



## York Region Standard Condominium Corporation # 972 and #1008

### REPORT TO COUNCIL – CITY FILE:OPA-23-2003

May 8, 2023

To: Mayor and Councillors of Richmond Hill

The Board of Directors of YRSCC 972 and YRSCC 1008, represent over 1,500 residents living in the condominium buildings (9015 and 9017 Leslie Street) which neighbour the subject site. Upon receipt of the City's Notice of Application (dated March 23, 2023) regarding the development proposal, the Board invited Councillor Michael Shiu to meet with the residents on April 11, 2023. About 160 residents attended the meeting and they all expressed serious concerns and objections to the proposed development. The Councillor listened to their concerns and stated at the meeting that he also objects to the application. He committed to provide guidance and support for the residents to make sure that their voices are heard by Council. We are most grateful for his leadership and representation of our interests in the governance of the City.

The condo Board carefully reviewed the application and identified the following issues and concerns:

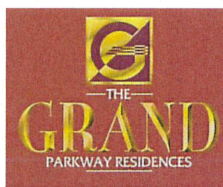
1) The Application Contains Misleading Information Regarding the Area and Density of Proposed Development.

The development proposal states that "The property has a site area of 8.6 hectares" and "The density of the proposed development is 5.55 FSI and 402 units per hectare."

Both statements are UNTRUE.

The "Subject Lands" (as referred to in the application) includes also lands belonging to City Hall, the Shoppes of the Parkway and the two condominium buildings (9015/9017 Leslie St). This was done without prior knowledge or consent of our condo boards. The applicant has intentionally included the surrounding lands as "Subject Lands" in the application to give a false impression that they have a "site area" of 8.63 ha for the proposed development, when in fact the site area is only 5.05 ha. It should be noted this site of 5.05 ha is a well established site, and Sheraton Hotel and Convention Centre will continue its operation after the proposed development. The new "developable land" made available after the demolition of three smaller buildings is only 1.54 ha.

The application states that "The density of the proposed development is 5.55 FSI and 402 units per hectare." Again, this statement is not based on facts because the wrong data is used for the calculation of FSI. First, Parkway did NOT include the Gross Floor Area of the existing Sheraton Hotels and Convention Centre in the calculation of FSI for the site area in spite that Sheraton Hotel and the Convention Centre will continue its operation after the development project. Also, the statement about the density of "402 units per hectare" is incorrect because it is based on



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treating the site area as 8.63 ha (should be 5.05 ha.) and assuming that there is no other development on this site. If they include the Gross Floor Area of the existing Sheraton Hotel and Convention Centre, retail shops and health club in their calculation, the “true” FSI would be significantly higher than 5.55 FSI as indicated and the density should be more than 685 units per ha (not 402 units as stated in application).

- 2) The proposed development does NOT comply with the land use policies and planning principles as stated in Richmond Hill Official Plan and York Region Official Plan 2022

The Richmond Hill Official Plan zoned the Subject Lands and surrounding lands as Employment Area and Employment Corridor, with the predominant use of land to be high performance industrial, office, and major office uses. The Subject Lands and surrounding area to the north and east were approved for employment conversion to a mixed-use designation.

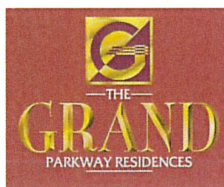
The RHOP permits a maximum site density of 2.5 FSI, with the greatest density being directed to the Highway 7 frontage. The RHOP also applies the following height requirements with regard to development of lands within the portion of the Regional Mixed-Use Employment Corridor designation located on Highway 7: a minimum height of 3 storeys and a maximum height of 11 storeys and the tallest buildings must be directed to the Highway 7 frontage (Policy 4.8.2.1.9).

As part of the Official Plan Update, OPA 18.3 Vision and Urban Structure was approved on September 9, 2022 designating the Subject Lands as part of the East Beaver Creek and Highway 7 as a Local Centre.

