

September 11, 2023

To: The City of Richmond Hill Council

From: Scott Rushlow, 16 Bawden Drive, Richmond Hill, ON (Heritage House Owner)

Re: **C#28-23 Agenda Item #15.2**

Dear Council Members,

I would ask that you include in your evaluation of the above captioned development proposal my thoughts on the matter.

To the developer's credit it appears they have made a more reasoned submission re height and density relative to their first submission, and isn't this precisely how they want you to see their latest proposal? They want you to forget that the bar is actually 10 storey's (the property is currently zoned "RM10")...and not the 32 storey's they innitally proposed. They now present their current offering as a significant sacrafice on their part and leverage an OLT case trial if they don't get their way. Are they not? I don't know how anyone could see it any other way.

A time for objectivity. So let's look at the facts;

First, this high density development proposal is still 60% higher than what the current zoning permits; not an insignificant departure from what the current zoning allows. Remember 10 storeys? More than that...kindly remember the character of the neighbourhood; 2 storey single family housing with some 2-3 storey townhousing mixed in. In other words...low density.

What does the Municipality envision for the North Leslie area?

More generally, it would appear from the City's "Official Plan Update, Emerging Key Directions (Sept 2021)" it describes the need for "Gentle Intensity" where a broader range of housing types are utilized in achieving its medium density housing and community development objectives. (For example, duplexes, triplexes, up to low rise apartment buildings) Makes sense. The "North Leslie Secondary Plan", the in-force planning document guiding development in the area bounded by Bayview Ave to the west, Elgin Mills Road to the south, the 404 to the East and 19th Ave to the North calls for, as one of it's guiding principles, "compatible development"; where "the design, orientation and intensity of new development recognize existing land uses". **In other words, new development should respect the character of the existing neighbourhood, where height and density are context appropriate.** With this in mind, I think a 10 storey development might even be considered a stretch for the neighbourhood. However, although I would prefer a more appropriate proposal of 6 to 8 storeys for the site I recognize the owner is within his right to build a 10 storey mixed use development.

Let's consider the current "RM10" zoning...This zoning permits generous development opportunities from either residential use or mixed use retail, office and personal services uses to a maximum of 10 storeys (subject to municipal approval). 10 storeys! That would still make this development a full 6 storeys higher than the tallest building in this area...bringing it closer to the "Gentile Intensification" objectives called for by the City of Richmond Hill. Please note this "RM10" zoning was very recently created; moving from the original agricultural zone in approximately 2017 to it's current zoning. I fully expect a 10 storey mixed use development represents a significant reward for the developer.

As an adjacent property owner I expected the developers would have reached out to me to discuss their proposal. They did not. I would have been happy to sit down with them to discuss my concerns with their proposal and the negative impacts on my property. The reality is I'm very concerned about the overlook effects of living under a 180 ft tower. My property, which already sits lower as a result of recent grading changes for their new subdivision, is literally steps away from this development. Difficult to use or even begin to enjoy your own yard space when you feel like there's potentially hundreds of people looking down on you. The privacy I sought here would be gone, to say nothing of the lowered property value.

I remind you. This development is immediately adjacent to a provincially significant wetland. As someone who has now spent a great deal of time in the area restoring the heritage house I can say I have witnessed first hand the many cast of characters who depend on this wetland for their survival. Deer, skunks, raccoons, blue heron, wild turkey, opossums, owls, coyotes, geese, ducks, squirrels, chipmunks, foxes, etc... I can also say that since the completion of the subdivision I have also witnessed a decline in the number of animal sightings since I first started coming here.

How about this... Has anyone else experienced a near collision trying to make a left turn from Bawden Drive onto John Birchall Road? Since this road has been opened up a couple of months ago I personally have had a couple of near misses trying to make this turn. Looking south the road bends away to the east making it impossible to see north bound traffic until it is on top of you. Also the southbound traffic coming from the Leslie Street/John Birchall intersection is tricky as it rounds the bend just before it reaches Bawden. And please...don't just take my word...try it yourself. And now they want to add another 450 residential units and some businesses to this corner? Someone is going to get hurt here.

In closing, it would seem to me that a 16 storey high density development proposal, with limited infrastructure support adjacent to low density housing and has to be considered inappropriate for the area. It is enough of a departure from both the current "RM10" zoning By-Laws and the North Leslie Secondary Plan design principles that this proposal must be rejected. I encourage the developers to reduce the height and density to a more appropriate level to match the needs of the community. Please listen to the local residents. The folks you sold your homes to.

Respectfully Submitted,
Scott Rushlow