

Dear Mayor Boshcoff & Councillors,

We, the undersigned, are writing to express our concern regarding the proposed 600 unit development for 791 Arundel St. (the parcel). As property owners along Toledo St., adjacent to the parcel, we will be directly impacted along with the hundreds of community members both locally and across the City.

The parcel, a much loved community greenspace for decades, with mature trees and woodlands, provides habitat and acts as a wildlife corridor for many bird species, bats, deer, foxes, coyotes, native red squirrels, and a bear or two. The trees provide shade to neighbouring properties as well as a wind and snow screen. Hundreds of community members and residents from across the City use the greenspace for active living including runners, walkers, dog walkers, cyclists, cross-country skiers, skate-skiers, mountain bikers, children going to school, bird-watchers, running events, the list goes on. In fact, local schools have been using this area for over 40 years for cross country running, nature walks and preparation for track & field. It is not just an empty lot waiting for development.

Although we prefer not to see any development of this greenspace given how valuable it is to the community, we want to assure you we are not against growth, nor would we oppose a much smaller development. However, a massive 600 unit development is contrary to the policies of the City of Thunder Bay Official Plan. It is not compatible in scale and mass with the surrounding community of single family homes, smaller apartment buildings consisting of 45 to 127 units, a 72 unit condominium, or the 118 units in Chartwell Thunder Bay's retirement home complex. The proposed development, the largest in the history of the City, dwarfs not only the properties along Toledo St., Hudson Ave., and Arundel St., but everything else in the Current River Ward.

In our opinion, the proposed development is also contrary to the City's own *Smart Growth Action Plan*, *Housing Community Improvement Plan*, *Housing Land Needs Study and Strategy*, *Climate Forward City: Net-Zero Strategy*, and *Urban Design & Landscape Guidelines*. These documents speak to objectives such as "creating compact and walkable neighbourhoods, accessible public transit stops, and net-zero new builds"¹; avoiding greenfield development, "which reduces vehicle trips and enables higher rates of transit use and active transport"²; having "residents of Thunder Bay drive less and walk or cycle more"³; ensuring "Thunder Bay's forests and greenspaces are protected and provide essential ecosystem services"⁴; and "encouraging housing in areas already connected to roads, water, and sewer infrastructure helps reduce sprawl, lower infrastructure costs, and create neighbourhoods that are more walkable and transit-friendly"⁵.

Size of the Proposed Development

The proposed 600 unit development will likely require buildings much higher than 5 or 6 storeys. The Call for Proposals required a Concept Outline which included a detailed narrative description of the proposed project along with a rudimentary sketch. However, the City only provided a generic "conceptual proposal" image and no specifics. It's extremely difficult to reconcile the proposed 600 unit development with the image provided. Based on our research of existing new apartment blocks in the City, we could not find a single apartment building with 200 units, nevermind a development with 3 buildings consisting of 200 units each. For example, one of the newest builds at 631 Fulton Blvd is 5 storeys and only 60 units. Older apartment buildings like Waverly Towers is 16 storeys and 153 units, and Bayview Towers is 12 storeys and 164 units. The numbers just don't seem to fit.

¹ City of Thunder Bay Urban Design & Landscape Guidelines (5.1 Residential)

² Climate Forward City: Thunder Bay Net-Zero Strategy (Transportation Fuel Emissions)

³ Climate Forward City: Thunder Bay Net Zero Strategy (Objective 13)

⁴ Climate Forward City: Thunder Bay Net Zero Strategy (Objective 2)

⁵ Smart Growth Action Plan (R17 – Infill Housing in Urban Serviced Areas)

Impact to Roads, Traffic, and Increased Emissions

600 units would mean an additional 1200+ residents (using a conservative average of 2 people per unit) as well as a **minimum of 600 vehicles**. This will have a huge impact on our local roads, not only on Arundel St. and Hudson Ave. but on local side streets as drivers attempt to find faster ways of navigating through the neighbourhoods, something that is already occurring. This increase in the number of vehicles increases traffic congestion, noise pollution and emissions, as well as raising safety concerns for other road users due to the lack of sidewalks and protected cycling infrastructure.

Greenfield Site

For all intents and purposes, the proposed development is a greenfield site. According to the City's Call for Proposals, water, sanitary and storm are available at Toledo St., not at the site itself. There was no mention of electrical services. Who will bear the cost of the additional infrastructure needed to tie into the development?

Car Dependency, Transit, Cycling, and Lack of Amenities

The community around the proposed development *is not* a "walkable" neighbourhood. In fact, [walkscore.com](https://www.walkscore.com) rates the area a **13 out of 100** which means it is "car dependent" and almost all errands require a car. The community does not have continuous sidewalks on most side streets and roads, including along Arundel St. and Hudson Ave.

