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Subject: Council Public Meeting - April 3, 2019 - Repeal of Downtown Local Centre Secondary Plan (submission to public meeting)

Dear Members of "City" Council:

I represent several landowners within the DLC who are in support of the repeal of the "entire secondary plan" as noted on page 2 of the Staff Report.

We had urged the former Town Council not to adopt it because it is not a workable planning document and, most importantly, the landowners whose lands are required to support redevelopment and reinvestment do not support the plan.

The numerous problems with the plan are a matter of public record and are on file with the OMB/LPAT.

Indeed, the problems with the Secondary Plan stem from section 4.3.1 of the Part 1 Plan and related definitions - matters that we urged the former Town Council and OMB not to approve. No one was listening.

The Town's OP was developed in 2009 and adopted in 2010. That process itself which includes this Secondary Plan process has been very expensive for the Town and its taxpayers. Little if any new and affordable housing units have been created in the Town (now City) particularly within the Downtown area. The Tridel building is shown as a model development in the City's OP and related documents yet achieving 8 - 9 storeys in height in the Downtown has been rejected by former Town Council members.

The linked system of courtyards was never workable - certainly not for vehicles - and has been rejected by landowners. Protecting view corridors relating to the Church Steeples is outdated amongst other matters which must be deleted from all planning documents going forward.

It should come as no surprise that some residents feel that "our "downtown" is unwelcoming and offers no reason for me to take my family there, support the local businesses, etc."

The approvals process in the Town is cumbersome and expensive. Nothing gets done - little if anything gets built and yet calls are made for a subway.

Clearly prompt and swift corrective action and leadership is required from the new City Council. The focus should be on fulfilling the 3 important principles set out in the DDLUS (excerpted below) which are:

1. Establish the environment for change
2. Reduce the cost of development
3. Reduce the risk of the approvals process

Excerpt
From

See page
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5.0 Implementation

The previous chapters have described the components of the Design and Land Use Strategy. The Terms of Reference indicate an Implementation Stage in conjunction with the development of the new OP, during which Town staff will prepare the Downtown Secondary Plan and Downtown Zoning By-law based on the Design and Land Use Strategy.

This chapter summarizes the primary recommendations that have evolved over the course of preparing the Design and Land Use Strategy. It is not anticipated that wholesale change will occur in Downtown Richmond Hill over the short term. Rather, the introduction of higher density and mixed use development will evolve as the market responds to the provision of high order transit. Downtown will continue to grow in its appeal of providing much greater choices for transportation, living and working in Richmond Hill.

Successful implementation hinges on three fundamental actions as described below. Research into case study examples of the intensification of centres in communities of all sizes across North America has revealed that these common elements are essential ingredients of success.

1. Establish the environment for change

It is necessary to continue to work at establishing the environment for change to a mixed use, higher density Downtown. The Town already has strong political will for intensification of Downtown Richmond Hill. This sends a clear message to the community that the Town is committed to investing in Downtown Richmond Hill and creates a favourable climate for private sector investment. The vision for Downtown Richmond Hill will be further strengthened with the adoption of this Design and Land Use Strategy and its implementing policy. Typically, there is also a need to invest in public facilities and amenities. In choosing to live Downtown, residents often trade off private space for a diverse array of public amenities and services. The Town of Richmond Hill has a history of investing in Downtown Richmond Hill. There have been many millions of dollars spent on streetscape improvements, the new Centre for the Performing Arts, the library and the McConaghy Seniors Centre. Other public sector partners are also investing in Downtown Richmond Hill with construction of high order transit.

2. Reduce the cost of development

Higher density, urban forms of development in general, cost more than typical suburban development forms. The Town has tools that can be used to reduce the

development costs to private developers and owners, which will increase the likelihood of the achievement of higher density urban development. Methods of reducing the cost of development could include:

- public/private partnerships (for example providing some public parking in private buildings);
- reducing parking standards; and,
- providing financial incentives.

Reduced parking requirements reflect diminished automobile use and greater opportunities for shared parking resulting from increased transit opportunities and ridership. Given the current cost of building parking spaces, particularly structured parking, reducing parking requirements and ensuring that the parking supply reflects the true need of more transit supportive forms of development subsequently reduces the overall cost of development.

Similarly, while recognizing that parkland is an important element in the composition of a healthy and balanced urban environment, reductions in parkland standards can be used to reduce private development costs. Further, opportunities for open space can be augmented through development requirements for publicly accessible private open spaces that provide an important urban amenity, while retaining private ownership.

The reduction of development costs can also be achieved through the provision of financial incentives by updating the Community Improvement Plan and/or through tax incentives/reduced development charges.

3. Reduce the risk of the approvals process

It is also important to reduce the risk for private developers. A private developer wishing to build the type of development envisioned for Downtown Richmond Hill may be more likely to develop if there is more certainty surrounding the planned vision and more certainty surrounding the approval process. The Official Plan Amendment will outline permitted heights, form and possible incentives to reduce some of the risk associated with development. An illustrated Zoning By-law will not only provide the regulatory basis to facilitate the Strategy, but will also provide greater certainty as to the Town's development expectations. Pre-zoning for the desired types and forms of development transfers the risk of the development approvals process to the municipality, in concert with the development industry. The pre-zoning exercise should be land use and built form based and should clarify municipal development objectives.

I, along with a number of experienced professional consultants and landowners are able assist the City in order to achieve a new vision and ultimately revitalize the Downtown.

Please provide me with notice of any decision taken on this matter.

P.S.- a new parking strategy and reduced parking rates are required in order to promote transit use and other more sustainable mobility options.

Thank you.

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