

Community centre ready for makeover

SCADS OF DEVELOPMENT

By Sarah Ratchford

Planning students at U of T are looking at ways in which gentrification might impact the future services and functioning of Scadding Court Community Centre.

They're working on a report outlining the ways in which the demographics of the surrounding community can be expected to change in coming years. And they are recommending ways the community centre can undergo a revitalization process, while continuing to provide services vital to current residents in surrounding neighbourhoods.

The report is being prepared by **Sarah Hubbs, Allison Lebow, Michael Matthys, Joseph Milos** and **Jessica Schmidt**. While their final recommendations are still being fine-tuned, they've taken an intimate look at the social fabric of the area and the needs of its residents. Their aim is clear: ensuring that the gentrification of the area doesn't have too harsh an impact on existing, lower-income residents. The students worked with Scadding Court and with city planner **Graig Uens** to shape the project. Uens says the income in the area is sure to rise, which will make for an interesting challenge when it comes to the centre's deliverables.

"Scadding Court occupies a very unique place in terms of service provision. It has to look at how to

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Neighbourhood Associations Feel Squeeze

OMB, A COSTLY FIGHT

Fighting at the Ontario Municipal Board can be a very expensive undertaking, as two Toronto neighbourhood associations have recently found. Board members lean heavily on professional opinion when making their decisions. But experts—lawyers, planners, and other professionals—do not come cheap. Win or lose, community associations are left trying to figure out how to pay the bill.

Last month, an eight-day hearing regarding a proposed six-storey building at 103-111 Ossington Avenue ended. The application was appealed to the OMB by the developer, **Reserve Properties**, due to the city's failure to render a decision within the statutory 120 days. Council rejected planning staff's recommendations to negotiate further with Reserve for a six-storey building, rather than the four-storey building the community wanted, and hired professional planner **Franco Romano (Franco Romano & Associates)** to fight Reserve Properties' appeal.

Ossington Community Association, the local neighbourhood group, was formed to protect the interests of residents along Ossington Avenue between College Street and Queen Street East. They joined the OMB hearing as a separate party.

"We were expecting it to cost around \$35 [thousand] total, and it ended up costing about \$70 [thousand];" CONTINUED PAGE 4 >

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UPCOMING DATES

DECEMBER 6

Parks and Environment Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

Toronto Preservation Board, 10:00 a.m., committee room 2

DECEMBER 9

Board of Health, 1:00 p.m., committee room 1

Design Review Panel, 12:00 p.m., committee room 2

DECEMBER 10

Budget Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

DECEMBER 11

Budget Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

DECEMBER 12

Budget Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

DECEMBER 13

Budget Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

Breakfast with the chief planner: Developing and Implementing a Vision for City Planning, 7:30 a.m., Ted Rogers School of Management. More information here.

DECEMBER 16-17

Council, 9:30 a.m., council chambers

DECEMBER 19

TTC Meeting

DECEMBER 20

Budget Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

JANUARY 2

Municipal elections nomination period begins

JANUARY 8

Budget Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

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CITY OF TORONTO EDITION

Liberty Village

CONGESTION HUB

The installation of a new traffic signal isn't typically big news, but if you've ever driven through traffic plagued Liberty Village, you'll know it is something to celebrate. An opening ceremony accompanied activation of the new stop lights at Strachan and East Liberty last week, marking a small victory for area residents who struggle daily with over capacity roads and transit lines—a problem expected only to worsen with ongoing intensification.

Well aware of the local frustrations, Ward 19 councillor **Mike Layton** is spearheading the "Liberty on the GO" campaign, which aims to make better use of existing infrastructure to service transit riders.

"We have put all this intensification into the area without consideration for the transit needs," Layton says, noting that the King streetcar is the busiest surface level TTC route in the city.

The new traffic light at Strachan and East Liberty, prohibited until recently due to the nearby grade-level rail crossing, was installed thanks in part to pressure from the **Liberty Village Residents Association**.

