

FOURTEEN FAST FACTS

about the proposal of Time Development Group to build 12- and 21-storey towers on River Road, between Philip and John Streets



1. **Current zoning: low-rise, high density.** The development plan approved by Council in 2008 provides for 119 units in a long, narrow building of 7 storeys at the south end (John Street) and 4 storeys at the north end (Philip Street). The density approved is 96 units per acre.
2. **Proposed zoning: high-rise, super-high density (as shown above right).** The current proposal is for 390 units in two apartment towers of 12 and 21 storeys. This works out to a density of 200 units per acre.
3. **Density even higher than in the proposal earlier withdrawn.** In 2006, over the objections of its Department of Planning, City Council approved a 29-storey tower for this site, with a density of 155 units per acre. Residents protested. Niagara Region disapproved. The property changed hands. The 2008 rezoning currently in force (density of 96 units per acre) was a kind of compromise, but the economy slowed. No construction took place.
4. **Lending the developer a helping hand.** In 2006, residents objected to the proposed development on grounds that it would interfere with their use of River Lane. This objection no longer counts, because the section of River Lane between Philip and John Streets no longer exists. Last February, after Time Development bought the development site and informed the city of its plans for the 12- and 21-storey towers, City Council closed this section of River Lane, declared it disused and surplus, and sold it to Time Development.
5. **Cheap land for sale – sorry, sold!** How much did Time Development have to pay? \$12,000, or about \$15 per m² (according to the report to Council of City Solicitor Ken Beaman and CAO Ken Todd, the land amounted to 845 m²). The minutes do not show anyone suggesting that the land might have been sold too cheap, or that other abutting landowners should have been allowed to bid.
6. **Might the towers fall into the gorge?** No building as tall or heavy as those proposed has yet been built so close to the edge of the Niagara Gorge. In 2008, Bill Barratt, president of the company that installed the lighting poles along River Road, was worried about the geological risk and unintended effects of blasting the bedrock. He registered his concerns with the city's Planning Department, enclosing photos of the Schoellkopf disaster in 1956 – directly across the river from where the 12- and 21-storey towers would be built. Mr. Barratt died in 2011.
7. **New skyscrapers in an old neighbourhood.** Currently, super-tall buildings in Niagara Falls are almost all in the Fallsview Casino area. The buildings proposed would be the tallest north of the Rainbow Bridge and Highway 420, taller even than Buckley Towers near Victoria Avenue, currently the tallest, with 14 storeys. The proposed towers would dwarf the heritage homes, duplexes, and bed and breakfasts in the residential area along River Road.
8. **The proposed towers are short compared to what Council has approved for next door.** In 2012, City Council approved a redevelopment plan for the adjacent properties to the south – where Bird Kingdom and Travelodge are now. That plan, proposed by partners Ralph Terrio and Hunter Milborne, allows for construction of two 60-storey towers for a resort. After five years, no construction has begun.

9. **What will happen next door remains to be seen.** What Council approved in 2012 for the adjacent property is no more set in stone than what it approved in 2008 for the property Time Development now owns. Market conditions change. Developers buy and sell. The newly renovated Travelodge may still be going strong 20 years from now.
10. **An abiding attorney.** Amidst turnover of owners of the development site, one constant has been their lawyer, Italia Gilberti, of the firm Broderick & Partners, at the corner of Queen and Ontario almost opposite City Hall. A former member of the Niagara Parks Commission, Ms. Gilberti was instrumental in developing the high-rose hotels in the Fallsview Casino area.
11. **Where are they now?** John and Teresa Prentice, living next to the development site at 4413 John St., led the protest against it in 2008, even appealing to the Ontario Municipal Board. Time Development Group bought them out last year. The Prentices moved away. Their former home is now an illegal vacation rental on airbnb, advertised as the “Historic Prentice House.” The host pictured is John Pinter, owner of Niagara Grandview Manor two blocks north.
12. **Guess who the host is.** Among other leading opponents of the 2008 proposal were Ken and Jean Murphy at 5401 River Road, half a block north of the development site. They had lived in their home for decades, raised a large family in it. They moved to a seniors’ residence in 2011. Their home is now an illegal vacation rental on airbnb, advertised as “Niagara Gorgeview Inn.”
13. **River Road is not Paradise.** Time Development Group is a different Chinese developer than GR Investment Group, the company proposing the “Paradise” project at Thundering Waters. GR Investment’s website shows pictures and bios of the people running it: Board Chair Helen Chang, President Zhang Changshun, and so on. Time Development’s website does not show names or photos of the people in charge, just says the company has been building homes “in Toronto and China” since 2000. From linkedin, one learns that the company has 11-50 employees, that Shaoyong Shen is a project manager, Jiayi Wang an office assistant, and Hao Zhang a vice-president.
14. **The grass has been mowed.** The development site grew up in tall weeds this summer, an unsightly welcome to Niagara Falls for the thousands of tourists passing by in cars and on foot. Somebody finally mowed it on September 11. Might this be a sign of the developer’s respect for this community?

For documents on which this fact sheet is based, email Ken Westhues, 5419 River Road: <kwesthue@uwaterloo.ca>
 Feedback appreciated, especially correction of any mistakes.



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Historic Prentice House on John Street



Entire vacation home · Niagara Falls ★★★★★ 3 reviews



How the development site looked in early September 2017

From the screen capture, airbnb, September 2017