

# Community waits on new plans for Playfair tower

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Since it was discovered last April that a developer wants to build an 18-storey apartment building at 1701 Kilborn Ave., the community has been voicing their many concerns.

Since then, residents have formed three special interest groups and are working with Alta Vista ward Coun. Peter Hume to voice frustrations to city staff and to the developer.

"A lot of good has happened since April 25 and the best grassroots campaign I've ever seen was born out of this," said Dylan McGuinty, co-founder of No Rezone, one of the three special interest community groups.

"Back in April the city followed the rules and sent out [a] notice of this proposal and then along with that proposal came an invitation for the public to respond with comments and questions," Mr. McGuinty added. "[T]oday ... we have probably over 1,000 people who have responded."

Residents have many apprehensions regarding the plan, including the height of the apartment building, which they fear will overshadow the townhomes across the road on Playfair Dr. Many are also worried there will not be enough parking, making the small residential streets in the area filled with vehicles.

After hearing from many concerned citizens, Coun. Hume had a public meeting in early September with all the community groups to create a consensus about the concerns and to connect city staff and the community.

The three main community groups are No Rezone, founded by Mr. McGuinty and Steve Bierbrier; Protect Vista on the Park, organized by Harry Seifert; and Rosewood Estates, headed by Allan MacNamara.

"We agreed that the resident parking should be underground; we agreed we should do our best to limit traffic access off of Playfair Dr.; we agreed that the set backs [the developer was looking to amend] along Playfair weren't

appropriate; we agreed the current design of both the tower and townhomes doesn't integrate from a design standpoint with the adjacent community," said Coun. Hume.

"We wanted to maximize the amount of visitor parking spots and make sure there was adequate parking for residents similar to the other apartment building at 1705 Playfair Dr. and we agreed the height of the tower had to be addressed to the satisfaction of the Rosewoods Estate, the townhomes next to the tower."

Along with the community consensus, the Vista on the Park organization had two more concerns specific to their building. They requested fencing in front of the condo at 1705 Playfair Dr. and a new entrance on the street for the existing condo.

"As we understand on all of these positions the developer agreed," Coun. Hume said.

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"We haven't seen a satisfactory new design so we are still waiting for that and there hasn't been an agreement on the height of the tower yet."

Currently city planning staff are in talks with the developer. Once talks are completed, the developer will come back with a design and if staff agree with the plan, it will then be brought out to the community and Coun. Hume said there will be advertised public meetings.

Along with the councillor, the various community groups are anxious to see the new plans.

"The message we want to get out from the community is the fact that we do very much appreciate the work Peter [Hume] has been doing and we know the message as a community as a whole is getting through not only to Peter [Hume] but also to the City of Ottawa planning group as well as to the developer," explained Mr. Bierbrier. "I think at the beginning everything was a mystery to us and I still think much of it is a mystery and until we see the next version, it's really hard to talk about."

Although this application got off to a rocky start everyone likes how it's progressing.

"In my opinion, Coun. Hume and city planners have been very, very helpful. I've met with them, I've communicated with them and they have taken the community responses very well and I think they are doing what they should do," said Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. McGuinty wanted to make sure people understand this is not a 'not in my back yard' campaign where residents are simply making excuses. Rather, it's a campaign where residents are using city infill plans to go against a development.

**There is a positive way to engage the public and that wasn't done in this case.**

Peter Hume  
City Councillor,  
Alta Vista Ward

"The official city plan is very clear and it says it wants infill that fits in the existing community," Mr. McGuinty said.

"We just want proportional, intelligent, compatible infill and we want it to be in keeping with the official plan policies."

Coun. Hume noted that he was not "particularly pleased" with how the application was made and if ever faced with a similar application in his ward in the future, he would handle it differently.

"There is a positive way to engage the public and that wasn't done in this case, so if faced with this again I would certainly be a lot stronger and more prescriptive with the proponent," said Coun. Hume.

For more information, visit No Rezone's blog at [www.norezone.wordpress.com](http://www.norezone.wordpress.com).

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