Todd Hofley, who founded the association in 2011 after finding his traffic concerns were widely shared by others in the community, told *NRU* that the intersection was dangerously congested. Once the grade separation work at Strachan had successfully rerouted the rail tracks beneath the street earlier this fall, it

was time to replace police traffic direction with a signalized intersection.

Rapid intensification over the last decade has produced an urban neighbourhood suffering from outdated transportation infrastructure and physical isolation. Add to that the ongoing condo construction, and massive bridge work at either end of the sole east-west thoroughfare (Dufferin and Strachan), and it's easy to understand the frustration of area residents.

One of the key proposals in the Liberty Village Master Plan released in August aims to address circulation problems with the creation of Liberty New Street, an east-west route planned along the southern edge of the community. The street would bring connectivity to many of the neighbourhood's dead-end streets—relics of the area's industrial past.

Liberty Village BIA executive director **Lynn Clay**, says that many of the proposed ideas contained in the master plan are ambitiously sky-reaching, but is excited about the possibilities.

"It would be wonderful in a perfect world to have Jefferson as a pedestrian street extending all the way south to a land bridge crossing over to the Exhibition grounds and Ontario Place."

Situated where it is, Liberty Village has the potential to become a vibrant, multi-modal transportation hub. Hofley explains that demographic

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Annual subscription rate is \$369 +HST (ON).

Complimentary trial subscriptions are available.

Advertising rates available upon request.

NRU City of Toronto Edition is not to be redistributed without the written consent of the publisher.

NRU City of Toronto Edition is published 50 times a year by email by *NRU* Publishing Inc.

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ISSN 1918-7548

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SCADS OF DEVELOPMENT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

maintain that role through a rebuild of the community centre... The makeup of that census area is different from the city as a whole.”

The students found that the population of census tract 39, in which Scadding Court sits, is made up of about 75 per cent people who identify as some variation of “visible minority.” That number is at about 42 per cent in surrounding census tracts. And in all of Toronto? It’s just under 50 per cent.

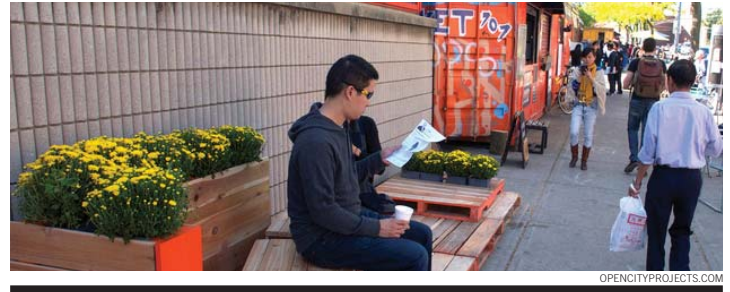
Uens says plans for the actual revitalization have yet to be seen. He says he hasn’t had anything concrete to review thus far, but it’s an older building, so it “could use a refresh, as some internal systems are a little dated.” He mentions the HVAC system as an example, and says redevelopment “may be an opportunity to expand [Scadding Court’s] scope of services.”

The students’ work was spurred by continued development surrounding the community centre, which is at Dundas and Bathurst. Chinatown and Kensington Market are somewhat insulated from major development due to a combination of heritage protection and local demand for marketplaces (the neighbourhoods supply 98 per cent of the groceries in the area). However, the neighbourhoods aren’t exempt from the pressure the city is facing to grow, and fast. There are over 48 development applications in the area surrounding the community centre (the area is defined as being between University and Grace and College to Front), and seven in its census tract (number 39).

And Alexandra Park, which is adjacent to Scadding Court, is currently undergoing a revitalization which will include 1,540 new, market-priced condo units. There will also be 333 demolished and replaced townhouses and apartment units, and 473 refurbished apartment units. But when the project is finished, there will be a 1:2 ratio of rental to market units, which has the potential to reshape the social fabric of the neighbourhood surrounding Scadding Court.

