
From: Stuart Weinberg [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, September 20, 2020 5:50 PM
To: Clerks@vaughan.ca
Subject: [External] Submission Against the Planned Highrise at the Chabad Flamingo Synagogue

To Vaughan City Councillors,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed 12-story apartment at the Chabad Flamingo Synagogue. I would like to state at the outset that I am a proud member of the synagogue and that I have the utmost respect for Rabbi Kaplan. My opposition is not personal, and I have little doubt that the Rabbi sincerely believes that the proposed building will be a much-needed source of affordable housing and a boon to the community and the synagogue. However, in its current form, the proposed structure is completely inappropriate for this neighbourhood. This is a neighborhood of detached homes. There are no high-rises in the immediate vicinity, and local residents, who spent considerable sums to live here, were assured that no high rises were planned. That is why the region is zoned as it is and, while I acknowledge that things can and do change, the fact that the Bathurst corridor is now a designated high-transit area does not justify the construction of a 12-story high-rise in this neighborhood. There are numerous, larger condominiums planned one to two kilometers south of Flamingo Road that will be home to thousands of new residents. There will certainly be substantial demand for public transit from these new structures, and had these buildings been constructed in this neighbourhood (God forbid) that argument may have had more validity. But to use the new busing corridor to justify this particular outlier is, respectfully, ludicrous and fallacious. Many residents of the new building will drive and, as the city council well knows, most residents already living in this neighborhood get around by driving. They do not use public transit.

This building will completely change the character of the neighborhood. It is like putting a manufacturing plant adjacent to an elementary school. It doesn't fit. Its 125 units will significantly increase already high traffic volumes in the neighborhood, heighten noise, and obstruct sunlight, including in my home on [REDACTED] Highcliffe Drive. It will heighten noise in the neighborhood, minimize privacy, and increase parking congestion, which is already a problem. Erecting this structure will also necessitate two-and-a-half years of highly disruptive construction, increased traffic (from heavy vehicles), increase noise, and raise the safety concerns that always accompany large construction projects, particularly in a neighbourhood filled with young children. Furthermore, this proposed project occurs on the heels of the construction of the new busing lane along Bathurst that caused congestion for years and that made the corner of Bathurst and Flamingo into a boondoggle with, frankly, no obvious benefits.

Then there is the potential security risk of having a two-floor underground parking garage in a large, highly visible synagogue. In July, Mark Mandlebaum, whose Lanterra Developments is developing this project, was kind enough to hold a call with the No Flamingo Highrise committee, of which I am a member. The issue of

security was raised, and while Mr. Mandlebaum assured us that he and Rabbi Kaplan, who also participated on the call, take security considerations with the utmost seriousness, he then went on to indicate that he believes that a 'higher power' will help protect the building and synagogue congregants. This, and I say this with all respect for Mr. Mandlebaum, did not provide much comfort or confidence. An underground parking facility on the grounds of a large synagogue underneath a building whose residents will be overwhelmingly Jewish is an inviting target for those who would seek to do harm to the Jewish community. This is not hyperbole. Unfortunately, as events in Pittsburgh and California, to name but two of the more high profile Anti-Semitic attacks in recent memory, have tragically demonstrated that an attack is a real threat.

In any event, to date there has been a complete lack of transparency regarding planned security protocols, and that is consistent with the disclosure, or lack thereof, around this project from the beginning. The lack of transparency has been very disappointing. Given the advanced design that was made public this past spring and the significant dollars that clearly had been invested to develop the planned apartment, it's clear that this building has been in the works some time, likely years. Yet there was no consultation with community members nor synagogue membership at any stage. Had there been, perhaps a compromise could have been reached and goodwill created. For what it's worth, I am open to a smaller building on the property (six stories or less) with clearly defined security protocols. As it stands, there is a high degree of anxiety and mistrust. It feels as if this project is being fast-tracked regardless of what the community wants with a minimum of consultation under the cover of the pandemic. It is, for instance, unclear how the building applicant plans to reconcile their stated desire to close access to the building's parking facilities through the Jewish Sabbath (which begins on Friday evening at sunset and runs through Saturday evening at sunset), while still allowing access to parking to residents who travel in cars. We were told that we would be provided with such information at the July meeting yet that has not been forthcoming. We have been assured that a separate entrance via Highcliffe is not in the cards, yet you will forgive many of us for being skeptical, and very anxious, given the lack of transparency.

In sum, this building in its currently proposed form, is not appropriate for this neighbourhood. We would welcome the opportunity for further consultations with the developer, Chabad Flamingo, and City Council in hope of reaching an amenable compromise. Failing that, I respectfully and strongly urge the committee to reject the proposed zoning change.

Sincerely,

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