

October 24th, 2023

Via Email

Infrastructure and Environment Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

To Chair McKelvie and the Infrastructure and Environment Committee:

Re: 2023.IE7.8 – Connected Communities: Advancing Year-Round Trails Between Earl Bales Park and York Mills Station

Tenblock is making this submission as a property owner and developer with a citywide interest in promoting active transportation. **We wish to express our strong support for the motion Connected Communities: Advancing Year-Round Trails Between Earl Bales Park and York Mills Station.**

Tenblock has developed and managed multi-family apartment buildings in Toronto for over sixty-five years. As a company, we are deeply committed to building sustainable, complete communities. This includes consistently promoting active transportation and connectivity options in all the communities that we serve.

The creation of year-round trail connections between Earl Bales Park and York Mills Station stands to benefit many current and future households in North York by:

1. Creating Connectivity
 - a. Ravine Access

Toronto's urban ravine system is a key feature of our city that we need to make better use of. Currently, the Earl Bales Park ravine trail ends at the northern entrance to the Don Valley golf course during all but the winter months. Expanding access to allow for year-round connectivity increases access for the residents of Hogg's Hollow to Earl Bales Park and connects the communities north-west of the 401 Highway to York Mills Station.

Currently, there are informal walking paths and desire lines demonstrating that residents of nearby communities want to access the ravine. As well, wintertime walks of the Don Valley Golf Course show a strong community interest in using the paved path for cycling, walking, and accessing the extended ravine area for recreation.

The proposed connection makes best use of an existing ravine trail network and golf course path by increasing how many households can safely access the Don Valley ravine network and higher-order transit.

- b. Safer Active Transportation Options

Currently, the ravine is the only non-road method for crossing the 401 Highway. All other nearby options require cyclists to ride on very wide, very fast roadways with significant changes in elevation and slope. For pedestrians, the narrow sidewalks and speed of traffic along Bathurst Street, Sheppard Avenue West, Wilson Avenue, and Yonge Street create an inhospitable walking environment. Establishing this year-round connection will continue to improve our city's pedestrian and cycling networks without impacting traffic or requiring long-term changes to the roadways.

Using the pathway to improve connectivity in this area of North York will help to prioritize the needs of vulnerable road users while making best use of established trails and pathways. Without intervention this area will continue to remain a difficult section of the city to navigate on foot or by bike.



2. Reducing Car Dependency

The proposed changes culminate in helping to reduce car dependency in communities around Earl Bales Park like West Lansing, Armour Heights, and Bathurst Manor. More and more young people are choosing to forego car ownership, and others (of all ages) do not want to have to rely on a car for their daily trips and commutes.

To put this into perspective, 28% of Toronto households did not own a car in 2016 (Transportation Tomorrow Survey) with that number increasing to 55% for households in the downtown. With the number of non-car households expected to continue increasing, homes in car-dependent neighbourhoods without safe walking and cycling options or easy access to higher-order transit will fail to be attractive or convenient for an ever-increasing share of Toronto's population.

Improving connectivity and safe active transportation options in North York can help to materially reduce the car dependency of many neighbourhoods. For many, this could mean being able to live in more affordable apartments around Earl Bales Park instead of relying on housing options downtown or directly adjacent to the subway. In pursuit of a more sustainable city, we should seek to reduce car dependency in as many communities as possible. Establishing the Earl Bales Park to York Mills Station connection is a valuable change that creates opportunities for local and longer distance, multi-modal trips around the city.

Tenblock absolutely welcomes establishing a year-round trail between Earl Bales Park and York Mills Station for the above reasons. We look forward to collaborating with other stakeholders and the City of Toronto on improving connectivity and safety for vulnerable road users throughout the city.

Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned with any questions or to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Tenblock



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cc: Councillor Lily Cheng, Ward 18 – Willowdale
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