That’s why the community centre is working with the planning students to put together recommendations for how best to move forward with a redevelopment, ensuring the centre can continue to serve current residents while accommodating the needs of any new ones at the same time.

But the students point out the revitalization of Alexandra Park isn’t all bad for low-income residents. The [guiding principles](#) for that project, they say, could also benefit Scadding



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Court, provided they choose to follow them. Of particular importance, they say, is the first principle: zero displacement, meaning all residents will be able to stay in their community throughout the redevelopment process. If the community centre pays attention to those principles, they should be able to redevelop responsibly, according to the group.

But a key component to a community centre’s identity (and usefulness) is the services it provides. As the makeup of residents around Scadding Court changes, and as gentrification of the area continues, the centre wants to determine an appropriate roster and balance of services for both existing residents and new ones.

The community centre has been going through the necessary steps to settle on a redevelopment process for the past few years, but previously, they hadn’t explored demographic changes and how those might lead to the need for a change in services. Scadding Court redevelopment, development and community engagement director **Alina Chatterjee** says she expects to have a clearer vision of what the redevelopment will look like in the new year, but many of the hoops have already been jumped through.

The feasibility study for the redevelopment, for example, was completed by the end of 2010. The report went to council, which directed planning staff to take a look at the potential redevelopment. And In 2012, council endorsed [revitalization principles](#) for Scadding Court.

Now, the community centre is looking at the nature of the services which will be needed, as well as trying to sort out who the developer will be. Chatterjee says they’re working with [McMillan LLP](#) to scope out potential vehicles for moving forward.

“We need to look at how the demographics will change, and how to be responsive and proactive. Who are we actually going to be serving?” **nrU**

OMB, A COSTLY FIGHT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Ossington Community Association president **Jessica Wilson** told NRU in a telephone interview.

A similar fight occurred against **KCAP College Inc.**'s 2011 plan for a 24-storey building at 245 and 251 College Street. The application was appealed to the board after the city failed to render a decision within 120 days. A group of local community associations joined as a party to fight the appeal. The **Grange Community Association**, whose area is bounded between College Street, Spadina Avenue, Queen Street West and University Avenue was one of them.

Their honorary president **Ceta Ramkhalawansingh**, said lawyer fees reached \$35,000 before it even got to the nine-day hearing, which finished last week.

"We knew that if we were going to go forward, we would need expert witnesses," Ramkhalawansingh said. "That was another \$20 grand. So we decided that we couldn't afford lawyers anymore. So we represented ourselves."

Aaron Moore is an assistant professor at the University of Winnipeg and author of the book *Planning Politics in Toronto: The Ontario Municipal Board and Urban Development*. In an email to NRU, he said that the issue is not about representation, as [community groups] can easily join as participants rather than parties.

"The real question is, can they effectively influence the decision-making of OMB members?"

Participants at OMB hearings can submit their opinion to the board, but cannot cross-examine or call witnesses and experts. Neighbourhood associations might therefore find attending as a party to be helpful at influencing the OMB, but Moore cautions they face an uphill battle if city council disagrees with their own planning staff and hires external experts.

"[T]he opinions of these external hires will [often] be based on weaker planning arguments and undermined by city planning recommendations to council. In these instances, neither the city nor residents usually fair well."

Symmetry Developments is a local Toronto developer. Its vice president, **Sayf Hassan**, is critical of the role of neighbourhood associations at the board. He said that the city's planning process—through community consultation and feedback—already accounts for local opinion, and the OMB is expensive for developers too.

"A one day hearing can cost as much as \$80,000 to \$100,000,"

Hassan said, noting that additional days can cost an extra 50 to 60,000 dollars each. "It delays projects, and the eventual [financial] impact is borne by the purchaser. It isn't borne by the developers, as they simply pass on the costs."

