

## **A Letter from the Association: Why NENA Supports the tall building on Pier 8.**

Residents have expressed concerns about traffic and parking, for the building described as an eye sore and beautiful building. There is enthusiasm from some neighbours and concerns from others. The proposed 45 storey building on Pier 8 has attracted both enthusiasm and concern from members of the community.

Last year, the Planning & Traffic Committee of NENA undertook a thorough review of the tall building proposal, along with having public meetings that were open to everyone and widely advertised. After consultation the Committee unanimously recommended the 45-storey building be approved, with a number of conditions and reservations about details. After the committee meeting recommendations were reviewed at the NENA general meeting and after discussion both the recommendations and reservations were unanimously approved.

Understanding why NENA would support an 8 storey height limit on Pier 8 and opposed buildings over 6 stories along James Street North is a good question. Further leading some to question why NENA would support 45 stories.

The simple answer is the 45-storey building won't cause an increase in traffic or the overall number of units on Pier 8 as reports and numbers have been agreed to by the City. The increased height of this single building will reduce the density of the rest of Pier 8, taking pressure of streets, increasing family units and connecting the new development to the Discovery Centre and waterfront. With development under the most rigorous design standard and scrutiny of any other building.

As with any topic there is also a more in detailed understanding and history. Our neighbourhood's primary planning document is an Official Plan called Setting Sail. Which was created through a partnership between the City and a group of neighbourhood residents that started working together in 2003. With Setting Sail being approved by the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) in 2012, with 750 to 1000 family units originally understood to be on Pier 8. A key reason the neighbourhood supported building on Pier 8 was the opportunity to increase family housing in and throughout the neighbourhood. Our neighbourhood is child and family friendly with more families strengthening connections between all buildings and increasing the use of schools, recreation centres, shops and churches. We welcome the input of new residents on Pier 8 and the input they have about what happens in our new distinct neighbourhood.

After the OMB approved Setting Sail, the City unilaterally increased the number of units to 1600, without discussion or consultation. Residents of the north end appealed that decision to the Ontario Land Tribunal understanding that change meant more traffic and far fewer children. Pier 8 stood to be the future home of 1600 people living in one-bedroom units.

With a new fixed number of units (1600) and a fixed area for development the only variable to change is the type of units proposed. With a building height set at 8 stories if you increase the number of units you reduce the size of the units. Essentially changing the child and family development understood under the original Setting Sail agreement to a development that has no connection to the north end except to drive through it.

As the Tribunal hearing approached, the developer started to talk to NENA. As they understood that our concern was with the number of family units, the discussions turned to a possible tall signature building on Block 16 - at that time zoned for institutional uses. The developer agreed understanding that the total number of units would not change.

**This meant that the density in all other blocks would be reduced.**

This is a critical point, by removing approximately 400 units from the 8 storey buildings and having them in a single signature building, the density on remainder of Pier 8 is reduced. Allowing for more family housing in the development and lower density across the street from current homes.

At the Tribunal all parties negotiated through and under the supervision of a mediator. The final settlement all agreed to was that one building could be constructed as a signature or landmark building. It was expressly set out this is not a precedent and the City (as owner of Pier 8) would not permit other building over 8 stories on the Pier. Over 25 neighbourhood residents were consulted by the appeal team including 6 former NENA Presidents. After the required council approval of the settlement, the public process began that also included a settlement to reduce traffic along John Street.

NENA held public meetings after the settlement to inform the neighbourhood. A team from the Planning & Traffic Committee studied the 45 storey proposal in depth. After open discussion at each meeting the Planning & Traffic Committee recommended support for the building. This recommendation was then discussed at our general association meeting which open and welcome everyone. The recommendation was unanimously approved by the general meeting with no opposition or concerns from neighbours.

The second aspect of the settlement is that the building must conform to clear design guidelines approved by Council. To our knowledge this is the first and only housing project in Hamilton that is required to meet rigorous standards of sustainability, beauty and integration with adjacent uses. The result will be a signature design that is a unique opportunity for the City and our neighbourhood. NENA understands that not everyone will agree, but through open public discussion the proposed design can create a beautiful building that adds to the neighbourhood and the harbour.

It has taken a long time to get to this point, through consultation, community engagement and open public meetings / discussion. NENA is satisfied that this building does not create a precedent but is single signature landmark building designed to bring families to Pier 8. NENA is satisfied that the unique design requirements set out by the City will create a landmark for the north end and Hamilton.

It should be remembered that if the building is approved the number of units being built on Pier 8 will not change. There is also no change in traffic or parking requirements as a result of the approval. The building will be built to help grow the child and family character of the north end as originally approved.

It has been a long road with many weeks of volunteer work and numerous public meetings getting to this point. We encourage our neighbours to examine the proposal carefully. NENA recommends the proposal and invites anyone with concerns, questions or support to our committee or general meetings.

NENA and any of our committees can be reached through our website ([www.northendneighbourhoodassociation.com](http://www.northendneighbourhoodassociation.com)). We also encourage people to join our monthly meeting on the first Wednesday of each month, with links found on the website and our social media posts.

Regards

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