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Editor
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The CARE Awards and the Dwelling on Despard Avenue

The Rockland Neighbourhood Association actively supports and promotes excellence in architecture and we congratulate the designers and builders on their awards, but this residence and the “semi-attached” adjoining residence caused significant disruption to the ambiance and streetscape of the neighbourhood. It may even be responsible in part for the City’s proposed changes to the Zoning Regulation Bylaw related to changes to site topography and grade calculation in low density residential areas. Certainly, rooftop decks – which infringe on neighbours’ privacy - are no longer allowed.

After the demolition of an old, but attractive period residence, the lot was cleared of mature trees and considerable green privacy screening. A loose-stone retaining wall was built around its southern edge, dramatically raising the ground level of a portion of the lot. Two large multi-storey residences were built, completely filling what was previously a single family lot with significant garden space. The small fence joining these residences meant they were considered “semi-attached,” hence requiring no rezoning and therefore no neighbourhood consultation.

Neighbours now face a wall of garage doors on Despard Avenue, two towering residences completely overwhelming the streetscape, neighbours who have lost the privacy of their homes, ongoing noise problems from the elevated roof decks, and serious down slope drainage issues at the adjacent homes.

The Rockland Neighbourhood Association invested considerable effort trying to assist the neighbours in getting information from the City on the structural integrity of the stone retaining walls and the changes to the height of the site.

Given the significant disruption to the ambiance of the neighbourhood and the impact on neighbouring properties, it is ironic to read that this Rockland residence was honoured six times at the 2013 Construction Achievement and Renovation of Excellence Awards.

Janet Simpson, President
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