

February 8, 2009



ACTIVE 18 - 2008 REVIEW and 2009 ISSUES

The following is quick review of planning issues in which Active 18 has taken part or is following, or which are pending and we are following. It attempts to be up-to-date but 'things move quickly'. There is always more information.

A. COMPLETE PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The first set of completed applications is the "Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) Three." Active 18 fought to improve these three projects at the OMB. That case is now completed and the projects can move ahead.

1171 Queen Street West – The Bohemian Embassy by Baywood Homes. The case is complete at OMB. The site plan is approved and construction underway.

1155 Queen Street West – The building adjoining the Bohemian Embassy to the east by Baywood Homes. Not part of the OMB case. The site plan is approved by the City and construction underway. The Queen Street façade of both buildings was a major issue for Active 18, both before the OMB and in negotiations with City Hall for 1155 Queen Street West. We achieved some slight modifications but the end result will still be an eight story wall with minor step backs. Shopfronts are narrower and vary in style than originally proposed.

150 Sudbury Street – West Side Lofts by UrbanCore and Artscape. The case is complete at OMB. The site plan is near completion and construction underway on the 18 storey east building. Artscape get a bargain purchase of 55 - 70 units, 20 of which will be sold to pay for 50 units for artist housing / studios. City Planning advises that UrbanCore is not proceeding with the approved 8 storey west building at this time. They are expecting some landscaping on this unused site for a temporary period.

48 Abell Street. The case is complete at the OMB for two large buildings. Phase One was to be 18 storey "social housing" meaning somewhat lower rent for 190 of the units. The Phase Two building is a 14 storey condo. The owner has torn down the west wing of the brick building. It is widely rumoured that the project is to be abandoned but the formal position is 'no' they still intend to go ahead with the social housing for which funding has been approved. There is no certainty about what may happen at this site.

The remainder of the completed applications generally has zoning approvals and are moving through the detailed site plan review process.

45 Lisgar Avenue - south of the Apartment Building, by Medallion Developments. Zoning was approved at the OMB for 14 storeys on a seven storey base. Public Health will have space on the ground floor, provided by the developer. An application for site plan approval has been submitted to the City and is likely to be approved by the end of 2009 according to Planning, but there is no guarantee that construction will in fact proceed.

40 Dovercourt Road – at Dovercourt and Sudbury. Zoning was approved by the City in January 2009 for 11 storeys with step-backs from the lower rise residential on Dovercourt. No Site Plan application has been submitted. Per City Council direction, Active 18 will be invited to discuss the detailed design and Section 37 community benefits when the developer proceeds with a site plan.

See: <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-16779.pdf>

1093 Queen Street West – at Queen and Dovercourt, by Baywood Homes. Baywood has proposed a building for this site which has been presented at several public meetings. The design has been significantly modified after some of those discussions. The revised zoning, including the building's massing, has been approved by the City in January 2009 for a maximum nine storeys with Queen and Dovercourt frontages reflecting the adjacent historic buildings. The application has been appealed to the OMB and a hearing date is set for March 24, 2009. This will likely be a "settlement" hearing. Active 18 has supported the revised massing as appropriate to the site. Per City Council direction, Active 18 will be invited to discuss the detailed design and Section 37 community benefits when the developer proceeds with a site plan.

See: <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-17820.pdf>

2 Lisgar Street, large building south of the new park, by Baywood Homes. The zoning has been approved by the City for a 15 storey condo with retail at ground level. The application has been appealed to the OMB and a hearing date is set for March 24, 2009. This will likely be a "settlement" hearing. Per City Council direction, Active 18 will be invited to discuss the detailed design and Section 37 community benefits when the developer proceeds with a site plan. Baywood, the City and Active 18 have had several discussions about this project, in particular the façade design on the north side relative to the south end of the new Lisgar Park. Nothing is finalized but the Steering Committee is optimistic that there can be some creative interplay with the park design.

