

Statement for Richmond Hill Parkway Hotel Development

To the City of Richmond Hill, Mayor, and Councillors:

The Leitchcroft Community Association (LCA) is a registered ratepayers association with the City of Markham. The boundary of the LCA is about 600-meters away from the Parkway Hotels development.

The LCA is not against development in general, but regarding the two developments near the Leitchcroft area, the LCA has huge concerns. The two developments are the South Park Road development in Markham and the Parkway Hotels development in Richmond Hill. The LCA is taking opposition to both developments.

Our greatest concern is the population and density growth in the area. The recent and new developments will be bringing well-over 13000 populations to the area:

- The just completed Pavilia Towers (Hwy 7 and South Park, east corner) are adding 769 dwelling units, bringing a new population of over 1500 (assuming 2 PPU multiplier for apartment unit).
- South Park Road development (Hwy 7 and South Park, west side) will build 6 towers of 34-42 storeys, adding 2603 dwelling units and 2961 parking spaces, bringing a new population of over 5000 to the area.
- This new Parkway Hotels development will build 9 towers of 35-42 storeys, adding 3640 dwelling units, bringing a new population of over 7000.

And, this is just the beginning -- both municipalities will continue to receive new development applications along Hwy 7! How much more population growth do we anticipate? Will both municipalities say no to any other new developments in future?

Yes, the GTA region is short of housing. Yes, the development site is on Hwy 7, a major roadway and transit corridor, and close to Hwy 404 and Hwy 407. Yes, the area is about a 10-minute transit ride to the potential subway along Yonge street.

However, to what end do we sacrifice living conditions and community harmony for the builders to maximize on profit?

The Parkway Hotels development proposal states a density of 5.5 -- this is a fault advertisement. A good portion of the land is for the hotel and conference centre, of which the new residents will not use on a day-to-day basis. They should not be part of the residential development plan. Assuming the hotel and conference centre occupy about one-third of the site, then the density of the residential area is about 8 FSI.

With more people living in the same building, there is less personal space, and conflict is more likely to happen. Here are some examples of condo living:

1. One of the building elevators broke down, and it takes more than 15 mins to wait for an elevator. After 10 stops, the elevator has not reached ground level, and other residents continue to get in, even though the elevator is full. Residents get very agitated and start complaining. Because they are late for work or appointments, they drive faster, running yellow, more prone to accidents.
2. Delivery cars stop and block the private road inside the complex, and other cars have to go in the other direction to get in, or they will back up to the outside roadway. Again, this leads to more traffic congestion and more prone to accidents.
3. Because of reduced personal space and smaller units, smoke and noise nuisance are more likely to happen. This leads to more complaints, more conflicts between neighbours.
4. Many residents actually smoke in the stairwell and underground parking, a fire hazard that affects the rest of the residents.

One concern with high-rise buildings is fire safety. While appropriate fire safety measures can help avoid spreading of fire in high-rise, with more people living in the same building, there is a higher chance a fire will break out. How much longer does it take for residents on top floors to evacuate? If some residents are trapped on top floors, how to rescue? The fire truck ladder goes up to around 20 floors, so this may not be an option. Firefighters will have to go in and go up, and it will take more than double the time to go up to the 40th floor instead of the 20th floor. Why are we putting our great firefighters at risk by design? Why do we settle for longer evacuation and rescue time by building taller buildings?

Another concern is the internal private road inside the development plan. It has 3 exits, two of which exit to 1 direction only (southbound of East Beaver Creek and westbound of Hwy7). Only at the Leslie exit cars can go southbound and northbound. How does it handle 5000 new vehicles plus the vehicles of the hotel guests? It is also lacking temporary parking for the ever increasing riding service (pick-up, drop-off), parcel, and food deliveries.

Traffic is a big topic -- Hwy 7 is congested, especially between noon to 7 PM everyday, 7 days a week. The Parkway Hotels development will bring about 5000 vehicles to the area, and the three new developments all together will bring over 7700 vehicles. From what we have experienced, there is no capacity on Hwy 7 to handle 7700 vehicles. What will both municipalities and York Regions do about this?

