

October 19, 2021

The Corporation of the City of Richmond Hill  
225 East Beaver Creek Road  
Richmond Hill, Ontario  
L4B 3P4

Attention:

**Planning Department- Ms. Sandra De Maria- Senior Planner  
City Clerk's Office- Mr. Stephen Huycke- City Clerk**

**Re: City Files: D01-21006 and D02-21011**

Dear Ms. De Maria and Mr. Huycke, and members of Council,

As you are all well aware, Richmond Hill is in a serious housing crisis. There are limited "smaller" and "more affordable" options available to Richmond Hill residents. The variations in housing stock are low, the number of new housing options are limited and as a municipality, we are doing very little to combat this problem.

Some Richmond Hill residents are concerned about this development. There were 32 letters of objection submitted to the Clerk's office in this regard.

In my capacity as a concerned resident of Richmond Hill, who is passionate about this City and its future, I took the time to read all those letters, in order to truly hear and understand these objections.

There were 6 main areas of concern raised by these residents. In this letter, I wish to address those concerns, in hopes to shed some light on these issues:

**1- Objection 1- Project Exceeds Current Permitted Land Use:**

*The Provincial Policy Statement* is issued under the authority of section 3 of the *Planning Act* and came into effect on May 1, 2020.

In respect of the exercise of any authority that affects a planning matter, section 3 of the *Planning Act* requires that decisions affecting planning matters "shall be consistent with" policy statements issued under the Act.

Comments, submissions or advice that affect a planning matter that are provided by the council of a municipality, a local board, a planning board, a minister or ministry, board, commission or agency of the government "shall be consistent with" this Provincial Policy Statement.

Under the *York Region Official Plan*, the subject lands are designated Urban Area and are further identified as being located on a Regional Rapid Transit Corridor. These lands are intended to support a full range and mix of urban uses. In this regard, the Urban Area policies of the *York Region Official Plan* would permit a mid-rise development.

As you are well aware, the Municipality is currently in the process of updating its Official Plan, which must align itself with the policies implemented the updated *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019)* and in the *Provincial Policy Statement (2020)*.

Accordingly, while the project may not be line with what is contemplated under the City's Official Plan today (which is over 10 years old and outdated to meet the demands of today's society), as the City's Official Plan is currently under review, the developer's intended land use of these lands will likely be contemplated by the City in the near future to address the City's housing crisis, as it correlates to the demands and requirements set forth by both the Region and Province of Ontario.

## **2- Objection 2- Too Many Development Applications Received in Richmond Hill:**

Figures show that lengthy approval times and high building costs have slowed down the building of new housing and rentals all across Ontario, particularly in Richmond Hill.

The population of Richmond Hill is growing at a rapid pace and yet, with few applications actually being "**approved**" and not just received, the City of Richmond Hill continuously fails at reaching its housing targets each year.

According to the *York Region 2020 Growth and Development Review (2020)*, a total of 5,832 new residential building permits were issued in York Region in 2020, with Vaughan, Markham and Richmond Hill accounting for approximately 70% of the total residential building permit activity, and Richmond Hill only accounting for **16%** of said activity, approximating to roughly **933 units**.

Yet according to the same study, the population of the City also grew by roughly **900 people** in that same year (2020).

Without factoring the situational changes of families (e.g. children moving out, couples divorcing and splitting households, etc.), the number of units built are simply not enough to meet the demands of our growing City.

## **3- Objection 3- Does Nothing to Address Affordability Crisis:**

As per the *York Region 2020 Growth and Development Review (2020)*, the average cost of a single-family home in Richmond Hill grew by **11.3%** from \$1,039,433 in 2019 to **\$1,156,881, in 2020**.

Yet as per the figures distributed in *Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan (2019)*, average household incomes are only up **2%** per year and **over 83% of buyers cannot afford** an average resale home in Ontario.

