

To: Steve Belan

On behalf of the Champlain Park Community Association (CPCA) Executive, I am writing to express our opposition to the Thai Embassy request for a change in use under its R1P zoning to allow its building to be used entirely as an office space with no residential component.

Our concerns are based on the following considerations:

* Our resident members have a direct stake in the outcome. The geographic boundary of the Champlain Park Community Association includes the eastern side of Island Park Drive between the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway and Scott Street.

* The Thai mission has been using its building as an office instead of as a residence since at least 2010, if not longer. It has been doing so in the full knowledge that this is a non-permitted use. While wilful non-compliance with the zoning by-laws might conceivably be condoned implicitly if circumstances warrant, we suggest that, as a principle of good public policy governance, it should never be explicitly legitimized, including in this specific case. To do otherwise risks becoming an instructive object lesson for others looking to get away with breaking the rules too. That's a negative precedent the City should never want to set.

* There's another potential precedent that concerns us deeply - undermining the integrity of the R1 zoning code. Allowing a non-residential office use under the R1 code is starkly at odds with the clear intent of the R1 code to limit the built form covered by that designation exclusively to single-family residential use. We see no justification for such a change, especially in the absence of a strong planning rationale to support it. If allowed, we foresee negative implications that could extend well beyond Island Park Drive.

* The planning rationale in the Thai application for a change in use is remarkably weak, amounting to little more than admitting the Thais are in non-compliance and would like an exemption simply because they are planning a new Embassy building. If the Thai request were granted on the basis of such inadequate justification, it opens the door for others doing the same anywhere else in any R 1 zone.

* The NCC and its predecessor organization, the Ottawa Improvement Commission, meant the street to be residential. That's reflected in the 99-year covenants with the homeowners. The City of Ottawa's R1P zoning for the Thai Embassy property reflects that intention. So too does the City's current initiative to apply a heritage zoning overlay to the street and the IPCA's efforts to eventually convert that to a full-fledged Heritage Conservation District when the covenants expire in a few years. To allow the requested change in use would be an unexpected and unwelcome reversal from the City's past and recently expressed intentions with respect to Island Park Drive.

* As part of the NCC's national capital parkway network, Island Park Drive is one of the city's iconic landmark streets. As such, we suggest the City should take special care to preserve the street's long-recognized essential characteristics. For almost 100 years, Island Park Drive has been a street of single-family residences with a maximum of two-story heights, aligned front-yard set backs and green medians. We want to see it stay that way. The residents of the street and the residents of the near-by neighbourhoods with whom we have spoken do as well.

As a community we very much welcome the Thai Embassy presence on Island Park Drive as well as that of the other Diplomatic Missions on the street. We are delighted that the Thais want to update their building to better showcase the modernizing country the Thai Mission represents. We would however be deeply concerned if the City were to set a precedent opening the door to non-residential uses or non-residential built forms fundamentally incompatible and inconsistent with current zoning.

Thank you for your consideration.

Roland Dorsay

Executive Member on behalf of the Champlain Park Community Association Executive.