



Scarborough Community Renewal Organization

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Deputation to City of Toronto, Planning and Housing Committee – April 27, 2022

Re: Our Plan Toronto: Draft Official Plan Employment Policies and Chapter 1 Directions for Consultation

From: Larry Whatmore, President, Scarborough Community Renewal Organization

Good afternoon councillors. 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the staff report, which we generally support. SCRO was pleased to contribute to this process as a member of the Community Leaders Circle and by hosting our own Scarborough-focused community consultation, with the involvement of City Planning staff and with the participation of 150 engaged Scarborough residents.

Since then, SCRO has continued to engage with Scarborough residents, businesses, community leaders, and local organizations. We would offer the following comments, based on the feedback and advice that we have been receiving through our networks:

Protecting and growing our employment areas. The City is expected to absorb 700,000 more residents over the next 30 years, which will require 450,000 more jobs. Where will these residents work if our employment areas are converted to other uses? We know that City staff share this concern. There is much anxiety in Scarborough about the applications already filed by developers to convert employment lands into housing. We are also concerned about the challenges that gentrification will pose for the affordable commercial rents that have enabled so many of Scarborough's aspiring newcomers to create small businesses that have injected so much economic and cultural vibrancy into Scarborough. Finally, we would encourage the City to make better use of the Scarborough Civic Centre, a terrific asset for the City, but underutilized. There is an opportunity for the City to make better use of this asset for its own employees, in a post-COVID, hybrid work environment.

Preserving our strong, stable and complete neighbourhoods. It will come as no surprise to you that there is considerable anxiety in our neighbourhoods about the disruption that will be caused by the City's Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods initiatives. While we understand the growth and the housing affordability pressures that are giving rise to these initiatives, the anxieties that our communities are feeling are real. I would be doing you a disservice if I left you with the impression that they are not.

Enhancing our public transit. Higher order public transit is so important for creating a vibrant commercial and employment ecosystem. And that's starting to happen; soon with the Eglinton East LRT and later with the Scarborough subway. We are pleased that Council has made a significant financial commitment to the extension of the Eglinton East LRT to U of T's Scarborough campus and to Malvern. We remind our Scarborough MPs and MPPs about the importance of their financial participation at every opportunity.

Some intensification is appropriate, but let's build the supporting infrastructure first. I can't count the number of times this has come up in conversation. We know that there is going to be housing intensification along our arterial roads and transit corridors, which is where it should be. But there is much concern that the housing will come long before the enabling transit has been built.

Scarborough residents want complete communities, but from a suburban perspective. Complete suburban communities may look different from complete downtown communities. And that's OK. Different neighbourhoods offer different qualities, which will appeal to some and not to others. What matters is providing the opportunity to live, work, and play in your own community, whether it's downtown or in a suburban neighbourhood.

SCRO is looks forward to continuing these conversations in the next round of community consultations.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to take any questions.

Larry Whatmore

President

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