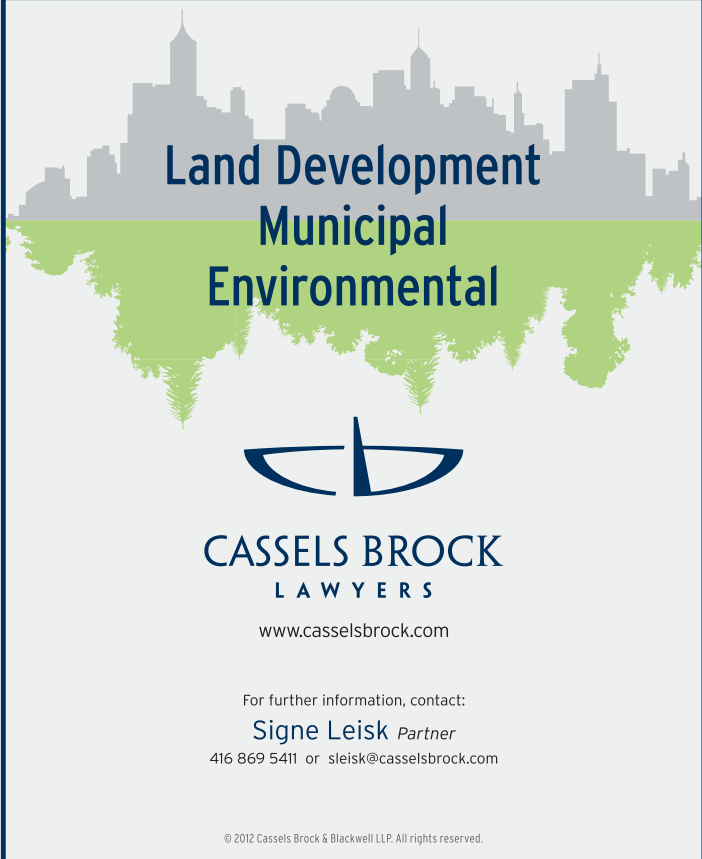
Wilson wishes there was more support for neighbourhood groups like the Ossington Community Association.

"I think the financial burden on communities is enormous, and it's not fair that we should have to be exhausting ourselves, our energy and our financial resources this way."

From the OMB's perspective, it cannot weight evidence based on a party's ability to pay.

"It's up to the parties who appeal to the board to come with their evidence," board communications consultant **Karen Kotzen** said. "Parties are all treated equally."

Stay tuned. Watch for the OMB decisions regarding 103-111 Ossington (PL121360) and 245 & 251 College Street (PL120328) in *NRU*. [nru](#)



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CONGESTION HUB

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

pressures and intensification not only require transit solutions, but demand them. Liberty Village’s exploding residential population, expected to double to 12,000 over the next few years, requires diverse transport options. And Hofley observes that the car culture that many of the suburban transplants who move to the area bring with them is diminishing, as new residents find they don’t need to own a car in a downtown setting.

But transit users in the area encounter many problems of their own. The main TTC route servicing downtown—the King streetcar—is already operating over capacity. And the two rail lines to the north and south are largely inaccessible to area commuters. According to Clay, many GO commuters who work within Liberty Village experience daily frustration using rail lines that directly pass their place of work but offer no connection.

Layton hopes that rail corridors currently isolating Liberty Village can be used to everyone’s advantage. He points out that from the centre of Liberty Village, walking distances up to King Street, or down to Exhibition station are equal, and more commuters would take the GO train downtown if it was more viable.

He has proposed TTC - GO fare integration to make short term GO train trips more affordable, especially between Exhibition and Union stations. GO service to Exhibition

station has recently expanded with more frequent stops.

Another option to help soften demand on the King streetcar would be the construction of a Liberty Village GO train stop on the Georgetown/Kitchener line which passes to the north.