The community also lacks basic services and amenities. We have no major grocery stores, banks, LCBO, medical offices, restaurants, etc. within a reasonable walking distance. Arundel St. and Hodder Ave. offer minimal services and amenities, but that is a 2.3km walk along Arundel St., with no sidewalk, until one gets a few blocks from Hodder Ave. and there is no bus service along Arundel St. from the development location.

The closest transit service is at Toledo St. and Arundel St. on the #7 Hudson bus which runs every 30 to 45 minutes depending on the day and time. There is also the #17 Current River to Waterfront, but the closest stop for that bus is a 1.6km walk along Arundel St., with no continuous sidewalk.

The cycle score from [walkscore.com](https://www.walkscore.com) is higher than walking, at 54 out of 100. Some roads in the neighbourhood have a painted bike lane, although the active living corridor along Arundel/Hudson installs flexible bollard posts, but only during part of the year. Given the lack of year-round safe and accessible cycling infrastructure, commuting by bike is only feasible 5-6 months out of the year and running errands by bike can be problematic because, sadly, most destinations in the City lack safe and secure bike parking infrastructure.

Alternate Proposals

We understand that the City needs to build more housing. City manager John Collin, recently stated "We must think bigger, we must act bigger"⁶. However, in the case of the proposed development, it doesn't comply with many of the City's own plans, strategies, and guidelines. We are not Toronto with its impersonal glass highrises. City residents love Thunder Bay for its access to nature, greenspace, affordable housing, and the friendly, relaxed, quiet atmosphere our community offers. Build on this greenspace if you must, but do it in a smart way, not merely because we need to achieve housing targets calculated using methodology based on outdated census data, in order to secure provincial and federal funding. The concerns of existing community members, the overall character of the community, as well as the suitability of putting a massive development into a car dependent, non walkable area of

⁶ [TBnewswatch.com](https://www.tbnewswatch.com) article October 29, 2025

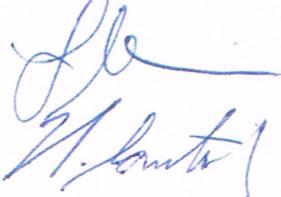
the City lacking local services and amenities, must be taken into consideration when surplusizing the parcel for development.

To that end, we respectfully propose another option (attached) for your consideration. Our proposed option would see a smaller development of 200-250 units, with buildings no taller than 5 storeys. Our option leaves the paved multi-use trail where it is, along with the existing mature trees on the east side of the property abutting the existing properties on Toledo, with additional trees planted for screening, and keeps a portion of the greenspace accessible to our community and to the wildlife. Our option also creates some distance between the entrance of the proposed development and the intersection of Toledo St. and Arundel St., as well as the driveway for the home at 432 Toledo St. that enters onto Arundel St. The most logical location from a traffic safety standpoint, would be to place the entrance of the proposed development directly across from the east entrance of Dawson Properties' Parkview Place, essentially creating a two-way stop intersection.

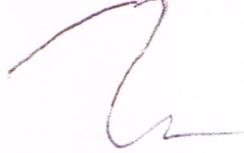
We trust that you will consider our concerns and comments, along with our proposed option, when deliberating the decision to declare the parcel surplus to allow development.

Sincerely,
Toledo Property Owners

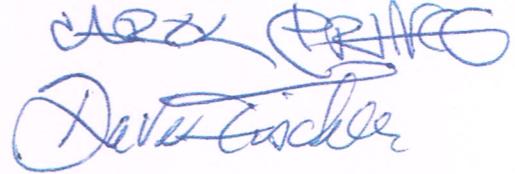
Lori & Nick Santink
420 Toledo St.



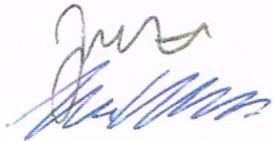
Tanner & Raija Dunn
394 Toledo St.



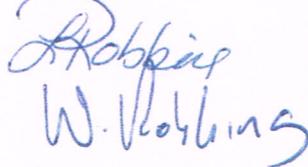
Carol Prince & Dave Fischer
404 Toledo St.



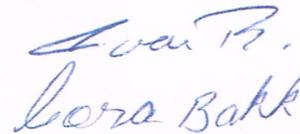
Jess & Zack White
432 Toledo St.



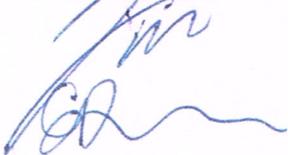
Lisa & William Robbins
398 Toledo St.



Cora & Ivan Bakk
408 Toledo St.



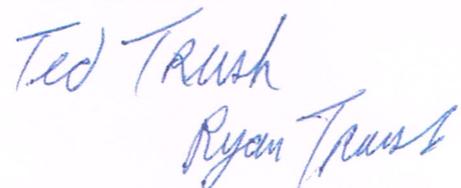
Elizabeth & Jonathan Muia
414 Toledo St.



Michael Pilling
396 Toledo St.



Ted Trush and Ryan Trush
424 Toledo St.

