

## YUDC explains choice for location of housing site

By GREG SPEARN

□ Greg Spearn is Vice President of the York University Development Corporation.

Judith Fraser's letter "Fault Found in Housing Site," in last week's *Excalibur*, is most welcome. This form of constructive input to the planning process for the future of York's land can be nothing but helpful—we invite much more. Following, are brief responses to each of the five issues raised by Fraser:

1. I disagree completely that housing development at the southwest corner of campus would destroy or endanger the naturally soft edge to the ravine. The area being considered extends west from Niagara Blvd. and on the north side of Murray Ross.  
Housing development can be the most sensitive interface to natural features—indeed preservation and enhancement of natural features helps to create a better housing project. Therefore, why inflict a negative impact on such a feature? Finally, there is existing housing south and north of this site. What better complement than additional shelter?
2. I believe the area used for walks and the "psychologically necessary" greenspace referred to is the same area that would be cleaned up and enhanced by development adjacent to it. The York University Development Corporation (YUDC) supports that particular notion espoused by Jane Jacobs, in creating or enhancing liveable

cities—particularly wooded and ravine areas.

The reference to a buffer from the rougher elements of Jane-Finch is an interesting one, yet there are rougher elements in any urban area, and one of the best ways of increasing our level of comfort over individual safety and security is to have more eyes on campus and improved accessibility to the natural amenities of the area.

3. The southeast area of campus is not necessarily as well suited for housing. In the first place the area does not have the same level of amenities enjoyed further west.

Secondly it is beside a major arterial road with the tank farms across the road further east.

Thirdly, other uses that on an interim basis could be related to the University in a very limited way and at the same time provide much needed income, could in fact be University buildings in the very long term (if we need them). That is not as easy to do with housing.

Fourthly, given this long term view, there is the likelihood of some form of rapid transit in the hydro corridor. The most logical location for a station is at Keele Street and the corridor. What better use in the very long term than buildings which provide us with the most options for the future?

Fifth and finally, in order to get the best possible housing project (and we will be involved in the design) for the best possible financial return, we may be faced

with selling the land. In the long term, our most valuable lands will be those next to the transit stop at Keele Street: therefore, those lands should not be considered for sale, but rather, developed on long term land leases.

4. Some traffic problems exist today, even with no further development. Clearly, any new development must both address the existing and incremental traffic associated with the development. Traffic issues are being studied very carefully.

5. Ms. Fraser speaks to the issue of non-students wandering onto the main pedestrian thoroughfares and thereby posing a safety and security risk. That safety and security risk exists where there are people—whether students or not—and particularly where there are no people (in the vast open areas on our periphery). I would submit that not all or even most "non-students" are bad, and indeed may contribute very positively to the quality of life at York.

The final part of Ms. Fraser's letter poses a question to the Development Corporation and to me personally. Allow me to answer in several brief but important ways.

First, the corporation and I value student opinion immensely. Student interest has been less than overwhelming to date. At a well-publicized open forum for the 38,000 students at York in October, eight students attended. The meeting followed on the heels of a great deal of publicity in campus publications

over a number of issues of those papers.

The YUDC questionnaire had a response rate of one half of one percent. A detailed, focussed questionnaire to all student leaders (approximately 60) elicited 2 returns. Please don't take this as criticism—this is simply the way things are. We welcome any advice we can get to reverse this trend. Again, we need and welcome constructive input.

Finally, affordable student housing is competing effectively for the top of the list of priorities. We are working very closely with CYSF and the University Administration on additional student housing as one component of a package that includes the new student centre. It is

housing projects like the one discussed in Ms. Fraser's letter that will enable York as a poor university to be able to afford the subsidization and commitments necessary to support projects like student housing, the student centre and other badly needed facilities.

In closing, please remember that this and other proposals for development that will come forward in the future are a means to an end—a true 24-hour campus, academic enhancement and the provision of badly needed space and facilities and equipment that this University deserves. We, as a university, are trying to help ourselves. How can you help?

### Letters Cont'd

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Physical Education, and its subsequent disgraceful funding. This year Recreation York received an effective operating grant of \$14,000. This works out to \$3.50/person intramurals alone.

There are now two alternatives open to the Physical Education department in regards to intramurals and recreation—either increase the programs funding, or cut the number of programs Recreation York offers. It is sad to note that by increasing the entry fees, the latter will be accomplished by ensuring lower participation.

Students cannot be expected to continually complacently accept the under-funding of programs that are central to campus extra-curricular life, and to live with the secrecy that surrounds this under-funding. We

will be passing around a petition asking the Phys.-Ed. department to open discussion about the funds and to increase the funds to this large, student-oriented and enjoyable program. We hope all those who have participated and who care about this issue will sign it.

—Steve Manweiler

### ERRATUM

In the article "Campus group's film sparks debate" (*Excalibur*, Jan. 29, 1987), *Excalibur* did not mean to suggest any connection on the part of Canadian Coalition for Peace through Strength to certain organizations. We sincerely apologize to CCPS if any inconvenience was caused.

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