

← Police Club Lands Devel...

Dear, Town of Newmarket

My name is Conner McRobbie and I have been a resident of Newmarket for twenty years, living next to this watershed. I am also a recent graduate of Wilfred Laurier University where I majored in biology. As a long-term resident, I feel it is my obligation to speak on behalf of nature, as it cannot speak for itself. There are many reasons why this development should be canceled in perpetuity.

This proposal attacks vital biodiversity, would impact or destroy an ecologically sensitive watershed inhabited by thousands and would isolate animal populations by cutting off travel routes and breeding populations. Newmarket has a significant existing deforestation problem, and this development would destroy a significant watershed/wetland that is already home to thousands. The property itself is a key connection for Newmarket's wildlife to the surrounding greenbelt, it helps to decrease risk of flooding in the area with the trees on the property, and the property could help Newmarket to address our lack of greenspace in the town.

The plan to build a new development on the property of the Police Club lands at 600 Stonehaven Ave is irresponsible at best. Having watched over the last few years, we've seen the destruction of the forest and farmland along St. John's Sideroad in Aurora between Leslie and Bayview. as well as the development of the golf course in Newmarket near the Ray Twinney Recreational Complex. Almost an entire watershed was destroyed for a new residential project behind the Magna factory compound, off Stonehaven Avenue. This destruction of habitats for wildlife also extends to the deforestation of our urban parks in Newmarket. This is taking place in 'Fairy Lake' and along the 'Tom Taylor Trail'. Many essential trees have been cut down along the waterfront of the river, apparently to increase the view of the river. This is counterproductive because these trees are essential to stopping erosion along the riverbank. The extent of the **DEFORESTATION PROBLEM IN NEWMARKET** is out of control. It even extends to the newly planned park at Yonge and Mulock. Many old growth trees on that property have already been cut down. This problem expands to the rest of Newmarket as many new homeowners are removing trees and not replanting. This is due to our poor enforcement of weak local laws on cutting down trees. These old growth trees sequester much more carbon per year than newly planted trees do. It is baffling to me that a proposition to remove 291 of 308 old growth trees on a property designated as a watershed could ever be considered or supported by the town.

Global warming is considered THE defining issue of our era. The government in Newmarket can not honestly allow the development of this property and continue to claim they give a damn about the environment. The planned development along Stonehaven Ave cannot be allowed to continue as it would sit on a ecologically significant watershed in Newmarket, which benefits the residents already living here in immense ways we take for granted every day.

The trees present on the property help to sequester rainwater during spring when the snow melts as well as throughout the year when we receive heavy rainfall. When there is a massive loss of trees in an area (like we have seen in the surrounding watershed over the last few years), the area inevitably comes under threat due to flooding. Without the trees and other flora to absorb rainfall, as well as to shade the ground the soil will degrade. Without trees the areas soil will not have the ability to hold onto this water and it will be lost as runoff possibly causing flooding damage to the surrounding community. This is highly likely when you look at the increasing number of unpredictable storms in recent years, which are projected to become more unpredictable and severe in the future.

The property on Stonehaven Ave will not be able to sequester as much carbon as it does today if the topsoil is buried under layers of concrete, asphalt, and homes. Carbon sequestration is the most effective way Newmarket can actively fight climate change at home today. Therefore removing these trees

would signal to the town how little our administration cares about our local carbon footprint. This proposal despite a developer's best efforts at mitigation is going to generate construction runoff which would leech into the watershed harming the water table as well as local fauna.

In the defence of fauna. The developer seeks to provide new homes with their proposal, thinking this adds new residents to the town. However, there is a major flaw in this logic. The local watershed is already home to thousands of residents that the developer seeks to invalidate and make homeless. The watershed has significant populations of: Field Mice, Squirrels, Chipmunks, Rabbits, Raccoons, Foxes, Skunks, Groundhogs, Coyotes, Beaver, Muskrat, Mink, Blue Jays, Cardinals, Sparrows, Robins, Mourning Doves, Dark Eyed Junco's, Swanson's Thrush, Chickadees, Hairy Woodpeckers, Owls, Snapping Turtles, Painted Turtles, and even Deer which I've seen with my own eyes. Many different habitats are present in the area. This does not even consider the vast biodiversity of insect and plant life already inhabiting the area. The watershed is home to a significant population of milkweed which is a vital source of food for the migrating monarch butterflies on their way to Mexico. Canada must do its part in protecting this vital food source among others found in the area. Lots of food sources which feed the wildlife can be found on the property including raspberries, blackberries, crab apples, grapes, amaranth, goldenrod, clover, cattail, thistle, and other various tree/bush forage. The property is also home to vital forage necessary to the survival of native bees. The destruction of these vital food sources would starve the already stressed local bee populations, making it even harder for them to survive the winter while they are already dealing with colony collapse disorder. Irrefutable proof of this can be backed up and peer reviewed by downloading the INaturalist app, developed by National Geographic. Here many residents have recorded their encounters with nature over time on and around the property. These encounters prove that this wildlife currently inhabits the area.