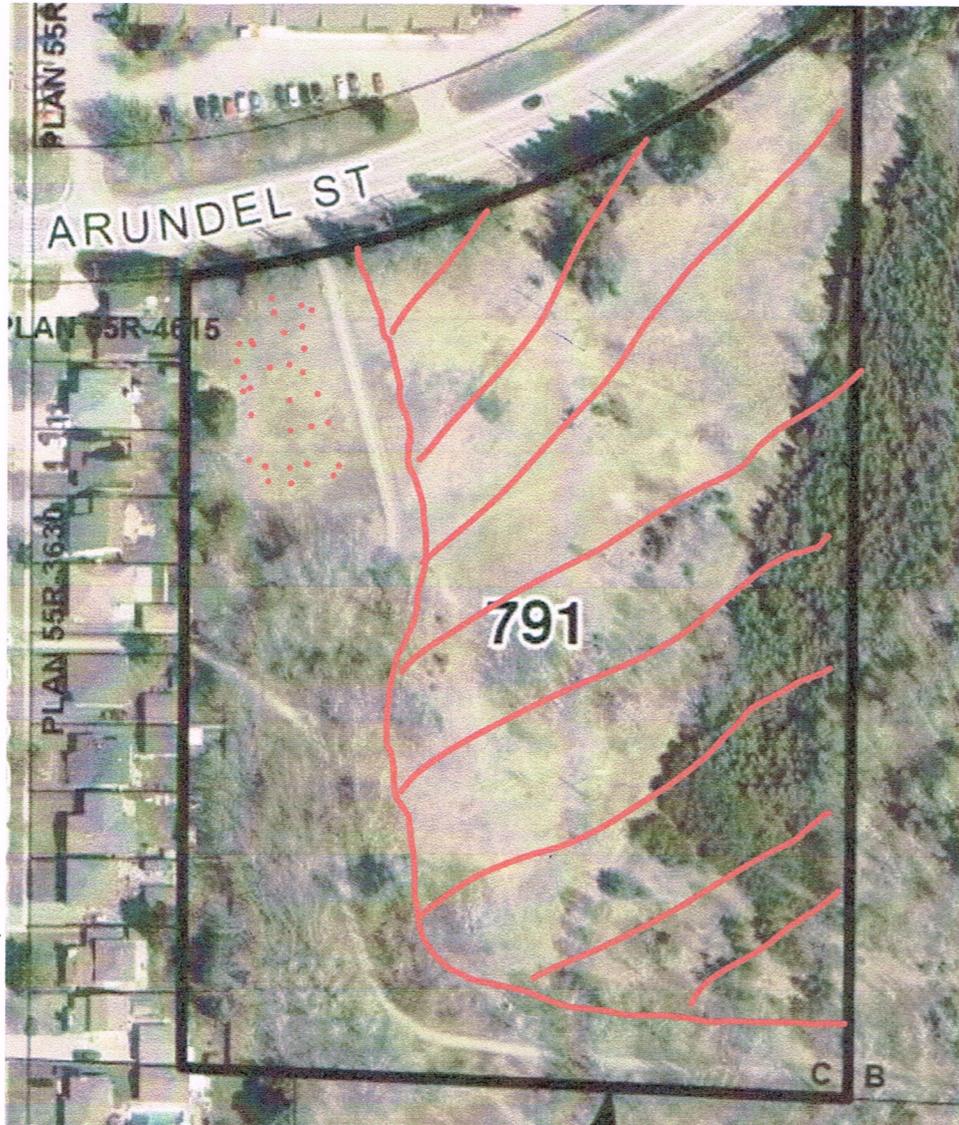


Encl.

ED KOIVULA
428 TOLEDO ST



PROPOSED OPTION



Shrink the buildable area of the parcel and keep the paved multi-use pathway in its current location. Keep existing mature trees on either side of the pathway and add additional trees at the north end to provide screening.

Legend:

- Red lines designate development (building) area**
- Red dots designate additional trees to be planted**

Mayor Boshcoff, Members of the Growth Standing Committee, City Administration:

My name is Lori Santink. I am here today, speaking on behalf of my husband and myself, as well as my neighbours, nine of the other property owners on Toledo St., whose homes are adjacent to the proposed 600 unit development at 791 Arundel St. and who will be directly impacted by the largest proposed development in the history of Thunder Bay.

In support of my deputation, I have provided a joint letter, along with copies of two blog posts by Livo Di Matteo, Professor of Economics, Lakehead University, as well as his recent interview with TBnewswatch on November 25, 2025.

We are unanimous in our desire to see the greenspace be left as is, to be enjoyed, not only by us, but by the community at large. This is not some random vacant lot owned by the City, it is a wonderful greenspace, enjoyed for decades, 365 days a year, by our local community, as well as many residents throughout Thunder Bay. With its mature trees, grasses, and open field, it provides habitat and acts as a wildlife corridor for the abundant animals who share our world. It provides a car-free, safe space for the many runners, walkers, dog walkers, cyclists, cross-country skiers, skate-skiers, mountain bikers, children going to school, bird-watchers, running events, the list goes on. The City has invested in this greenspace by installing a paved, lit multi-use trail maintained year round, with access from the Active Living Corridor along Arundel, Lyon Blvd, as well as a pathway between 414 and 412 Toledo St.

