

Planning and Development Council Meeting February 7, 2023

Comments Received Regarding Item 6.2 - Public Meeting Report, Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and Plan of Subdivision, Oakville Argus Cross LP., File Numbers OPA 1614.78, ZBA 1614.78, and 24T-22005/1614 - 217 and 227 Cross Avenue and 571, 581 and 587-595 Argus Road



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February 6, 2023

To: Town Council

Re: Planning and Development Meeting, February 7, 2023.

Agenda Item 6.2: 217-227 Cross Avenue & 571, 581 and 587-595 Argus Road

Good evening Mayor Burton, Councillors and members of the public,

My name is Carolyn McMinn and I am the President of the Trafalgar Chartwell Residents' Association (TCRA). I am here tonight because of concerns we have with the development proposal for 217-227 Cross Ave & 571, 581 and 587-595 Argus Rd. We do not believe these three extremely tall towers with a majority of tiny, single bedroom units, will in any way assist with the development of a new complete community in midtown.

The Trafalgar Chartwell Residents' Association (TCRA) supports the Town of Oakville and its vision to create a vibrant new community with the development of the midtown growth area. It will welcome new residents from diverse cultural backgrounds supported by new restaurants, grocery stores, offices, playgrounds and other amenities. There will be employees working in the businesses located there, each complimenting and enhancing Oakville's liveability. The current midtown area really needs an overhaul and an update!

To add some additional context to my initial comments, if we look just to the north at 590 Argus Rd, and just to the west at 166 South Service Rd East, there are three more 44 to 58 storey towers also proposed for each of these sites too, all to be developed by Distrikt. So, in the immediate vicinity, there will be a total of 9 towers of similar height to the Marilyn Monroe towers in Mississauga, that is, between 136m, or 446 feet and 180m, or 591 feet in height.

This is without taking into consideration other developments close by, which include:

- On the lands at 177-185 Cross Ave and 580 Argus Rd, zoning approval has been granted for two 12 storey towers and a 20 storey tower.
- The land at 157 Cross Ave is currently being reviewed by the Town to re-zone and permit the construction of two mixed use buildings of 12 and 26 storeys.
- Several years ago, the land at 599 Lyons Lane was approved for construction of a 20 storey residential tower (or 26 storeys with bonusing).
- Construction of a 26 storey residential tower at 627 Lyons Lane, with 295 units and 295 car spaces is currently under review at the Town.

What precedent are we setting if we allow towers almost three times the current permitted height to be constructed on the parcel of land under discussion tonight?

We are troubled by what is perceived to be the lack of an overall plan for Midtown, outlining what the Town's expectations are in terms of where buildings will be located, the number of residential and mixed-use buildings, along with the number of occupants, density of the buildings, providing sufficient green space, and so on. Without such a plan, no one knows what to expect and what the final version of Midtown will look like. As the developers are only interested in their own projects, it will be the Town and its residents who will be living with the long-term consequences of the developments, for better or worse. What is the legacy we are leaving for future generations?

Let me share some very concerning numbers with you:

Population Density:

The Midtown area consists of 103 ha total, of which 43 ha are able to be developed, due to utility corridors, roads and Metrolinx owned land. The Province has mandated a minimum population of 200 people and jobs per hectare. If we use the gross land area of 103 ha, even though it would make more sense to use the net area of 43ha, that means a minimum of 20,600 new residents and jobs for this area. This has been split, by the Town, into 13,400 residents and 7,200 jobs.

The site under discussion, located at Cross and Argus is 12,167m² or 1.2167 ha, as per the June 2022 Justification Report. **This is 2.8% of the developable midtown area or 1.2% of the total midtown area.**

With 1748 units proposed, assuming 2.2 people per unit (this is the number used by the Province), that makes 3846 new residents in these 3 towers alone. **That is, almost 29% of the total population of Midtown on 1.2% of the land.**

If we look at the 3 developments by Distrikt in this area of Midtown, they will account for more than 10,000 residents, or more than 75% of the mandated population of Midtown on less than 5% of the Midtown Growth Area.

Unit size:

The maximum residential floor space in the 3 towers is 112,558m². When divided by the number of units, 1748, the average unit size is 64.4m² – or just over 693 sq ft. These units are tiny – about 2.5 times the area of a Holiday Inn hotel room! Given that this is the average unit size, the 1,223 single bedroom units are likely to be much smaller than this. There are also 455 two bedroom units and 70 three bedroom units in this proposed development.

