

Friday, June 16, 2023

Mayor Dave West, and members of Council:

I am a landowner/developer/resident in the city of Richmond Hill and have been for many years. I am very much interested in the future growth of the City of Richmond Hill.

I have reviewed the draft plans for the Village Local Centre and the Oak Ridges Local Centre and I do not find a lot of difference from the status quo. The current Official Plan has not been working for the landowners which is why we have not had major development in the past 15 years in the downtown core and the Oak Ridges area. If we continue to follow the same concept for the next fifteen years, Richmond Hill will not be able to meet its goals of providing more housing and more jobs.

After COVID-19, many businesses had to change their model. As a result, in Oak Ridges there are many empty commercial units - and landlords are having a difficult time finding new tenants, meaning commercial vacancies are high.

The proposed Local Centre requires that residential developments provide commercial uses on the ground floor. However, commercial units in a condominium building bring a lot of traffic and noise. I highly recommend that City Council take into consideration that mixed use commercial and residential does not work on every application, especially in the Oak Ridges area where there is already a lot of commercial vacancy.

The vision of York region, is to increase density and height along Yonge Street, in order to make use of existing infrastructure and to support the existing rapid bus transit.

There has been a tremendous increase in the population of York Region, and property prices for existing low-density housing have reached an unaffordable level. Condominiums provide a more affordable option for newcomers, first time home buyers and the elderly wishing to downsize without leaving Richmond Hill.

If we do not provide height and density on Yonge Street, where should we have it? We have 24 hours VIVA transit along Yonge Street and all the infrastructure in place. There is a Go train at the corner of Bloomington and 404 as well as Major MacKenzie and Newkirk. All of the infrastructure is in place, we just need to build dense housing to support it.

An FSI of 2 and a height of 6 in Oak Ridges is not going to meet the needs of the area. I am suggesting, in my professional opinion as a landowner and developer with deep ties to Richmond Hill, that it should be increased to an FSI of 4 to 5 and a height of 9 stories.

In the downtown core, having an FSI of 3 will definitely not motivate any landowner to do any development in the area. This too should be increased. My recommendation would be an FSI of 5.

I hope the Mayor and members of Council take my comments into consideration, since we all have the same objective for the City of Richmond Hill.

Please note, my comments based on a good planning principle for every application.

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