As you already know, out of the TEN “opportunity sites” chosen by City Administration, 791 Arundel is the only one zoned Community Zone, a zoning designation used by the City for park space throughout Thunder Bay. Yes, this zoning also allows some development, but not residential, and definitely not the type of massive development that is being proposed. Why, we ask, with all the parcels available to the City for development, is it now choosing to build the largest housing development in the history of Thunder Bay on what is, and always has been seen and used by the residents of Thunder Bay, as park space? In our opinion, this sets a terrible precedent.

Professor Di Matteo’s blog posts and interview lends credence to our letter and our concerns and comments about this proposed development. In his blog post of November 20, 2025, he states:

“...the logical place to target density developments in Thunder Bay should be the two former downtown core areas of Port Arthur and Fort William and the corridor connecting them that runs along and immediately adjacent to Water/Fort William Road/Simpson Streets and Algoma/Memorial/May Streets.”

The Shuniah neighbourhood is definitely not the location for THE largest housing development the City has ever seen and even runs contrary to Thunder Bay’s Official Plan. In order to fit 600 units, the greenspace will have to be rezoned Urban High-Rise. Such zoning and massive

development, allowing buildings up to 45 metres or 12 to 15 storeys high, is not compatible in scale and mass with the surrounding community of single family homes, smaller apartment buildings consisting of anywhere from 4 to 127 units, a 72 unit condominium, or the 118 units in Chartwell Thunder Bay's retirement home complex. It literally dwarfs every single other build type in the neighbourhood.

The development is also contrary to many of the tenets in the City's various policies, strategies, plans and guidelines, which no doubt has cost taxpayers thousands, if not millions of dollars to produce. For example:

- Thunder Bay Housing Lands Needs Study and Strategy
- Climate Forward City - Thunder Bay Net Zero Strategy
- Smart Growth Action Plan - DRAFT
- Thunder Bay Urban Design & Landscape Guideline

These City documents, as well as media releases and interviews with local media, use urban planning language such as:

- Creating "integrated spaces that combine residential, commercial and public amenities"¹
- Building homes in areas that already have neighbourhood amenities. "Infill" development keeping our taxes lower, making better use of existing infrastructure, and allowing more people to live in walkable, connected neighbourhoods.²
- By 2030, 65% of trips within the city will be by walking, cycling or public transit.³
- Neighbourhoods are complete, compact, and walkable.
- Thunder Bay's forests and greenspaces are protected and provide essential ecosystem services.⁴

In his interview with TB Newswatch, Professor Di Matteo stated that putting developments, and I quote, "wherever the City conveniently has a piece of green space in the short run may seem optimal because it's quick, but what they're doing is creating a more dispersed city that's even more dependent on vehicles."

And dependent on vehicles we are. According to walkscore.com, a website whose mission is to promote walkable neighbourhoods, our Shuniah neighbourhood is considered "car dependent", with a walk score of 13 out of 100. 791 Arundel to Hodder Ave, where some basic amenities exist, is a 2.3km walk along Arundel, without continuous sidewalks, on the road, with car traffic. Although the Active Living Corridor has cycling opportunities, it is not protected nor maintained

¹ Ontario Construction News June 6, 2025 Thunder Bay seeks developers for 10 prime city-owned sites in push to boost housing.

² www.thunderbay.ca/getinvolved Proposed Housing Developments on City Surplus Lands

³ Climate-Forward City: Thunder Bay Net-Zero Strategy Sector Targets: Active Transport and Transit

⁴ Climate-Forward City: Thunder Bay Net-Zero Strategy Focus Area: Land Use and Natural Areas Objectives 1 & 2

year round. There is only one bus servicing our neighbourhood, the #7 Hudson, running every 30 minutes in peak times, and this bus does not run east of Toledo.

Toledo and Conmee do not have continuous sidewalks so again, even considering walking a direct route to downtown is about 3.8km or a 50 minute walk, including on roads, with traffic. There are no major grocery stores, banks, LCBO, medical offices, etc., nevermind large employers in our neighbourhood or in Current River. Residents in this neighbourhood must drive or use transit, which, as I'm sure you're aware, is neither convenient, fast, or the most efficient means of getting to any of our major employers.

We do not understand why the City would consider destroying this well used and loved greenspace, would consider cutting down forest that provides an essential ecosystem service in our neighbourhood, and propose a 600 unit housing development which will add 600+ more vehicles spewing emissions and increasing noise pollution, and add upwards of 1200+ people, to a car dependent neighbourhood that is not "walkable, complete, compact, or connected".

