

## Amendment OPA 18.6

### VILLAGE LOCAL CENTRE – COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

#### **Introduction:**

My comments and questions will focus only on the “Village Local Centre.” I both live in an 8-unit condominium townhome corporation immediately adjacent to the Village Local Centre, and also represent all units as a member of the Board of Directors.

The Village Local Centre is a key area of Richmond Hill that has to be sensitively developed so as not to lose sight of what is important to City residents, and that it continues to contribute to the high quality of life in Richmond Hill.

The Village Local Centre truly is a combination of the non-residential/commercial buildings on Yonge Street and the adjacent neighbourhood areas. Not to consider them as one entity would mean the development of the area would not occur as envisioned. Therefore, development of sites in the Village Local Centre and the adjacent neighbourhoods should be complementary and contextually sensitive to the area overall. Height and density of development must be context appropriate and support the vision for the Village Local Centre by considering “human scaled” heights.

#### **Discussion:**

Comments and questions will be provided below by identifying page numbers, Key Directions statements, and Section titles of the OPA 18.6 document.

#### ***Topic Area - Key City Directions:***

The document includes the following statement: “Currently, the Official Plan provides height and density policies for the Village area with a maximum height of 5-8 storeys and a maximum density of 2.0 floor space index (FSI). These standards are blunt tools in a very complicated context.”

#### Comments & Questions:

The draft OPA 18.6 includes recommendations of the intention to change the mid-rise buildings from 5-8 storeys to 9-storeys in height. In addition, the intent is to allow heights in the area north of Dunlop-Wright of up to 15-storeys. These also appear to be “blunt tools” which would dramatically change the context of the Yonge Street vision as well as the adjacent neighbourhoods.

The rationale section of OPA 18.6 on page 10 does not provide any clear reason why the mid-rise heights would need to change from up to 8 storeys to 9 storeys? Can you provide details?

#### ***Topic Area – 3.4.1 Urban Design Page 8***

There is a statement “The city shall promote establishment of a skyline by directing high-rise built form in a series of pulses that correspond with the centres of the city”.

#### Comments & Questions:

Can you please explain what a “series of pulses” means, and how it might look when implemented?

### ***Topic Area - 4.3.1 Village Local Centre Page 9***

The rationale section states that “the Village Local Centre boundary is to be reduced and lands adjacent to the Village Local Centre are anticipated to support taller buildings and greater density to support density targets and the vision based on feedback from the public. The proposed vision is based on the vision from the Key Directions Report and additional feedback from the public”.

#### Comments & Questions:

The public and stakeholder comments noted in a 2 May 2023 document submitted to an OPA Committee Meeting indicate that “Built form in the Village should be limited to low and mid-rise buildings”. Mid-rise buildings previously were up to 5-8 storeys. But, as noted in the Key Directions Area above, and at the bottom of the Rationale section on page 10 it appears that number of storeys is to be increased to 9-storeys with little to no rationale of adding 1-storey to the picture. It is appreciated if you can provide background and detail for the 1-storey increase.

I have recently seen a development proposal for 107 Hall Street that goes as high as 14 storeys which does not seem to represent the stakeholders’ suggestions nor the proposed Council policy that the character of the Village Local Centre will be enhanced by appropriately transitioned development to adjacent neighbourhoods which will incorporate human scale urban design.

I have toured Main Streets of Aurora, Newmarket and Markham to compare their Main Streets (which are largely 1-2 storeys tall) with the Village Local Centre proposed for Richmond Hill. I also investigated how close taller developments in adjacent neighbourhoods (5-15 storeys) are placed. Most development occurs on Main Streets with only a few developments greater than 3 -storeys that are developed off the Main Streets.

### ***Topic Area - 4.3.1.1 Land Use Pages 13, 14 and 15***

Section 2 page 13: The statement “The predominant use of land in the Village Local Centre shown on Schedule A2 (Land Use) shall be for mixed-use, transit-oriented development.

#### Comments & Questions:

Can you explain what “transit-oriented development” means? Would not any development along Yonge Street be geared to use of transit seeing that Yonge Street narrows from Major Mackenzie Drive and north through the village area and parking is an issue as it is now? Perhaps you are referring to increased employment that might have people use transit to get to their jobs in the Village Local Centre?

