

212, 220, 222 Steeles Avenue West – OFFICIAL PLAN AND ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENT

Vaughan Council Committee of the Whole – May 30, 2023

Submission – SpringFarm Ratepayers Association

Introduction

The SpringFarm Ratepayers Association, or SFRA for short, is the City's recognized ratepayer group for the area bounded by Yonge Street, Steeles Avenue, Bathurst Street and Centre Street, which includes this site proposal for 212-222 Steeles Avenue West. The SFRA has been in existence since 2016 and represent approximately 8,500 households in this area of Ward 5. The SFRA is not opposed to redevelopment *per se*, but we want to see reasonable redevelopment that integrates and balances the needs of existing communities and new development, in this case, the Crestwood neighbourhood between the CN Railway and Steeles Avenue, and Hilda Avenue and Yonge Street. We submit the following comments to the Committee of the Whole and to City staff for its consideration.

General Concerns about Yonge & Steeles

In the usual development planning process, each site is reviewed independently, while paying attention to adjacent properties. The redevelopment of the northwest corner of Yonge & Steeles is unique, however, as there are currently no less than eight applications covering 18 hectares, which must be reviewed both independently as well as cumulatively to understand the collective impact on this area and surrounding neighbourhoods. If the City's goal through the Yonge-Steeles Corridor Secondary Plan is to create a vibrant, liveable community, it must be not only internally integrated and co-ordinated, but it must also integrate the existing Crestwood community to the immediate north and west of Yonge & Steeles.

SFRA has been extremely concerned for many years about the revisions to the Yonge-Steeles Corridor Secondary Plan, and the grossly disproportionate heights and densities that are more appropriate to downtown Toronto than Yonge & Steeles, even with a subway station at Steeles. We have been adamant in insisting that any redevelopments integrated with the existing neighbourhood and internally, to provide public amenities such as parkland, recreation, school, and library facilities in this area to serve both the existing community and its new residents. The SFRA has been an active participant in former Ward 5 Councillor Shefman's Working Group and offered constructive suggestions and advice to the various proponents.

We were extremely dismayed at being deliberately excluded by Council in its process to revise the Secondary Plan in March 2022, which Council approved *in camera* on March 22nd. We were further excluded from the City's negotiations with the numerous proponents during the Ontario Land Tribunals 2nd hearing in August 2022, despite our seeking and receiving Participant status during those hearings.

SFRA maintains that the revised Secondary Plan's removal of maximum heights and densities is unprecedented and will result in a massive shadowing wall along Steeles Avenue. The resulting traffic congestion will be immense, despite the design goal that almost all new residents will not own cars and only use bicycles, public transit, and walking to meet their transportation needs. As Table 1 illustrates, based on the existing proposals, the resulting densities from 43 residential towers will make the northwest corner of Yonge and Steeles **the most densely populated intersection** anywhere in the GTA at

1,347 people/hectare, which is 449% or almost four times the minimum density (300 people and jobs per hectare) for the Yonge Steeles MTSA area. (By comparison, St. James Town in Toronto has a population density of 1,015 people/hectare¹), despite no nearby provisioning of places to work.

Table 1: Yonge Steeles Corridor Secondary Plan Redevelopment Proposal – Selected Statistics as provided in Applications to City of Vaughan

<u>Location (Owner)</u>	<u># of buildings</u>	<u>Proposed # residential units</u>	<u>Proposed Additional Population</u>	<u>Site size (ha.)</u>	<u>Population Density (ppl/ha.)</u>
2 Steeles W/ 7028 Yonge (Gupta)	3	1,890	2,835	1.13	2,509
72 Steeles W/ 7040 Yonge (Humbold)	4	2,620	3,930	1.97	1,995
88 Steeles W (Sisley)	2	1,077	1,616	1.26	1,282
100 Steeles W (Salz/Dream)	4	1,765	2,648	2.065	1,282
180 Steeles W (Mizrahi Constantine)	6	2,080	3,120	2.25	1,387
212-222 Steeles W. (AWIN)	4	1,085	1,628	1.186	1,372
7080 Yonge (Chestnut Hill)	2	652	978	0.5018	1,949
7200 Yonge (Auto Complex)	18	4,742	7,113	7.36	966
TOTAL	43	15,911	23,867	18.0	1,347

There are still several land owners in this area who have not filed an application for future redevelopment. The revised Secondary Plan will allow an additional 45,000 people and jobs to the Northwest corner of Yonge & Steeles alone. The proposed redevelopment of the southwestern corner, in Toronto, Centrepont Mall, will add another 8,000 residential units. The northeastern corner, in Markham, is earmarked for another 8,000 residential units, and we are only starting to see new proposals for the southeastern corner. Assuming 1.5 person average per unit, we will see at least 69,000 new residents around this intersection. This is a recipe for an unliveable community, with massive traffic congestion and overloading of infrastructure capacity. We are concerned that planning for this area has not taken into account the additional proposed developments on the other corners of Yonge and Steeles.

