

City File OPA-23-0003

Dear Michael and Godwin,

Thanks to Councilor Michael for bringing our residents' concern to the Deputy Mayor Godwin on the impacts of South Park towers on Richmond Hill. We acknowledge the response from the Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure regarding the boundary and jurisdiction that only the neighboring City and the York region can act on. I am thankful to the Deputy Mayor's commitment to address this issue with the regional councilors and ward councilors. While we await what action has been taken, the recent issue of the Sheraton Parkway zone redevelopment application is infuriating the residents in Ward 4 of Richmond Hill and the Leitchcroft Community in the City of Markham.

It is very obvious that the York Region has to step in, the two cities have to collaborate and our city needs to make our position clear to prevent these monstrous towers being built on unsuitable locations. Otherwise, Hwy7 will be brought to a complete halt at peak hours, environmental risk will take place and the quality living image of Richmond Hill will surely get tainted. Residents are very angry as indicated with the Sign the Petition: Sign the Development Threatening Our Richmond Hill with Overpopulation & Traffic Gridlock! Residents in both cities are signing up. I am actively considering putting that petition to the Next Door to make this issue known to all those who need to use Hwy 7 if York Region needs to know the massive concern.

I am not repeating what I have put in my petition case to OLT and your good self on the South Park issue which I expect you will revisit the issue and its progress. The problem is aggravating with the Sheraton Parkway application. This time residents expect the City of Richmond Hill, the Regional Council and the City of Markham will demonstrate a seamless government approach to address the grave concern of the residents. My network and contacts including residents in the condos behind Sheraton, residents along Hwy7, business owners, professionals in transportation, city planning, architects, building maintenance experts etc. have shown high concerns about this application. The application if accepted by the Council will reflect irresponsibility. I shall try to put their concern in less technical terms and plain language but your professionals can get to its details.

The application is an unreasonable stretch in concept and unethical demand for change of the Official Plan which sets the direction and limits in land use, land designation, occupancy permit, Floor Space Index.... The worst is considering this site as underutilized, demolishing some structure there and asking it to be rezoned as a Key Development Area in the middle of a well established and busy traffic area. Then the congested area is put on nine towers of 48 storeys inconsistent with ethos and spirit of the City of Richmond Hill Official Plan. The acceptance of such is allowing the applicant to rewrite the criteria for land use designation to meet their objective at the expense of the City.

The Vision Statement In the City 2041 Key Directions Report states that "East Beaver Creek and Highway 7 should be a gateway hub to service the broader employment and area residents, which provides access to a variety of businesses and cultural elements, is well supported by transit". These key directions will be ignored if approval for amendment can be given and the vision will become a nightmare for the residents. City government and the Council policies, plans and directions will in future have no place with the citizens.

Putting 9 towers of 48 Storeys, is inconsistent and incompatible with the adjacent buildings and structure, creating an eyesore at the portal. In practical terms, these towers will certainly create shadowing effects and the towers will block the southern views of the existing condos. When property price is so affected, they will take collective action against the developer and possibly the City for price drop and property tax reduction. The current building concept plan in two dimensional drawing without showing the buildings around the subject site, will mislead the readers of this application. When the developer is introducing the plan, Council and affected residents should visualize it through a to scale Model with the buildings existing in Parkway lands and the neighboring areas in wood blocks, a common way used by architectural professionals to ensure distorted and biased viewing is avoided.

There is a practical question for the City whether the municipal infrastructure can accommodate the addition of 3,460 residential units. In addition, Infrastructure such as the watermains, storm drains, and sewer do not only affect the City of Richmond Hill. The subsequent impact will put on the neighboring city in the south and then to the City of Toronto as these are interlinked systems. Their ability and our City's infrastructure capacity is of little concern to the unconscionable proposal. However, the Council is charged with the duty to prevent and protect.

Simply putting in 9 towers in the subject land with some facilities such as hotel, convention center, fitness room and gas station remaining intact are force fitting to create a Key Development, resulting in high human safety hazards. In the event of fire, trucks may easily get jammed in the single lane driveway between the hotel and the proposed podium / garden. Additional traffic land lanes from two to three is called for. The width of the podium floors at ground on top of the towers sit and garden facing Leslie to cater for an additional lane. The current design shows little attention to human safety. Similarly, the proposal cares less for residents being able to retreat to ground away from the buildings on fires, let alone fire drills and false fire alarm situations.

