Developments: I guess I'll step in then. So to answer a question about the differential between, you know, what's the current condition on the ground there and what we propose. What we propose is a resort style secure twenty-four hour monitored and maintained with professional management student accommodations. This is ground zero for students from abroad, from out-of-town and we find that there is a significant demand for this type of housing in this location and this two block corridor so I would say to you that we're providing amenities that are second to none, this is a type of concept that happens in most of our major cities in Canada. We've had other development companies touch on this type of development, never to this degree of, from an amenity perspective so I guess from a heritage perspective we have a heritage consultant that would be very ready and diligent to answer any of the technical questions because we hear there's some discussion around the merits of our Heritage Impact Assessment. So we would we would be happy to answer any questions. I'll wrap up.

- Councillor Cassidy: Thank you very much. Okay. Do you have any technical questions? Councillor Hopkins.

- Councillor Hopkins: Yes I do Madam Chair and given that this is a resort style student housing project I would think students use transit and just want to understand how the access to say Richmond Street it would be a long and straight. I ventured down that road a number of times, it's not that easy to get to Richmond Street given that there's really no road there but I just want to understand a little bit more of the plans and I haven't really studied them but the access coming out of the building and going towards Richmond Street I think is something I'd like to know a little bit more about.

- Ali Soufan, York Developments: So we have access along St. George and Ann Streets so you could wrap around down to Mill Street and get to, get to, Richmond that way, also to go around off the Ann Street frontage and hit Piccadilly Street and get out there as well I think there's a couple buildings that exist, I think it's 695 Richmond it has openings that people walk through now currently. I don't know if they're going to continue to allow our residents to walk through, that's a future discussion. We would hope so. Again, this is the last piece of the block to develop and we want to work closely with our neighbors to achieve a great result ultimately.

- Councillor Cassidy: Councillor? Any other technical questions? Okay. Not seeing any. Thank you Mr. Soufan. I'm going to go to the public now are there any

members of the public who would like to comment or ask questions about this application? Now's your chance. We have four microphones. Okay, we have somebody down here on the on the Council floor. If you state your name and if you're comfortable state your address and you'll have five minutes. Hit that little button to turn your mic on.

- Mark Tovey: Perfect. Thank you Madam Chair and thank you Members of the Committee. (See attached presentation.)
- Councillor Cassidy: Perfect timing. Thank you very much. Any other members of the public? Come to the microphone, there's one above you and there's one down here. State your name and you have five minutes.
- Kelley McKeating, 329 Victoria Street: I have provided written comments which you hopefully received some time this morning. One of the things that always surprises me is that when people and companies that want to build a very tall, very large building, they never come to Councillors and say I want to tear down a butt ugly 1970's strip plaza sandwiched between a gas station and a fast food joint that's already zoned for the height that I want and I want to build there. It's unfortunate that it seems that most proposals for very large, very tall buildings have to come at the expense of heritage properties. This proposed development is within, I understand, the Heritage Conservation District study area for the Great Talbot, North Talbot, sorry, Heritage Conservation District and it doesn't seem to me that it would be appropriate to allow changes to that property until that study is done with. I feel incredibly badly for the people who live in the three existing apartment buildings adjacent to this because there will be a mind-numbing loss of sunlight, of view, of privacy if this very, very tall building is allowed to be constructed so close to where those people live. Councillor Hopkins asked about access to Richmond Street and I have been through that little lane way and it's really not a very convenient access to Richmond Street so this building is not as close to transit as one would think when looking at the map. One of the things that wasn't discussed earlier when staff was doing their presentation is that while Ann Street and St. George Street are indeed local streets they are busy local streets, there are dump trucks and cement mixers that barrel along Ann Street and up north on St. George Street just about all day through business hours as well as on statutory holidays sometimes and I found myself picturing that there's, you've got this massive building with no set-backs so all of the delivery vehicles to that building, and there may be a lot, Skip the Dishes and Ubers and the like and Amazon Prime deliveries, they're not going to have anywhere to park except on the road and if you've got 600, 750 or 800 people living there there's going to be a fair bit of traffic chaos and impatient delivery drivers scooting in and out and double parking and trying to maneuver around while big dump trucks and cement mixers are tearing by and it seems to me like you're just asking for people to be injured. Given the affordable housing crisis in London it seems to me unfortunate that a proposal like this, if it is to be considered by Council, I would certainly hope that any approval be conditional on a non-trivial number of affordable housing units being included in the building. It seems to me that not only students should have the fancy dancy swimming pool and all these other amenities and we do need, we're in desperate need, of more affordable housing in the community. Also, it seemed to me from the staff report, it wasn't 100% clear, but it did seem like all of the parking would be above-ground and that just seems to me like a waste of space. If you put the parking underground then maybe the building wouldn't have to be quite as tall. Thanks.
- Councillor Cassidy: Thank you. Any other comments from the public? Ms. Valastro.

