

**From:** Eric Zhang

**Sent:** Thursday, October 12, 2023 2:06 PM

**To:** Clerks Richmondhill <clerks@richmondhill.ca>

**Subject:** Re: Concern about the proposed 9941 Leslie Street Development, City File OPA-233-007 & ZBLA-23-0011

Dear Sir,

Thank you for the information session. I am writing to you to express my concerns in opposition to the proposed 9941 Leslie Street development. City File OPA-233-0007 and ZBLA-23-0011. I urge you to disapprove of this development. As the specific plot of land itself is improper for meaningful senior living, and also poses an unproportional burden on its surrounding communities.

1. I find it alarming that the information session today had misrepresented the surrounding area by "simplification." Firstly, the developer's presentation mislabeled the western quadrant as "vacant." It is the site of a major townhouse community development. The "legacy hill" development headed under "Treasure hill design firm." They are already rolling out phase 2 sales this week and are likely to be another major residential hotspot for our community. It is important to consider the proposed development as being surrounded by large low-rise housing communities in the NE, SE and W areas. It will be the only building that majorly towers over in the visible vicinity of these communities
  - o While the building takes up very little horizontal footprint. It monopolizes the vertical footprint in the area. There are only 2-3 story tall buildings in the surrounding visible vicinity, with an occasional low rise (5story in the distant 3km south)
2. 12-story is well beyond what is appropriate for this area. While Tall buildings can be great, it is only true when they are placed in the right places. A 10 story, let alone a 12 story building, is far from harmonious with the surroundings on Leslie & Major Mackenzie. While I do understand the desire for further development, there needs to be a distinction between the facilities available at Major Mackenzie/Leslie vs. those available at Highway 7/Leslie and Elgin Mill/Leslie.
  - o Highway 7 & Leslie are within natural walking distance of a major communal & cultural hotspot of Time Square. Whereas Elgin Mills & Major Mackenzie have a massive communal hotspot of Richmond Green & its the extensive connected park grounds. These are hotspots that are not restrained by the hours of day.
  - o Whereas from 16th avenue to Major Mackenzie, it has been an absolute boon for commercial clients. These are companies attracted by the wealth of talent and services that have centralized within this area of Richmond hill. Startups and existing companies can easily find services and build products in these industrial zones. While they have been amazing for the majority working class demographic of the area. They are not the type of clientele that allow for communal hotspots to form. Instead we have a culture here that respects the hour of working class individuals. Most if not all services in the area tend to shutter after 9pm est.
  - o This working class culture will leave any prospective building residents naturally stranded and isolated. This is especially concerning considering the sensitive

nature of its senior clientele, of whom require proper support for healthy and meaningful living.

- This living arrangement only benefits the builder/clinic & instead exploits its senior clientele, as well as, the surrounding community.
  - Most of the residents choose this area of Richmond hill to raise their children, under the values of unfettered access to the blue sky and sunlight. Disrupting this harmony would make this area drastically less desirable for working class families seeking to raise their children.
  - On the contrary, such endeavors would be drastically better supported further west of this site, near Weldrick & Bayview, where the prospective Richmond Dunlap observatory park is being built. As being in direct and close walking distance to these major communal & cultural hotspots, go a long way in breaking down the isolative nature of tall buildings.
3. It has also failed to bring to attention that the industrial zoning south of the proposed build site is not merely "retail/office" space. There is also a school in direct proximity south of the build-site.



In Purple ---- Victoria Education Centre Montessori & Child Care – 9901 Leslie Street, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 3Y3

- We get some very heavy winds on the major Mackenzie/Leslie intersection due to the general “openness” of the intersection. Items falling from balconies are a serious concern. Especially if there are children playing nearby.
- There should also need to be more stringent sound, noise, and air quality checks. Having children learn next to a 12<sup>th</sup> story build site, is both a major inhibition of studies and a health hazard. This is no longer a simple case of a large apartment complex placed next to an industrial park. Especially with strong winds that can easily carry debris of a construction site into the adjacent plot.
- This can also potentially hurt the ability of the school to do business. As parents wish the best for their children, a school's surrounding environment is also a major consideration. **The school being saddled against a 5-story building, let alone a 12-story building or build site, can greatly dissuade parents from choosing them.**

i. Richmond hill is known for its excellent education opportunities. Where parents will primarily seek residence in these areas for schooling. This has translated into growing housing interest and greatly correlates with more tax income. **It is important that we continue to protect and nurture these schools for our future generations. And not inhibit them by building a 12 story/any large multi story building in direct proximity.**

- **Senior residences unfortunately do not have the best track record for maintaining proper health standards.**

i. Even with stringent long-term safeguards on the operation of the senior residence, by its location to a school, we potentially create a new super spreader site. This site is in close proximity to children, who are also a major vulnerable group, especially seen in the recent Covid-19 Pandemic. This close proximity is a major risk and of detriment to the health and safety of both vulnerable groups. A senior home should never be in the direct proximity of a school. As it can easily escalate into a feedback loop, where diseases are spread between developing and compromised immune systems. Coming out of the COVID 19 pandemic, it is important that our city is designed to prevent similar endemics from spiralling out of control.

3. **It is a well-known statistic in Ontario and Canada, that the leading cause of seniors seeking MAID (Medically Assistance in Dying) is loneliness. We should be building senior residences that promote actual bidirectional participation in communities. and not isolating them to a single building. There are many studies that found senior only living residences can promote loneliness & detachment from society. Otherwise by omitting this consideration, we are being complicit in driving seniors to an early death.**

- The developer stated in the information presentation, that they did not look into the “micromanagement” of the building’s interactions with its surrounding area. **This should be a major red flag, for any senior residence development.** The success and longevity of a senior residence lies in its ability to integrate bidirectionally with its surrounding community. The selling point is instead focused upon the "compactness," which is of itself a counterproductive measure for quality senior care.