“There is a huge potential opportunity to use existing corridors to open capacity,” Layton notes. He adds that this would have to happen quickly before available land parcels get snapped up for more development. Two sites are currently under consideration as potential candidates for the proposed station.

Several BIXI stations are also hoped for, although at the moment there is little other bicycle infrastructure in the neighbourhood.

“It is absolutely important to have more north-south pedestrian and cyclist access to improve connectivity with the larger neighbourhood. We have a history of connection with the Queen West neighbourhood that is important to maintain,” Clay says.

More connections would encourage cycling to and through the community, and bridges linking Liberty Village with King Street in the North, and the exhibition grounds in the south, are under review.

While transportation fixes come slowly to the evolving neighbourhood, Hofley remains optimistic.

“Liberty Village has no choice but to become a cycling, pedestrian and transit-oriented neighbourhood” he says. **nr**

TORONTO BRIEFS

Cities Centre reorganizes

The University of Toronto’s **Cities Centre** is in the midst of a reorganization. Dean **Richard Sommer** sent out a release Wednesday advising that the centre will leave its current location at 455 Spadina by the end of December, and that “its

functions will be in transition under the umbrella of the **Global Cities Institute** over the following year.”

Sommer said in the release that the reorganization is part of a larger-scale discussion at the university on how to approach university-based work on cities, and as such,

the school is rethinking existing university resources in urban research.

Email building permits, FASTRACK expansion

If you’re looking to apply for a building permit or make certain service requests with the city, you can now do so

by email. Zoning reviews, disclosure of records, sign permits and certified plans can now be requested by emailing the city, among [other applications](#).

The city has also expanded its [residential FASTRACK program](#). Existing houses

PLANNING AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT ROUND UP

New development permit system?

A report on draft official plan policies for implementing a development permit system was adopted as amended. The initial report made [recommendations](#) for “a more effective and efficient means of development approval in the city,” with policies for authorizing a development permit system in Toronto. It would replace zoning by-laws and committee of adjustment approvals for minor variances and site plan approval by combining those procedures, as well as *section 37* agreements, into one.

Councillor **John Filion** moved to amend the report to direct chief planner **Jennifer Keesmaat** to conduct a community consultation to obtain comments and feedback. Consultation is to include meetings with clusters of resident associations and condo boards, as well as a combined open house and public meeting for each planning district. The chief planner would report back on April 10 on the outcome of the community consultation exercise.

“Feeling congested” update

Committee adopted, as amended, a report from Keesmaat providing an update on the “Feeling Congested?” initiative. Phase 1, which involved development and review of decision-making criteria and an assessment of revenue tools, is now complete. Phase 2 is currently underway. It includes identification of priority transit projects, a priority transit network and refinements to official plan transportation policies.

The amendment, by Councillor **Frances Nunziata** asked that staff “be directed to include mobility hubs in the project list and project description in the initiative throughout 2014-2015.”



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Just need a little relief?

The chief planner’s [report](#) on the proposed approach to study the relief line initiative was adopted with two amendments. First, the chief planner was directed to undertake public consultation on the relief line proposed terms of reference and public consultation framework, with technical support provided by Toronto Transit Commission staff. Staff is to report back to the Planning and Growth Management Committee seeking approval of these documents in early 2014. Second, staff was directed to include in the public consultation terms of reference a process to rename the downtown relief line.

Response to provincial review of planning process

Committee adopted the staff report making a series of recommendations in regards to the province’s review of the land use planning and appeal system. The report [recommends](#) that city manager **Joe Pennachetti** ask provincial staff to consult further with city staff in the preparation of any legislative, regulatory or other changes associated with the review; requests that the municipal affairs and housing minister undertake a broader review of Ontario’s land-use planning system to achieve improved accountability and that the province to expand the scope of the review to include other related matters, including the operations, practices, procedures and reporting requirements of the OMB.