• AnnaMaria Valastro: Hi there. I'm requesting a one minute extension if I go over the five minutes. I recognize that I'd have to stop and you have to take a vote so I am like to put that forward for consideration. I feel there's been a lot of bad decisions made in recent years for the North Talbot neighbourhood. I believe these decisions are made because our Councillors don't really understand the neighbourhood and only see students and run-down once beautiful old homes and decide this neighbourhood needs to be revitalized. It's an eye sore for many of you and developers but many of us believe that Council is accountable for damage done, for failing to protect this neighbourhood. It doesn't have the cachet of North London or heritage character of Woodfield, it is not a rich neighborhood and many of us believe the City treats this neighbourhood differently than others. For example, the City never afforded us the same protection as a BIGs neighbourhood when big developers proposed restructuring that neighbourhood. Our previous Councillor, Tanya Park, voted against a Drewlo development on Talbot because she had a good understanding of the neighborhood and recognized that large development at that location on Talbot would overwhelm the interior residential neighborhood; that development which is currently under construction was approved even before obvious problems such as traffic flow were sorted out and the site plan process was private. Residents could predict the traffic problems and they're now coming to fruition as dozens of dump trucks pass through the small residential streets to access Richmond Street and that will be the permanent track of flow for residents originating from that building. Never did the City study the negative impacts of increasing daily traffic flow by 100s of vehicles on those narrow residential streets. This proposal by York Development is asking Council to flip many of the goals and visions that were expressed by thousands of residents during the development of The London Plan and I would go further and state that York Development is being disingenuous when they state there is a growing demand for student housing. There's no more room for student housing in North Talbot unless Council's looking to completely destabilize that neighbourhood and that could very well be the goal. The Council can no longer avoid talking about the negative impact concentrated student housing has had on neighbourhoods and on students themselves and residents. Other cities zone for student housing to ensure a balance of temporary housing to permanent housing as they would for any other housing type and if York Development was sincere they would build student housing near the university's *(Councillor Cassidy: Excuse me Ms. Valastro, there's a point of order.) (Councillor Turner: Thank you Madam Chair. If I could just politely ask the presenter to refrain from making any comments about the sincerity or the truthfulness of the applicant. I think that everyone deserves respect in these Chambers and I would ask that you extend that privilege to them.)* Ok. *(Councillor Cassidy: Thank you Councillor.)* It would be better suited near the University to compliment Westerns active campaign encouraging students to live within walking distance of campus. York Developers has not brought forward a business plan for increased student housing in North Talbot. The Luxe on Richmond Street, for example, was no longer advertising to as student housing and is selling some of its units as condos. The City has no method of determining whether there is a need for more student housing or not but there's a broad understanding that enrollment in higher education is predicted to decline and only be supplemented to foreign students. I believe this proposal, and many of us do, will kill this neighborhood. It is located in an area where traffic is trapped, the only method out is through residential neighborhood increasing traffic by hundreds of vehicles every day because this neighborhood receives not only local traffic but receives through traffic from Talbot and Richmond Streets. I feel the development, I feel like this, like the previous presenter said that you know my guess is this land went cheap and it's next to the bars and you know it's probably seen as being very profitable to build here. This development is bad for this neighborhood and I don't understand how one developer has the power to completely transform an entire neighborhood by breaking the rules. I don't know that many Council, I know that many Councillors from speaking with you don't know where North Talbot is and I'm being genuinely honest when I say that I'm scared for the neighbourhood. I'm sorry if you don't like this but I

don't have the confidence that you were protect the residents because I don't believe you see them. Decisions about our neighbourhood appear to be flippant. Nowhere is this a better example more prevalent than in the recent decision to allow municipal parking lot on the interior block of John Street because of that decision entire blockage trees and backyards were bulldozed along with a heritage livery in a matter of a few days because that decision was made blind. (*Councillor Cassidy: Ms. Valastro you're at five minutes. I recognize that you had previously asked for a minute extension. Would, ok, Deputy Mayor Helmer and is moving it and Councillor Hopkins is seconding. All in favor? Hand vote. Any opposed? So there's one opposed. Go ahead, wrap it up please.*) My neighborhood has become increasingly dangerous because of the concentration of bars on Richmond Street in a concentration of student housing. Doesn't that dangerous for both residents and students alike; for example there were seven home invasions on Mill Street on the evening of the last Tragically Hip concert broadcasting Victoria Park. In the morning police canvassing the neighborhood asked why I don't have cameras on my house stating it is impossible to investigate break-ins when there's so much traffic from outside the neighborhood. The police can't identify suspicious activity because everyone is a stranger and it's just wishful thinking and believing that somehow you can divert loud drunken traffic away from the neighborhood by building on this edge, it's just not true and cannot be substantiated. Finally York Development produced a noise report that states that noise at street level do not meet provincial safety standards and is likely to increase because of increased traffic and made several recommendations as to how to insulate tenants from increased street noise. Ironically it is a requirement that the of the Planning Department to ensure interior noise levels meet provincial standards but does not care what the residents that live at street level are exposed to noise. Let's see provincial standards. (*Councillor Cassidy: So that's your at your extra minute now Ms. Valastro.*) Okay. Thank you and I'm really sorry if you don't like to hear this stuff but I just want you to know that there's a lot of people that live in this neighborhood that don't feel that this neighborhood is, is not treated the same way.