See: <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-17815.pdf>

B. APPLICATIONS AT AN ADVANCED STATE

2 Gladstone Avenue, west of the Gladstone Hotel, by Streetcar Developments. Streetcar has taken over this project. This proposal is before the OMB. Active 18 is not a party to the hearing. The Gladstone Hotel is. Active 18 have indicated it would support the Gladstone's position. A revised proposal went to Community Council and was approved by the City at eight storeys with setbacks. A hearing date took place on February 4, 2009. An update will be provide at the Annual General Meeting. The Steering Committee struggled over the possible precedent of a building over 5 stories on the north side of Queen but in the end decided not to fight this issue. The site is isolated. There is a plausible planning rationale for a taller building at this far end of the strip, just before the railway tracks and underpass. The City staff reports stress the unique nature of the site. Per City Council direction, Active 18 will be invited to discuss the detailed design and Section 37 community benefits when the developer proceeds with a site plan.

See: <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-17830.pdf>

C. OTHER APPLICATIONS and PLANNING IN PROCESS

1181 Queen Street West – the "Plaza" Site across from the Gladstone Hotel, by Baywood Homes. Baywood has presented two different plans for the site at two different community meetings. Active 18 have vigorously critiqued both of these designs. At the moment the proposal is on hold and we understand that Baywood will be coming back to the City with revised plans. Key items are the overall height, the setbacks/stepbacks on Queen and Sudbury and the treatment of the corner. A community meeting will be held to gather feedback on any revised proposal once submitted to the City. The application has been appealed to the OMB but no hearing date has been set and Baywood has agreed not to push for a date until staff and the community have seen and commented on the revised proposal.

"Planning" the area north and west of Queen and Gladstone, and the Price Chopper Site. This area includes vacant industrial lands, some residential uses and occupied inexpensive studio spaces for artists and other businesses. The area is piquing the interest of developers. The warehouse property behind the buildings on the west side of Gladstone, called the "Toyland" site, has been purchased on option by a developer. Active 18 have meet with that developer to discuss their preliminary plans. No formal proposal has come forward yet.

There will no doubt be height issues on this site if and when proposal comes forward but A18 has not taken a position yet.

All of the lands in the area are designated “Employment Lands” which means that residential is not permitted and there is a threat that a big box store could locate in the vicinity of Dufferin Street, both meaning major planning problems.

Active 18 have been pushing for a comprehensive planning process for this area that will have some teeth and allow for the most appropriate uses while protecting and expanding the current studio spaces, employment for local residents and great design. Applications for uses not currently permitted by right in the Employment Lands designation are not currently appealable to the OMB. The City’s Planner, Sarah Phipps, says that the policies in the OP that currently exist to protect Neighbourhoods are sufficient to show what can be done on the Price Chopper site. With respect to the Toyland site, the City is under no obligation to accept any proposal since the land is designated Employment Lands.

Peel Street and Gladstone Avenue. Upon completion of the Dufferin Jog Elimination Project, both Peel Street and Gladstone Avenue no longer need to accommodate buses and trucks and will need to be redesigned as residential streets. The City process to look at the redesign has begun. City staff has met to compile a list of stakeholders for the public consultation process, of which Active 18 should be a part. Active 18 should be contacted shortly.

“Lisgar Park” Working Group. A new park fronting the south side of Queen Street West between Lisgar Street and Abell Street is to be built as part of the overall re-development. Active 18 hosted a Charrette on the uses and design of the new park. The outcome of the Charrette was a comprehensive document that outlines the development principles and design priorities for the park. The park is part of a network of dedicated public access open space, court yards, paths, etc. through and between the various projects in the Queen West Triangle. A Park Working Group is just getting started to guide this project. Various Active 18 members are participating in this. But this group is open to other community input and members. There are numerous issues to be worked out within this group, some tedious and some exciting. The general intent is to stress flexible use of space in the park proper and overall artist ‘vision’ to bring together the design of the park, the adjoining buildings and the network of public access open spaces.