Parkway Hotels actively participated in the City’s Official Plan Review. They provided two written submissions and made two deputations to Council requesting that the East Beaver Creek and Highway 7 Area be designated as a Key Development Area. City staff conducted extensive research and public engagement and proposed in OPA 18.3 to affirm the designation of East Beaver Creek and Highway 7 as a Local Centre. OPA 18.3 was approved by Council on June 27, 2022. It was not subject of appeal and it came into force on September 9, 2022. If Parkway is not satisfied with the outcome of the Official Plan Review, they should have filed an appeal with OLT when OPA 18.3 was approved. It is an abuse of process for Parkway to request that OPA 18.3 be amended now to order to increase the height and density of their proposed development.

By applying to redesignate the Subject Lands to a Key Development Area, the developer is making an *open challenge* to the legality and applicability of the Official Plan and OP Amendment (OPA 18.3), both of which are *legal documents* that set the direction and policies for planned growth and development in Richmond Hill. Council has a duty to protect and preserve the integrity of the Official Plan. The acceptance of this application is allowing the developer to re-write the Urban Structure and Intensification Hierarchy (which are foundations of the Official Plan)





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in order to meet their ulterior objective at the expense of the City. It would be considered a mockery of Council and administration if the City would consider an amendment to OPA 18.3 (which came into force only recently on September 9, 2022) and allow this monstrous development to be constructed right in front of City Hall.

#### **3) The Land Size Limits its Capacity to be Developed as a Key Development Centre**

Parkway Hotels proposed to demolish three two-storey buildings and then build nine 35-42 storey towers on their current site, which is already fully developed with Sheraton Hotel and Convention Centre. The current site area is 5.05 ha. The "developable land" made available after the demotion of three buildings (i.e., Best Western Hotel, 650 Highway 7, and 9005 Leslie St) is 1.54 ha. or 3.8 ac. The small land size (1.54 ha) by itself would limit its capacity to be developed as a Key Development Centre.

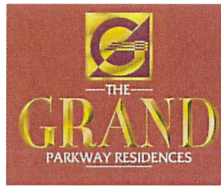
The Official Plan and OPA 18.3 states that one of the basic criteria to be considered a KDA is that it must be "areas where *large* parking fields, underutilized sites, and/or parcels of vacant land presently exist, and the land is large enough to support new public streets, parks and urban open space connections as required by a KDA." In this case, the "developed" site area of 5.05 ha and the "developable land" of 1.54 ha simply does not meet the threshold to be considered a KDA.

If Parkway Hotels is indeed serious about developing this site to be a KDA, they should consider demolishing the Sheraton Hotel and Convention Centre to make the whole site of 5.05 ha available for development of a KDA.

#### **4) This is Not a Suitable Site for a Key Development Area**

The City's current and planned Urban Structure identifies 2 KDAs along Yonge Street (i.e. the Yonge Street and 16<sup>th</sup> Ave/Carrville Rd KDA and Yonge Street and Bernard Ave KDA) and none along Highway 7 based on objective planning principles and standards. Yonge Street is where the current Go Train stations are located and where future subway lines will be built. Yonge Street also connects Richmond Hill Centre to other municipal Centres such as Aurora and Newmarket. Before identifying the two KDAs on Yonge Street, City staff first reviewed a Secondary Plan prepared for each KDA setting out the new public streets, parks, public amenities and urban open space connections. In this case, the applicant did not provide any secondary plan for the proposed KDA. The site map shows the entire site is literally "filled" with 9 towers, leaving no room for public streets, parks, public amenities and urban open space connections.

Highway 7 and Leslie Street is an already overburdened intersection. Although there are two bus stops situated on Highway 7 outside the subject site, there is a lack of proper transit infrastructure to accommodate the current users and the influx of 14,000 potential new residents.



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Any intensification of development on this site will exacerbate the already congested traffic on this strip of Highway 7, where drivers from Markham and Vaughan will use this strip of Hwy 7 to enter or exit Highway 404. The proposed development to add 111 hotel suites and 3,460 dwelling units to this site would introduce potentially 14,000 new residents and 4,000 vehicles to this area. As a result, Highway 7 will be brought to a complete halt at peak hours, environmental risks will take place and the “quality living” image of Richmond Hill will surely get tainted.

To conclude, this is NOT a suitable location for a Key Development Area and for the 9 monstrous towers to be built.