Once again I'll quote from Professor Di Matteo's blog post of November 20, 2025:

"The problem here is that Thunder Bay's idea of increasing density in a climate crisis apparently includes cutting down swaths of green space to build density development in areas often removed from where density either already exists or should be promoted. Moreover, the constant dispersion of new development results in the new residents of these "density developments" having to rely mainly on automobile transport rather than public transit which is not convenient or timely given the dispersed nature of the city."

Mayor Boshcoff, Councillors, City Administration, we are not against building housing but we are against using greenspace to build this type of density, not only here, but across the City. Build here if you must but only if there are no other options. If you insist on using this greenspace, we propose a much smaller development, zoned Urban Mid-Rise, that leaves the multi-use trail as is, provides a buffer between any development and the existing property owners on Toledo St., and is compatible in scale and mass with the surrounding community. But please, before you even consider designating this parcel surplus, nevermind allowing a proposed 600 unit development or even a smaller development, consider the learned opinion of Professor Di Matteo, the concerns of the adjacent property owners and the wider community, the overall character of the Shuniah neighbourhood, the car dependent nature of this area, the lack of adequate walking and cycling infrastructure, the lack of local services and amenities, the destruction of forest and greenspace, and what the removal of a well used and much loved park space means to the residents of the Shuniah neighbourhood and the community of Current River.

Thank you

NORTHERN ECONOMIST 2.0

An Ontario economics and policy blog.

THURSDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2025

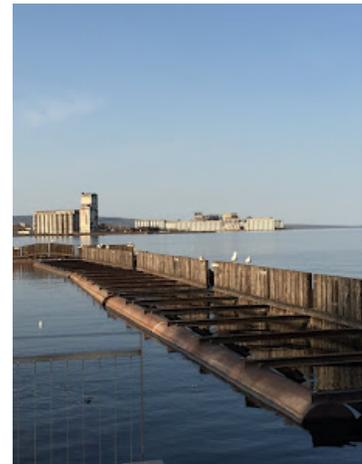
Thunder Bay Is Missing Its Chance for Strategic Urban Density

After decades of low growth, Thunder Bay has been experiencing a period of growth that affords it an opportunity to reshape its urban landscape. Historically, Thunder Bay has allowed its urban footprint to expand in a low-density highly dispersed web that is more costly to service and provide efficient infrastructure such as water and sewer as well as public transit. The recent spate of population growth as well as the availability of provincial and federal money for housing means that Thunder Bay could be making some major strides building density in its core urban areas. This of course would complement the rather large dollar amounts that have recently been expended for urban redevelopment projects in the downtown cores such as the [North Core Streetscape Project](#) and the [Victoria Avenue Revitalization](#).

Alas, in its haste to meet federal and provincial housing targets and obtain government money, Thunder Bay is on the verge of yet again squandering the opportunities that have presented themselves by engaging in short term decision making that will build scattered density developments that will sprout like toadstools after a summer's rain. City officials have noted that they are only 32 percent of the way in meeting their housing targets and [must build an additional 1200 units](#) by February 2027 to meet the target of 1,755 housing units. The proposed locations for density development are at 300 Tokio Street, 144 Fanshaw Street, 791 Arundel Street, 211-223 Tupper Street and 224 Camelot Street.

Of these four proposed locations, three are essentially going to be plonked on available space – often green space – in the midst or immediately adjacent to existing residential areas. Only one – the Camelot Street location is going to be placed near a downtown core area. And that is the point. To date, the large

THUNDER BAY HARBOUR



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▼ 2025 (40)

▼ November (4)

[How Thunder Bay Wastes Both Taxpayer Money and Urb...](#)

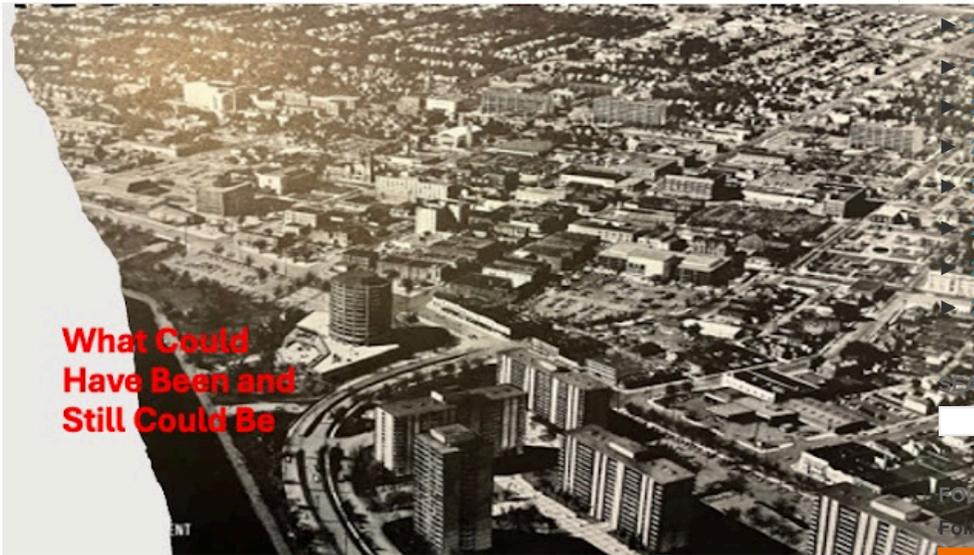
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[The Road Ahead: Pictures of Federal Budget 2025](#)

