

## **January 2016: Report on Public Meeting about Spadina-Sussex Redevelopment**

On Jan. 14, 2016, Councillor Joe Cressy sponsored a public meeting to present the current University of Toronto-Daniels Corporation plans for the student residence at the northwest corner of Spadina and Sussex. About 80 people were in attendance.

In introducing the project, Councillor Cressy emphasized that development is bound to take place on that site, given the excellent transit access and the city's mandate for intensification. The question is not whether the site will be developed but when and by whom. He noted that a 12-storey condo building could be constructed as of right, without any public input. He reminded those attending that Toronto does not allow "people" zoning that would preclude students, or any other group, from living in a particular building or location. He emphasized that the current developers—U of T and Daniels—have been much more willing to consult with the public than many other developers, and in fact, began their public consultations more than two years ago. They understand that the neighbourhood wants this to be a mixed-use facility, with offices, businesses and community spaces as well as a variety of people living there, not just first-year undergraduates. As well, impact on Sussex Avenue needs to be minimized and green/park space provided.

University of Toronto Vice-President Scott Mabury said that the University needs to build more residences. He reported that since 1996, the percentage of international students has increased from 3% to 30% and continues to rise. To attract these students, the University needs to offer residence accommodation. It predicts an additional 2300 residence places will be needed by 2020. Professor Mabury described the proposed residence as housing 548 undergraduates, 60% first year and 40% upper years and graduate students, along with 10/15 townhouses for faculty, and students. Seven replacement units for those in the existing building, who will be displaced by the development, would also be provided. He noted that the U of T has regained control of the Robert St field from UTS, and that the University would like to develop the south end of the field to provide green space for the students and the community. The form this would take would be determined after further community consultation.

David Kim, dean of the 1200-student Chestnut Residence, then spoke concerning the nature of the U of T residence student population today and their residence experiences. He noted that international students tend to be very serious about their studies and high achievers. The University holds students to high standards of respect for others and for property and tries to optimize their experience by developing a sense of community through providing facilities such as a dining room and study spaces. He indicated that a dining room requires a minimum of 500 students to be economically feasible. He also said the proposed residence would have a much higher student to don ratio (1 per 28 students) than typical (1 per 40 or 50 students), and would place premium on community engagement. He described the U of T's Centre for Community Partnership as a possible way to bring this about.

Remo Agostino, Vice-President of Daniels Corporation, then showed renderings of the building, a 23 story (75.5 m) tower. A five floor podium would contain ground floor retail and separate entrances to commercial and residential areas. The basement would provide a dock for truck access and 19 parking spaces. A mezzanine would provide administrative space. The 2nd floor

would hold the student dining room and other common areas, plus an event space open to the community. The 3rd and 4th floors would have offices. The 5th through 23rd floors would have 20 student units per floor, either in dormitory (380) or suite (148) conformations. A don would reside on each floor. To the west of the tower, between the city owned laneway and Sussex Mews, 15 stacked townhouses would be constructed for faculty, with a possible fourth floor for rental replacement housing. The shared use park agreement would be imbedded the rezoning process.

Michael Leckman of Diamond and Schmitt, architects, reviewed the features of the building in keeping with the Tall Buildings guidelines for corner properties. He pointed out setbacks and stepbacks, as well as green/sustainability features, such as a maximum of 40% glass. He reviewed shadow studies showing that at the equinox, the shadow would have left Robert Street and the field by 10:18 am and at other times of year, shadowing would be less. He noted that the townhouses provided a stepdown into the neighbourhood. He also indicated a willingness to incorporate features to make the building more compatible with the heritage neighbourhood.

Questions and comments followed. Key concerns included:

- U of T encroaching into a residential neighbourhood rather than using property it owns on the other side of Spadina
- The disappearance of the Ten Editions bookstore
- Student behaviour in the neighbourhood, and reducing their impact on Sussex by moving the entrance north on Spadina
- Whether there is adequate infrastructure to support the building.

Councillor Cressy closed the meeting by noting the receptiveness and flexibility of the developers, and suggesting to the attendees that since some development is sure to take place in that location, engaging with U of T and Daniels might be the best option. He indicated that once an application has been filed, further public consultations will take place.

Report by Carolee Orme, NE Area Representative, HVRA