

Deposition for 8001 Bathurst Street

Registered to speak at Committee of the Whole Public Meeting, April 5, 2022, Agenda #4

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Official Plan Amendment File OP.19.016

Zoning By-law Amendment File Z.19.040

Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. My name is Naomi Shacter, and I'm a resident of Highcliffe Drive.

The parking problem

I'd like to address the lack of parking at 8001 Bathurst Street, which was highlighted by the City Planners after the applicant's first submission, a deficiency which still remains. The problem is two-fold. The parking lot is closed at specific times, and there was never enough parking to begin with—only 104 spots were provided for the current structure.

For those that don't know, the parking requirement for a Place of Worship, is calculated using 11 parking spaces per 100m² of gfa. In that first submission, the City noted that the existing synagogue, with a gross floor space (GFA) of 5,326.4m² required 586 spots, which it clearly did not, and does not have.

It's unclear to me why the applicant's most recent submission states that the existing structure is only 4,151m², however, even that number requires 451 parking spots, still more than the development can accommodate. Please keep in mind, this does not account for the resident parking requirements.

The applicant's most recent plan provides 154 parking spots, whereas the RA3 zone requirement for the whole site is 644 spaces as noted by the applicant. That's a shortfall of 490 parking spaces and not just a minor variance. While the applicant was successful in reducing the height of the proposed building, resulting in less units, 154 spots is simply not enough considering the site usage.

The revised plan also designates an additional 1,222 m² of GFA to a Place of Worship within the proposed residential building (the social hall). It's a bit confusing, the change in numbers, but using the calculations previously mentioned, that would require an additional 134 parking spots. With an expanded reception area, bride and groom's room, and additional learning space the intent and ability to offer larger and more frequent functions plus additional onsite learning opportunities is there, and will no doubt result in additional parking requirements..

When asked about the lack of synagogue parking during the last public meeting with the applicant, one of the consultants (I can't recall which one) brushed that concern off, implying that the synagogue was previously granted a parking variance, further implying that only parking for the apartment building would be taken under consideration, thereby ignoring the existing lack of synagogue parking. Nevertheless, the parking issue remains regardless of how you spin it. And what further exacerbates the deficiency is the fact that the parking lot is closed during the Sabbath and religious holidays, That means no in or out privileges from sundown on Fridays (as early as 4:15 pm during winter months) until Sundown on Saturday (as late as 9:20 pm in summer months), and on religious holidays that fall out during the week, which there are approximately 13 days affected. It should also be noted, that these are times when schul attendance is high, and members and guest outside of the area drive to the synagogue, therefore requiring parking not available onsite.

(the two pictures below are 'light' overflow parking (from 8001 Bathurst Street) along the elbow of Highcliffe. When cars are parked up and down both sides, it's nearly impossible to drive through with oncoming automobiles. This is minimal in comparison to pre-pandemic parking issues, but is slowly ramping up again.)





There are also other factors, besides parking lot closures that hinder the number of available parking spots. During this winter for instance, the snow mounds were significant and approximately 40+ parking spots were compromised, even after much had melted. The applicant has provided 91 and 86 sqm for snow storage at two corners of the site. That seems inadequate given the amount of snow we saw this year, which would easily spill over into parking space.

(pictures below show snow covered parking spots, long after snow has begun to melt)













The impact

So, how does this lack of parking impact the community? Well, Covid has changed the landscape temporarily, but as things get back to 'normal', overflow parking from 8001 Bathurst Street means hundreds of cars, literally, lining the streets during religious events and celebrations. It means illegally parked cars overnight when the parking lot cannot be accessed by residents. It means visitor parking on residential streets when there are school functions. It means narrow streets that impede the safe passage of emergency vehicles when overflow parking lines the Northern parts of Highcliffe.

The last thing I'd like to mention is the development at 300 Atkinson, agenda item #3. That applicant had proposed a 2-storey synagogue, but due to the lack of parking, abandoned the project because it lacked the 65 onsite parking spots the City required, even though those 65 spots were secured with an agreement at 18 Atkinson. And I want to stress that... onsite parking. 8001 Bathurst Street simply does not have the onsite parking required..

Adding an additional structure and expanded institutional use will only further exacerbate the parking issue on community streets.

I kindly ask City council to consider the whole site when looking at the lack of parking that already exists, and to not focus solely on the parking requirements of the proposed building in isolation, as the applicant's site plans seem to suggest.

Thank you,
Naomi Shacter