builds on Junot and Fulton have been built in or adjacent to existing lower density residential areas and often at the expense of nearby green space. Except for Camelot – which is a good location if one is planning to build up core area density – these are all scattered willy-nilly in places where the only option is to drive somewhere to get anything done.

Thunder Bay needs to use this opportunity for growth to be more strategic in how it does its housing if it wants to truly build density. The density housing projects in this city should be designed to concentrate population near services and amenities, not encourage more time-consuming commuting in the long run, to meet short term funding targets. The density build locations in Thunder Bay should be the two former downtown cores areas of Port Arthur and Fort William and the corridor connecting them that runs along and immediately adjacent to Water/Fort William Road/Simpson Streets and Algoma/Memorial/May Streets. It is up to the mayor and council to provide this type of directive to its administration because simply asking them to come up with sites for density build will generate the quickest solution rather than a methodical plan for infill.



What might such a density corridor look like? A good example is rooted in the urban renewal studies of the past. Plate 20 of the 1968 Proctor and Redfern Downtown Fort William Urban Renewal envisioned a Simpson Street with density rental housing as the accompanying figure illustrates. Many of those apartments or condos would likely have sweeping views of the lake and provide for a mix of both premium and affordable units with room for shops, stores and offices on the street level. Indeed, the recent redevelopment of Simpson Street's road and sewer infrastructure should have presented an opportunity for the consolidation of derelict and underused properties to build the multi-unit buildings the city seems to so desperate to ram through existing residential neighbourhoods and green space.

This opportunity is going to be short-lived and if we simply build things in an erratic short term pattern, we will have to live with the costs for decades to come. Our municipal politicians need to actually step up and lead for a change by providing direction rather than hide behind bureaucratic processes. This window of opportunity will not last long.

Posted by [Livio Di Matteo](#) at 17:54

Labels: [core areas](#), [density](#), [housing](#), [strategy](#), [thunder bay](#)

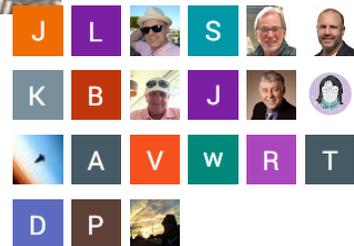
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The Northern Economist blog started on Shaw

Webspace as commentary and analysis of economic issues and policy from a Northern Ontario perspective by Livio Di Matteo, Professor of Economics at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. It had regular posts from November 2010 to February 2012. Posts continued on Northern Economist 2.0 until 2013 when I took an extended break. Occasional posts resumed effective December 2016. With Shaw terminating its blog space functions, I have archived the old posts at: [northerneconomistarchive.blogspot.ca](#).

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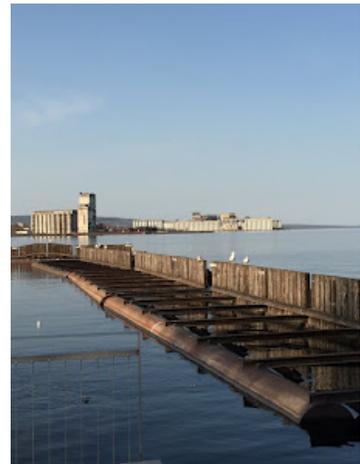
THURSDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2025

How Thunder Bay Wastes Both Taxpayer Money and Urban Core Development Opportunities

The City of Thunder Bay is engaged in budget season and striving to keep its total tax levy increase [to 2.6 percent](#). As part of its new two-part budgeting approach, the capital budget two-year plan is now underway [with initiatives](#) including \$34 million in road improvements in 2026 with another \$26 million in 2027 as well as initiatives in waste diversion and transit. The [proposed capital budget](#) for 2026 amounts to \$160 million while 2027 is going to be lower at \$148 million. January will see [the operating budget](#) and with the 2025 total levy at \$241.7 million, a 2.6 percent increase could bring the levy up to \$248 million.

The proposed 2026 tax levy increase is indeed modest by recent historical standards as the accompanying figure shows as the 2025 increase was 5.2 percent and 2025 was 4.5. However, the proposed 2.6 increase is also below the average increase over the 2015 to 2025 period which comes in at 3.4 percent. Of course, increases need to be balanced against what the needs are and keeping rates low for their own sake is not necessarily the ultimate policy objective. Rather, the aim should be to provide the best public services desired at the lowest costs possible which implies efficient and not wasteful spending, which brings me to the main event.