Traffic:

Even with 0.5 car spaces per unit and 410 spaces for visitors, workers and customers, totalling 1286 parking spaces, the increase in the number of car movements per day will have a significant impact on the surrounding businesses and residents.

And having only 0.5 car spaces per unit means residents will be forced to rely on food delivery services for meals, trucks delivering groceries, uber and taxi for destinations not easily reachable by public transit, not to mention the online shopping deliveries arriving daily.

There will be large staging and loading areas required for each of these towers to accommodate the moving vans for residents moving in and out, repair and maintenance vehicles for the furnace and public amenities for example, garbage collection and emergency vehicle access. This is in addition to the parking requirements for delivery drivers. Sufficient elevators allowing residents to quickly descend to collect their uber eats deliveries before the food gets cold, are also required!

What analysis has or will be done to address these needs?

Financial:

Currently in Ontario, the average income is \$60,000 per year, making an average of \$120,000 per 2 income household.

If these units were to sell at approximately \$1M each, not an unreasonable estimate, given the new condos at Trafalgar and Dundas are selling for upwards of \$950k, with 20% deposit and an \$800k mortgage over 25 years, owners would be making approximately \$5000 pcm in repayments and would require a household income of \$244,000 to even get approval for the mortgage in the current economic climate. This information was recently published in an article in the Toronto Star.

Given the recently legislated reduction in development charges to developers, will the developers pass on these savings to the buyers of the condominiums? How many of the units will be “affordable” housing? How will they be differentiated from other units in the towers? Has the Town set any requirements around this?

Demographic:

Given what I have just described above, there are few business sectors in Canada that pay well enough to allow someone to purchase a \$1M condo. Property investors aside (we need investors, they’re not the bad guys, they allow people to rent in their desired area without the burden of saving for a deposit), we risk attracting a fairly homogenous group of future residents, which will not lead to a vibrant, diverse community as envisaged by the Town of Oakville. Instead, we risk creating dormitories where commuters come to sleep. They will likely have very little interaction with the established Oakville community and downtown area. This is not what we want as residents of Oakville. We want to attract lots of families to live in Oakville and participate in the broader community.

Amenities:

To support such a large number of people on such a small parcel of land, small grocery stores typically found in mixed use condo towers, will not be sufficient to feed the residents. Take New York as an example. They have similar population density to what is being proposed here. On every street corner

there are hot dog carts, fruit stalls and food trucks. It's smelly, messy, not particularly esthetically pleasing, and definitely not viable during the depths of a Canadian winter.

Childrens' playgrounds are a great idea – for warmer weather – and also if air quality is properly monitored, given the proximity to QEW – however if a majority of single bedroom units are built, where will the children come from? The same goes for the potential day care centres.

Privately owned publicly accessible open spaces are maintained at the whim of the condominium corporation after the developers leave. There is no requirement for the condominium corporation to maintain them as originally developed, or to allow them to remain open to the general public. That is, gates can be installed preventing access, and the trees, grass, benches and other features that make it an attractive place to walk your dog, have a picnic and play with your kids, can all be removed. And if the permeable surfaces start leaking into the underground car parks, the condominium owners are legally required to pay for the repairs if the condominium corporation has insufficient reserves.

The amount of open space in this proposal is tiny when compared to the number of residents who will live in these towers. It totals around 3921 m² or around 42,205 sq ft. That's about ¼ of a football field in total, including the walkways linking the POPS south to the GoTrain, north to Argus Rd and east to the proposed new road. With an estimated 3846 residents in these towers, that's only 11 sq ft per person!!! Hardly enough to maintain physical distance in a pandemic.

Active transportation links to the GoTrain, plus north and south Oakville, need to be well lit, safe, easily cleared of snow and ice and well maintained. We would like to see more detail on this.

In conclusion:

The current height permitted for development in this area of midtown, of between 12 and 20 stories, is more than sufficient to achieve the required density of 200 people and jobs per hectare. We fully support these building heights. We do not support towers taller than this. It is unnecessary, and will not create the community envisaged in our Livable Oakville Plan. Instead, we risk creating an isolated population of highly paid commuters who only sleep in these tiny dormitories.

Let's build to 20 stories, in unit sizes of 1200 sq ft that allow a family with children to move in and become part of our community. Let's build one tower per plot of land. Let's put green space in the form of attractive parks, playgrounds and walking trails linking the various parcels of land currently being proposed for development. Let's create a legacy we can be proud of, for the future residents and future generations who will live here. The future of Oakville is in the hands of our Planning staff and elected representatives.

Thank you for listening!

Sincerely,

Carolyn McMinn
President TCRA