

From: Don and Colleen Bone

Sent: Friday, February 7, 2025 5:16 PM

To: Clerks Public

Subject: Development Services Committee Meeting - Item 8.1...7200 & 7290 Leslie St.

This is my second letter regarding the proposed Baha'i Centre in and between 7200-7290 Leslie Street, just above Steeles Avenue, referenced as 'Plan 22 262723'.

I am writing this second letter because this devastating plan of razing over 600 mature trees, of quashing such a unique ecological space, of irreparably harming this habitat for wildlife including some documented endangered species is, unbelievably, still an open question with the town of Markham. How can this be?

I have made myself aware of the hefty volume of resident opposition to this shockingly irresponsible idea, and it astonishes me that any elected Markham 'representative' could still even consider this proposal. Clearly they are not representing their electorate residents, so one must wonder exactly whom do they represent?

The absurdity of grasping onto the promise of 'saplings' as some sort of mitigating solution to destroying the 600+ mature trees this proposal calls for is simply insulting. Basic science has proven over and over that mature trees bring significantly greater environmental benefits; they capture more carbon with their canopy, they provide more shade thus cooling the surrounding areas, they filter more air pollution including particulate matter, they enhance biodiversity, and their more deeply established root systems bring vital soil stabilization. The list of their benefits goes on. How anyone can expect residents to take comfort in the planting of saplings to replace these mature trees is truly beyond comprehension.

As I said in my first letter to address this irresponsible proposal, I have been a resident of the adjoining area for over 30 years, and a voter who has not missed voting in even one election in my adult life, and I strenuously object to this disastrous proposal. I am appalled that it is even being considered.

If this nonsensical idea actually becomes a reality, be assured that voters all around the area will remember that you knowingly imposed a projected 5+ years of destruction chaos, mess, and noise on your citizens. Worse than that, though, voters will remember your irresponsible approval of unconscionable ecological carnage that will harm the health and well-being of generations to come.

I believe Markham residents deserve better than this grossly obscene environmental destruction. Do you?

Colleen Bone
95 Quail Valley Crescent
Thornhill, Ontario

Deputation Feb. 11, 2025 Item. 8.1: Baha'i National Center and Temple 7200 & 7290
From: Kimberly Seymour VP Settler's Park Residents Association

Dear Council,

I am against the "Recommendation Report" for the Baha'i Development and the proposed changes to the Official Plan and re-zoning. This report should not be approved and should be brought back to DSC once the Baha'i reduces the scale of this project to the level that the community can accept.

Past surveys have proved that over 98% of the community are against the development; therefore, this project should not be accepted by Council. Council should represent its constituents and not approve a project that is so highly undesirable. The residents have on many occasions voiced their concerns regarding the current proposal and the developers have refused to listen to the residents.

The Regional Councillor, Honourable Jim Jones, was appointed to Chair the Thornhill Sub-Committee meetings due to such strong opposition. In conversation with him at the first meeting he said, "I know I will have done my job and the process has been effective when 20% of residents are for the project, 60% are in the middle, and 20% are against the project." We are nowhere near that statistic, therefore there is much more work to be done to make enhancements to this project.

I acknowledge that the emergency road through the German Mills Meadow and Natural Habitat was taken off the table as well as a few other concessions, which were mainly due to TRCA requirements. However, these early changes were before the sub-committee was even formed and this was due to the huge opposition from the community. No improvements have been made since the start of the sub-committee formation.

There has been zero dialogue allowing direct questions to the Baha'i developers. All questions were through a restricted process. This was a game of smoke and mirrors as there truly was no effort to work with the community, not through the Community Liaison Committee or through the sub-committee meetings. On paper, it appears that several attempts to appease the community were made, but the reality is this was just not the case. I am glad to see that the mayor is here to hear this, as this is the truth.

We know most visitors to this temple will be out of town guests including out of province or out of the country as displayed by the out of province deputations from the Baha'i members. Councillors should listen to the residents as it is the local residents that will have to put up with all of the negative consequences with years of construction and associated noise, dust, cutting of 600+ mature trees, some over 100 years old, and once built, traffic, light pollution and noise pollution from large numbers of guests.