In an area where the cost of an average single-family home is well over \$1,500,000.00 at the moment, a condominium development is in fact the only type of housing that will be considered “affordable” for that 83% that may be in the market to purchase a home, but simply cannot afford it.

Therefore, the concept of affordability must be considered in relation to the “average market costs” of owning a residential property in Richmond Hill.

In addition to the young families that will likely have a hard time affording housing in Richmond Hill, there are a number of important disenfranchised groups that are particularly affected by this crisis:

1) the elderly residents of Richmond Hill, whom may longer be able to afford the increased property taxes on their homes and yet, don’t have many downsizing options in Richmond Hill and after many years of paying taxes, are forced to move out of the area for lack of cheaper housing options; and

2) the youth of Richmond Hill, whom will be forced to live with their parents, or consider shared housing options as their only means of remaining in Richmond Hill post high-school.

Responsible developments such as this project, is the only answer to meet the needs of both our growing and aging populations in Richmond Hill.

It is time we listen to the needs of our entire community, rather than the desires of a few and look at the housing crisis in Richmond Hill as something that affects “all” and not some members of our City.

#### **4- Objection 4- Is this Development Responsible:**

In May 2015, the Applicant submitted Zoning By-law Amendment and Site Plan Applications (City Files D02-15014 and D06-15039) to the City to permit a commercial development comprised of two freestanding buildings with a combined total gross floor area of 2,495.19 square metres (26,858 square feet) on the subject lands. The applications were heard at the September 9, 2015 Council Public Meeting at which a number of concerns were raised including increased traffic in the area, child safety, pollution, loitering and noise resulting from the proposed commercial development. Furthermore, a desire to maintain the lands for residential purposes was also expressed by residents.

On the basis of these proceedings and upon hearing the public’s concerns respecting the potential negative impacts of the commercial development on the surrounding neighbourhood, the Applicant decided not to pursue its original development proposal, despite the fact that the current Official Plan supported its proposal.

This to me is an indicator that that responsible developers and developments exists.

In every aspect of its intended design, this development is committed to proper planning principals and respecting the natural environment surrounding the land.

First and most importantly, the development is in conformity with the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*, a statement of conformity submitted to the municipality on submission of these Applications, and available for review by all.

The building works with the site slope, not forcing the land into an artificial shape. The height of the building along Coons Road ranges from 4 stories in the west next to the residential area to 8 storeys in the east. It maintains 8 storeys only along Yonge Street and the south side.

The Coons Road transition in scale, respects the single-family houses to the north and has minimal impact on the surrounding area (as per the Light/Shadow impact study conducted by DEXD Architects and dated May 31, 2021, also submitted to the municipality on submission of these Applications and available for review by all).

In order to respect the privacy of the one residential property located directly to the west of the development, the driveway has been designed to create additional distance between the building and said neighbouring property.

After the driveway, is a proposed 5.1 metre landscape buffer along the west property line, which can achieve enough soil for large mature trees to grow by the use of a raised planter above the extent of the parking structure. This provides a green screen for the western houses. The landscape buffer slopes down to the driveway so that the western end of the building is almost level with the tops of the houses.

The eastern side of the property along Yonge Street currently has substantial vegetation which is proposed to be cleaned up and retained. The height of the existing trees will obscure the first 2 or 3 floors of the building. The East property line landscape treatment includes a combination of shrubs, perennials and deciduous canopy trees to enhance the east side of the building fronting onto Yonge Street while providing substantial privacy for ground floor unit patios.

In terms of the City of Richmond Hill's Sustainability Metric, the development currently scores 43 points, placing it in the "very good" performance level. The metrics are green development standards that quantify and evaluate the sustainability performance of new developments and encourage proponents of development to achieve sustainable design targets that go beyond provincial and municipal requirements.

The Applicant has indicated its intent to incorporate several sustainable features that comply with either TGS Standards or LEED Certification standards or both, to be determined and incorporated in the Site Plan Amendment portion of the development.