THUNDER BAY HARBOUR



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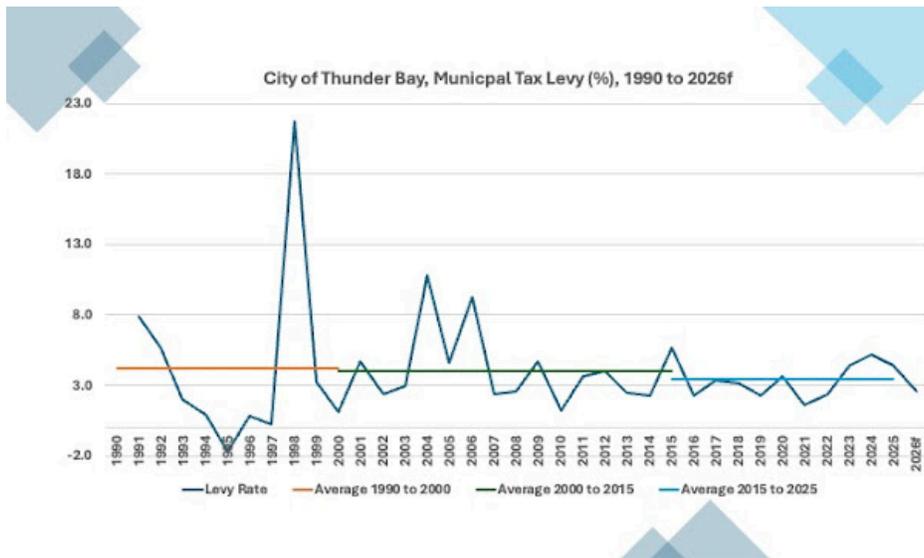
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 - ▶ 2016 (5)
 - ▶ 2013 (1)
 - ▶ 2012 (33)

Whether the City of Thunder Bay will come in with a tax levy increase of 2.6 percent or not remains to be seen. However, what is more important is what often seems to be a lack of strategic direction with how Thunder Bay seems to allocate its spending and projects by doing them in a manner that often works at cross purposes. A case in point is the recent moves to build density housing in the City of Thunder Bay to address the housing shortage and provide affordable housing.

The City of Thunder Bay is preparing to sell municipally owned land to developers to build density housing. The pieces of land are: 300 Tokio Street, 144 Fanshaw Street, 791 Arundel Street, and the land between 211-223 Tupper Street and 224 Camelot Street. Despite the oft stated claim to want to provide affordable housing, the [City has apparently rejected](#) a developer's affordable housing bid for the land that included transitional housing because it was not dense enough. The City of Thunder Bay wishes for: 400 units on Tokio Street, 200 on Fanshaw Street, 600 on Arundel Street, and 185 on Tupper/Camelot streets for a total of about 1,385 units.

Now, Thunder Bay municipal politicians are very good at using the right words and as one councillor was [quoted](#):

<<"There is no question that we are in a housing crisis, not only in the city of Thunder Bay, across the province and across the nation," Foulds said. "We're also in a climate crisis."

"In order to deal with those two huge issues, we do need to have a focus on intensification and increasing the density of our cities, building on existing infrastructure. With that said, we do need to make sure that the infrastructure can handle it. We also must make sure that the developments are appropriate and safe.">>

The problem here is that Thunder Bay's idea of increasing density in a climate crisis apparently includes cutting down swaths of green space to build density development in areas often removed from where density either already exists or should be promoted. Moreover, the constant dispersion of new development results in the new residents of these "density developments" having to rely mainly on automobile transport rather than public transit which is not convenient or timely given the dispersed nature of the city.

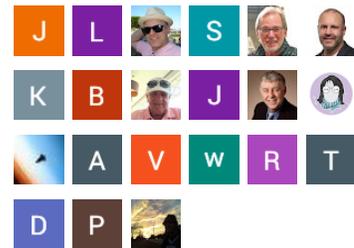
As noted in [an earlier post](#):

<<Of these four proposed locations, three are essentially going to be plonked on available space – often green space – in the midst or immediately adjacent to existing residential areas. Only one – the Camelot Street location is going to be placed near a downtown core area. And that is the point. To date, the large builds on Junot and Fulton have been built in or adjacent to existing lower density residential areas and often at the expense of nearby green space. Except for Camelot – which is a good location if one is planning to build up core area density

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The Northern Economist blog started on Shaw

Webspace as commentary and analysis of economic issues and policy from a Northern Ontario perspective by Livio Di Matteo, Professor of Economics at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. It had regular posts from November 2010 to February 2012. Posts continued on Northern Economist 2.0 until 2013 when I took an extended break. Occasional posts resumed effective December 2016. With Shaw terminating its blog space functions, I have archived the old posts at: northerneconomistarchive.blogspot.ca.