### **5) Heavy Vehicular Traffic in the Site and Traffic Gridlock on Hwy 7 / Leslie Area**

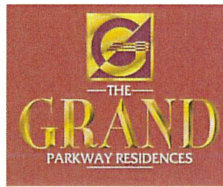
The full compound of this site has a hotel, 9 towers, RH municipal office, the two existing condos, indoor mall and fitness center. Each has its own municipal parking standard and requirement. Hotel parties, events, restaurants, lounges, function rooms etc. will require substantial parking. All of them 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, traffic jam at the multi-storey underground garage, let alone how fire trucks can work within the compound.

The proposed development will add 3,460 dwelling units and potentially 4,000 vehicles to this area. Surprisingly, the Traffic Study submitted by Parkway Hotels concluded that “the subject development has a manageable traffic impact to the studied intersections” and only recommended that “the City and Region review intersection movements and adjust traffic signal timing and other intersection signals.” Upon further review, it was found that the Traffic Study was based on traffic data collected on November 17, 2022, when the Province was still under “Covid lockdown” and a significant number of people are working from home or doing online schooling. Also, the “Trip Distribution” data used for the Study was derived from the outdated 2016 Transportation Tomorrow Survey. In addition, the Study has not taken into consideration the possible adding of traffic from the South Park (six additional towers) and the other traffic increase from the proposed towers along Hwy7 at Yonge, Warden, McCowan, etc. which are way higher than the normal future calculations of growth.

Since Highway 7 is a Regional Road, York Region has to step in, and the two cities (Markham and Richmond Hill) have to collaborate in mitigating the traffic congestion on Hwy 7. Our City needs to make our position clear to prevent the monstrous towers from being built on unsuitable locations. Otherwise, Hwy7 will be like Don Valley Parkway, with stop-and-go traffic all day long. It is time for Council to act responsibly and not add another 4,000 vehicles to Hwy 7 from this site.

### **6) Height of new builds must be compatible with height of existing buildings in the Neighborhood**





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Currently, the tallest buildings in the block bound by Leslie/Highway 7/E Beaver Creek/E Pearce are the two condo buildings (9015, 9017 Leslie St.). The RH City Hall and the Sheraton Hotel are both 9 storeys high. Putting 9 towers of 35 to 42 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 light and views of the existing condos and City Hall. To minimize any impact on the broader employment lands north of the Subject Site, we propose that any new builds on the Subject Site must be directed to the Leslie and Highway 7 frontages.

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.

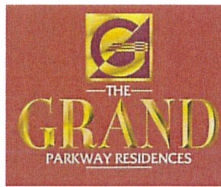
#### **7) Lack of Municipal Infrastructure Support**

Adding 111 hotel suites and 3,460 dwelling units to this small parcel of land would put a severe strain on the local municipal infrastructure requirements, such as watermain, sewers, storm water drainage, sidewalks, streetscaping and active transportation facilities. However, the application does NOT address any of the infrastructure issues and there is no information to indicate that the current municipal infrastructure can support and sustain this mammoth development which add 280,490 sq. meter of total Gross Floor Area to the site. York Region must be involved in assessing the viability and sustainability of the proposed development.

#### **8) The Application Fails to address the Key Directions for this Area “to Provide a Civic Presence relative to the City’s Municipal Administrative Building with an Open Space Facility”**

The City Plan 2041 Key Directions Report clearly identified the importance to establish the existing municipal administrative building as a place for civic interaction. It was suggested that there would be improvements to green spaces around the building to provide more of a “City Hall” appearance, and to enhance placemaking at the site. One does not need to go far to appreciate the “green spaces” and “open space” design of Markham City Hall.

The Municipal Building is currently situated at the N.E. quadrant of this site. Putting a 42-storey building right adjacent to City Hall and putting another eight 35-42-storey towers in the vicinity would seriously erode the image of City Hall and create a poor work environment for the municipal employees. Like the residents in the neighboring condo buildings, the municipal employees will be impacted by the problems caused by this monstrous development, such as traffic gridlock, overcrowding, blocked views and shadowing effect, noise and air pollution, fire safety, lack of green space, etc.



