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Sent: Monday, June 19, 2023 3:30 AM

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Cc: howard doughty; Alana Kanaka

Subject: Council Public Meeting - June 20, 2023 - OPA 18.8 - ORLC - Delegation Letter

To whom it may concern:

The Beaufort Hills Homeowners' Association (BHHA) draws its membership from the 225 homes in the neighbourhood generally bordered by Yonge Street, Coon's Road, to Humberland Trail, Blackforest Drive to Beaufort Hills Drive.

We are concerned about the Key Directions Report for the Richmond Hill Official Plan Update.

Following a review of pertinent sections of the Key Directions Report for the Richmond Hill Official Plan Update dated November 2021 and attendance at the City Plan Open House on June 7, 2023 at the McConaghy Centre, we wish to share these comments and concerns:

a) Oak Ridges Local Centre (ORLC)

OPA 18.8 proposes extending the ORLC north of Worthington / Blackforest on the east side of Yonge and for a pocket on the west side of Yonge between Coon's Road and Blackforest. The rationale given by the Planner at the Open House for this was a statement that development applications have already been received for these two areas. This raises an important question: is the task of the planning department to plan or to respond, to be proactive in determining what good development would look like or to be reactive and seek only modest modifications of their profit maximization in the interest of the community.

Over the past 40 years, the BHHA has confronted development applications that have never been in the interest of the residents. We have succeeded, if at all, only in winning mild and temporary revisions in development proposals, which have then been used to establish precedents for even more egregious building proposals the inevitable next time.

With regard to this specific case, we should all remember last year when ex-councillor Beros claimed to have led a successful fight against the Baif highrise development proposals near the SE corner of Bloomington & Yonge, and to have won! The former councillor was wrong. In fact, the original proposal for a high-rise was merely delayed (as the number of townhouses approved was increased). And now the door is wide open with a "welcome" sign for the resubmission of perhaps an even larger complex.

The Oak Ridges Local Centre sits atop the highest land mass in Richmond Hill. That natural filtration system cannot sustain intensification of this kind. The whole of Ward 1 was said by the Planning Department in 1984 to be such a sensitive, fragile environment that no more than 6,000 people could responsibly populate it. Now, we have about 40,000 and the OPA 18.8 is set to accommodate even more.

The effects on the underground water table and the natural drainage system will (not might) be destructive and ultimately disastrous. Even the more recalcitrant deniers now admit that "climate change is real," they have not, however, accepted the consequence in terms of flooding, which is not matter of "if" but "when." To permit, much less to promote this absolutely unnecessary kind of "development" is nothing more than infantile vandalism against the environment.

To explain or excuse further development on the most northerly part of Ward 1 on the basis that, if these early proposals are rejected, then even worse will befall cannot be allowed to stand.

High-rise apartments, low-rise townhouse complexes, further single-family suburban homes, and pointless commercial development will add nothing to the inventory of "affordable housing" and will not be commercially viable. Pretending to make a walkable city in the midst of already existing "suburban sprawl" fixes none of the urgent provincial problems. It does, however, shift even more of a tax burden onto residents, while yielding nothing of value other than to developers' balance sheets.

In the struggle for responsible development, City Council is constrained by provincial legislation and a provincial government that either does not understand or does not care about fragile ecosystems. In the face of such a power structure, resistance is difficult and may yet be futile ... until 2026; in the meantime, surely there must be some strategy more ennobling and potentially effective than a pre-emptive cringe.

The past week has shown how a concerted effort by regional mayors can contribute to the withdrawal of a proposed amalgamation of York Region into a megacity. The current premier may be immune to reason, evidence, and the public interest; however, he has demonstrated that he can be swayed by a display of solidarity and commitment. Things could be otherwise, and the place to start is with reversing the force field. Richmond Hill must set the rules and establish the standards. Corporations must start with a set of environment-friendly, people-centred rules. There is plenty of money to be made on all the land already on the way to development in places where no such danger exists.