Section 4, page 13 & 15: The land uses noted as being permitted in the Village Local Centre are: (a) high density residential (b) office (c) commercial and (d) retail plus parks and open spaces and live-work units. On page 15 # 4 the permitted uses also include low density residential and medium density residential (townhomes) for lands without direct frontage to Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive.

#### Comments & Questions:

Presently, most of the redevelopment over recent years for lands without direct frontage to Yonge Street have been townhomes of 3-storey height. That has increased density to a large degree while at the same time retaining buildings that are compatible with surrounding areas both non-residential and residential So, if the intent of the city is to increase development in the Village Local Centre that seems to be happening now.

Page 14 Rationale Section includes a notation stating:” North of Wright and Dunlop Street is proposed to permit high-rise buildings of up to 15 storeys to recognize the existing OP permissions for the Uptown District.”

Comments & Questions:

The Village Local Centre boundary is to be reduced to mainly the old Village District including a small portion of the Uptown District to be added. Schedule 1 shows a very tiny area on Dunlop Street to be added to the “Local Centre” – which is presumed to be part of the former Uptown District piece? If so, why would the entire new Local Village Centre be designated to permit high-rise buildings of up to 15 storeys? I can see properties fronting Yonge Street being able to accommodate 15-storey buildings, but allowing such in adjacent neighbourhood boundaries would not support the vision for the Local Village Centre area. As noted earlier, the majority of development in the Village Local Centre has been 3 storey townhomes over the past several years which blend into the Village and add density at the same time.

I would like more clarification for the rationale for the 15-storey buildings. The recent development application for 107 Hall is a good example of how that policy could end up negatively impacting the adjacent neighbourhoods, the vision for the Village, and would not meet the policy direction of appropriately transitioned development either.

***Topic Area 8 – Retail, Commercial or Community Uses Encouraged to Front onto Existing or Planned Parks or Urban Plazas Page 17***

The rationale is that the additional policy “*encourages non-residential uses to front onto open spaces to animate them*”.

Comments & Questions:

Can you clarify what you mean, and provide some examples to show what you envision? From my experience, citizens want open spaces to use without restrictions to access. So, clarifying what non-residential uses would front onto open spaces would be helpful.

***Topic Area 7 - Deleted Policy 7 and new Policy 4 Page 17***

The Rationale section states that the deletion of Policy 7” recognizes the focus of this Local Centre is on the Village area of the City. New Policy 4 continues to recognize low density residential and medium density residential uses. Furthermore, Schedule A9 is proposed to be removed as non-residential permissions are proposed to be expanded to apply throughout in the Local Centre not just along the Yonge frontage”

Comments & Questions:

It appears that higher height and density permissions would result, which do not automatically or easily insert in low and medium density areas.

I am not sure what the rationale is for applying non-residential uses throughout the Village Local Centre? What are the benefits vs. the drawbacks? What type of non-residential uses are you envisioning that would be developed and how would they fit the village character contemplated in the vision for the Village Local Centre?

### ***Topic Area 11- Height and Density Page 19***

The Rationale notes indicate this group of policies is “... allowing for built form transition from the Village Local Centre to flanking areas, while permitting heights and densities that are context appropriate and support the revitalization of the Village as well as existing BRT transit service.” In general, higher density is located along Yonge Street frontage and are in locations close to the BRT station (Yonge/Crosby). Generally lower density allocations are located off of Yonge Street where the Local Centre is closest to the Neighbourhood designation for transition purposes”

#### Comments & Questions:

Definition of what is envisioned is required. What will support revitalization of the Village and what are the preferred heights and densities? Are you looking at allowing parking off street (city-built parking garages with landscaping to help take parking of Yonge Street), and perhaps a second storey on places like 3 Coins or the El Bocho on Yonge Street to maximize use and attract more people to the Village? Are you looking at having small stores off of Yonge Street in the flanking areas?

If a Bus Rapid Station is equivalent to a shelter and pick up zone - then one already exists at Yonge/Crosby. If the intent is to build structures near the BRT at Yonge and Crosby to provide a minimum density target of 160 residents and jobs per hectare as identified under PMTSA # 45 (Crosby BRT Station) - -where is the available space to do so?

### ***Topic Area 12- Height Permissions Applying to Development Page 23 and 24***

**[A]** The Rationale section on page 23 states that that a 1 storey commercial building would not meet the “Village in the City” vision.

