



January 12, 2022

To: Members of the Planning and Housing Committee

From: Aamir Sukhera on behalf of SaveTPark

**Re: PH 30.3 – Protected Major Transit Station Area Delineations – Downtown and City-wide Interpretation Policies – Final Report**

Good morning/afternoon Madam Chair and Members of the Committee

My name is Aamir Sukhera and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today. I am a long-time resident of Thorncliffe Park and have lived and been active in the community for over 40 years.

I am here to express my disappointment that the potential at the Thorncliffe Park Station didn't even get a mention in a list that identifies 180 locations as major transit areas that could be transformed into transit-oriented communities. From my perspective, the City and Province have not only missed a golden opportunity to pursue their own stated objectives from both a planning and equity perspective – but they are neutering the potential to do so in the future because Metrolinx is dumping a 675,000 square foot train depot there instead - and the City and Province are letting it happen.

The currently planned Maintenance and Storage Facility will destroy an active community hub, displace and remove small businesses that directly service a unique population and pass on this chance to address many of the challenges this vulnerable community faces.

Major Transit Station Areas provide the opportunity to create new residential uses and affordable housing, build on existing mixed uses and create new community spaces – all things that Thorncliffe Park desperately needs and could have if the area around its new station was looked at from that perspective.

This is a location that is perfectly suited to achieve objectives associated with the Provincial Growth Plan and the City's desire to create transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly communities - while addressing other hard and soft infrastructure deficiencies at the same time.

From a growth plan perspective, the respected team at urbanMetrics notes that the Thorncliffe Yard site currently has a density of 60-90 jobs per hectare, but if the train yard is located there, that number will drop to 25 jobs per hectare – next to a new subway station!

Their report also says that “the directly impacted lands would support 987 jobs per hectare, secondarily impacted lands would support 3,241 jobs per hectare for a total of 5,787 jobs per hectare.”



They also point out that “if the directly affected area was redeveloped with a density of 1.5 (which is comparable to nearby mixed-use areas) almost 800,000 square feet of new development could be accommodated. This could translate into an increase of 1,000 new units and 1,730 new residents.

But since it appears that we are the only ones looking at the potential of this site from the perspective of stated government policies and objectives, it currently doesn’t look like the opportunity for this transformation will emerge.

This decision by transit planners also doesn’t align very well with the Equity Impact Statement that I saw in a related staff report before you today. It says that *“A founding principle of the Official Plan is that Toronto’s future must be shaped by diversity and be more inclusive and equitable.”*

However, it doesn’t appear that this principle applies to transit planning in Toronto – where there are 3 Train Depots currently under construction or planned right now – one at Jane-Finch, one at Mount Dennis, and now one planned for Thorncliffe Park. Three communities with the lowest equity scores in the City’s own ranking of 140 neighbourhoods.

When Metrolinx shocked our community with its surprise decision to locate the train yard in Thorncliffe Park, City Council requested Metrolinx to consult with the community because it had not done so before.

Responding to the City’s request, Metrolinx rolled out a pretend PR exercise that was framed as such by the Metrolinx CEO who clearly stated that “The deciding factors for the site were never open to consultation” and repeatedly said that the consultation exercise was only about implementation.

This is the same CEO who moved an entire segment of a transit line in Richmond Hill because some homeowners were concerned about a tunnel 30m under their houses. But then, Thorncliffe Park is not Thornhill.

This flexibility on the part of Metrolinx was shown to others as well. The originally preferred site for the MSF was in a low-density industrial area north of Thorncliffe Park, but when Metrolinx met with a couple of companies located there and got some pushback, they retreated. They also declined to pursue the site across the tracks that is currently home to large aggregate piles and a cement yard owned by large multi-national companies. So instead of locating a train yard in a dirty industrial yard with few employees away from a residential community, Metrolinx instead pivoted to pursue a path of less resistance. One that is unlikely to hire corporate lawyers and slow the arbitrary timelines given them by a Premier who needs to prove he can build it faster than those who came before him, even if it tramples all over certain communities in the process.

The Thorncliffe Station and the fate of its surrounding is being determined right now, and the current path is clearly the wrong one.

Aamir Sukhera

Instead this is what Thorncliffe Park will look like.



**Thorncliffe Park North: Transit Oriented Development Opportunity – With the Ontario Line and a train station, this is what Thorncliffe Park should have the opportunity to develop.**