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If approved by Council, this development would create a concrete forest with 9 towers five times the height of City Hall surrounding the Municipal Administrative Building. Is this the kind of “civic presence” and “placemaking” that Council wishes the City Hall to become? Is this the image and legacy that City Council wishes to create for Richmond Hill?

#### **9) Lack of Parkland and Amenities**

The City Plan 2041 Key Directions Report has identified the need to provide amenities that support existing and future residents and continue to provide services that support the broader employment area. However, the developer focused the application on “where” to erect the 9 towers with 3,460 dwelling units and neglected the fact that the 14,000 potential new residents also need parkland and other support services for their daily living.

The site map indicates that only one acre of land is dedicated for park for the whole development. The City regulation requires all developers to dedicate 1 hectare (2.47 acres) of land for park and other public recreational purpose for each 300 dwelling units proposed for residential development. In this case, for the proposed development of 3,460 residential units, the developer is required to dedicate 12 hectares (29 acres) of land for park and public recreational purpose.

As stated in the Key Directions Report, “Density without amenity is overcrowding. Density with amenity is community.” It is clear that all the developer is only concerned about “density” and they have no intention of creating a community with amenity.

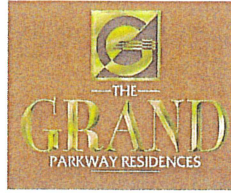
#### **10) Putting Humans at Risk**

Simply putting in 9 towers in the subject land with some facilities such as hotel, convention center, fitness centre and gas station remaining intact are force fitting to create a Key Development, resulting in high human safety hazards. In the event of fire, fire trucks may easily get jammed in the single lane driveway between the hotel and the proposed podium / garden. Adding traffic lanes from two to three is called for. 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.

#### **11) Blockage of Sun and Views and Shadowing Effect of the Towers**

Three of the proposed towers are going to be situated in close proximity to the south side of the condo buildings, completely overshadowing our buildings and blocking the views and light for more than half of the 9015/9017 residents whose units face the south side. The monstrous towers will seriously impact the quality of life of the 1,500 residents who have been living in the neighboring condominium buildings for the past 20 years. This is literally pushing the residents





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### **12) The Application does not comply with Federal Zoning Regulations for Buttonville Airport**

Section 3.1.9.9 of the Official Plan states that "The height of buildings or structures shall be restricted in accordance with the Federal Zoning Regulations for Buttonville Airport for as long as the Buttonville Airport continues in operation."

### **13) Our Position:**

We urge Council to affirm their support of the Official Plan and OPA 18.3 to designate the subject site as a Local Centre. We propose that the same land use and design policies designated for current zoning be applied for consideration of the proposed development: that the maximum site density is 2.5 FSI and the maximum height is 13 storey, with the greatest density and height being directed to Highway 7 and Leslie Street frontage.

We feel strongly that Council has a duty of care to protect the residents from any invasive development that will adversely affect their health and quality of life. It is now the time for Council to demonstrate leadership and stand up against the ambitious developers to protect the interests of the residents.

