

Police Club Lands Development Proposal

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 Wilfrid Laurier University where I studied formally to become a biologist. I only have five minutes so I'm going to jump right in. 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 and their access to forage/habitat, would impact, or destroy an ecologically sensitive watershed necessary for flood suppression, which is already inhabited by thousands. The development would also isolate animal populations by cutting off necessary travel routes and breeding populations passing through our town. The town of Newmarket needs to recognize they have a significant existing deforestation problem which needs to be addressed, and the property itself must remain as a key connection for Newmarket's wildlife to the surrounding greenbelt.

The plan to build a new development on the property of the Police Club lands at 600 Stonehaven Ave is irresponsible at best. We have watched the destruction of the forests in our town many times before. However, the loss that would follow the destruction of this vital connection can not be emphasized enough. Habitat fragmentation has been identified as one of the leading causes of biodiversity loss globally. This happens when populations of animals are isolated or otherwise cut off from other breeding populations. This fragmentation of a necessary habitat can not be allowed to continue. Newmarket is surrounded by the greenbelt on the east and west (Figure. 1). However, the only remaining forest connection between the two sides passes directly through the developers proposed plan.

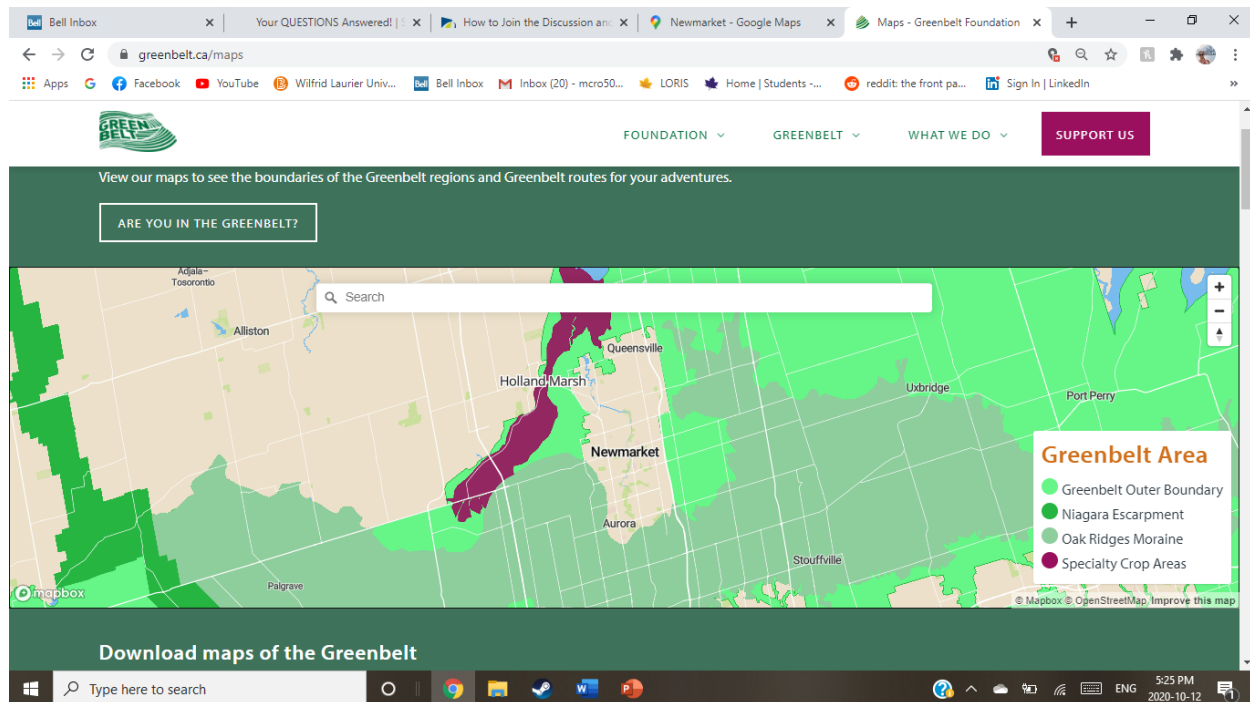


Figure 1. A screenshot of the greenbelt from the official website.

If passed, this development would sever this vital connection of our wild spaces forever. This watershed is a necessary 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 Tom Taylor 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 development could also cause parts of the local food web to collapse by further fragmenting their habitat, putting even more strain on the environment. The destruction of this wild habitat would be a massive loss to Newmarket's biodiversity.



Figure 2. A screenshot of Newmarket from satellite images. Looking at satellite images you can clearly see the areas where wildlife can still freely move through town. These are the areas I have highlighted in purple. Circled in red is the proposed development land. This picture clearly shows how necessary this undeveloped land is to wildlife.

The developer has stated they intend on removing 291 of 308 trees on the property. The trees currently present on the property are vital to sequestering 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 (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 and shade the ground, the soil will inevitably degrade. Without the tree's roots, the soil will no longer be able to hold onto rainfall during long periods of drought which are becoming more frequent. Conversely, this rainwater that would have been sequestered in the wetland, will be lost as runoff. This excess runoff will likely cause flooding damage to the surrounding community, which the developer is aware of, the developers planner, Richard Zelinka was quoted saying, "The property's green space has been prone to

“unnaturally high” flooding during storms because the creek system gets backed up due to an undersized culvert under Bayview.” (Queen, Lisa. “Glenway Developer Proposes 202 homes on police union lands in Newmarket”. Newmarket Era. March 17th 2020). This quote proves that the developer is extremely aware that their proposal will be putting the current residents at severe risk for thousands of dollars worth of flooding damage. 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 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 this will force onto Stonehaven, 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.