However, the Village Local Centre Vision outlined in the 2 May 2023 report to an OP Update Committee Meeting says the vision is: A “Village within the City” that is vibrant, walkable, accessible and green; and that provides opportunities for entertainment, community gathering and events and to appreciate the City’s history and diversity.”

#### Comments & Questions:

Why would a 1-storey development not meet the “Village in the City” vision?

Having a 2-storey building minimum will not necessarily provide any more ability to meet the vision than a properly designed 1-storey structure (which currently makes up most of the buildings in the Village!) Having 1 storey structures may even be more contextually sensitive and perhaps more human scale in the Village area? Can you provide more details to explain this section?

**[B]** The Rationale section at the end of page 23 and moving into page 24 has statements that require more clarification. The initial statement is: “9 storeys is used as the maximum height of mid-rise buildings, notwithstanding the current definition of mid-rise in the OP, to allow for better transition and consistency from similar built form of more recent development in the area while maintaining the historic village character”.

Can you identify what recent development you refer to? Most of the development I have seen over the past 15+ years has been 3-storey townhomes which maintained the village character – so what 9-storey or taller buildings are you referring to? The second question is - can you clarify how transition and consistency will be better and retain the historic village character?

**[C]** It is also stated on page 24 that north of Wright/Dunlop a maximum of 15 storeys is permitted to provide a reasonable transition from the 9-story limit south of it and transition to the adjacent RUMC lands. The base building height and maximum for these high-rise buildings is consistent with the current OP policy for development in the Uptown District.

Comments & Questions:

On what basis was it determined that a 15-storey building height is a reasonable transition from the 9-storey height limit to the south of Wright/Dunlop? Even the move from a 5-8 storey height to a 9-storey height needs that basis identified as well.

Is it reasonable to set a 15-storey limit when almost all development from Arnold to Benson Avenue are mostly in the 3-storey height category?

***Topic Area 2 – Building a Strong, Vibrant Identity and Character Page 26***

The Rationale section mentions an addition of an Urban Design Brief which may be required to demonstrate how proposed development reinforces the Village Character, etc.

Comments & Questions:

An Urban Design Brief should be required (**not** may be required) for any development in the Village Local Centre and any developments within close adjacent neighbourhoods to ensure that historic character, and site redevelopments are complementary and contextually sensitive **to the overall area**.

***Topic Area 1 – Public Streets and Active Transportation Connections Page 31***

The Rational section indicates that “new streets are proposed in the Local Centre and the proposed schedule identifies the location.

Comments & Questions:

Schedule E2 shows an extension for Crosby across Yonge Street to what appears to be a new street heading south from Benson Avenue to Wright Street. That map does not identify details clearly to show where the streets will actually go as buildings appear to be in the way of the new roads – so until a defined plan and location is known I do not believe Schedule E provides the necessary information for citizens to understand the impact.

In fact, if Crosby is not extended to the West, it would in fact limit vehicular access points to/through Yonge Street! Is there more defined information available?

***Topic Area 6 – Development of Parking Lots***Comments and Questions:

New development should provide required parking on site.

In terms of City-owned parking I had prepared a discussion paper for former Ward 4 Councillor West which showed potential for development of city-owned parking structures of limited height, which could be landscaped to provide an amenity feature as well. There are several areas located behind commercial structures on both sides of Yonge Street (from Major Mackenzie and north) that could be used. If developed they would relieve parking from Yonge Street providing a smoother flow of traffic through the Village areas. It is something worthwhile to consider.

***Topic Area 3 – Secondary Plans Should be Prepared, Page 37***Comments & Questions:

If the OPA 18.6 document will become the Secondary Plan for the Village Local Centre what would that consist of? Would it consider the details similar to that found in the draft proposed Downtown Local Centre Secondary Plan prepared in February 2017?

***Topic - Schedule E1 Village Local Centre Density Allocation***

Reading the Density Allocation map in the area of Hall Street and Benson Avenue, it is not clear how the density reflects the actual construction in this area.

If you overlaid the 8 townhome units of YRCC No. 811 on the E1 map, the 8 townhomes are located so they are both on Hall Street and around the corner facing Benson Avenue as well. There are 4 directly on Hall Street that would have density of 2.5, and then there are 4 facing Benson Avenue which looks like 3 of the 4 would be in the 3.5 density area and 1 in the 2.5 density area.

Comments & Questions:

Can you clarify if this map can be more detailed to identify existing properties that may be built so they are in more than one of density allocation areas?