This watershed is a vital connection to the surrounding forests in the Newmarket, Aurora, and Whitchurch-Stouffville area. It connects the forests surrounding the St. Andrews Valley Golf Club to the Trans Canada Trail and the surrounding York Regional Forest. Connectivity of forests is potentially the most vital aspect of keeping Canada's wildlife populations intact. Without these forest connections, populations of wildlife become isolated. This is similar to what happens to island populations of animals. This isolation inevitably leads to inbreeding and weaker populations that may not survive. This could also cause parts of the local food web to collapse, putting even more strain on the environment. The destruction of this wild habitat would be a massive loss to Newmarket's biodiversity. The local population of trees are already being thinned due to the ongoing problems with emerald ash borer disease, Japanese beetles, invasive/alien species, and other problems affecting our local tree populations.

Seeing as how Newmarket is a town surrounded by the 'Greenbelt', Newmarket residents should take it upon themselves to be good stewards of what few forests remain in our small town. The South-Eastern section of Newmarket is noticeably lacking in Greenspace aside from the lawn behind the MAGNA centre that would be much better off being left to rewild instead of continuing to mow it for no reason. This property on Stonehaven Ave also suffers from this mowing problem, the property is in the perfect location for a development that works in harmony with nature. Allowing the area to rewild (which involves \$0 in investment by the local government) is the best thing that could be done for the property. By simply leaving it alone and allowing the local biodiversity of plants to recolonize the property, a very hardy forest could be developed to support even more wildlife. The forest park could be supplemented with a running path which has been partially developed in the ravine behind Schaeffer Outlook and Best Circle. This could be expanded into the Police Fields to develop the area into a park like Fairy Lake in scale and grandeur. The existing property has plentiful parking (the out of use parking lot nearest to Bayview which has fallen into disrepair could even be removed or otherwise turned into a commercial plaza. The existing buildings could be used for local community groups to meet for field trips. Conversely the building could also be turned into a restaurant with a beautiful view overlooking the new forest that will develop. A more appealing name could also be chosen, if the park could be renamed to something more significant "Sir David Attenborough Park", "David Suzuki Park", "Tony Van Bynen Park", "Reclaimed Woods Park" (not exhaustive), etc. This could allow for more interest in the park to develop.

In this time of Covid-19 where more and more people are staying home from work and their other responsibilities. Many people are looking for new places to explore close to home, so another local area park can be nothing but positive. Take the 99 steps as a case study. After the beauty of this area was discovered by the surrounding public, the popularity of this area skyrocketed. The property in question also has a steep incline where these steps could be repeated or improved upon. The ground is also suitable for a boardwalk to be installed, like the one in Fairy Lake. With increasing restrictions on gatherings due to Covid-19, staying apart is more important than ever. As an avid runner I take hours at a time to run through the parks in town and I have noticed the significant crowds starting to reappear in our local parks again. Even as restrictions are being reimplemented, the play parks and paths are being overwhelmed, nonetheless. People are being struck with Covid fatigue and our local parks do not provide a sufficient space for people to explore nature, as well as allowing for proper social distancing to occur. This addition of a greenspace in the South-Eastern corner of Newmarket is exactly the way we could take this strain off our packed local parks, by providing other options for residents to explore.

Development of these homes will provide a quick one-time monetary gain for the developers of the property, tax revenues for the town and income for local businesses – but at what cost?? The town seeks to add 142 townhomes and 60 single detached residences. Assuming the new residents of the proposed townhouses will be single car homes, and that the single detached residences will likely be two car homes. This development will immediately add at least 262 new cars to Newmarket streets. Aside from extra traffic, each of these cars will averagely emit 4600 pounds of carbon a year into our local air. So, just the cars associated with this newly proposed development will be adding a massive bulk of 1,205,200 pounds of CO2 emissions into our local environment annually. **Newmarket would need to plant 25,108+ trees** elsewhere in town, simply to offset the carbon emissions from the cars of the new residents in this development. This does not include the carbon which will be associated with the Newmarket Hydro which will be used to power and heat the homes in question. Conversely, if you were to let the area rewild, the amount of forest cover in the area could be tripled or even quadrupled. The current forest cover present on the property already sequesters about 14,784 pounds of carbon a year, assuming each tree absorbs the average of 48 pounds of carbon a year. This expanded forest should be used to sequester carbon which is already being emitted by our residents. The property could potentially sequester almost 60,000 pounds of carbon every year if it is managed properly.

The development/destruction of the property will be a massive loss for all Newmarket residents already living here. As the wildlife moves out and is displaced by us, it will leave us worse off. Animals trying to find new homes will lead to more destruction of property in the area, as the wildlife is pushed into our backyards in search of new suitable habitat. The town of Newmarket needs to take responsibility for the safety of its residents. This areas floodplain without trees will put the homes already in the area, as well as the new ones being built, at risk for thousands of dollars worth of flooding and storm damage; due to the loss of the water sequestration from trees roots. In Canada's 2020 throne speech, the liberal government promised to address climate change by planting 2 billion trees in Canada. Newmarket could take it upon themselves to be the change we want to see. Canada has 2 billion trees to plant if they want to fulfill this promise. So, my question to you is why not Newmarket? Thank you for your time, I hope you take a serious look at this email and share it with your colleagues as I feel this is a massive issue that is being pushed through over a holiday weekend that many in the area would be opposed to.

Respectfully,

Conner McRobbie