Queen Street West Heritage Study. Active 18 have funding (\$15,000) for the preparatory work for a Heritage Study for Queen Street West, generally in the area between Dufferin Street and Ossington Avenue. This is underway.

Business Improvement Area (BIA) Study. The local BIA is conducting a study of Queen Street West. Details to be provided at the Annual General Meeting.

Dufferin Tunnel Art. The Dufferin Jog Elimination Project (Dufferin Tunnel) is under construction. Active 18 was asked by the City to appoint someone to the Jury to select the ‘art’ to go in the new Dufferin Tunnel. That individual has yet to be selected. The Steering Committee asked Kelly McCray to do this but not as the Steering Committee’s “representative” in case other members might apply for this commission. There will be reporting back.

D. OTHER POTENTIAL PLANS

Woolfitt Proposal for Art Museum and Sculpture Court. Ben Woolfitt is in the advanced stages of planning and designing a Queen Street building at the corner of Queen Street West and Abell Street (where the West Side Lofts Sales Centre is located) which would include three floors of a 15,000 square foot art museum and a sculpture court atop this Queen Street extension of the store. Nothing has been submitted to the City. The ownership and operation structure is still under consideration.

The Drake Hotel Expansion. There are rumours but no hard information. The Drake is operating neighbouring stores to the east.

Queen Street West Bars. The Beaconsfield Residents Association has taken many steps regarding noise from the bars. The Steering Committee has not participated in this, although some members have supported the BRA in their individual capacity. The Steering Committee is currently intent on supporting the BRA with respect to the ‘planning’ dimension of this issue. That is, the number of bars along the Queen Strip should be frozen. The reason for this is to keep our variety of stores and businesses. This issue overlaps with the BIA study noted above. The City has set up a committee, and is looking at ways to manage the bars/restaurants.

Great Hall Club License. The Great Hall is not in Ward 18 but the rumoured club license will obviously affect the neighbourhood. The Steering Committee has not taken a position on this. Our policy is “we’re not interested in the noise issue and would rather focus on planning issues.” Which isn’t to say others might not be. We have not yet wrapped our minds around this from a planning point of view.

Carnegie Library / Theatre Centre. Part of the settlement with the “OMB Three” was substantial Section 37 contributions to the conversion of the Carnegie Library to a Theatre and the probable lease to the Theatre Centre which currently operates in the basement theatre space at The Great Hall. Active 18 have supported this proposal as a worthy community benefit. Part of the ‘deal’ was that the current occupant, the City’s Public Health Department, would move into space to be provided by the Medallion project at 45 Lisgar Street. This long term “no-cost-to-the-City” is to be their Section 37 contribution. The uncertainty when Medallion will proceed with their project is a “big problem” for the Theatre Centre. Any significant delay imperils their ability to survive in the neighbourhood.

SUMMARY OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS		
Approved		
Address	Storeys	No. of Units
1171 Queen	8 storeys on Queen Street. 20 storey tower behind.	325 units.
1155 Queen	8 storeys.	40 units.
48 Abell	18 storey affordable housing building. 14 storey condominium on an 8 storey base.	190 rental units. 300 condominium units.
150 Sudbury	East Building - 18 storey tower on an 8 storey base. West Building – 8 storeys.	573 units including 70 affordable units for artists.
45 Lisgar	14 storey tower on a 7 storey base.	325 rental units.
40 Dovercourt	11 storeys.	140 units.
Council Recommending Settlement		
1093 Queen	9 storeys.	107 units.
2 - 90 Lisgar	15 storeys.	334 units.
2 Gladstone	8 storeys.	53 units.
Proposed		
1181 Queen	8 storeys	65 units.
11 Peel	To be determined (no official application submitted).	To be determined.
	TOTAL:	2,452 +