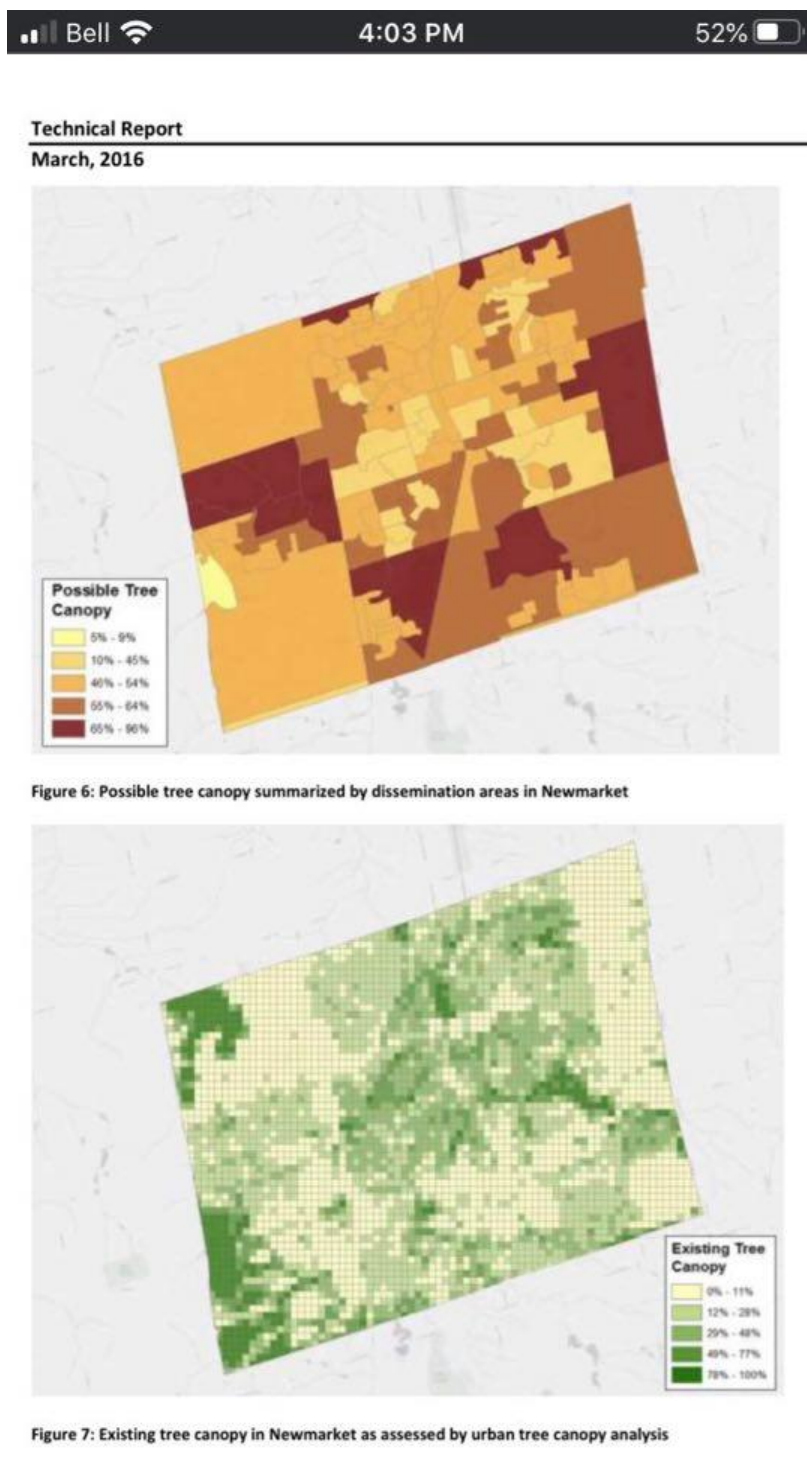


Figure 3. This is a screenshot out of the Town of Newmarket's Urban Forestry Report in 2016. Here they town identified the police club lands and surrounding areas as one of the best candidates in town for improving our towns forest cover.

Figure 3 is a screenshot out of the Town of Newmarket's Urban Forestry Report in 2016. Here they identified the police club lands and surrounding areas as one of the best candidates in town for improving our towns forest cover. How can the town rightfully approve this development knowing severe deforestation will occur? This same report also stated that in 2016, Newmarket had 294,755 trees, according to the i-Tree Eco model. The liberal government of Canada promised in their 2020 throne speech that they would plant 2 billion trees. According to the 2016 census, Canada has 5,162 municipalities, meaning that each municipality is responsible for planting 387,446+ trees. If the town develops this land, where do they plan on finding the space to more than double our towns current tree population?

This development as it stands does not make any sense. I am requesting that you reject the developer's proposal until they can either come up with a reasonable solution or they take massive action to mitigate their ecological effect. Our town is at a unique crossroads and must decide if they care only about endless development and urban sprawl, or if they are willing to take the wellbeing of our residents (both human and not) into consideration.

Sources

Queen, Lisa. "Glenway Developer Proposes 202 homes on police union lands in Newmarket". Newmarket Era. March 17th 2020. <https://www.yorkregion.com/news-story/9892259-glenway-developer-proposes-202-homes-on-police-union-lands-in-newmarket/>

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