

FINDING NEW USES FOR OLD CLUBS



Lana Hall

North York community council's recent support of a staff report recommending refusal of a mixed-use development proposal for the Flemingdon Park Golf Club has reignited discussions around the need to balance transit-oriented development and access to public parkland with the need to protect natural heritage systems.

Last month, North York community council considered applications by **Don Valley Trails Park Holdings Inc.**—a consortium of developers

comprising **Greybrook Realty**, **Cityzen Development Group** and **Tercot Communities**—for official plan and zoning by-law amendments for the lands located at 155 St. Dennis Drive. Currently, the site accommodates the Flemingdon Park Golf Club. Established in the early 1960s, the club is located on the southeast corner of Eglinton Avenue East and the Don Valley Parkway.

The proposal calls for the development of four residential towers ranging between 42 to 56 storeys in height, connected by a two-storey base building. The mixed-use development would accommodate 2,170 residential units, and approximately 348 square metres of non-residential space. In addition, a total of 405 vehicle parking spaces and 2,397 bicycle parking spaces are proposed.

The applicant proposes five per cent of the residential gross floor area to be allocated for affordable housing. Of the site's 16.94 hectares, 16 of those are proposed to be conveyed to a public agency, such as the **City of Toronto** or the **Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)** as open space, while the remainder of the site would be designated as 'Apartment

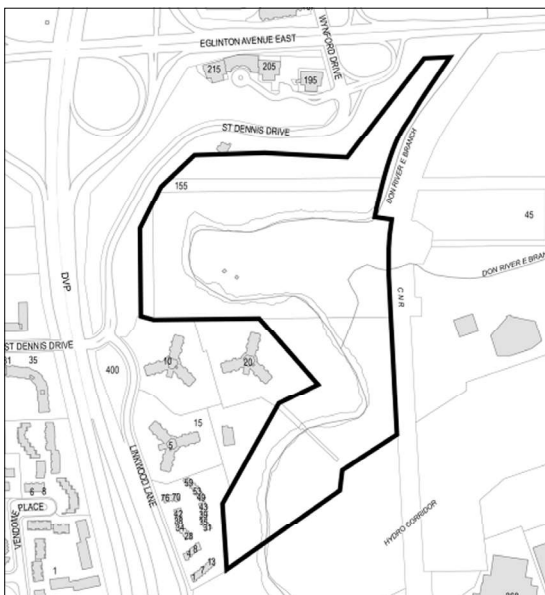
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Below left: Location map showing the site of 155 St. Dennis Drive, the subject of a mixed-use proposal that seeks to develop four mixed-use residential towers on the site that now accommodates the Flemingdon Park Golf Club site. Don Valley Trails Park Holdings also proposes to convey 16 hectares of the site to a public agency such as the City of Toronto or the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to be used as open space and to be connected to the surrounding Don Valley Trail network.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO

Below: Architectural drawing of the four mixed-use residential towers proposed for the site at 155 St. Dennis Drive in Flemingdon Park. The towers are proposed to range from 42 to 56 storeys in height, accommodating 2,170 residential units and 348 square metres of non-residential space. Five per cent of the residential gross floor area is proposed to be allocated for affordable housing.

SOURCE: HARIRI PONTARINI ARCHITECTS



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Neighbourhoods' under the City's official plan to permit the four mixed-use towers.

"What attracted us to this project in the first place was just the scale of opportunity that existed with a project like this," says **Urban Strategies** partner **Craig Lametti**. "It's an opportunity to basically unlock 40 acres of parkland, which is bigger than the size of Trinity Bellwoods Park."

But at its October 17 meeting, North York community council adopted a staff recommendation to refuse the application based on staff concerns that the proposed development would be situated within a natural heritage system and within erosion hazard lands. Staff also noted that the project proposes residential development in an area not envisioned for growth in the province's *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*.

Lametti says the City staff report does not reflect the "rigorous" technical analysis the project team undertook on the site to demonstrate that it meets the criteria for developing within designated valley lands. "It's a bit of a shame [for] a proposal that has so much potential from a city-building perspective that they're not actually engaging on it," he told *NRU*.

Lametti also says a refusal of

the application ignores the benefits of its proposed "restoration framework," which would see a potential co-development partnership with Indigenous communities to "kickstart the ecological restoration of that land and do so in a way that reflects Indigenous cultural values and practices."

Though the proposal for public green space in the application was "enticing," Ward 16 Don Valley East councillor **Jon Burnside** ultimately agreed with the recommendation to refuse the development proposal, based on concerns about the site's proximity to erosion lands and its location within the natural heritage system.

"It did actually address some other concerns that I've had with other developments. That's kind of the sad part of this," he told *NRU*.

"One of my concerns was that with the level of intensification that's going on in Wynford

Heights and Flemingdon Park specifically, there's a lack of amenities like park space. Ten percent of [a development site] is still just somewhere for you to take your dog or sit and have your coffee; I don't consider that parkland."

With the development of the Eglinton LRT, Flemingdon Park is the subject of approximately 24,000 planned or proposed residential units from development applicants seeking to capitalize on demand for future access to the LRT.

Whether residential development is ultimately permitted on the site or not, some say there is still value to having the golf course made publicly accessible and connected to the surrounding Don Valley Trail network, which would be possible if it was owned and operated by a public agency, as the proposal calls for.

These kinds of connections are essential to making green space more accessible for Torontonians, says **Walk Toronto** steering committee member **Doug Vallery**. Walk Toronto supported the City of Toronto's "Golf Course Operational Review" in 2021, which

recommended strengthening trail connections and providing increased non-golf access to the City's golf courses.

"Toronto is a city ... likely to be the third highest-populated city [in North America] by the year 2070, and the density is going to have to be supported by greenspaces," says Vallery. "My personal feeling about golf is it's a restrictive minority use which is not supporting the public ... The trail connections just aren't being made and the golf courses are in the way. Ideally this greenspace should be a connection, rather than a barrier."

If connected with the rest of the Don Valley Trail network, the site at 155 St. Dennis Drive would allow access to trail improvements as far south as Evergreen Brickworks and potentially near the mouth of the Don River.

City staff's report and recommendations on the development proposal will be considered by Toronto city council at its meeting on November 8. 🌻



Rendering of a view of one of the four mixed-use towers proposed for 155 St. Dennis Drive. North York community council adopted a staff recommendation to refuse the proposal on the grounds that it lies within a natural heritage system and is not suitable for residential development, sparking a debate about the need to balance intensification along the upcoming Eglinton LRT line with the need to preserve open green space. The staff report will be considered by city council next week.

SOURCE: HARIRI PONTARINI ARCHITECTS