

**Pilon, Janet**

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**Subject:** Vrancor Development at 354 King Street West

**From:** Barbara Ledger

**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 12:36 PM

**To:** Office of the Mayor

**Cc:** [clerk@hamilton.ca](mailto:clerk@hamilton.ca)

**Subject:** Vrancor Development at 354 King Street West

Mayor Fred Eisenberger  
Hamilton City Hall  
71 Main St. West,  
Hamilton

Dear Mr. Mayor,

I am writing to convey to you my deep concerns about the Vrancor development at 354 King St. West. This is a matter which affects the whole city, and the Strathcona neighbourhood is facing issues today that may well confront any other neighbourhood tomorrow, if aggressive and inappropriate development practices are not stopped.

I live in the neighbourhood, and am therefore at risk of being dismissed as a 'Nimby'. But I would argue that it is the neighbours who, having the most to lose by bad development, are the most engaged and the best informed. Furthermore, I am not saying 'not in my backyard', I'm saying 'not *this* in my backyard'.

As you may know, Vrancor has approval for a ten-storey hotel and a six-storey student residence on the site on the northwest corner of King and Queen, which wouldn't be too bad, but that isn't what they're building there. They have applied for changes to the Urban Hamilton Official Plan, the Transit-Oriented Corridor Plan, the Strathcona Secondary Plan, and zoning by-laws, to be permitted to add two storeys to the hotel and 19, for a whopping total of 25 storeys, to the student residence.

These changes would add approximately 1,300 transient residents to a parcel of land considerably smaller than a city block. That degree of density, in an area currently, and appropriately, zoned for 'medium density' is, frankly, appalling.

The developer tries to justify the intensification, and the height, and even the less-than-required amount of parking he's providing, by arguing that the site is next to the downtown. Queen Street is the boundary, so the site is adjacent to, but not in, the downtown. In fact, it is adjacent to the western outskirts of the downtown, where the majority of the homes and businesses are one-to-two storeys. The kind of 'zoning creep' that Vrancor is asking for, and betting on, is a slippery slope. It would set a dangerous precedent, and put at risk principles established by city planners and fought for by neighbourhood groups across the city.

I understand the need for urban intensification; I attended Joe Minicozzi's 'Do the Math' urban planning session organized by Councillors Wilson, Nann and Danko. But it must not be a case of intensification at any cost. The degree of intensification Vrancor is proposing might be appropriate closer to King and James, if it were a more appropriate design overall, but this particular development will cause no end of problems, both for the immediate neighbourhood — increased shadow, wind, noise, traffic, parking and privacy problems — and for the wider city — traffic problems on King and Queen streets, congestion causing delays for emergency vehicles (the Ray St. Fire station is just around the corner), mental and physical health issues caused by overcrowded conditions, and the blight on the cityscape of two unattractive monoliths on one of our major arteries. Not to mention one-thousand-plus students, two blocks from Hess Village.

Vrancor has shown itself to not be a good neighbour. Time and again they have withheld information, provided misleading information, and changed their plans, here and elsewhere, without letting anyone know. The reports and studies they have provided in support of their application leave out or shrug off what is unfavourable and foist onto the city responsibilities, such as a lay-by in front of their hotel, that Vrancor doesn't wish to take on. They do the least they can get away with, and ask for the most they can get, while treating the city and its citizens with disdain. It's galling to think, for instance, how much city staff time was wasted working on plans for the original development, that Vrancor never had any intention of building.

I hope that when Vrancor comes to City Council seeking approvals for the zoning changes they need, Council will show them that the concerns of citizens matter more than the avarice of developers, and vote to deny their application.

Thank you for your attention, and I hope, for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Ledger