- Councillor Cassidy: Thank you. Are there any other members of the public?
- Regetal Rhabi: I'm actually a current Western student right now. I would like to speak into question just on the nature of this project. Being the first time that I've heard it and this is just strictly from observation I don't see, I see a lot of the comments as to why this is not a good idea and I do agree in the sense that there needs to be more discussion about why this is being built, how it's being built and how it's going to affect the residents in the surrounding area but I would like to bring up that London is an ever growing city and we are growing way more than we used to at a substantial rate compared to other municipalities and not just Western's community but also in terms of Fanshawe, our students are increasing, we have more students coming from outside of London and student housing is in demand and I know as a student who's looking for post grad housing, not in London, but in another city this project is of inspiration to me and would be somewhere I would live. I think the idea is the fact that it doesn't look as the way that current student housing looks right now and it is a form of student housing that, you know, you only see in Toronto and Ottawa and the other major cities that can appreciate this considering its height and it's width and the location that it'll be in; however, I think it is of utmost importance to talk about the reason we need this and to talk about how London is growing and modernizing the district and I understand the concerns come from residents who live in the area and the ones who've been there for a while in that neighborhood but I do think there's an amount of social cohesion especially between the residents and the students that are incoming that is very important to aspire to get to and I fully recommend of adopting the recommendation and receiving it for discussion. I don't think from what I've heard today that we're talking about, you know, building it currently but just talking about, you know, getting into that route and I don't think that's a bad thing and I would recommend and I think from a student

standpoint as well it's definitely needed but it could be modified in ways to fit resident concern as well. Thank you.

- Councillor Cassidy: Thank you very much. Any other comments from the public? There's microphone right there. State your name, you have five minutes.
- Heather Chapman, 152 Albert Street: I just want to follow up on some of the comments I've heard here and some of the research I've done. We're looking at a heritage brewery which is currently recognized that has an auto repair shop in it and everybody is going to look at and say oh well it's not worth saving. Well, The Globe and Mail did an article May of 2018 and in it they make note of old buildings for men into stylish breweries so here we would have a heritage brewery that's gone from being an auto repair shop and we can make it a brewery again. Why not build upon what we already have? Cities all over North America, in the States, in Ontario, everywhere are doing this type of thing and what they are doing is they are enhancing upon what we already have by taking the local craft breweries and making them a destination for our city. If you go on Trip Advisor it shows you the 10 best brewery destinations and we're on there for Labatt brewery but that's only one, I mean we have many many breweries. The people that run the, the beer festival every summer they do a really really good job of that and what I have noticed is there's a ton of people, a ton of people that want to go to that but it's so lined up and it's so busy and there's nowhere for them to sit and so here you are with your little tickets and you go to a tent and you get your chit and then you go and you line up for your beer and you decide what, what beer you want. Why not build upon that and take the brewery that we have in the Kent Street area/Ann Street area and make it a walking tour? This is what other cities are doing, this is what works for them. We could incorporate the other nearby breweries such as Toboggan that's right down the street from this brewery and lots of people are doing this. Why can't we build upon that? This is my recommendation. That way it's a win-win for everybody and I don't think that we should sacrifice our heritage, our breweries, our destination as a city that has a steeped brewery history to build a resort for rich students who come here for eight months of the year. Come on, yes, build student housing but it doesn't have to be on this scale, it doesn't have to tear down everything that's ours that has been here that's part of what we have as Londoners just to caterer to rich students and people from other countries to come here so they can have luxury, you know, student accommodations. I mean is that really a prudent use of our, of our neighborhoods and our heritage? Are we going to have to throw that all away just for one development? I don't think that that's appropriate. Okay. That's my comments.
- Councillor Cassidy: Thank you. Any other comments from members of the public? Any other members of the public wish to speak to this item? I'm not seeing any so I'll look for a motion to close the public participation meeting.