- The location is a modern-day fortress that is designed to keep seniors inside. Leslie Street and the Rouge River form a natural barrier for visitors and residents. Since our communities are designed to focus inward for recreation/leisure, rather than outward. There is little incentive for individuals from the surrounding wider community to travel to the proposed site. While it also limits the direct mobility of seniors to wider communal areas through natural and man-made barriers.
- i. The Rouge River excludes seniors from easier access to the communal spaces of the new Legacy hill development. There are no community centers that are naturally accessible by foot. As the location is awkwardly positioned far from all communal centers. (>2km for each alternative, Bayview hill & Richmond green)
- ii. Leslie street prevents natural integration with Bayview hill
- iii. Relying purely on public transit for meaningful communal participation, greatly increases the risk of seniors of health complications due to changing weathers. Its proximity to a school makes this concern much more severe. As a feedback loop of illness spreading between developing & compromised immune systems can quickly spiral out of control.
- iv. It is important to have a naturally easily accessible communal center that attracts the wider surrounding community. As to reduce risks and barriers for seniors to participate safely and meaningfully. At present, there are only natural & man-made disincentives for senior residents to participate in the wider community.
  - It is also incredibly unhealthy and potentially predatory by the clinic/building owner, in having the main communal area being the retail/offices within the building. As this can further the senior's feelings of detachment from the rest of society beyond the building. This leads to an unhealthy dependent relationship by senior residents that only benefits the builder/clinic.
    - This is especially concerning if the predatory practice of the unit being lease-only is adopted, in a building that has all aspects controlled by one party. Especially one that actively fosters dependence & isolation. It would leave seniors overly vulnerable to the whims of the clinic/building operator w/o any leverage.
  - Counter Argument: The retail units will drive wider foot traffic to the build site.
    - i. This position is overly idealistic. The location is already monopolized by 3 large retail parks. (i) Smart Centres at Bayview & major Makenzie; (ii) Leslie & Major Mackenzie Plaza (fresh co) (iii) Woodbine & Major Makenzie
      - 1. (i) and (iii) have already monopolized most of the visiting traffic due to the long-term presence of major retailers. The proposed building size is unlikely to adequately attract major retailers to compete.
    - ii. In practice, it is likely to be occupied by small offices, and a few restaurants. None of which are ideal for promoting meaningful interaction of the wider surrounding community with its senior residents. Instead it further detaches seniors from the wider community, while imposing an unproportional burden on the surroundings with its verticality.
- 4. A mid/high rise greatly compromises the privacy of its surrounding residents. There are only really 2-3 story buildings in the surrounding area, with 4-5 stories in the surrounding

industrial parks. Having a large 8-12 story building tower over Leslie & major Makenzie, greatly compromises the enjoyment of all residents in the vicinity

- The surrounding areas are already deeply entrenched in low rise detached, semi, and town housing developments. These established areas are unlikely to change for the coming decades. These are filled with families bearing children
- It is in their right to enjoy intimate backyard moments, although this may be disrupted by a giant tower looming over them in their backyard. Disrupting this only causes the surrounding community to build up resentment and tacitly reject the seniors. Making them more isolated. A lose – lose situation for both prospective senior residents and the surrounding community.
- The city has already set a precedent in protecting residential privacy. The city allows (although with application) exceptions on fence sizes for those directly next to streets. This is to protect the privacy of residents within, when the usual 6 ft are not enough.
  - i. Most of the houses west of the build site, all have very small backyards that are unable to fit a medium-large tree for privacy/shade from the planned-building's purview. The fences directly next to the roads are the only form of privacy for this corner of the community. The proposed building renders the allowed increased fence sizes useless/inadequate

5. Other burdens on the community.

- The headlights of the proposed 175 cars parking can produce excess amounts of light pollution to the residences across the street. Especially at night where high beams are common, they will be shining directly into the window of houses across the street
- Stop & go pickups for shoppers and the elderly are likely more commonplace. It is important that it does not happen on Leslie street. Or else, it can cause major delays to both public and car transit. This may also include increased uber/lyft ridership with pickups on the curb. Ideally pickup is somewhere away from the street, to prevent congestion, especially for population scaling concerns down the line.
- Construction sounds will greatly hinder the livelihood of residents in the surrounding community. As post pandemic more people are working at home/hybrid, construction sounds of a major mid/high rise will greatly inhibit their ability to do business in their homes.
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Without careful location planning for senior residences, we inherently allow planned obsolescence to be built-in. Where the product, our esteemed seniors, are driven to early deaths by isolation in their dependance to a single building. All the while, it poses an unproportional burden upon the nearby school and the surrounding communities. Leslie St and the Rouge river instead have become barriers that prevent natural integration with the surrounding community and only furthers isolation. What results is a lose-lose, where the seniors have a reduced quality of life due to inadequate location selection. The school is greatly compromised, and the surrounding residential communities build resentment against these seniors, by no fault of their own, but due to the building's high vertical monopoly of its surroundings. This location is inherently unsuitable for housing our seniors, especially one involving a mid/high rise development.

This proposal is only quickening the end-of-life process instead of protecting and promoting healthy living in Richmond hill. The development will only prey on its senior residents for recurring monetary benefit, exploiting them without providing adequate support for healthy and meaningful living. What is being produced is not a shining new beacon of development, but a 12 story confinement of our esteemed elders population, and an alienation of its surrounding community.

Would love to talk more about this.

Thanks,

Eric