

DATE: April 29, 2021

TO: City of Hamilton Planning Committee c/o clerk@hamilton.ca

FROM: Aleda O'Connor, Ray Street N., [REDACTED]

CC: Maureen Wilson Maureen.wilson@hamilton.ca

RE: 354 King Street West/Hotel portion

I – UHOPA-20-003/ZAC-20-008 (May 4th Planning Meeting)

I oppose the request by the Vrancor Group to change Hamilton's Official Plan and Zoning By-law to permit two additional storeys on the hotel at 354 King Street W, for the following reasons:

1. The height. Perhaps if the hotel were not so tall, the other objectionable features about it would not be so evident: weak design, shoddy workmanship, wind in the parking lot, shadows on neighbouring properties, lack of setback, inadequate podium for more than 10 floors.

2. I question City Planner Andrea Dear's position that this hotel "does not detract from the adjacent cultural heritage resource and respects the views of the resource..." Strathcona itself is a heritage resource. This Vrancor complex of buildings detracts visually from Strathcona's streetscape of 19th and early 20th Century homes. This area was one of the earliest parts of the city to be settled. While they may not be "designated" there are many fine examples of workers cottages and other middle class homes that span the last century here. Vrancor's Hotel contributes no praiseworthy 21st Century character and is not memorable or charming in any way.

3. My neighbours and I rely on Hamilton's Official Plan, the Strathcona Secondary Plan and the city's zoning by-laws to protect the historic qualities of our neighbourhood, one of Hamilton's oldest. If the requested changes are approved, it will set a precedent for Vrancor's student residence next door and further development along Queen Street and others in Strathcona. Insensitive intensification will only be detrimental to the cultural heritage streetscape, which is an asset that belongs to the entire city.



Ray Street North

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4. The upper floors of the hotel are not set back from the podium as would be required by the tall buildings guideline if this hotel were downtown. Lack of setback along Queen Street North alone should be a reason to deny approval for additional height.

5. The no-frills hotel design does not contribute any distinguishing architectural interest to the intersection at Queen and King along this gateway corridor. Nor does it offer any amenities or green space that will improve the neighbourhood either for residents or hotel guests. Two additional storeys will not overcome these deficits.

6. Not enough consideration has been given to temporary parking for hotel drop-offs and pickups. We know that hotel traffic will circle the block in search of parking or pull-over spots. Nearby streets are narrow enough that vehicles travelling in opposite directions do not pass easily. Many of the older homes do not have driveways or parking spaces. These residents rely on street parking 24/7 and few spots are open on the street overnight.

7. The incomplete 10-storey hotel already reduces winter morning sunlight that reaches properties, sidewalks and pavement at the corner of Ray Street N and Market Street. Some of these homes also have winter afternoon sunlight reduced or eliminated by the Good Shepherd on the west side of Ray St. N. None of these issues have been thoughtfully addressed by the hotel design or setback. Additional height will only make this problem worse.

8. Vrancor's studies show that uncomfortable wind conditions are expected in the hotel parking lot. Even if the hotel remains at 10 storeys, this wind will affect the quality of the experience for hotel guests and occupants of the townhouses also being built by Vrancor and the student residence, as well as anyone who walks nearby. Why would the city permit a building that will make the wind conditions even worse?

9. You have already permitted Vrancor to increase the height of this hotel from 6 to 10 storeys. The current 10 storeys plus 2 floors of mechanicals already will be 12 storeys. That's enough height.

10. We depend on our elected representatives to ensure that necessary intensification addresses the city's greatest needs and contributes to an enriched quality of life for current and new residents of this neighbourhood. This hotel does not provide desperately need housing in the downtown area where there are already at least five hotels within walking distance. In what way does a hotel increase the city's housing inventory?

For all these reasons, I urge the Planning Committee to consider how this decision will affect the future student residence application that is coming up, and to deny this request to alter the Official Plan and Strathcona Secondary Plan.

- Aleda O'Connor

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