

North York Community Preservation Panel

June 22, 2021

North York Civic Centre
Main floor, 5100 Yonge St.
Toronto, ON M2N 5V7
Attention: Carlie Turpin
email: nycc@toronto.ca

RE: Preliminary Report - Zoning By-law Amendment and Plan of Subdivision Applications - 1350 Sheppard Avenue West (Downsview Lands Secondary Plan, William Baker District)

Dear Councillor Pasternak, Chair, and Members of North York Community Council,

The North York Community Preservation Panel is the City Council appointed heritage preservation advisory committee for North York.

With this letter we submit our objection to the proposed plan for developing the William Baker lands.

The reason for our objection has to do with the existing heritage woodlot which is irreplaceable and is 100% protected under the 2011 Downsview Area Secondary Plan (DASP). While it's difficult to balance a heritage woodlot with volume housing, in our view the Application, as submitted, fails. The current plan will have the long- term effect of undermining the unique character of this mature forested area.

Some of the drawbacks of the application are as follows:

1. The archeological assessment found a total of 531 historical artifacts and "a single modified bone fragment was recovered from the site during the Stage 3 assessment and it is potentially associated with a Woodland period occupation. This stage 3 worked bone along with 12 pre-contact Indigenous ceramic artifacts recovered during Stage 2 were consistent with a site affiliated with the ancestral Huron-Wendat dating ca. 800-1650 AD." Shouldn't we seize this opportunity to use the heritage woodlot as an educational tool? Indigenous Nations, school groups, naturalists, conservationists, bird watchers, biologists, local historians, and members of the public would be provided with ample opportunity to teach and learn about the natural and cultural heritage of Downsview. Nowhere in the over 30 documents submitted with the Application or in the preliminary report is this even suggested.

2. What was parkland under the DASP is being sacrificed for development and 4 "new" parks are being created. The applicant feels that any loss of existing heritage woodlot can be made up for by creating additional parkland elsewhere -- as if it is just a matter of square footage. Currently the northern & eastern sites are largely treeless empty spaces while the planned intrusions into the woodlot require the destruction of up to 4

dozen mature trees. This is not a fair trade off. The priority should be to preserve and protect the resource we already have.

3. Any natural greenspace in the middle of a large city is rare and under significant pressure due to loss of habitat, ambient noise, artificial lighting, intrusive structures, increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic, omnipresent utilities, etc. Yet the plan proposes to surround this unique protected woodlot with 3985 residences. The wear and tear caused by the proximity of so many “non natural” elements creates an ongoing threat. In phase 1 the plan introduces residential units in 4 locations along the margins. To say that these 4 intrusions are incidental is misleading. Currently there are no barriers for the public to access the woodlot. Surrounding it with low and mid-rise buildings creates a barrier.

4. The proposed plan splits the heritage woodlot into a number of specific purpose areas; woodlot, parklands, buffer areas, development blocks, etc. While this subdividing may maximize real estate usage, it makes it impossible for the woodlot to survive any threats. From an ecological point of view this inorganic and piecemeal approach won't work as the separate parts are not designed to work with each other to create a “green network.” The woodlot should be maintained as a single entity.

According to Carolinian Canada’s Ecological Woodlot Management Fact Sheet “Forest cover has been declining for 200 years and is at extremely low levels today. Less than 15% of Carolinian forest remains in southern Ontario.” Their solution: “If in doubt, just leave it alone.”

Respectfully submitted,

Rosanna Iaboni,
NYCPP member
on behalf of the
North York Community
Preservation Panel

c.c. Al Rezoski, Manager, Community Planning, North York District

Ben DiRaimo, Senior Planner, Community Planning, North York District