

This Development Plan United a City Against Overdevelopment — and Transformed Its Leadership

Nine years ago, in 2016, this very development application became the **catalyst** for one of the most significant resident-led movements in Richmond Hill’s history. What began as grassroots opposition quickly grew into a city-wide call for responsible planning — leading to the formation of the **Yonge-Bernard Residents Association (YRA)**, a formal appeal to the courts, and public demonstrations, even during the height of the COVID pandemic.

Years of tireless civic activism ultimately gave rise to the **Richmond Hill Umbrella Residents Group (RHURG)** and the non-profit **A Better Richmond Hill (ABRH)** — both core members born from the same fight: to protect the integrity of our neighbourhoods from unchecked overdevelopment.

This movement culminated in a **political turning point** during the 2022 municipal election, where **three pro-developer councillors were voted out**, resulting in a major transformation of City Council and public sentiment.

All of this was sparked by this very development site.

Now, the same developer — after securing approvals in **2020**, and additional **revisions in 2022 and 2023** — has returned with a **new application** proposing dramatically **higher towers, greater density, and intensified scale**, while having **built nothing** of what was previously approved.

This latest proposal not only disregards established planning policies and infrastructure limits — it blatantly violates a **legally binding agreement** reached between the developer, the City, and residents (YRA).

It’s a striking coincidence: on **October 8, 2024**, the Yonge-Bernard Residents Association (YRA) — the very group that had led the opposition to this development for years — formally dissolved. Just **10 days later**, the developer submitted a dramatically intensified new application to the City. With such a provocative and disrespectful submission, one can’t help but ask:

Is the developer now seeking to reignite the very public outrage that once united and mobilized an entire city?

The table below presents a clear, fact-based comparison between what is currently allowed — and what the developer is demanding. It exposes just how far this proposal deviates from public interest, good planning, and basic fairness.

What’s Allowed vs. What the Developer Wants

Category	What’s Allowed / Approved	What the Developer Proposes	Why It’s Unacceptable
Legal Agreement	Legally binding plan approved by OLT (2020) after years of negotiation with City, residents (YRA) , and developer	Ignores signed agreement ; submits a significantly more intense and disproportionate proposal.	Breaks public trust , undermines City’s credibility, and sets a dangerous precedent

Yonge–Bernard Community Response to Yonge MCD Inc. Development Proposal – OPA-24-0007

Category	What's Allowed / Approved	What the Developer Proposes	Why It's Unacceptable
Building Height	Max 6 storeys (outside KDA); Max 15 storeys (within KDA)	Up to 49 storeys (5 towers ranging from 29 to 49)	Up to 15× taller than nearby homes – no appropriate transition
Density (FSI)	Neighbourhood: Max 1.0–2.0 KDA: Max 5.0	Neighbourhood: 5.69 KDA: 12.38	2.5–2.8× over limit — represents extreme overdevelopment
Units Allowed	Around 600–800 units total	1,850 units	Subway-level density in a suburban setting — 284 units/acre
Land Use (Neighbourhood zone)	Low/medium density housing only	High-rise towers on Neighbourhood-designated lands	Direct violation of Official Plan and South Brookside Tertiary Plan
Corridor Designation	Only the City may expand corridors through a Municipal Review	Developer attempts to self-designate Regional Corridor	An unlawful planning overreach for private gain
Environmental Impact	Must protect Rouge River tributary , wetlands, MVPZ buffer	Towers proposed near sensitive natural heritage features	Threatens ecosystems , violates environmental intent
Infrastructure Suitability	Designed for low/medium density use	High-rises place unmanageable strain on local systems	Streets, sewer, water, and transit are not equipped for this scale
Affordable Housing Compliance	At least 25–35% affordable , 5% 3-bedroom	Unclear affordability commitments ; missing data	Fails affordability targets , lacks transparency
Parking Spaces	Zoning requires 1-to-1 or higher	Only 1,348 spaces for 1,850 units	Short 500+ spots – will flood local streets
Urban Design Compliance	Must follow angular plane , tower spacing, transition	No valid angular plane study ; unclear tower distances	Massive shadowing, overcrowding , and poor compatibility
City Staff Feedback	Staff raise serious concerns across planning, zoning, engineering, heritage, and waste	Reports are incomplete, inconsistent, and unreliable	Staff not ready to support; major issues remain unresolved

Bottom Line:

This is **not sustainable growth** — it's speculative overbuilding that:

- Violates **legal agreements**
- Disrespects **community voices**
- Destroys **planning credibility**
- Threatens **natural areas**
- Overburdens **infrastructure**
- Sets a **dangerous precedent** for all of Richmond Hill