

HARBORD VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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Toronto, ON M5S 1X1



March 19, 2014

Committee of Adjustment
Toronto City Hall, 2nd floor
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

File #: A0767/13TEY

Dear Sirs/Madams,

I am writing on behalf of the Harbord Village Residents' Association to oppose the two variances being sought by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB).

Our Association has had a long and supportive relationship with Central Technical School (CTS). Eight years ago, we raised \$4,000 to purchase trees for the campus. For the last few years, we have engaged student volunteers in twice-yearly campus cleanups and provided meals for all the volunteers afterwards. When the school's swimming pool was threatened with closure, we rallied community support to keep it open. We are strongly supportive of the school's programs and publicize them often to our members.

We know that the sports field and track have been allowed to deteriorate in recent years. Many in our community regularly visit the field and run on the tracks. We know that CTS' sports teams and physical education classes deserve a better field and track for their activities, and we want to help them achieve that goal.

The proposed change of use of the playing field and track from public educational use to a private, for-profit use cannot be considered a minor variance, as the proposed dome and artificial playing field will have many negative impacts on the surrounding community. Our board has extensively reviewed the proposal and spoken with the developer, TDSB officials, and residents living near the same developer's similar project at Monarch Park School. We have concluded that it will have the following impacts:

- The proposed enterprise — the rental of multiple sports fields to groups from across Toronto — will bring large numbers of cars into a dense downtown neighbourhood that is already deficient in on-street parking and has no underused parking facilities. The school's parking lot on Borden Street is often full on weeknights due to a popular night school program that draws students from around the city. The Green P lot, just north of the school and south of Bloor

Street, is also fully occupied on many days and evenings by patrons of the businesses and restaurants on Bloor Street.

- The increase in the number of cars coming into the neighbourhood will create traffic problems for all and jeopardize the safety of residents. Monarch Park residents have told us that many parents, anxious to get their kids to the dome on time for a game, speed through their neighbourhood to drop off their kids or search for on-street parking. City staff from Transportation Services recently concluded that the impact of the proposed dome at Central Tech on neighbouring streets would be “severe”.
- Replacing the grass field with artificial turf and limiting access by residents will remove the only green space of any size in our community. Harbord Village has no parks. Many residents use the field and track at the school, and have done so for decades.
- The proposal involves privatizing the use of a public space that has been paid for by the public. However, the public will not have access to the field or track during the months that the dome is erected if the developer is successful in securing enough rental groups to book all available hours. Razor Management is offering seniors one two-hour period per week when they can walk on the track for free. There will be no free access for any other members of the public during the dome months.
- We are deeply concerned that low-income neighbours will find the proposed rental rates to be unaffordable and thus be excluded from a public space they have used for years. Once the field is fully booked, there is no provision in place to prevent the developer from raising his rates still higher.
- Artificial turf fields are very hot in the summer. One Arkansas study showed that when the outside temperature was 34C, the plastic turf was 67C. This differential will impose a significant additional air conditioning cost for nearby residents that have such equipment, and a significant health burden on those without air conditioners.
- The crumb rubber that commonly lies under the top surface of artificial turf contains lead, arsenic, cadmium, chromium and other toxic chemicals, which will leach into soil over time. The rubber also contains phthalates, which are known to have adverse effects on the reproductive organs, lungs, kidneys and liver. Based on the concerns about children’s exposure to these chemicals, the Environmental Protection Agency in the US recently withdrew its support for artificial turf.
- The proposed high-intensity lighting (i.e., 50 foot candles) will negatively affect those who live on the west side of Bathurst Street, immediately adjacent to the field. While the lights are designed to focus light onto the field, the height and intensity of the lights are such that light will spill and glare onto adjacent properties.

- Monarch Park residents have told us that noise is a big problem. Sports teams are noisy while on the field and just as noisy when they are saying goodbye to their friends off the field.
- We are upset about the inadequate level of community consultation about this project. For example, the TDSB distributed a flyer in advance of a public meeting on January 9th that referred only to “field improvements,” without describing any of the changes being proposed. As a result, the majority of people in our neighbourhood do not know what is being proposed. This is inexcusable, given the negative impacts they will endure if the variances are granted.

The sum total of all these negative impacts indicate that the proposed development is inappropriate. The requested variances should not be granted, because the impact of their approval will be anything but minor. The scale of the project is inappropriate for a dense downtown neighbourhood and should be rejected.

Our preference is to continue to sit down with officials from the TDSB and the City, along with neighbouring residents’ associations and school administrators, to devise a strategy to renovate the field so that it better serves CTS students, other youth groups and the surrounding neighbourhoods. There are better options to explore than giving control of the playing field and running track to a private operator for 20 years.

Thank you in advance for considering our views in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Grant". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Tim Grant, HVRA Chair
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