Site-Specific Issues and Concerns

To their credit, AWIN approached SFRA in 2021 to discuss their original proposal, which included four towers ranging from 12 to 35 storeys in height, as well as 4-storey townhouses and a 27,000 Square foot public park and a one-storey indoor community space. We noted at the time that their proposal was the most reasonable in terms of building heights in the area, compared with the other redevelopment proposals. That assessment is still current.

The revised Secondary Plan’s creation of a 50m wide linear park on the south side of the extension of Royal Palm Drive from Hilda Avenue to Yonge Street resulted in the expansion of the park space and removal of the town houses, but AWIN compensated for the increased park land by increasing the heights of its residential towers by 3 to 14 storeys.

¹ <https://censusmapper.ca/maps/3365?index=8#14/43.6624/-79.3894>

Building Heights

SFRA remains very concerned in general about the proposed building heights in all of the Yonge-Steeles Secondary Plan area. The AWIN proposal has the lowest heights among all proposals submitted to date, below the 45-degree angular plane intersects, and this is admirable. The 12-storey building in Phase 1 is more in keeping with the local community, but the 24-storey northernmost tower in Phase 2 is double that. While the southernmost towers on Steeles Avenue (37 and 43 storeys respectively) are lower in height than neighbouring properties, we still believe that the heights are excessive. The revised Secondary Plan (as illustrated in Figure 1 below) does not specify either a minimum or maximum height, only the northernmost buildings are subject to the City's 45-degree angular plane. We are also surprised that both Phase 2 buildings are higher than their respective counterparts in Phase 1. As Figure 1 illustrates, the general direction of the revised Secondary Plan is for a reduction in minimum density moving from Yonge Street westward, sloping down from 6.0 FSI at the corner of Yonge and Steeles to 3.0 at Hilda Avenue. This would logically suggest that within each development site, the proposed building heights should also decrease from east to west. Thus, SFRA would prefer to a closer balance in building heights between Phases 1 and 2, with slightly lower heights in Phase 2.

C2 PLANNING - Planning Rationale 212, 220 -222 Steeles Avenue West – OFFICIAL PLAN AND ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENT

Figure 10 - Schedule 2 (South) of the Modified YSCSP

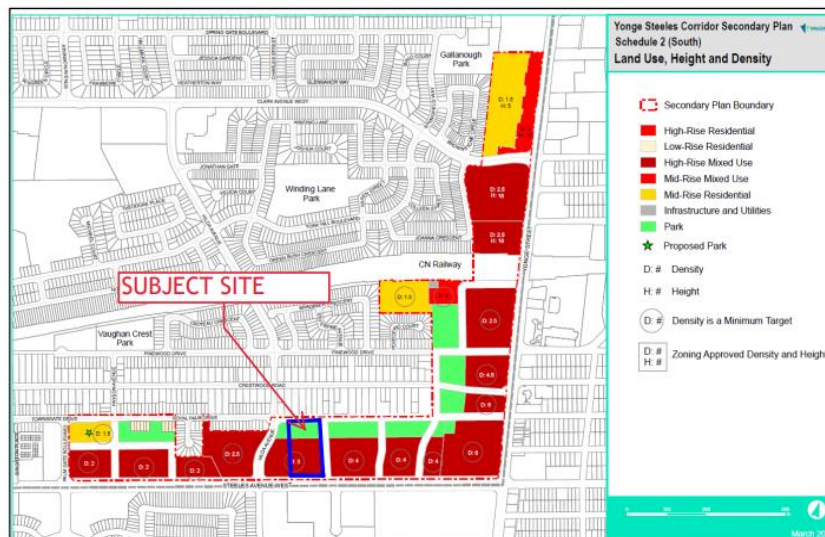


Figure 1: Revised Yonge-Steeles Corridor Secondary Plan, Schedule 1 (South) Land Use, Height and Density (Source: *Planning Justification Report*, p. 13)

Public Park Space

SFRA acknowledges the proponent's acceptance of the Revised Secondary Plan's designation of a 50m wide park space to be dedicated to the City for public park use, consistent and aligned with the neighbouring proponents eastward towards Yonge Street, and representing approximately 27.3% of the overall site's area, as shown in Figure 2. AWIN intends to convey the park space in two phases, starting with Phase 1, which is roughly one-third of the eventual park space on this site. We also acknowledge

and applaud AWIN’s proposal that the public park space will be unencumbered, without strata parking or any other underground features.

