



July 5, 2021

Acting Mayor DiPaola and Members of Council
225 East Beaver Creek Road
Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 3P4

Re: SRPI.21.052 Request for Endorsement – Concerning **Draft** Affordable Housing Strategy, April 2021 and related reports to be considered at the Council Meeting of July 7, 2021

Dear Acting Mayor DiPaola and Councillors:

I act on behalf of North Elgin Centre Inc. (NEC), owner of 11005 Yonge Street, located in the Yonge Bernard KDA. We participated in the ongoing Affordable Housing Strategy process, including the workshops and therefore have been fully engaged in the study.

As an interested landowner and stakeholder, NEC has preliminary comments that cover four areas:

1. Staff's recommendation #b on what is being endorsed;
2. Staff's comment about the housing affordability crisis – report page 3;
3. Tools and statements concerning the cost of providing new housing units, including inclusionary zoning and reference to Bernard KDA; and
4. Parking & Housing Affordability

1. Staff's recommendation #b – what is being endorsed?

On page 1 of the Report, Staff's recommendation #b seeks "Endorsement of Affordable Housing Strategy". The document referred to is in Draft.

On page 2 – Staff explain what they mean by "endorsement" of the strategy, stating specifically "that it will not commit the City to use any specific tools at this time, rather it will provide direction to staff to undertake the work necessary to identify the details associated with each tool, consult...and then seek Council's approval of the individual tools".

Staff's recommendations to Council should be revised to state:

- a) That Council receive the staff report and the draft affordable housing strategy attached to the staff report along with deputations and communications; and
- b) That Staff be directed to undertake the work necessary to identify the details associated with each tool, consult with the public and stakeholders, and bring forward a recommendation report by [insert date].

With the above changes there should now be clarity around Staff's request for endorsement.

2. Staff's comment about the housing affordability crisis – Report page 3

On page 3, Staff note that the Region has reiterated ***its housing crisis*** through its 2021 Report, emphasizing that the Region has not been able to achieve housing affordability targets in recent years.

While the Staff report suggests that the City has a responsibility to address the problem, Staff have not expressly confirmed that the City has an housing affordability crisis, nor has Staff confirmed the nature and significance of the crisis.

While the Draft Affordable Housing Strategy April 2021 also refers to the Regional Housing Report, it does not provide any data on housing starts by unit type or level of affordability in Richmond Hill, nor does the Strategy or background reports confirm how far off Richmond Hill is from meeting its housing supply targets and its affordable housing supply ***targets already in existence***.

Since the City has not used any "tools" to-date, it should first take stock of the existing crisis and its root causes. From our 40 plus years of experience in land use planning for housing, the root causes stem from unrealistic Official Plan policies and zoning provisions that cause delay of both planning approvals and construction of new residential units.

These are major contributors to why very few new apartment units have been built in Richmond Hill and along the Yonge Street corridor.

3. Tools and statements concerning the cost of providing new housing units, including inclusionary zoning and impact on Bernard KDA

On page 4 of the Report, Staff notes that the City has a supporting role to the Region and other stakeholders in creating more housing options.

To-date, the City has not been successful in creating (bringing into force) Official Plan policies that would support the creation of more affordable housing through new

Secondary Plans. The record shows over recent years that Council has been indecisive and constantly changing its position on policies that would have a significant impact on the creation of more affordable housing and higher density residential development. The Yonge Bernard KDA resolutions of May 13, 2020 and May 14, 2020, are but one example.

It is therefore unclear how Staff or Council will obtain “buy-in” as suggested on page 7 of the report, when there is a lack of accountability at City Council for decisions made this term and the policy direction taken (by Staff through delegated authority) does not facilitate nor promote the housing options required to serve current or future residents of the City. The exodus of the 20-40 year old age group is alarming.

It is therefore premature to talk about “inclusionary zoning” since this is sure to drive up the cost of housing in the City even further, and will likely continue to have a negative impact on creating the necessary supply of future apartment units in the Centres and Corridors, including purpose built rental units. I concur with the comments of Oxford Properties on this matter.

4. Parking & Housing Affordability

At page 22 of the Draft Strategy Report under Section 3 – Guidelines and Standards, reference is made to the findings from the transportation plan update. What update? What findings?

In the 2nd full paragraph of the Draft Report, the consultant states that the City “should consider approving further reductions of parking requirements for affordable housing, supportive housing and purpose build rental housing projects ***where the proponent can demonstrate the demand for parking will be less than what is otherwise required***”.

The statement assumes that the current parking requirements (these determine what supposedly is required) are appropriate. They are not.

Moreover, this approach is completely inappropriate since Provincial policy demands that high density development supports current and planned major investment in public transit and active transportation options in order to build complete communities that reduce reliance on the automobile and address climate change.

The report should have referenced the need to create “zero car households” for residents who will not require a vehicle parking space since they will not own or lease a vehicle. Their mobility needs will be met through new technologies and use of transit, active transportation, car or ride-share options.

Conclusion

We therefore urge Council to take a critical look at what they are being asked to endorse and direct staff to incorporate a policy driven approach to providing the necessary tools

to support the creation of affordable and higher density housing, especially in designated intensification areas.

The process should change from having proponents of affordable, rental and other forms of housing required to prove a reduction in parking standards through additional studies to creating the environment and regulations that actually support such development through a parking regulation that eliminates any minimum required parking (spaces) for new residential units in high density buildings supported by BRT.

The Draft Affordable Housing Strategy (to be updated) should not result in a need for more studies, but actually result in proposed **solutions through appropriate new supportive policies and regulations.**

Once again, we urge Council to adopt the proposed revised recommendations noted above and restated here:

1. That Council only receive the staff report and the draft affordable housing strategy attached to the staff report along with deputations and communications; and
2. That Staff be directed to undertake the work necessary to identify the details associated with each tool, consult with the public and stakeholders, and bring forward a recommendation report by [insert date].

We look forward to ongoing input to this process and to City staff and their consultants creating a more pro-active next version of the Affordable Housing Strategy with proposed solutions instead of direction for creating more studies.

Yours truly,

MPLAN Inc.



Per: Michael S. Manett, MCIP, RPP

cc NEC