The absolute worst consequence will be to the environment even though Baha'i states there will be an environmental net gain. In theory, that might be the case; however, we all know it will take many, many decades. SPRA has experience from plantings in the meadow to know that approximately 90% of saplings will likely die. The Baha'i should use more calliper sized trees.

There will be immediate destruction and immediate negative loss for a long time and there is no guarantee the area will recover, and that wildlife will return, especially with the large groups of visitors. Animals do not like noise or people, they will become displaced, including SAR species which need to be protected by Markham.

Our world is in a very sad state environmentally. We believe the vision of Markham is not to destruct habitat and unnecessarily harm animals; therefore, I hope the Mayor and Councillors will listen to the residents. Do the right thing to protect the environment and the community and bring this back to DSC until the Baha'i has shown they are seriously willing to work with the residents to reduce the impacts of this negative plan as it is now encroaching on the well-being of animals and to the residents to the point where I have heard residents say I want to move away from my home. How sad is that?

When you have so many local RA's against this project this begs the question as to the purpose of an RA and for Councillors? Are they not both to voice and uphold the wishes of the residents? My questions are for Regional Councillor Jim Jones: Do you believe the mandate of the Thornhill Sub Committee was successful ending with an outcome where the residents being somewhat happy with the proposal? Or do you think this project must go back to DSC, until more improvements can be made in a collaborative way with the community and the Baha'i? I feel the community deserves that and has a lot to offer if the Baha'I members are willing to listen.

Thank you for considering my position,
Kimberly Seymour
VP Settler's Park Residents Association
Former Chair Community Liaison Committee
Settler's Park Adopt a Park lead
Local Resident for over 30 years

From: Jamaal Merrick
Sent: Sunday, February 9, 2025 7:46 PM
To: Clerks Public
Cc: Councillor, Keith Irish - Markham <KIrish@markham.ca>
Subject: New Baha'i Development - My Written Submission

Hello Clerks Team & my local Ward 1 Councillor, Mr. Irish,

I was pleased to see the city's recommendation to approve the Baha'i development.

I am not a member of their religion but I do believe they can be good stewards of the area and significantly better than other alternatives had they picked up and left.

Their congregation hosts a number of non-denominational youth events for public members and so I'd like to see them make a concerted effort to extend those programs to our local youth. I'd love the city to try to secure an agreement or commitment of sorts from the Baha'i administration to offer such opportunities to our local youth so that they can engage in off-screen activities that encourage positive values. Our local Thornhill Community Centre is somewhat lacking in that regard.

I also hope they can commit to helping to keep our shared park clean and peaceful.

The idea of such a major development in our backyard is a little scary, but even more exciting, and I am looking forward to seeing the vision come to fruition.

Sincerely,
Jamaal
58 Cottonwood Court

February 10, 2025

Re: **FILE PLAN 22 262723**

Dear Development Services Committee Members,

I am writing to express my deep concerns and strong opposition to the proposed development that requests the rezoning of land and changes to the Official Plan. This development poses a significant threat to Greenway, which we have been fighting to protect for the last two years. Proposing to rezone land as if it were merely moving chess pieces is irresponsible. Mature woodlands and meadows destroyed in one area and replaced with saplings in an area half a mile away, which is devastating.

The area in question is a vital part of our local ecosystem, home to numerous wildlife species, including endangered ground-nesting birds. The natural habitat is irreplaceable and supports a diverse range of fauna. The proposed development plans to remove over six hundred trees, which would impact the wildlife corridor used by deer, coyotes, and foxes. Construction on three properties destroys the habitat and corridor for the entire affected region.

The meadow and surrounding natural areas serve as a critical habitat for many animals. The destruction of this habitat would not only displace these species but could also lead to their decline and extinction in our region. Protecting these natural areas is essential for the survival of wildlife. There has been an increase in wildlife appearing on city streets and in neighborhoods as they are displaced from their natural habitats.