– these are all scattered willy-nilly in places where the only option is to drive somewhere to get anything done.>>

As noted in the same post, the logical place to target density developments in Thunder Bay should be the two former downtown cores areas of Port Arthur and Fort William and the corridor connecting them that runs along and immediately adjacent to Water/Fort William Road/Simpson Streets and Algoma/Memorial/May Streets.

So, how does this come back to my point about wasteful spending? Thunder Bay is constantly trying to revitalize its core areas – the former cores of Port Arthur and Fort William - with initiatives that cost millions of taxpayer dollars. For example, the recently completed north core/Port Arthur streetscape project clocked in at about \$13 million. Currently underway is the south core/Fort William Victoria Avenue revitalization project which is going to kick in at \$18.4 million. Then there is the Simpson Street redevelopment cost from the end of Victoria Avenue to the Ogden/Dease Street area which is approaching the \$8-\$9-million-dollar cost.

In total, this is almost \$40 million dollars in capital spending and rather than being additionally leveraged into a denser set of core urban areas with the tens of millions of dollars in federal housing infrastructure money, it is going to be left to mainly its own devices to attract residents. And beyond these four proposed projects, there is the [proposed Central Avenue](#) Development Lands project which while ostensibly in the “center” of the city will build over 40 acres of largely wooded area eliminating much of the green corridor that runs from Lakehead University through to the College and ultimately Chapples Park.

Thunder Bay’s development motto is essentially “density if necessary but not necessarily urban density.” Thunder Bay equates urban density as simply the act of putting multi-residential units on anywhere the city has surplus land rather than working with owners in existing brownfield areas to consolidate derelict and underused properties. Infill is not always the same as creating urban density. Thunder Bay wastes taxpayer money by providing business owners in the former core areas with beautification baubles but then does not follow up with real strategic investment in those areas. It is the type of short-term thinking that has led to the creation of a dispersed and costly to service city with an over-reliance on automobiles. Enjoy the short-term construction benefits from all the new housing projects as the future costs to both the taxpayer in servicing costs and the environment will be substantial.

Posted by [Livio Di Matteo](#) at 14:31

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City missing a chance to increase housing in cores, public policy analyst says



[Gary Rinne](#)

2 days ago



1 / 3 Concept drawing for proposed development of three residential buildings with a total of up to 600 units at 791 Arundel St.
| City of Thunder Bay

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00:03:21

THUNDER BAY — A respected economist and researcher in public policy is questioning the City of Thunder Bay's current plan to generate high-density housing.

"It's not that we don't need density housing, but this is a good opportunity to actually build things in the core. I think it's a fairly narrow window," said Livio Di Matteo, a professor of economics at Lakehead University.

Di Matteo is critical of the proposal to have developers build [large housing complexes](#) at locations such as [791 Arundel St.](#) near Boulevard Lake and 144 Fanshaw Street near Confederation College.

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City officials have stressed these kinds of projects are necessary to meet tight deadlines established for the federal government's Housing Accelerator Fund.

Another 1,200 units are required by 2027 in order to retain about \$6 million in government funding.

But Di Matteo believes the city should re-think its strategy.

"What the city seems to be doing is pursuing short-term objectives and funding rather than using this as an opportunity to essentially puts its money where its mouth is and put more density in the traditional core areas," he told Newswatch in an interview Monday.

"The spine of the city, really, in a sense is that Mainline bus route, and the part of it that goes from downtown (north) to downtown (south) should really be the target for density housing. Putting them wherever the city conveniently has a piece of green space in the short run may seem optimal because it's quick, but what they're doing is creating a more dispersed city that's even more dependent on vehicles."

Di Matteo feels it makes more sense to put up four-to-six storey buildings on dilapidated or underutilized properties in the cores and along the corridor between them.

"The bottom floor could be shops, retail, whatnot, and the upper floors a range of housing, including affordable housing."

Of the four sites the city recently identified for housing projects, only one — between Camelot and Tupper Streets — is a good location in terms of core-area density, he wrote in a [blog](#), while the rest "are scattered willy-nilly in places where the only option is to drive somewhere" to get anything done.

In the interview, he added that "There's a certain amount of hypocrisy where city councillors argue how important fighting climate change is, and then when push comes to shove they'll find a piece of green space because it's convenient, and go after the short-term funding from governments."

Di Matteo conceded that the city is constrained by government-imposed deadlines.

"Yeah, they could argue that...(but) I think it's up to the politicians to make the case to other levels of government as opposed to always sitting back and accepting what comes down from the higher levels as a fait accompli."

He pointed to the investments the city has made and is making in the cores, with projects such as the north core streetscaping, improvements on Simpson Street, and the revitalization of the south core.

"So if you've spent that kind of money supporting it, buttressing it by putting in density housing in the cores would be ideal, and surely they would have to make the case to government to extend deadlines to they can put the land together as part of a longer-term and essentially more strategic project."



About the Author: Gary Rinne

Born and raised in Thunder Bay, Gary started part-time at Tbnewswatch in 2016 after retiring from the CBC

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