The residents can take public transit ...

The VIVA bus system is good for connecting along Hwy 7 (main intersections) and Finch/Yonge. If the destination is not close to Hwy 7 or Yonge (within 10 mins of walk), then people will not take public transit. It may be viable for those who are going to the Langstaff Go Station or Finch/Yonge TTC terminal by taking VIVA, for their work commute. But, that is about it. When people are used to driving in and out, it is very hard to convince them to take public transit. Just think about, how do I go from here (East Beaver Creek) to Walmart for grocery shopping? What are my public transit options? Taking VIVA? 17 mins of walk from station to the store front. Take Bus 1? Schedule is every 30-mins to an hour. If I miss the bus, it takes at least 30 mins to wait. Driving only takes 7 mins.

Also, with more residents taking public transit, they will need to stop the Hwy 7 traffic flow in order to get to the VIVA stations. This will make the congestion even worse. How do we avoid residents crossing Hwy 7 illegally to run for a bus?

The Parkway Hotels development site is initially zoned as a business corridor. Do the existing sewer, watermain, and electricity infrastructures support a new population of 7000? If the infrastructures need to be upgraded, then will it result in lengthy road closure around the site?

Bear in mind that Hwy 7 and Leslie are both major roadway, and any closure will have a significant impact to the community.

The new residents include children and teenagers. Are the nearby schools and day-care already at capacity? If yes, will new schools be built? Again, it is not just about the Parkway Hotels development. All three recent developments bring 13000 new population, and assuming 15% of the demographic are under 18 years of age, then we are talking about 2000 children and teenagers.

The Parkway Hotels plan includes 0.4 hectares of strata park, and this is roughly half of a soccer pitch. This is also for 7000 new residents, plus the hotel guests -- this is not enough green space for everyone. Is the strata park owned and operated by new condominiums? What about the parkland contribution? What about other recreational and community facilities? The new population will put a strain on all existing facilities in the area, resulting in crowded parks, more conflict among people, and less harmony.

I made reference to going to Walmart earlier, because it is one of the closest and popular grocery stores in the neighbourhood. Does the development plan include modernizing the shopping mall to attract relevant retails and services for the new population? Grocery, pharmacy, family doctor, other medical services, financial services, to name a few.

In summary,

1. We urge the City of Richmond Hill, City of Markham, and York Regions to work together on any new development plans along Hwy 7 between Yonge and Hwy 404. Any new development will put stress on any facilities across the municipalities. Any development news should be communicated to residents in the entire area (not just within 120-metres).
2. Please keep the population growth sustainable. As there will be more developments to come, favour mid-rise over high-rise. Keep density below 4 FSI. Do not set a bad precedent. Most importantly, please be nice and give enough space for all the new families to settle in the community.
3. More specific to the Parkway Hotels development plan, reduce number of buildings and number of floors to reduce the overall population growth.

4. The internal private road is not enough to support the new residents (bring almost 5000 new vehicles, plus vehicles of hotel guests). Revise the plan. Include more space for temporary parking to avoid back up to the major roadway.
5. Traffic on Hwy 7 -- how to solve the congestion problem with an additional 4000 vehicles (and 7700 vehicles for all 3 developments combined)? How to ensure pedestrians crossing Hwy 7 safely without impacting already congested traffic flow.
6. The plan should also outline any potential construction work affecting the roadway of the neighbourhood.
7. The builder should consider parkland contributions around the development site. The parkland should ensure enough green space and recreational facilities for the new population. It should be within walking distance for all ages, and should not require a car to get to. It should be very safe for children to play or ride a bike, without damage of being hit by vehicles.
8. The area will require new elementary schools, high schools, and day-care for the population growth. The plan should include considerations and solutions to overcrowded schools.
9. What about community facilities and services? The plan should include considerations and solutions.
10. The plan should include considerations and solutions of grocery, retails, and services that the new population will need.

It is the residents, existing and future, who are affected the most by the development plan.

Please plan it right for them.

Leitchcroft Community Association (Markham)

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End.