

From: Sue Mason
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2025 5:50 PM
To: Clerks Public
Subject: Project #22 262 723

To Mayor Scarpitti, Councillor Keith Irish and Members of the Town Council,

I attended the Public Meetings regarding the Baha'i National Centre and even though I am not in support of the development I tried to observe the proceedings with an objective lens.

The rendering of the Temple is impressive with its architectural beauty and affiliated buildings, all of which are situated in the valleyland.

Deputations and written submissions from the meetings on 05/23/23, 04/09/24, 05/28/24, and 02/11/25 collectively showed there were 94 oral deputations and 83 written submissions. Out of the 94 deputations 54 people were opposed to the development, 26 people were concerned and the majority of the 14 people supporting the development are from the Baha'i community.

In the 83 written submissions 61 people were opposed, 5 had concerns and 4 out of the 5 letters of support were from Baha'i Councils located out of our province.

A community survey completed by 507 local residents showed that 504 people did not agree with the proposed development, 2 were undecided and 1 agreed.

In response to the residents' concerns the Temple height was reduced by 5 metres, the sq. footage was changed from 1,000 sq.m. to 600 sq.m. and flood zone issues were addressed along with other alterations to the woodland site. There were TRCA reports and an environmental peer review which was noted to be bias because it was the applicant who recommended her.

Despite the accommodations by the applicant and community opposition/concerns it appears that the project was going to be approved from its onset.

In the Spring/Summer of 2023 Ward 1 update Councillor Keith Irish stated, "I believe redevelopment by the Baha'i National Centre for their continued use is preferred." (The residents clarified that if the greenspace couldn't be protected then housing was preferred.)

The applicant seemed to be very confident in getting approval because in December 2023 they purchased 4 Waterloo Court for the purpose of supporting "visiting staff, volunteers and NSA members."

They also have 1,600 trees already being grown in an offsite nursery in preparation for the 2,450 trees that will be planted in order to restore and re-establish the valleyland. None of which would be necessary if the ecosystem was left as is.

In the Oct. 24, 2024 Markham Economist and Sun Mayor Scarpitti stated, "They have owned the property since the 1960's long before any homes were built nearby."

The land purchased by the Baha'i in its natural state 50 years ago has evolved into an ecological, biodiverse corridor which is now surrounded by a well established community that is experiencing exponential growth and future large scale developments. I recognize the excitement and importance for the Baha'i to see their vision come to fruition but the landscape has changed. The location is no longer suitable.

Mayor Scarpitti has expressed that he foresees lots of cyclists, walkers, naturalists coming to the area, perhaps even more than the Temple visitors. This is one of the reasons the community does not support the project.

If connecting to the Lake to Lake Route and removal of invasive species is one of the City's goals, they can be achieved by the Town with less destruction to the environment and without the financial assistance from the applicant.

Due to such an overwhelming response from the community I'm left to question the motivation for permitting the development. If the proposal is approved I have lost faith that counsellors do not support or represent their constituents in order to look after the well being of their community.

Sincerely,
Sue Mason R.N.