The full compound of this site has a hotel, 9 towers, RH municipal office, the existing condos, indoor mall and fitness center. Each should have its own city's parking standard and requirement. For instance, for municipal offices, 3 parking per 1,000 square feet and for the 9 towers, possibly 1.2 parking per resident unit leading to over 4,000. With Hotel parties, events, restaurants, lounges, function rooms etc will require substantial parking. All of them will generate substantial human and vehicle traffic within the compound. A compound of this size with such huge human and vehicle traffic is prone to conflict generation, let alone how fire trucks can work within the compound.

Only a handful of open space parking will exist. Parkland and open space are very limited. All vehicles amounting to 4,600, have to go below surface level and the vehicular jam/blockage at the proposed underground multi storey garage. The current one ramp design in the proposal for the 6 floors garage should have an additional ramp, which means the underground garage should be 7 floors instead of 6. Furthermore, enclosed space for electric vehicles charging has specific requirements under the Condominium Act. The said space will be in visitors parking but enclosed for safety, and cater for queuing space. Lithium battery fires at charging can spread fast and be damaging to neighboring vehicles. Water from the sprinkler system may aggravate the fire. Has due diligence been exercised by the developer in its design at all remains a question for the Fire Service Department. This echoes further that human safety is not taken as a priority while the Council has the duty of care for the residents in vetting such a proposal.

With the shared underground parking with the hotel, future residents of these towers may confront financial burden for remedial work of any water leaks to the underground garage from the driveways serving both the hotel and the towers. The current arrangement means the driveways should serve condo corporations only, not the developer's hotel as well. Its warranty period should be noted that developers are only responsible for repairs in the first one or two years of warranty period. It may be argued that arrangements and cost apportionment between the hotel and the condo corporation can be stated clearly in the purchase and sale agreements, such fine prints will certainly be ignored by purchasers. The future fights and conflicts should be avoided to taint the harmonious living image of the City, let alone the protection duty to the residents in our City.

Lastly, the most significant issue is the traffic on Hwy7 and Leslie. The traffic report submitted by the Sheraton Parkway should be read in conjunction with the traffic report for the South Park rezoning. The two projects are located in two different Cities but are both using the Hwy7. The SBL Hwy7 & East Beaver Creek / Commerce Valley Drive East has a V/C of 1.13 and a delay time of 149.4 and also at Highway 7 and Leslie with V/C of 1.00 and a delay time of 99.1 That is showing delays and over-using its capacity. The subject site will have traffic stops at Leslie, Residential Block T1 and T8, gas station and East Beaver Creek, reducing the traffic flow too. This foregoing set of figures has not taken into consideration the possible adding of traffic from the South Park 6 additional towers and the other traffic increase from the proposed towers along Hwy7 at Yonge, Warden, McCowans etc which are way higher than the normal future calculations of growth.

The argument of changing to using public transport is not sound for Hwy7 users as users are driving to the 404 or 400 connections, east and west. After taking public transport, they will still end up having to take connections to home and office. The figures in the South Park r traffic study are showing figures in 2014 and 2015. Some of the figures may not be reliable as during rush hours in Hwy7, now 100% packed solid during rush hour with 3 lanes in each direction should have 6,000 with the current City guideline of 2,000 per lane. The current counting shows only 1,400, a figure that is misleading. An ADT count by the Cities and a study by the York Region to more accurately assess if Hwy7, particularly along the section on Ward 6 of Richmond Hill, are requested before advising the residents that this Hwy7 is sustainable with these additional towers.

These are some of the concerns from residents who love the City of Richmond Hill and have confidence that the Council and the members involved will demonstrate their care for those affected. Please guard the interest of the Ward 6 dwellers, Richmond Hill ratepayers and the users of the Hwy7. They have asked me to copy this letter to the Mayor who has an oversight responsibility on this issue, connecting with the Mayors of other cities and the York Region to demonstrate leadership for a seamless government. Finally, I would like to thank our Councilor Michael and his staff for reaching out to us for a community collaboration to this challenge.

Yours Sincerely,

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