Illuminated sign study deferred

The electronic and illuminated sign study and recommendations for amendments to chapter 694 of the municipal code was deferred until April 10 to allow for further public consultation. **nrj**



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TORONTO BRIEFS

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containing one or two dwelling units will be eligible for the residential FASTRACK program for a number of projects including: additions with cumulative areas up to 100 square metres on all floor levels; minor interior alterations; second suites in residential dwellings; conversion from up to three residential units to a single-family dwelling; decks, verandahs, porches and canopies; garages and carports; accessory structures (i.e., gazebos, storage sheds); basement entrances; pool fence enclosures; fire damage repairs; plumbing permits for residential dwellings; HVAC for residential FASTRACK permits after related building permits have been issued; and revisions to residential FASTRACK permits. All residential FASTRACK applications can be submitted by email.

[Saving bike sharing in Toronto](#)

The city has arrived at a solution to keep the **BIXI** bike share program and, hopefully, put it on more solid financial footing, as well. The program will now be under management of the **Toronto Parking Authority**

after an agreement was made between the city and **PBSC**, the company that administers BIXI Toronto service.

BIXI Toronto will continue to operate the system until the spring of 2014, when it will be taken over by the parking authority. TPA is looking for a private company to operate the system and is working with the city to find a title sponsor for the program. Funding for the deal is coming from a \$5-million payment from **Bell Media**, which will go toward the city's purchase of all the bike share assets, transition costs, and the creation of a reserve account to place the system on a more secure financial footing. As part of the agreement, Bell Media's obligation to provide 20 automated public toilets under its street furniture partnership with the city will be cut to nine, two of which have already been installed.

The city is planning to expand the number of bike share stations from 80 to 102 in 2014, with funding provided by the city's Pan/Parapan Am Host City Showcase program. TPA will work with the new private operator, once chosen, to develop a financially

sustainable plan for expansion beyond 2014.

[New affordable housing officially opens in Scarborough](#)

A new housing complex built specifically for seniors and people with disabilities was officially opened Friday. Located at 8 Chichester Place, the development is a 210-unit complex including 104 one-bedroom and 85 two-bedroom apartments for low-income seniors, and 10 one-bedroom and 11

two-bedroom apartments for people with hearing issues. Twenty-one units have been outfitted with strobe lights to help signal fire alarms and incoming phone calls for those with hearing disabilities.

The project was built by **The Remington Group**, and it received \$25.2-million in funding through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program. The city contributed \$3-million to the project. **nrU**

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TORONTO OMB NEWS

Rezoning ok'd pending section 37 agreement

In a decision issued November 21, board member **Joseph E. Sniezek** allowed an appeal by **Bannockburn Lands Ltd.** against the City of Toronto's failure to enact a zoning by-law amendment. Bannockburn Lands applied to rezoning a property at 1185 Eglinton Avenue East from industrial to residential uses to permit the development of two residential towers with 661 units and 48 townhouses.

The board was informed that a settlement was reached between the city and Bannockburn Lands Ltd.

In support of the settlement, planner **Peter Smith (Bousfields Inc.)** told the board that the zoning by-law amendment conformed to provincial plans and the city's official plan. He also stated that the proposed density is less than the maximum permitted in that area and thus leaves sufficient space for remaining parcels to be developed. Smith dismissed parking and traffic concerns citing previous traffic studies. He said school capacity concerns will be addressed once the buildings are occupied.

Sniezek agreed with Smith and stated that the by-law will be approved once the city informs the board that the *section 37* agreement has been finalized.

Solicitors involved in the case were city solicitor **Gary McKay** representing the City of Toronto, **Adam Brown** and **Jessica Smuskowitz (Sherman Brown Dryer Karol Gold Lebow)** representing Bannockburn Lands Ltd., and **Chris Tanzola (Overland LLP)** representing Independent Order of Foresters. (See *OMB Case No. PL130533*.)

