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**Subject:** PH31.13 City Council consideration on March 9, 2022  
**Date:** March 8, 2022 8:29:58 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
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[Joint Declaration RE Willowdale Manor Seniors Home Feb 2022.pdf](#)  
[Seniors Health and Green Space March 2022.pdf](#)

Attention City Clerk, Marilyn Toft, Manager

**RE: City Council consideration on March 9, 2022**

PH31.13	ACTION			Ward: 18
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**Modular Supportive Housing Development at 175 Cumber Avenue**

The attached items are submitted on behalf of the following three local Willowdale (Ward 18) community organizations:



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**RE: Willowdale Manor Seniors Care Home Parklands**

**175 Cummer Ave. Willowdale, Toronto**



*Every  
resident*

*Bill of Rights for people who live  
in Ontario long-term care homes*

*Every  
resident*

*"has the right to be given access to  
protected areas outside the long-term care facility in order to enjoy  
outdoor activity, unless the physical setting makes this impossible."*



This joint declaration is made in response to continuing statements by City of Toronto officials and their political allies and recent media reporting, all of which omit material facts and include material misrepresentations.

In March 2021, with zero community notice or consultation, the City announced it would destroy and redevelop Willowdale Manor Seniors Care Home Parklands at 175 Cummer Ave in Willowdale, Toronto. The secret selection of this site was championed by local Willowdale Councillor John Filion.



In January 2022, following thousands of petitioners' protests, Willowdale MPP Stan Cho officially informed the City that it's poorly planned project at must be relocated. In a letter to Toronto Housing Chair/Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão, MPP Cho states "... *this site is just not suitable.... I am committed to working with the City to ensure we can find a more suitable location in Willowdale.*"

Unfortunately, Ms. Bailão and Mr. Filion and Mayor John Tory have refused to address the serious problems with this site selection and have refused to work with MPP Stan Cho on an alternate site. Instead, they have chosen to play politics and blame the Ontario Government for the city's own mistakes.

Specifically, for almost a year, City officials led by Mr. Filion, have:

- Refused to address or even to admit these parklands are protected for the seniors home residents' use and enjoyment under decisions in 1997 by the City of North York Planning Committee and 1998 by the Ontario Municipal Board. Decisions in which Mr. Filion himself was involved in 1997-1998.
- Refused to explain why seniors' rights and green canopy preservation are not issues permitted to be raised or discussed despite explicit City and Provincial policies protecting both.
- Refused to disclose the 50 alternative sites Mr. Filion claims were assessed and judged to be inferior to the protected parklands of a seniors home.
- Refused to justify how this interior neighbourhood parkland site within a City of 156,000 acres is the best location despite having limited proximity to daily living services much less to professional mental health and addiction supports for the chronically homeless persons intended to be housed on such seniors parkland.
- Refused to admit that the local Newtonbrook East neighbourhood associations have opposed this site on the basis that it would violate the seniors' rights and parklands preservation policies, as well as being an inappropriately remote location.
- Defamed and incited hatred towards neighbourhood residents and organizations, as "anti-homeless NIMBYs", while knowingly suppressing the fact, this very neighbourhood has since 2019 accommodated a major social services site at Cummer Ave. and Yonge St. initially housing over 175 refugees and now maintaining over 100 homeless shelter beds, not all of which are filled.
- Refused to address the serious site limitations and zoning by-law non-compliance issues raised by the City's own Planning Department and Provincial agencies.



In light of the foregoing facts and misleading City led media blitz, we again call for public officials at the City to do the right thing.

*Do right by Seniors.  
Do right by the Environment.  
And do right by the Homeless.  
City officials don't have to choose one.  
Honest and intelligent public servants can do all 3.*

February 15, 2022



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## Health Benefits of Green Outdoor Spaces for Seniors.

By Victoria Di Felice

*The author holds a Master of Science in Management at Ted Rogers School of Management and a Bachelor of Science from McMaster University. She is a second-year law student at the University of Western Ontario's Faculty of Law.*

There is a consensus in the literature that access to green outdoor spaces have both mental and physical health benefits for seniors. The leading study on the association between green spaces near residences and the longevity of senior citizens in large cities found that living in areas with walkable green spaces positively influences the longevity of urban senior citizens independent of their age, sex, marital status, or baseline functional status. The study defined “walkable green spaces” as any open green space near the senior’s residence.<sup>1</sup> A 2020 study found that the positive effects of green spaces are felt particularly in neighbourhoods that are characterized by lower income elderly populations.<sup>2</sup> These findings were confirmed in a recent 2021 study published in the International Journal of Environment Health Research.<sup>3</sup> The 2021 study analyzes the benefits of outdoor parks in the light of Covid-19. The paper notes that the size of the green space influences the activity level of individuals. Well-designed large outdoor environments have a positive effect on the physical activity levels and psychological well-being of elderly individuals. Importantly, the study notes that the health of elderly individuals is most influenced by their immediate outdoor environment compared to other age groups because of their decreased mobility. The study concludes that there is a need to improve immediate outdoor greenspace near senior’s residences.

In addition to the multiple studies demonstrating the need for green spaces near senior’s residences, a 2014 City staff report directed to the Board of Health highlighted that “abundant, diverse and well-maintained green spaces are important features of a healthy city.” The staff report details the myriad of both physical and mental benefits of green space and notes that the term “green space” refers to a “wide variety of natural and landscaped areas both publicly and privately owned.” It includes private yards and open spaces. The city emphasizes that “the health benefits of green space are more strongly associated with green space that is in close proximity (less than 1 km) to residential areas.” The staff report specifically notes the importance of green space “in areas near vulnerable populations including people living on low-income, racialized groups, and older adults,” noting that improving green space in areas where senior citizens are living is necessary to promote health.<sup>4</sup>

**REFERENCE:** Green City: Why Nature Matters to Health September 4, 2015 City Staff Report from Medical Officer of Health <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-83420.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> Takano, T., Nakamura, K., & Watanabe, M. (2002). Urban residential environments and senior citizens’ longevity in megacity areas: the importance of walkable green spaces. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 56(12), 913-918.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis, M., Cook, P. A., James, P., Wheeler, C. P., & Lindley, S. J. (2020). Relationships between health outcomes in older populations and urban green infrastructure size, quality and proximity. *BMC public health*, 20(1), 1-15.

<sup>3</sup> Levinger, P., Cerin, E., Milner, C., & Hill, K. D. (2021). Older people and nature: the benefits of outdoors, parks and nature in light of COVID-19 and beyond—where to from here?. *International Journal of Environmental Health Research*, 1-8.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-83420.pdf>