

Delegation Notes from Tony Lo Presti

Good afternoon Mayor Meed Ward, Councillor Bentivegna and all participants and listeners of this virtual meeting,

My name is Tony Lo Presti and I am a retired educator living in Millcroft since 1991. I am a supporter of the *Millcroft Against Development* and the *We Love Millcroft* community groups that have emerged to fight Millcroft Greens' intentions to introduce housing on the Millcroft golf course.

My personal opposition to Millcroft Greens' application for a zoning amendment is based on three reasons. The first is the fact that research demonstrates that cities need to protect and preserve open spaces because they provide many benefits to a community.

For example, the green open spaces in the Millcroft golf course protect valuable surface and groundwater resources in our community by allowing rain and snow to percolate into the ground and to replenish the groundwater there. These open spaces also help to prevent flood damage and offer a cost-effective alternative to expensive flood-control measures, such as building concrete sewers and drainage ditches.

Many Millcroft residents are concerned about the housing development's impact on stormwater management. They worry that the introduction of housing on the golf course will overtax the current drainage system and make pre-existing homes and new ones to be built more vulnerable to flooding, to water damage, and to repair costs that may raise liability issues that may lead to lawsuits.

As well, many Millcroft residents are perturbed that the proposed partial conversion of the golf course into housing will destroy existing ecosystems and wildlife habitats in the golf course because trees and plants will be removed. But these habitats and ecosystems will be preserved if trees and plants are not removed. Trees and plants in open spaces are important because they counteract the damaging effects of climate change by generating oxygen, by helping to reduce air and water pollution, by helping to keep the area cooler in temperature, and by helping to control soil erosion.

It is a no brainer that the community will lose many of these environmental protections and safeguards if we allow the golf course to be dismantled and not kept intact.

The open spaces of the golf course are also valuable because they expose and connect golfers and non-golfers to the pleasing sights, sounds, and beauty of nature all year round. Open spaces, whether green or covered with snow, provide not just physical recreational opportunities, but

they also impart a calming, mood-improving presence that enhances the psychological health of residents by reducing the stress of work and the claustrophobia of urban life.

A second reason why I oppose the application is that there is no real and pressing need to remove any open spaces from the golf course. Typically, developers who want to convert golf courses into housing subdivisions justify the need for a zoning amendment by some authentic and compelling reason – such as offering evidence that the golf course is on the verge of bankruptcy or that more housing is needed in the area because of a housing crisis.

But Millcroft Greens has advanced no such substantive justification for its housing development other than the flimsy pretext of addressing the issue of damage to properties due to errant golf balls. This justification is plainly unconvincing, given that protective netting can resolve this issue more cheaply, and given that logic suggests that if more houses are added on golf land, more (and not fewer) houses will be hit by errant balls.

The sad reality is that by eliminating even a few open spaces from the golf course for the purpose of cramming more housing and people in the area, Millcroft Greens' development proposal will not improve the Millcroft area, it will worsen it. The Millcroft golf course is the jewel in the community's crown. It is an oasis of green open spaces that enhances the quality of life and the mental, emotional, physical, and social well-being of Millcroft residents. The elimination of open spaces in the golf course will deface and damage this community jewel.

Millcroft residents are especially apprehensive about the havoc that the construction of housing will wreak on the community – such as noise, vibration, dust, an increase in traffic, construction detours, and driving delays – all of which are sure to exacerbate an already busy and congested traffic flow in and out of the Millcroft area. We all know that, when faced with traffic that gets snarled up by construction or by accidents, drivers will use residential streets to bypass such congested traffic.

Now factor into this construction mess, the planned CN Rail Hub development (which projects 1600 truck trips a day accessing the QEW Niagara and 403 corridors via Millcroft's Appleby Line and Dundas St.). The effects of this Hub in conjunction with the Millcroft Greens' development will create a traffic nightmare for the community if the City approves the developer's application.

Can anyone blame Millcroft residents for being upset about the Millcroft Greens' housing proposal and the construction and traffic problems it will cause for the community for months, if not years, just because the developer wants to exercise its right as owner to squeeze more profit from the golf course?

A third reason why I oppose the application is that many residents perceive the developer's application as unfair and unjust because they bought into the area and paid premium prices for their houses based on good faith representations that the golf course's Open Space zoning would be preserved. These residents feel like the proverbial carpet has been pulled from under their feet as they now stand to lose not just open spaces but also a depreciation of their quality of life and of their house values if the City approves the Millcroft Greens' application.

As a result of all these detrimental impacts that the Millcroft Green's development will cause, the Millcroft community is turning for help to the City, whose duty encompasses upholding its Official Plan and Zoning regulations that protect Parks and Open Spaces in both publicly and privately owned lands.

It is up to the City to decide what Millcroft Greens can and cannot do in the Millcroft community. But in deliberating that decision, the City needs to be wary of Millcroft Greens' future intentions. If the City approves Millcroft Greens' application to demolish part of the golf course now, how will the City be able to stop Millcroft Greens or any other new Millcroft golf course owners if and when they decide to demolish the whole golf course in the future?

That's one question that the City needs to consider. Another is: What benefits will the community derive from the approval of the Millcroft Greens' application that will outweigh the environmental, ecological, infrastructural, and traffic detriments that it will inflict on the community? The answer is NONE! What should be apparent to all by now is the social injustice of the Millcroft Greens' proposal. It is purely one-sided: The developer wins and the community loses!

Millcroft residents are relying on the City's good judgment in ensuring that its decision regarding the Millcroft Greens' application will be based on the environmental, economic, and moral calculus of achieving the greatest good for the welfare of all of the families that live in the Millcroft community – and not the greatest good for the self-interests of the few who own the Millcroft golf course.

I have confidence that the City will do everything it can to preserve ALL of the open spaces of the Millcroft golf course.

I have concluded my remarks and I am ready for any questions you may have.