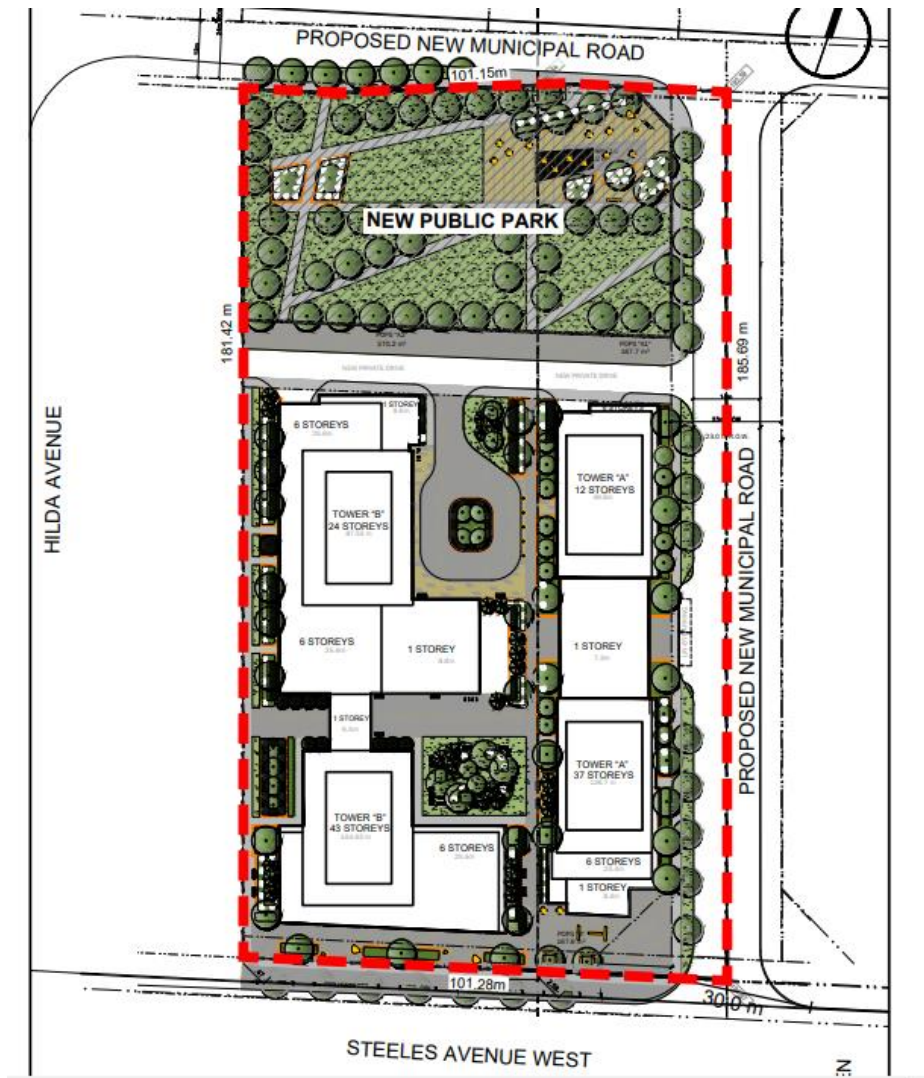


Figure 2: Site Plan and Landscape Plan, *Planning Justification Report*, p. 41

What is less clear is how this vitally necessary park space will be designed and animated. The Secondary Plan’s designated Linear Park provides an excellent opportunity for community engagement and design to make it usable and enjoyable year-round. One possible urban model for a linear park is the David Crombie Park in downtown Toronto in the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood. We understand that the City’s Active Together Management Plan (ATMP) is being revised, but that should not stop the early-stage engagement with local residents to design the linear park, including this section. However, given the City’s deliberate exclusion of resident needs and participation in the March 2022 revision to the Secondary Plan, we need firm guarantees from the City for our involvement in these studies.

In response to our question about the Park Study, Michael Habib, Manager, Parks and Open Space Planning wrote:

“The City’s Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development Department is responsible for the planning, policies and implementation of new urban growth-related developments associated with parks, recreational facilities, open spaces, and the recreational trail network.

