

Deputation to Scarborough Community Council - July 17th 2020

Re: Golden Mile Secondary Plan

From: Larry Whatmore, President, Scarborough Community Renewal Organization

Members of Scarborough Community Council:

My name is Larry Whatmore. I am the president of the Scarborough Community Renewal Organization. SCRO is an organization of engaged volunteers that works to connect, promote and renew Scarborough, so Scarborough can be strong and prosperous. We seek to renew Scarborough on multiple fronts, including arts & culture, the natural environment and, of course, opportunities for economic prosperity.

The renewal of the Golden Mile provides such an opportunity. Over the past decade and more, Toronto has prospered but Scarborough, not so much, apart from condo towers and big box retail, which is not enough to build a complete and prosperous community. That requires so much more: office jobs from anchor employers, service businesses to support them, arts and cultural amenities, and parks and community facilities. In short, we foresee a complete community, not a bedroom community.

We have reviewed the draft Secondary Plan and many of the background reports. We believe there should be a greater emphasis on maintaining and expanding office space in the Golden Mile so that new office and employment related buildings are developed and existing ones are not lost to redevelopment.

This would also maximize the public benefit of the large investment now being made in the Eglinton Crosstown LRT.

SCRO has two specific suggestions to offer to improve the Secondary Plan.

First, SCRO believes the current language in Section 3.2.5 which “encourages” the retention of office space through redevelopment, should be strengthened to ensure existing office buildings are not lost to redevelopment. For example, the language in the City of Toronto Official Plan Amendment (OPA) Number 231, “requires” the retention and replacement of office floor space. This language should be incorporated into the Secondary Plan.

Second, SCRO believes that Section 4.5 of the Secondary Plan, which requires that a minimum of 10 percent of floor space be dedicated to non-residential uses should be increased to 20% to help create a critical mass of office and employment space in this part of Scarborough.

We have reviewed the letters submitted by the various landowners in the Golden Mile. We are disappointed to see the desire of some landowners to reduce the amount of non-residential floor space or to allow residential uses on employment area lands south of Eglinton Avenue.

Landowners cite COVID-related uncertainty in the office market as justification for this. Perhaps. Or it could be exactly the opposite, as we have opined recently, as have others, where office workers currently commuting downtown may be less inclined to do so, creating opportunities for a suburban renaissance. Nobody knows for sure at this time. But we believe it would be a mistake to allow short-term transactional thinking by current landowners to be the catalyst for a secondary plan that is meant to guide development in the Golden Mile for the next 30 – 40 years. Because once these lands are developed as condos, opportunities for more inspired developments later on will be foreclosed. Let’s not do this. This is a transformative opportunity for the Golden Mile. Let’s make sure this renewal includes a full suite of community

enhancements, including employment lands offering a wide range of employment opportunities for the thousands of new and existing residents who will live there.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak and happy to take any questions. I have also provided my speaking notes to the City Clerk for distribution to you.