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Subject: [External] Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan Update and study - deputation
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Deputation of Barry Nelson: Heritage Vaughan Oct 23, 2024 7:00 pm - 6.3 Thonhill Heritage Conservation District Plan - Update Presentation and Review

Good evening, Chair and Members of the Heritage Vaughan Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today regarding item 6.3, the *Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan Update*. My name is Barry Nelson, I'm a local Culture and Built Heritage Advocate and I am here to advocate for a more comprehensive consideration of large-scale development applications that are proposed adjacent to or near heritage districts, particularly within the Thornhill community.

Thornhill's heritage is deeply rooted in its history as a rural hamlet and later as a Police Village, with a landscape characterized by 19th- and early 20th-century built forms and agricultural heritage . The *Thornhill Heritage Conservation District* (THCD) was originally established to protect this village-like character, and I appreciate the report's recognition of the importance of these historical themes in guiding the district's evolution. However, as development pressures increase, it is critical that any large-scale proposals near heritage districts are thoroughly evaluated not only for their architectural compatibility but also for their cultural impact.

The *SWOT Report* highlights the concept of **sympathetic intensification**, which calls for updated guidelines that ensure developments align with the historical character of Thornhill . To achieve this, I propose that the updated THCD Plan include a mandatory **Cultural Heritage Impact Statement (CHIS)** for any large-scale development adjacent to the district. This statement that I can with ease provide definition, development protocol and sample content, would require developers to demonstrate how their projects respect the historical context, architectural integrity, and cultural fabric of Thornhill. This is particularly important given the report's findings that while some new developments attempt to evoke historic styles, they often do so at a much larger scale than traditional structures, potentially compromising the character of the district .

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize the **interconnected heritage landscape** shared between Vaughan and Markham across Yonge Street. The cultural and built heritage of Thornhill is not confined to Vaughan's jurisdiction; it extends into Markham, where similar historic and architectural elements contribute to a cohesive community identity. Decisions made in Vaughan have direct implications for the broader heritage environment of Thornhill, including the assets and landscapes protected within Markham's boundaries . As such, it is vital that Vaughan's heritage planning policies consider this shared history and coordinate with Markham to ensure a unified approach to heritage conservation that benefits both

municipalities.

Additionally, the report points out the importance of **preserving historical views and landscapes**, which are integral to Thornhill's identity (Section 4.8). Large-scale developments risk disrupting these heritage vistas, and a thorough impact assessment would help ensure that new constructions harmonize with, rather than overshadow, these elements .

Finally, the emphasis on **community engagement** is crucial. The *SWOT Report* supports ongoing public and municipal consultation as a means of refining the THCD Plan. Developers must be required to engage with the community and heritage experts to understand the historical and cultural values they are building within. This inclusive approach will help new residents appreciate Thornhill's significance and integrate harmoniously into the heritage landscape .

In conclusion, I respectfully urge the Committee to integrate these recommendations into the THCD Plan Update. By mandating a *Cultural Heritage Impact Statement* and fostering collaborative efforts with Markham, we can ensure that Thornhill's unique and shared heritage is not only protected but also celebrated.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.