

2013 NECA AGM Report
Beechwood-MacKay Redevelopment Site/Committee

- The Beechwood-MacKay property is a *cornerstone* location for New Edinburgh and the greater community along the Beechwood village mainstreet.
- Destroyed by fire, it had been too long awaiting a second lease on life.
- When NECA's board confirmed Minto was pursuing its redevelopment, we quickly formed a dedicated working committee and requested a meeting with Minto to discuss opportunities for pursuing an *exemplary* and *soonest* redevelopment.
- We also wanted to ensure residents of New Edinburgh and the greater community had *every opportunity* to be informed and to provide input regarding this key site.
- We organized *our own* community information meeting to present the planning framework (approved policies, zoning, guidelines) for the site and invited Minto to present their preliminary plans also.
- It was held January 16, 2013, at the MacKay United Church hall.
- A *capacity, engaged* community crowd attended the presentations and dozens stayed on to discuss specific aspects of the proposal (design, transportation, retail, environment) and then provided *informed* feedback.
- Generally, NECA and the community were pleased with the mid-rise scale and mixed use (condo-retail) proposed for the site.
- There were concerns however with the design detail, unclear direction for the retail component and vehicular access.
- The city's policies call for new, larger buildings to be set back on upper floors and broken up vertically to appear like several buildings built over time; be constructed of warm materials complementing surrounding buildings, and to incorporate smaller retail businesses to uphold the mainstreet character.
- The initial design appeared too commercial, uniform and cool: it was lacking vertical variation and warmth, with more glass and steel than masonry.
- Our working committee further ensured the City held a follow on *official* public information meeting, which was held March 19 at St. Bartholomew's Church hall.

- The meeting was well attended and residents again provided *informed, reasoned* input.
- NECA's Heritage & Development committee also submitted formal comments to the City.
- Minto and their architect *listened* and made some improvements.
- The revised plans were presented to and approved by the City's planning committee at a marathon meeting on March 26, where our committee reps addressed the report.
- They were then presented to and approved by the City's urban design review panel on June 26, where we attended as observers.
- The redesigned building has a more varied façade, with less glass and more masonry that is striated and warmer in colour—a better complement to surrounding brick buildings.
- NECA hopes Minto will also pursue an optimum number and mix of smaller street-front retail units to bring back the *village* dynamic created by the 10 businesses that were lost to the fire.
- High on the most wanted list is another hardware store!
- We have had follow-on communications with Minto, City councillors and staff in this regard, including a letter from our president referencing new hardware retail formats, such as the 'Canadian Tire Express' stores.
- We have also encouraged Minto to enhance the blank west facing wall to create a *gateway feature* for this entrance to New Edinburgh and Beechwood village.
- **NECA and the community have had a *respectful* dialogue with Minto and their architect, which has culminated in an *improved* design for this cornerstone site and gateway for New Edinburgh and Beechwood village.**
- We understand Minto's initial pre-sales events have had positive results and note that the official public launch event will be held next Saturday, October 26.
- **We wish Minto every success in giving this prime location a new lease on life.**