The increased traffic resulting from this development is another significant concern. To bring a tourist attraction, which we know people from all over Canada and beyond, will be coming to see is located on a dead-end street. Without the addition of a new Rapid Bus Lane on Steeles Ave., the influx of visitors will worsen traffic congestion, complicating navigation for everyone. How are oversized vehicles going to safely turn around, such as eighteen wheelers carrying materials, dump trucks, cement trucks, gray hound buses, to name a few.

Additionally, the dead-end street location raises serious concerns about the ability of emergency vehicles to access the site quickly and efficiently. In emergency situations, the lack of prompt access for entry and exit could result in severe repercussions. In your report, give credit where credit is due. It was the TRCA who cancelled any ideas of the emergency access road through the meadow due to it being hazardous lands.

The proposed development includes too many buildings in a small area, resulting in insufficient parking for visitors. This extensive development will place significant pressure on existing infrastructure and diminish the natural beauty and tranquility of the Greenway

and surrounding community. The duration of the construction period is unreasonable to impose on the surrounding homes and community.

I am deeply upset by the potential loss of tranquility and mental peace of our local park, designated a Natural Habitat and Meadow for wildlife. The influx of tourists and subsequent destruction of the park would irreparably harm the environment and diminish the quality of life for residents. We are committed to preserving this natural space for future generations and maintaining its status as a sanctuary for wildlife.

In conclusion, I urge the City Staff to reject the proposed development and rezoning requests. It is essential to prioritize the preservation of natural habitats and the wildlife that relies on them. Modifying the current zoning by-laws and City Plans to allow the construction of this large complex in our quiet community, despite strong opposition from residents, is unjustifiable. If a generational family lived in a Heritage home, would they follow the current laws or the laws from when they purchased the home?

This project is in the wrong location!

Thank you for considering our concerns and for your commitment to preserving the integrity of our natural environment.

Sincerely,

Edith Kangas

To The Members of Development Services Committee:

When I first heard initial reports some years ago of the plans for the Baha'i National Centre and Temple, it was inconceivable to even think of a massive development at this location. To find that we are now at the point of amending the City's Official Plan as well as the By-Law to facilitate its approval, almost beggars belief.

Over the course of many meetings, members of our community and beyond have expressed through deputations and submissions, the devastation this development will cause; to wildlife, to the tranquility of our green space, traffic congestion and major parking issues. I will not go into detail and repeat what has been said many times before. BUT I hope the councilors have been listening.

A community survey was undertaken, and in just a few short weeks, the results showed that 500 people said "No", and 1 voted 'Yes.'" **Councillor Irish has stated that "residents come first"**. And the residents have spoken. Again, I hope Councillor Irish and ALL councilors are listening.

This is a quiet neighbourhood, brimming with wildlife. Many residents are retirees, enjoying their senior years with peaceful walks through this natural space. To have a tourist attraction foisted into our midst, with years of construction, is not right.

It is the wrong location.

One point I do want to highlight is this: This is a dead end street, with only one way in and one way out. Added to that, are the projected crowds of visitors, as seen at other Baha'i Temples. Should emergency services be required, they may be unable to gain access, and time may be critical. This has the potential to be a serious situation and should not be brushed aside. Even if the devastation to the environment is (inexplicably) considered by some as unimportant, I would hope that councilors feel they have a duty of responsibility not to approve a project that may have unconscionable results.

I urge all councillors to consider carefully the ramifications of approving these amendments and development; This is a square peg in a round hole for a multitude of reasons, and it's beyond comprehension why the City of Markham would consider allowing this oversized development at this location.

Sincerely,

Gail Lavery

From: Sue Mason
Sent: Monday, February 10, 2025 10:39 AM
To: Clerks Public <clerkspublic@markham.ca>
Subject: Baha'i Development - Written Submission

To Whom it May Concern,

Please see below my written submission in regards to Item #8.1 at the Development Services Committee Meeting on February 11th.