Report respectfully submitted by,

  
Ray Lafaive

President, YRSCC 972 Board

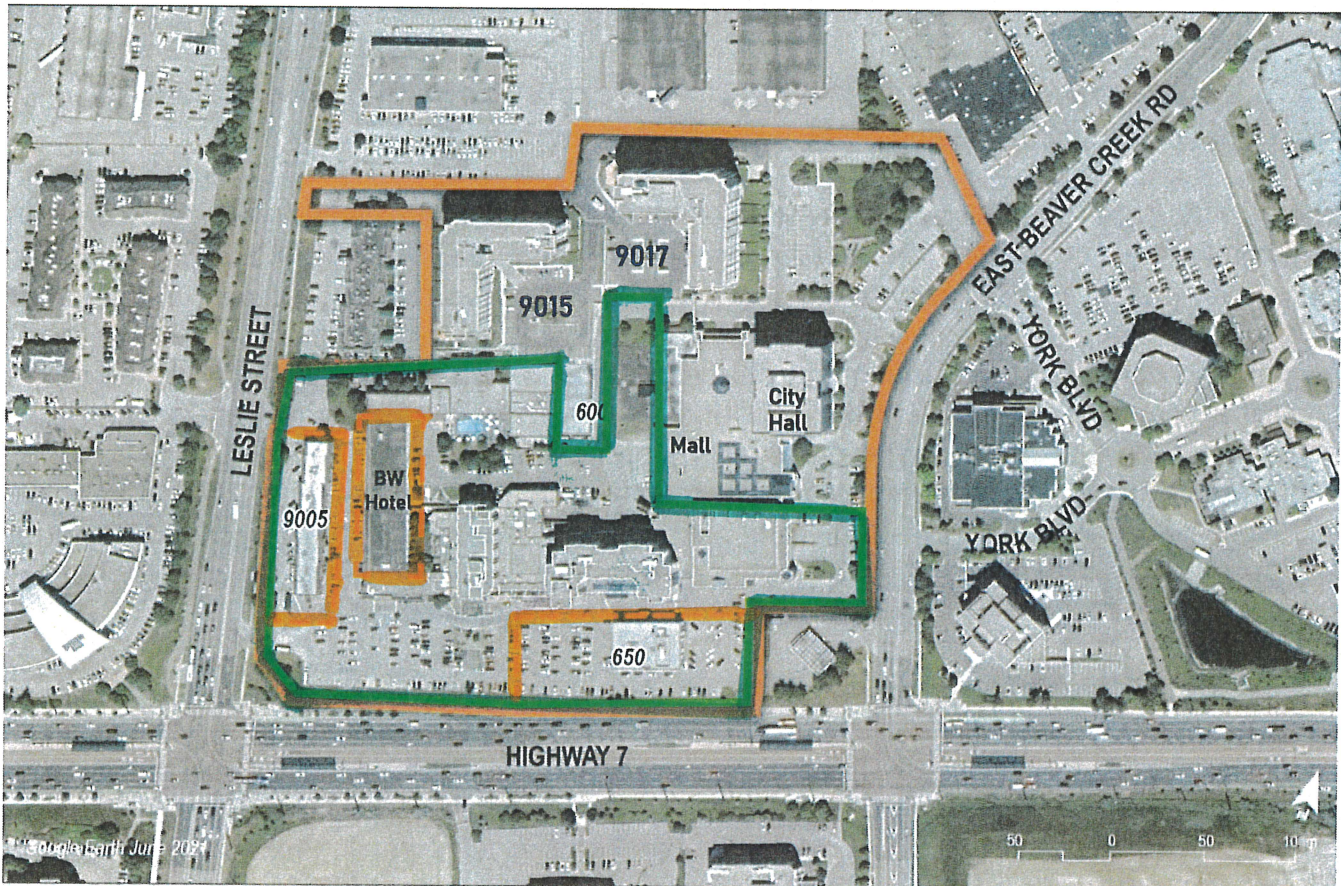
  
Vincent Ching

President, YRSCC 1008 Board



# DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION SUMMARY

## LOCATION



Subject Lands - 600 & 650 Highway 7 and 9005 Leslie Street, Richmond Hill

Actual Land

1. "Subject Land" as referred to in the Application:

- NOT 8.63 ha. as it wrongfully includes the lands belonging to the 2 condo buildings, City Hall and Parkway Mall.
- Should be 5.05 ha. (ie. area within green boundary)

2. Developable Land – only 1.54 ha

- Land made available after demolition of (a) Best Western Hotel (0.5 ha), 9005 Leslie St. (0.38 ha) and 650 Hwy 7E (0.66 ha). Buildings shown inside the dotted boundary lines should be treated as INFILL development, not redevelopment of whole site.
- Land size is too small to be designated a Key Development Area.

3. FSI (Floor Space Index) Formula = Total built-up area (existing and new) divided by Total Area of the Plot.

- The Application shows 5.55 FSI. This is INCORRECT as it includes only the GFA (Gross Floor Area) of the new builds and does not include the GFA of the existing Sheraton hotel, conference centre, retail shops, and Health Club.
- The actual FSI would be significantly higher than 5.55 FSI.