

To: Mayor and Councillors

From: Pat Pollock

Re: Submission for Council Meeting, October 28, 2020, **Item 14.3, Economic Development Opportunity**

It seems that there have been a couple of proposals for this land in the past.

a) RH Council APPROVED the conversion of these lands to be used for residential purposes (September 18, 2019) and

b) York Region in their Summary of Employment Area Conversion Recommendations DID NOT APPROVE conversion to non-employment uses for Mackenzie Commons (staff report). However, York Region Council did approve the conversion. (vote of only 6 voted against it).

Because of this situation a number of questions need to be asked:

1. If York Region and Richmond Hill Councils voted to convert the lands to include residential use, why is an MZO needed?

This makes no sense. According to the two councils Treasure Hill/Rice group have approval to develop this land as mixed use. Is the reason so that there is no further input from the public? With a MZO the proposal is fast tracked and there is no further public consultation.

2. What is the value of a MZO?

Public input has been consulted when this matter came up at Richmond Hill Council and at York Region Council. No further input is allowed when a MZO is requested. This is a method to circumvent further public input.

Requesting an MZO is viewed as being manipulative. It is viewed as not accepting further public input. It is viewed as being self-serving, and not ethical. As you say yourself, Councillor Perrelli, "follow the rules". That means that going forward needs to have input according to the Official Plans of both York Region and the City of Richmond Hill. What is happening here is the circumventing of the whole process.

3. What is the best use of this land?

I agree with York Region Staff recommendations to have this land used for employment lands.

Treasure Hill/Rice Group is suggesting 4240 residential units in nine 25-storey towers, three 20-storey towers and two 30-storey towers, plus other adjoining lower residences (I do not have access to the more recent October 17, 2020 submission). Can you imagine the traffic congestion trying to get onto Major Mackenzie and then onto 404? It is already far too congested.

This land is much more suitable for employment where office buildings like those at 16th and 404 already exist. The proposed development has only 4 office buildings of 10-storeys each bridged by two of 2-storeys and an additional two of 3-storeys each. Most of the land is used for residential dwellings as noted above. Even at 16th and 404 there is congestion but not nearly what is expected with the proposed ratio of residential to office space proposed here.

In the York Region Staff Report it states:

“For York Region Site Specific Employment Area Conversion Assessment Summary states for RH1 (the land in question)

- Site is adjacent to Highway 404, contributing to the Regional and local municipality’s economic development potential and supporting goods movement. Converting this site is contrary to Regional and Provincial planning objectives.
- The site is 17.6 ha and is considered a large-sized employment area site and should be protected over the long-term to support a diverse range, size, and mix of employment opportunities.
- Site is part of a larger contiguous employment area, and the introduction of non-employment uses has the potential to destabilize the employment area and/or negatively impact viability of existing and future surrounding employment uses adding pressure for future conversions of the adjacent parcels.
- Existing site-specific permissions on the site already allow for more flexible employment uses such as major retail and commercial uses.
- The introduction of non-employment uses, such as residential, is not compatible with the surrounding context due to its proximity to a 400 series highway.

Recommendation: Not recommended for conversion to non-employment uses. Designate as employment in the Regional Official plan.”

It is clear that this recommendation is well thought out. Who voted against this at York Region Council? What are the reasons for going against this staff report?

4. Why should Treasure Hill get special treatment and not go through the normal process of development approval?

The fact is, it shouldn’t. Truth is that this group (both Treasure Hill and Rice group) contributed through family members, to Perrelli, DiPaola, and Muench campaigns in 2018 up to the maximum amount of money allowed. This creates a conflict of interest. As such, Perrelli, DiPaola and Muench should recuse themselves from discussion and voting on this issue. Instead we have one of them putting forth a request for a MZO which circumvents the process. This is a manipulative tactic to benefit Treasure Hill and Rice Group.

Conclusion:

There is no reason for a request for an MZO, except to circumvent the process for the benefit of Treasure Hill/Rice group. This proposal needs to go through the normal process adhering to the Official Plans of York Region and The City of Richmond Hill. Public input needs to be heard all through that process. This appears to be manipulative, circumventing the process in order to satisfy Treasure Hill/Rice Group. Richmond Hill Council needs to vote against this motion and Treasure Hill/Rice Group needs to go through the normal process of getting approval for their proposed development plans.