With appreciation,
Sue Mason R.N.

Dear Mayor Scarpitti, Rick Cefaratti, Councillor Keith Irish and Members of the Town Council,

On January 13, 2025 I attended the City of Markham's working session on Urban Design, Built Form and Land uses.

Included in the discussions was the City's prioritization of placemaking and the establishment of the provincial policy statement 2024 to increase housing supply. There was an appreciation of the City's purchase of the Shouldice Property to acquire green space in order to advance the goals of its Integrated Leisure Plan.

At the end of the meeting Mayor Scarpitti commented, " Change is somewhat inevitable in the area we live in, so we need to think about how we leverage that change for the benefit of the community."

Mayor Scarpitti also stressed the importance of having more senior housing so that people don't have to leave the community.

There are fifteen religious institutions located throughout Ward 1. (noted below email)
The addition of a national temple, an administration centre, lodging facility, two welcome centres and numerous parking lots are of no benefit to a community that needs housing and protection of heritage greenspace.

The Baha'i owned property is zoned for housing and should remain as such in order to meet the community and City's vision for the future.

At the Town Hall meeting on May 28th, 2024 the local residents clearly voiced their preference for housing and survey results from the community showed overwhelmingly that 99.9% of the residents are not in agreement with the proposed development.

With large scale developments on the horizon, new provincial legislation and priority placemaking the City should strategically seize this opportunity to purchase the land for the long lasting well being of the community and preservation of greenspace.

Sincerely,
Sue Mason R.N.

Religious Institutions in Ward 1

Temple Har Zion - 7630 Bayview Ave. Thornhill L3T 2R7
Inam Mahdi Islamic Centre - 7340 Bayview Ave. L3T 2R7
Cham Shan Temple - 7254 Bayview Ave. Thornhill L3T 2R6
Shrinathji Haveli - Hindu Temple - 58 Clark Ave. Thornhill L3T 1S5
Ukrainian Catholic Church of Saint Vladimir - 15 Church St. Thornhill L3T 2G4
Mosaic Temple - 30 Elgin St. Thornhill ON L3T 1W4
Thornhill United Church - 25 Elgin St. Thornhill L3T 1W5
Thornhill Lutheran Church - 149 Baythorn Dr. Thornhill L3T 3V2
St. Luke's Catholic Church - 39 Green Lane Thornhill L3T 6K5
Chabad Lubavitch of Markham - 83 Green Lane Thornhill L3T 6K6
Jesus the King Greek Melkite Catholic Church - 1 Lyndhurst Dr. Thornhill L3T 6T5
Good Shepherd Roman Catholic Parish - 21 Simonston Blvd. Thornhill L3T 4L7
Wong Dai Sin Temple - 378 Steeles Ave. E Thornhill L3T 0E7
Bayview Glen Church - 300 Steeles Ave. E Thornhill L3T 1A7
Bahá'í Faith - locations are in community centres and homes

From: Valerie Burke

Sent: Monday, February 10, 2025 10:45 AM

To: Clerks Public <clerkspublic@markham.ca>; Mayor & Councillors
<mayor&councillors@markham.ca>

Subject: DSC Item 8.1 - Recommendation Report - Baha'i OP and ZBA Applications

To the Members of Development Services Committee

Re: Item 8.1 Recommendation Report, National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i of Canada, OP and ZBA Applications

Please refer this report back to staff so that the Bahai developers reduce the size and scale of this project to a level that the residents can accept.

The proposed development is far too large and completely incompatible to the surrounding area and sensitive German Mills Wildlife Corridor. This development will cause fragmentation to the wildlife corridor, create excessive light pollution and destroy healthy mature trees. The net effect of this proposed project will not be beneficial to our environment. How can the peer reviewer be impartial when it was the applicant who recommended her?

This development is being "shoehorned" into a very sensitive ecological wildlife corridor. It is a square peg in a round hole.

Please listen to the residents who have come out to meetings time and time again.

Sincerely,

Valerie Burke