Shortly after moving here in May 1984, Suzanne Payne, in her capacity as President of BHHA, met with then-Mayor Al Duffy. Mayor Duffy assured her that the southeast corner of Bloomington & Yonge down to what is now Worthington would never be developed, given the geotechnical constraints and swampy conditions caused by a high water table in this portion of the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM). It has always seemed appropriate for the gateway to this part of Richmond Hill to remain in a natural state to protect the vista from the crest of the ORM, and given the recognized gems of local features, including: Lake Wilcox, Lake St. George, Bond Lake, the Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve, Jefferson Forest and the stated "environment first" approach to planning for this area on the ORM. For these reasons, we ask that the ORLC proposed extension be canceled in this area north of Worthington / Blackforest on both sides of Yonge.

b) Modern Main Street

The introduction of a "Modern Main Street" with multi-storey buildings close to the main arteries of Yonge & King streets in the ORLC does not appeal to anyone. As good planning knows, a Main Street needs to be a destination point, with defined purposes.

Modern main streets exist where modern towns and cities exist, where a downtown area has naturally developed. A "walkable" city makes great sense where an established community already exists. Oak Ridges is not built that way. However misconceived it may have been, the era of "suburban sprawl" has established this community of mainly single-family dwellings and, in Beaufort Hills, large lots with residents who are unlikely to be attracted to yet another set of strip malls and the like. To imagine that people will walk a half-hour or more to buy fresh vegetables from a green grocer or flowers for the dinner table is absurd. Just as a transit system conceived on the false idea that people in Richmond Hill will take the subway to work every day in downtown Toronto flies in the face of all evidence, so the notion that a community hub around the No Frills store in an expanded "main street" defies logic. Indeed, the concept of a Yonge-centred strategy for development is fundamentally flawed when it is applied north of Stouffville or even Elgin Mills Road.

The current plan to introduce a "Modern Main Street" at the northern end of Oak Ridges lacks community purpose.

c) Low Impact Development Techniques

As you prepare to pave Paradise and put up parking lots and multi-storey buildings in Oak Ridges, climate change and severe impacts like flooding need to be anticipated and mitigation measures put in place. With a capacity of 0.5 mm (less than an average rainfall), the "low impact development technique" pictured in the Open House presentation material as explained by the Planning representative (gravel-filled pathways / swails around the base of new buildings) appears to be inadequate. Surely

any design recommendation or guideline to mitigate the effects of climate change must be aiming for the highest standard.

d) Impact on Beaufort Hills & Surrounding Communities

The Beaufort Hills neighbourhood is an extraordinary and unique community, one worthy of protection.

New development should be compatible and respect the established character of existing surrounding neighbourhoods. Beaufort Hills is an area of outstanding natural beauty, a stable well-established community with wooded lots and detached single family dwellings. This bold proposal in OPA 18.8 is out of character for the existing lot patterns and inappropriate for this natural environment.

e) Aging in Place in Richmond Hill

Years ago when we were young and very actively involved in the OPA 129 and subsequent Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) Hearing, we felt we were safeguarding the natural environment of this area of the ORM and doing our best to put the environment first.

The Beaufort Hills neighbourhood was protected by Zoning for lots of record for the 225 homes, and original homeowners signed covenants to protect and maintain the trees on our properties. This protection has been eroded over the years by purchasers who challenge the Zoning by-laws and resort to Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) to bypass Planning in Richmond Hill. Other current trends include building out to the maximum allowable limit on an existing site or applying to change the zoning to sever properties into two or three lots. It is a concern every time a "For Sale" sign goes up. How can we expect to age and thrive in an established community bombarded by construction noise and equipment, the desecration of the tree canopy, and the permanent loss of wetlands and green spaces threatened by development?

We wish to register a delegation to speak at the Council Meeting on June 20, 2023. Suzanne Payne will speak on behalf of the BHHA. Howard Doughty has already registered separately and we request he be scheduled to speak after Suzanne.

Please consider this a request to be notified of the decision of Council with respect to the adoption of Draft Official Plan Amendments for OPA 18.8 (File No.: MOPA-23-0003).

Sincerely,

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