The planning and distribution of new parkland and recreational facility programming across the City has followed the provision targets of the Active Together Master Plan (ATMP). While programming for future parks is informed by the ATMP, the ultimate programming and design principles of parks will be refined in consultation and input from the local community and ratepayers association. (our emphasis)

Given that parkland is to be conveyed through the development process, the assembly and the final configuration of the linear park is reliant on developer’s timing as well as other factors such as the Royal Palm EA and servicing. We are actively exploring several scenarios to inform our park process in the interim while ensuring there is sufficient information prior to commencing the parks planning and design process.”

We have additional concerns with the Linear Park’s safety for pedestrians and other users, who will have to safety cross several north-south internal roads to access other portions of the Linear Park. At a minimum, high-visibility lighting and traffic calming measures must be installed to reduce vehicular traffic speeds on the north-south roads accessing the future Royal Palm extension across the northern boundary of the Secondary Plan area and this site as well.

Private Open Park Space (POPS)

SFRA also acknowledges and applauds the inclusion of significant POPS lands that allow for greenery and permeability of the site in the north-south axis from Steeles Avenue West to the Public Park. We would prefer to have a wider POPS space between the two podia along Steeles Avenue West (Phase 1 and Phase 2) to make the interior space more permeable and visibly connected to Steeles Avenue. This can be accomplished by increasing the setback of the eastern side of the six-storey podium in the Phase 2 southernmost tower.

Multi-purpose and multi-use Indoor Community Space

The proposal includes designating approximately 388m² space at grade in the easternmost section of the one-storey portion of Phase 2 (see Figure 3). The site provides driveway access to this Community space from the north, as well as POPS access from the south.

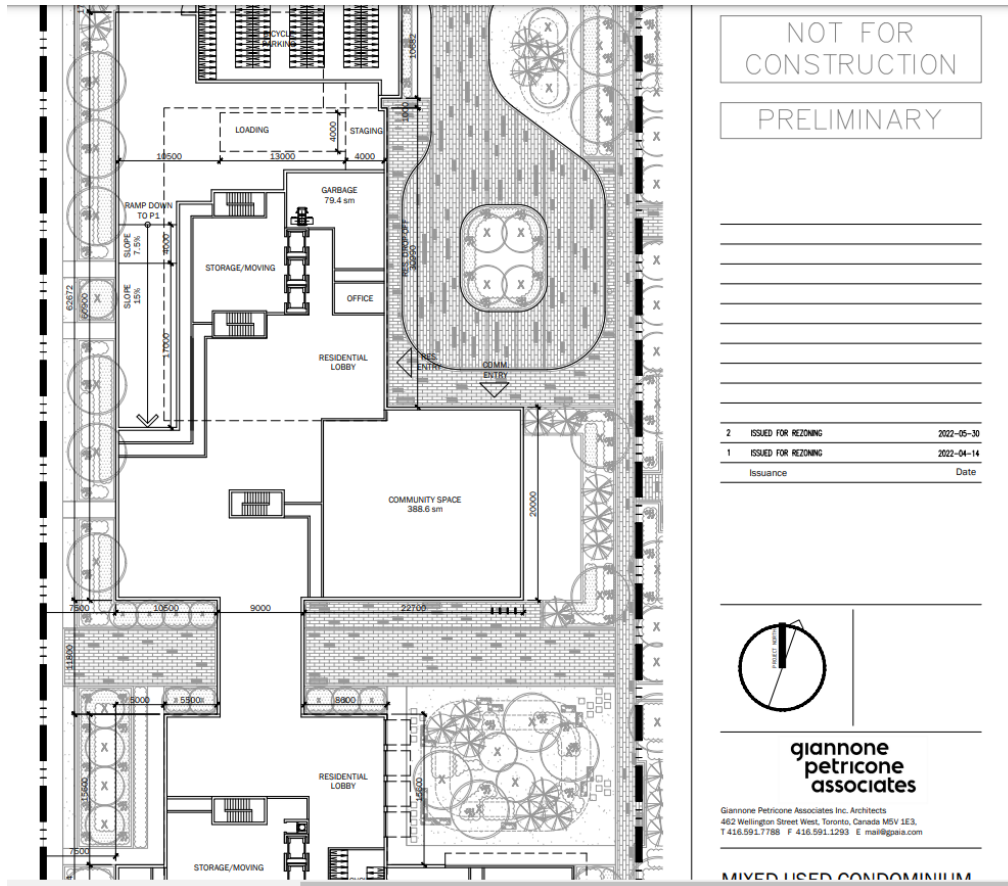


Figure 3: PARCEL 2 GROUND - 6TH FLOORPLANS (Source: *Planning Justification Report*, p. A3-101)

We applaud the inclusion of this space, with a few caveats that require confirmation or changes:

1. There is no designation indicated for its specific use – for example, a library branch, school, recreation facility, community arts facility, etc. Moreover, the proposal does not indicate how the space will be owned – conveyance to the City for its use determination, funding for its animation and programming, as well as ongoing repairs and maintenance. Having a dedicated space that cannot be used due to inadequate funding is of limited value. We believe that AWIN should financially contribute, on an ongoing basis, to the programming, repairs and maintenance of this indoor multi-purpose and multi-use community space, ideally through an agreement with the City.

