

February 25, 2020

MGP File: 19-2839

Richmond Hill Council
225 East Beaver Creek Road
Richmond Hill, ON L3B 3P4

via email: clerks@richmondhill.ca

Dear Mayor Barrow and Members of Council:

**RE: Council Meeting, February 26, 2020
Agenda Item 13.9 (SRPRS.20.003) – York Region’s Municipal Comprehensive
Review (Part 1): Requests for Employment Area Conversions
Richmond Hill Honda
Automobile Dealerships, City of Richmond Hill**

Malone Given Parsons Ltd. (“MGP”) is the planning consultant to Richmond Hill Honda, currently located at 77 16th Avenue, in the City of Richmond Hill.

We are writing in response to Richmond Hill’s February 26, 2020, Council Agenda Item 13.9 “York Region’s Municipal Comprehensive Review (Part 1): Requests for Employment Area Conversions” (Report No. SRPRS.20.003).

Request

We have reviewed the Staff Report and are generally supportive of the staff recommendation to permit automobile dealerships to locate in employment designations. We welcome the opportunity to work with City Staff through best available alternative means, however we remain concerned that this request can only be supported through an Employment Land Conversion. As such, we are seeking Council’s support for Richmond Hill Honda’s Employment Land Conversion Request as explained in further detail below.

Richmond Hill Honda is Looking for a New Site in Richmond Hill

As you may be aware, Richmond Hill Honda has sold its existing site at Yonge and 16th Avenue and is in search of a new location in Richmond Hill to maintain its +/- 100 high-quality jobs within the City.

In search for a new site, it has become apparent that the current Official Plan framework only permits automobile dealerships along the Yonge Street and Hwy 7 corridors. These corridors generally consist of urban and mixed-use Official Plan designations where residential development has increased land values significantly. It has now become cost prohibitive for Honda to locate on these corridors. Unfortunately, these corridors are the only places where auto dealerships are a permitted use.

Richmond Hill Honda is now in search of a site outside of the Yonge Street corridor and is interested in key locations within the City's Employment Area designations, where land costs lower while maintaining their presence and visibility along arterial roads.

Richmond Hill Honda's Employment Land Conversion Request

Within the City's Official Plan, automobile dealerships are considered a commercial use and only permitted in the various mixed-use designations along the Yonge Street and Hwy 7 Corridors.

Automobile dealerships are not a permitted use on employment lands. As such, Richmond Hill Honda has submitted an employment land conversion request to solely permit automobile dealerships on designated employment lands.

In the Province's A Place to Grow: The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, an Employment Conversion is required to permit non-employment uses within Employment Areas (Policy 2.2.5.9). As the City's Official Plan does not permit automobile dealerships in employment designation and the use is considered a commercial use, the introduction of an automobile dealership can be considered an employment land conversion.

In our opinion, Richmond Hill Honda's request to permit automobile dealership uses within employment areas is a local matter. However recent changes to the Growth Plan have shifted the responsibility of employment land conversions to the upper tier municipalities (York Region). As such, we are seeking Council's support for the inclusion of automobile dealerships on employment lands to provide York Region with the appropriate direction as part of their Municipal Comprehensive Review.

We emphasize that Richmond Hill Honda's employment land conversion request does not seek any additional non-employment uses (such as residential uses) to be permitted. The request also does not request a re-designation or removal of lands from an employment designation. Rather, Richmond Hill Honda is only seeking to add automobile dealerships as a permitted use within employment designations in the City of Richmond Hill.

While we appreciate staff's support for the permission of automobile dealerships on employment lands and their efforts to facilitate this request through "best alternative means", we remain concerned that this request continues to be a conversion request as defined by the Growth Plan which can only be processed through the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review. As such, we continue to seek Council's support for Richmond Hill Honda's employment land conversion request.

Automobile Dealerships are Permitted in Employment Areas in Other Municipalities

The permission for automobile dealerships within Employment Areas is not a new concept in York Region. Other municipalities (e.g. Town of Newmarket, City of Markham) currently permit automobile dealerships within their employment designations. The Town of Newmarket permits motor vehicle uses as-of-right in business park designations (Business Park – General Employment and Mixed Employment) while the City of Markham permits motor vehicle uses within the Business Park Employment and Service Employment designations at its discretion through site-specific review.

It is our opinion that automobile dealerships are an appropriate use for employment areas and should also be permitted use in Richmond Hill.

Based on the above reasons, we respectfully ask Council to support the Employment Conversion Request. This will continue to allow the City to undertake a comprehensive analysis to consider policy direction to permit automobile dealerships in employment designations.

I will attend the February 26, 2020 meeting to speak to Council and answer any questions.

Should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss our comments in greater detail, please contact me at 905.513.0170.

Yours very truly,

Malone Given Parsons Ltd.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'L. Capilongo', written in a cursive style.

Lauren Capilongo, MCIP, RPP
Principal

cc. Richmond Hill Honda
Kelvin Kwan, City of Richmond Hill
Deborah Giannetta, City of Richmond Hill
Patrick Lee, City of Richmond Hill