The design incorporates several stormwater management techniques such as the collection of stormwater for use in the building's green-roof, terraces and surrounding landscaping, rather than directing same to the City's stormwater reserve.

Additionally, the development is designed with the utmost respect for the environment and green space. It design features a beautiful green-roof garden, with both planted and paved areas for residents to enjoy the wonderful scenery, with amenities such as BBQ spaces and lounging areas.

#### **5- Objection 5- Yonge Zone Development Across the Street:**

The Yonge Zone development, along with other massive developments of its kind, that propose multiple towers of varying heights in a small space, are preciously the reason that residents are weary of developers and development in general.

13 apartment buildings ranging from 8-12 storeys in height, is entirely different than 1 apartment building with a maximum of 8 storeys at its highest point.

In fact, rather than developing an 8-storey building with no regard to the surrounding residential neighbourhood, in reading the submissions of the Applicant, the design of this building is specifically intended to respect its surroundings and meet the demands of the community.

#### **6- Objection 6- Will Create Traffic:**

The Province's *Housing Supply Action Plan (2019)* is specifically designed to address Ontario's housing crisis by making the most of infrastructure investments and encouraging more density along major transit stations.

As you are aware, the subject development is located on Yonge along the Yonge Street Rapid Transit Corridor and within 400 meters of the Yonge and Bloomington Road transit stop, intended to accommodate a significant portion of the planned growth within the area, in line with both the *Provincial Policy Statement (2020)* and the *Growth Plan for the Greater Horseshoe (2019)*.

In accordance with the Transportation Study conducted by Tran-Plan Engineering and dated June 9, 2021 and submitted with the Applicant's submission and available for review by all, in light of the design of the project, the said development will have minimal impact on the future background traffic growth of the area.

Furthermore, the project is designed in a manner to have minimal impact on the flow of traffic in surrounding neighbourhood, as follows:

- a) **Change in Design to Meet Region's Future Requirement:** After hearing the Region's comments in the pre-submission meeting, the Applicant changed the design of the driveway, by removing 6 townhouses from its' original design, and joining the driveway between Coons and Yonge. This was done in an effort to accommodate any future changes to Yonge Street, upon the building of the Viva Rapid Transit Stop on Yonge directly in front of the building.

- b) **Project Meets City of Richmond Hill's Parking Strategy Requirements:** In terms of the parking requirements, with 341 parking spaces, this development exceeds the City's proposed parking requirements, thereby easing the resident's concern of the overflow of parking on the neighbouring streets.
- c) **Proximity To Major Transit Lines:** The project's close proximity to public transportation encourages the use of same in lieu of driving and is in fact one of the most attractive features of this development.
- d) **Encourages Cycling:** The development is in close proximity to many cycling trails and networks. As means of encouraging cycling, there are over 232 Bicycle parking spaces available in the development.
- e) **Walking:** The Coons side of the development is strongly anchored in pedestrian access, and landscaped walkways and proximity to public transit will encourage walking. Furthermore, there are a number of essential services available within walking distance of the development.

In summary, while I understand the reservation of some people respecting development in general and the history of past difficulties with developers in Richmond Hill, one must look at each development application on an ad hoc, case by case basis to determine whether each particular development makes sense for the community.

In the past 24 hours of my involvement in this matter, **I have spoken to over 100 residents and obtained over 100 signatures of support for this Application.**

These residents all have something in common... they all fear for the future of Richmond Hill. They are all negatively affected by the housing crisis. They all have children, parents, friends and neighbours that cannot afford housing in Richmond Hill, and they are all looking to the City for assistance in this matter.

The housing needs of this community can no longer be ignored. The people of Richmond Hill need Council's help. They need the City's help in furthering properly planned developments. They need an end the housing crisis and they need you to act now.

Sincerely,



Raika Sheppard  
160 Centre Street West, Richmond Hill, Ontario  
raika@jklawfirm.ca