TO: The Toronto East York Community Council

FROM: Jack Costello, chaplain to Romero House for 30 years

**A CITY WANTING TO BE A COMMUNITY**

My name is Jack Costello. I am a member of the Romero House Advisory Group giving consideration over several months to the   intentions and planning of the proposing Developers of the Bloor/Dundas West “Giraffe”  project.

The presentation below is deliberately tuned to the felt need for serious consideration being given by all City Councils to **the need for a ‘major conversion in attitude and practice’ by Developers (this one, in particular)**.

It addresses itself to the need for our City Councils to care for the housing needs of many people with modest incomes and limited funds *for affordable housing relative to their incomes*.

I raise one question here: *What would the construction process and product be like if the City and the developer gave serious attention to the housing costs and needs of people who have to live relatively close to efficient public transit?*

My background:

-- For 30 years I have been part of ‘Romero House’ for Refugees (at 1558 Bloor St. W.--four properties west of this very corner.

--For 20 years I have been living at Sherbourne and Earl St.--directly across from St. Jamestown and serving its people.

--For 10 years before that , I lived in The Annex on Huron St. and also on Madison. When not in Toronto, I lived in other parts of the world--i.e., the USA, Asia and Europe.

--I taught in Regis College, at  the University of Toronto for 30 years, and was president of that College for 14 of those years.

--I know our City  well.

Toronto, like any city,  is indeed about housing--housing for its families, citizens  and workers,  workers, play-goers, hockey and baseball fans,--and visitors of many stripes and colours. People live here; and want to be able to live here! People want to make Toronto their home.  And they can only do so if we, as a City,  want them enough to provide affordable housing and housing- legislation, to meet their needs as workers and their hopes as parents and citizens.

It could be said that any city--but Toronto in a special way--is primarily a verb, not  a noun. It has an identity… yes, but that identity is always on the move--and each of us is invited to be an active part of both its identity and its changing--in the direction of a great inclusion.

Toronto is  not just a city; it is a city wanting to be a community. Full of diversity, yearning for a unity that is ‘fair’ for all.  In fact, being a part of that goal is our  joining in on **the grand enterprise of helping to build our City as a Community**. And at the heart of forming community with one another, we mean helping  to create a more humane, just and convivial society. Community shouldn’t happen here only as a feeling;-- like when the Leafs or the Jays are doing well! It is a way of being.

**At the very heart of this grand enterprise  of taking a city and making it more and more a just and caring community is affordable housing**. Building a city-community, and  joining in on and creating a neighbourhood as a community, requires housing that is decent and affordable. We mean housing that people of various income levels can afford, and live in with comfort and dignity. We need a city in which people, seeking housing for their families, are not driven mercilessly by prices but rather that prices are shaped by the economic capacities of people and by the care of this City for their welfare. That means affordable housing requires laws that work for everyone--especially the most needy.

Our group’s conviction and goal is to encourage --and even pressure--developers, to express a public and clear interest themselves in contributing  to creating a more humane and convivial society--in every part of the City. We ask and require developers to become contributors **to a vision in which ‘competition’ is an acceptable factor within a shared vision of ‘cooperation’--and cooperation is in service of ‘community’.**

From the perspective of caring for affordability in housing, developers can still ‘make money’. But we urgently require that they join us in providing housing at an affordable level, and supporting revised laws that give families a fair chance to become active members of the community that we are all living in --and building together.