

Good morning,

My name is Rita Bilerman, and I am the chair of the Annex Residents' Association. I am here to speak to the demolition of 145 St. George Street. We have also submitted correspondence on this.

This matter relates to a 1959 12-story rental apartment building in the Annex. It contains 130 affordable and mid-range units. It is structurally sound and has been well maintained over the years.

In Toronto, about half the population are renters not owners. In the Annex, it may surprise you, that number is more than 70%. These are our neighbours. They are your neighbours. And they form the fabric of our communities.

This proposal raises many issues. Our letter includes planning concerns but today we wish to highlight four principles that form the basis of why we object to this proposal and submit that you too should object.

### **1. First - The Human Context**

The target site is not a parking lot, nor an under-utilized parcel of land. It is home to valued neighbours, many of whom have lived there for decades – three of them for more than 50 years. The prospect of displacement late in life is nothing short of devastating and life altering. **Where do they go? How do they manage?**

Housing security is recognized as a core element of mental health. Life in the pandemic has been stressful enough. Now just imagine adding the threat of eviction to that stress.

In reality... these people face a loss of community, a loss of security, a loss of dignity and, in many cases, a loss of independence.

Yet they find themselves just pawns on the developer's chess board.

## **2. Second - The Housing Crisis**

In the midst of a housing crisis, the proposal contemplates the demolition of 130 affordable and mid-range units – housing that is increasingly difficult to find in our neighbourhood.

Are we to be turned into a luxury ghetto through demolition?

Consider.... while the developer is obliged to replace the existing affordable housing units, that obligation lasts only ten short years. Meanwhile the bulk of the proposed units must rent at luxury or higher than average Toronto prices. How else could the project produce a profit considering the extraordinary expense of demolishing the present building?

The very real prospect is the eviction of long-term tenants to the benefit of buyers who buy units solely for their investment value. How is this really helping the present affordable housing crisis?

And as you have heard from many today, they and we support density done right but we are all very concerned about the lack of affordable housing and strongly urge the city and province to create bolder policy on this.

## **3. Third – the Climate Crisis**

The City of Toronto has set a lofty goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The unwarranted demolition of 145 St. George is not only hostile to achieving this but represents a worrying precedent for such cavalier demolitions city-wide.

We are not alone. There are many of these apartment neighbourhoods across Toronto – all of which face similar threats if this project is to be sanctioned.

Carbon emissions are typically discussed in terms of operations – the heating of a building, the running of a car, the turning on of lights. Yet embodied carbon – the emissions from construction material extraction, manufacturing, transportation, and on-site construction processes is equally costly to our environment according to the UN.

Who is really paying for this cost? The developer? The occupants? The City? Us?

The world is waking up to this. The highest prize for architecture in 2021 was awarded to French architects whose credo is “never demolish, never remove or replace - always add, transform and reuse.” Their work is focused on replenishing low-income housing complexes, aesthetically and functionally, and get this - while respecting rather than replacing the tenants who live there.

Why can't Toronto do this as well?

#### **4. Fourth – the Domino Effect**

Buildings similar to 145 St. George exist along St. George Street, and in fact... in every area of the City.

Should this domino fall, you can expect more of these proposals in every ward in Toronto. This is not a matter of speculation. Just look down the agenda to TE 28.29 where the same developer is proposing to demolish a 24 storey apartment building at 25 St. Mary Street and construct two towers of 54 and 59 storeys, displacing 259 rental units.

So, to recap.

1. We don't think tenants should be **pawns in a developer's chess game**
2. We don't want the Annex turned into a **luxury ghetto**.
3. Let's observe the climate-saving mantra of **reduce, reuse, recycle**.
4. And let's stop the **domino effect**.

Therefore, we ask.... what is this proposal really adding to our neighbourhood? To our city? And more importantly, at what environmental and social costs?

We ask that you think critically of this and, respectfully – oppose it.  
Thank you.