2. If this space is intended to be available to the larger adjacent community within a larger catchment area, the City must assume that its users will arrive in a variety of modes, including people with mobility limitations. Since there is no on-street parking being made available, the proponent must guarantee a certain number of Accessible visitor spaces in the site’s underground parking lot for Community Space users who wish to or need to park, in addition to being dropped off or picked up, or expect on-street parking on the North-South road or the Royal Palm extension to the north. These underground spaces should be as close to the elevators near the Community Space.

3. As Phase 2 is scheduled for at least 15 years from now, this means that this Community space will only be constructed and made available to the neighbourhood at that time, with no local benefit for

either the existing or new residents until then. We would prefer to see this Community space allocated within the one-storey podium in Phase 1 between the two towers, which would also allow for better drop-off and pick-up access from the North-South road for those with mobility issues, and for better proximity to Steeles Avenue for users arriving by public transit along Steeles Avenue.

AWIN has indicated to SFRA that these types of details will be included in Site Plan Development when that occurs. As this may take decades to unfold, we want these concerns to be entered in the public record to ensure they are addressed.

Neighbouring sites and timing

SFRA is also concerned about the timing of redevelopments in this area, which is at the discretion of each development proponent. This likely means that we will experience piecemeal redevelopment, without guarantees about site connections, which community-designated spaces as well as Linear park parcels and the Royal Palm extension will be constructed first. The revised Secondary Plan allows for up to 15,000 units to be constructed prior to the Yonge North Subway Extension's opening. This may actually contribute to a "race" among property redevelopers to build sooner. The revised Secondary Plan requires that each parcel being developed address the Royal Palm extension and each site's community space. AWIN has indicated in its report that it intends to develop Phase 1 in 15 years and Phase 2 in 20 years' time, preceded by the Mizrahi Constantine site at 180 Steeles Avenue West.

As we have stated many times at the Working Group meetings, it is actually advantageous for both the existing community and the new residents that public amenities such as the Linear Park and indoor facilities such as libraries, recreational and arts facilities be constructed and operational at the early stages of area development to attract new residents, instead of waiting until the population matures. If the proponents are serious about attracting young families, these amenities must be in place earlier. If they are left to the tail end of development, young families will not be attracted to this area. Providing these amenities at the early stage actually will build the neighbourhood community the proponents are marketing.

We have also recently become aware of changes immediately to the east (Mizrahi/Constantine, at 180 Steeles Avenue West) and to the immediate southeast, Tangreen Court on the south side of Steeles in the City of Toronto. Mizrahi/Constantine has recently put its site up for sale, although they stated to us that they still to develop their site. This creates a tremendous amount of uncertainty for the AWIN site in terms of road connections, POPS connections, designated community space, building heights and so on. The Tangreen Court proposal², for 7 buildings ranging between 18 and 55 storeys, will considerably shadow the AWIN site in the mornings.

Conclusion

In summary, SFRA considers this proposal to be the least objectionable to the Crestwood community of those submitted for application to the City to date, with lower building heights and densities (albeit, in our opinion, still too high for this area). AWIN's conformity to the revised Secondary Plan is commendable, in particular, the unencumbered public park space and the inclusion of indoor multi-use and multi-purpose community space. We have outlined some questions about the location, access,

² <https://streetsoftoronto.com/7-tower-proposal-at-yonge-and-steeles-adds-to-huge-development-spike/>

usage and funding of the community space, which must be subject to agreement at the site-plan stage. We would prefer to see some overall agreements for the Linear Park, POPs and community amenities for the entire area, rather than waiting for the site-plan stage, which in the case of AWIN, may be 15 or more years in the future. It is vital that local residents be invited to participate in the planning of the Linear Park and community amenities forthwith. Finally, we note that there may be some new unknown factors affecting this project, such as the Mizrahi site sale and the Tangreen Court proposal to the southeast, which may necessitate changes to the AWIN proposal for its two phases.