Relocation approved for banquet hall


In a decision issued November 18, board member **Blair S. Taylor** allowed in part an appeal by **Kwan and Kwan Ltd.** against the City of Toronto's failure to approve a zoning by-law amendment. At issue was the relocation of an existing on-site banquet hall from a building on 55 Barber Greene Road. The subject lands have split zoning and the banquet hall was not a permitted use at the new location.

The board was informed that a settlement was reached between the city and Kwan and Kwan Ltd. regarding a portion of the zoning application. Planner **Randal Dickie (PMG**

Planning Consultants) provided evidence on behalf of Kwan and Kwan. He stated that the subject lands were designated as an employment area and would support the economic function of that area while not negatively impacting traffic based on a traffic report filed previously.

In opposition to the settlement, **Don Mills Residents Inc.** representative **Terrence West** said that the proposal was an encroachment in an industrial area. He also raised concerns about an increase in traffic and noise.

The board concluded that it agreed with Dickie and noted that expert traffic evidence in opposition to the proposal was absent. It allowed the appeal but withheld its final order until the city solicitor confirms her satisfaction with the last minute changes to the draft zoning by-law and conditions and agreements are met.

Solicitors involved in the case were **Susan Rogers (Susan D. Rogers Law)** representing Kwan and Kwan CONTINUED PAGE 9 



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TORONTO OMB NEWS

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Limited and city solicitor **Christina Achkarian** representing the City of Toronto. (See OMB Case No. PL130667.)

Severance approved for new house

In a decision issued November 18, board member **Joseph E. Sniezek** approved in part an appeal by the City of Toronto of the committee of adjustment's approval of minor variances and consent applications. **John Alves**, **Adriana Azzoli** and **Edy Azzoli** had requested to sever a property at 212 Queens Avenue into two lots to accommodate the construction of a semi-detached house.

To accommodate the land severance, minor variances were sought to reduce the required frontage, side yards and lot size and also to increase the floor space index for the newly created lots. The board was informed that a settlement had been reached between the city and Alves, Azzoli and Azzoli and the variances were amended. Planner **Eros Fiacconi** (EGF Associates) gave evidence in support of the amendment. He explained the changes that were made include increased floor space index and a setback at the north side of the property.

The board accepted Fiacconi's uncontested evidence and determined that the changes were minor with little impact to the property. It allowed the appeal if conditions are met including the preservation of trees.

Solicitors involved in the case were city solicitor **Christina Achkarian** representing the City of Toronto and **Russell Cheeseman** (MLC) representing Edy Azzoli, Adriana Azzoli and John Alves. (See OMB Case No. PL130724.)

New rooftop terrace approved


In a decision issued November 19, board member **Reid Rossi** allowed an appeal by **Philip Kocev** of the City of Toronto committee of adjustment's refusal to approve his application

for minor variances. Kocev sought permission to convert a two-storey detached dwelling into three units including a third floor addition, a front three-storey addition, and a rooftop terrace located at 915 Greenwood Avenue.

The board was informed that a settlement was reached including the requirement of an additional variance stating that the rooftop terrace must be at least two metres from any adjacent walls.

Planner **Ben Quan** (QX4 Investments Limited, Planning & Development Solutions) provided evidence on behalf of Kocev that the requested variances conform to the *Planning Act*. He also said that the proposal is consistent with the neighbourhood designation to rejuvenate the existing housing stock in the area.

The board agreed with Quan that the variances would improve the appearance of the street and authorized the variances with conditions, including fencing for privacy and tree preservation.

Solicitors involved in the case were **R. Jarvis** representing Philip Kocev and city solicitor **Ellen Penner** representing the City of Toronto. (See OMB Case No. PL130826.) 



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TORONTO PEOPLE

Ryerson president **Sheldon Levy** announced that he is

stepping down at the end of his term, in July, 2015. The search

for a new president will begin in January, 2014.

Jake Tobin Garrett is the new policy coordinator at Park

People. Previously, he was project coordinator with TAS.