

Development Proposal for 114 Richmond Rd



Ashcroft has released its proposal a large (700+ units) development for 114 Richmond Rd (2.1 ha) including:

- A mixed-use building fronting Richmond Rd (7-12 Storeys),
- A hotel directly behind the convent (8-9 Storeys),
- A senior's retirement building (5-8 Storeys),
- Senior's condominiums (5 Storeys),
- Underground parking under the majority of the site.

This directly challenges design guidelines of what could be built which were presented to all potential buyers of the site before they purchased the property. The Design guidelines were built upon established policies and guiding documents for the area. The guidelines stated acceptable levels of development as 4-6 storeys along Richmond Road and 4 storeys in the back of the property. It also outlined heritage designation details, sight lines and site plan controls to be used. Large portions of public space are not truly public but in fact private driveways or patios of restaurants. The development is also proposing to cut through Byron Linear Park.

How balanced is this Intensification?

Since 2006 there have been 832 units built or approved along the Richmond Road corridor that represents 104 per cent of the target the street was to achieve by 2021 according to City planning documents. The Ashcroft proposal for 114 Richmond Rd. would bring intensification levels close to the 2031 target. The Richmond Road/Westboro Community Design Plan (CDP) specifically identified intensification levels for each segment of the study area. In the area around the site, Ashcroft is already building 266 units leaving only 342 units to be built in over a decade.

While significant work is being undertaken by the City to improve quality of life in support of intensification, the pace of growth proposed by Ashcroft is beyond what can be reasonably accommodated by the community. Among many enhancements in the planning framework to increase compatibility the ministry specifically included protection against over-intensification in the City Official Plan. The ministry included that intensification policies are properly implemented as they are along the Richmond Rd corridor they shall not be used for approving height or density above current zoning

What are the legal processes are being undertaken on the site?

Heritage designation is underway for the full site that will help ensure the cultural significance of the site. Although appealed by Ashcroft to the Ontario Superior Court, both the City advisory and Council committees have approved the designation and Council will shortly vote on it. This designation is not able to be overturned outside of Council if enacted. Ashcroft has also attempted to file a re-zoning application without full documentation and will likely try to resubmit shortly. This process would need to come before committee and Council after staff review but is appealable beyond Council control to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). An appeal for building outside established guidelines will prove to be a test for recent in-force Official Plan and Secondary Plan compatibility improvements. The community will be advised on the application throughout with public comment periods at the start of the process.

The Community and City at large understands and supports balanced intensification as it can build better, more sustainable communities but over-intensification unnecessarily creates significant negative implications. Ashcroft is not abiding by reasonable design guidelines presented before the company purchased the property and is proposing significant over-intensification on the site.