

June 20, 2022

MGP File: 19-2836

Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua and Members of Council  
Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Sub-Committee  
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive  
Vaughan, ON L6A 1T1

**Communication : C 8  
VMC Sub-committee  
June 21, 2022  
Agenda Item # 1 and 2**

via email: clerks@vaughan.ca

Dear Mayor Bevilacqua and Members of Council

**RE:       ITEM 4.2 - VMC Secondary Plan Update: Phase 2 – Land Use Options  
          ITEM 4.1 - VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan Update  
          Portage Conversion Landowners Group**

As the land use planners for the Portage Conversion Landowners Group (“**Portage Landowners**”) who own land north of Portage Parkway and west of Jane Street within the City of Vaughan (“**Portage Lands**”), Malone Given Parsons have reviewed the Staff Reports related to Items 4.1 and 4.2 on the VMC Sub-Committee agenda for June 21, 2022.

The Portage Lands are located adjacent to the northern boundary of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (“**VMC**”) and generally within 500-800m of the SmartVMC Bus Terminal and VMC Subway Station. The lands east of Edgeley Boulevard and north of Portage Parkway are within a MTSA as endorsed by Regional Council.

We thank staff for inviting the Portage Landowners to participate in a VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan Landowners Meeting (March 3, 2022) and the VMC Secondary Plan Landowners Meeting – Expansion Areas (May 25, 2022). Both these meetings provided the Portage Landowners a preview of the proposed Landscape Master Plan and Land Use Options and in that context provide the following comments. We are writing to express our concerns with regards to the material and options provided and request a meeting with staff.

Our comments are provided in the context of the developments recently constructed, approved or submitted on lands opposite the Portage Lands on the south side of Portage Parkway. The lands on the south side of Portage Parkway have recently been constructed with 55 storey residential towers (Transit City 1-3) with no stepbacks or building articulation to minimize the mass of the building on Portage Parkway (see **Images 1 - 3**). Closer to Jane Street, TC 4 and TC5 are currently under construction of a similar built form at 45 and 50 stories in height. Recent Official Plan and Zoning applications for 101 Edgeley propose to continue this trend of extremely tall buildings along the south side of Portage Parkway with two towers adjacent to Portage at 59 and 63 storeys in height. These existing and proposed buildings have and will continue to dramatically change the streetscape along Portage Parkway and operations of the adjacent low-rise employment uses.

*Image 1/ View of Portage Pkwy looking east from Buttermilk Avenue*



*Image 2/ View of Portage Pkwy looking east just before Millway Avenue*



*Image 3/ View of Portage Pkwy Looking East from Monte Carlo Inn*



*Source: Monte Carlo Inn (May 2020)*

## **EMPLOYMENT LAND CONVERSION**

The Portage Landowners requested and received approval from Vaughan and Regional Council for an employment conversion on the basis that it would provide an opportunity to create a more logical transition and appropriate interface between the extreme height and densities approved on the south side of Portage and the existing low-density, low-rise employment lands to the north. Additionally, it would provide an opportunity to resolve related issues such as parking spill over and streetscape impacts.

## **VMC SECONDARY PLAN - EXPANSION AREA B**

As part of the VMC Secondary Plan Update, the Portage Lands have been identified within **Expansion Study Area ‘B’** to the VMCS Update. The June 21, 2022 Staff Report to VMC Sub-Committee states that the potential boundary expansions are being evaluated based on the following key principles:

1. Will the boundary expansion introduce meaningful and compatible transitions to the surrounding context and existing prestige employment uses?
2. Can appropriate buffering of uses be achieved?
3. Can the expansion area off opportunities to supplement the much-needed parkland and social infrastructure required within the VMC?
4. Can the boundary expansion be contained within the geographies outlined?

Additionally, the report notes that regardless of the outcome of the potential boundary expansions of the VMC, the lands afforded employment land conversions will continue to be permitted to redevelop for non-employment uses. Therefore, a fifth consideration should be given to whether the Expansion Areas are more appropriately guided by the policy framework within the VMC Secondary Plan or the City’s Official Plan. If the Portage Lands are not included as part of the VMC, they will have to be designated for land uses outside the context of more detailed VMC secondary plan policies and without the benefit of comprehensive planning.

***We continue to request that the Portage Lands be brought into the VMC Secondary Plan Area, as doing so can achieve the four key principles outlined by staff (as reviewed following), provides a better transition, and represents a logical extension of the VMC.***

## **VMC PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

Regarding the VMC Parks and Recreation Master Plan, we are concerned that that proposed approach to analyze and supply parkland and recreation facilities employs a suburban model or suburban development mindset; one that focuses on the delivery of parkland through traditional, land compulsive active parkland and recreation facilities rather than one that focuses on the provision of parkland to supply a dense, dynamic urban downtown as the VMC is envisioned.

The delivery of parkland in the VMC should employ creative, “out-of-the-box”, and innovative ideas to provide sufficient parks and open space that reflect the vibrant and cultural hub it desires to be. People living in dense residential buildings have little to no private outdoor space, have an immediate need for parkland within mere footsteps of their

homes, such as a small, designated places for pet relief or an urban oasis where you can grab some fresh air and sunshine and chat with your neighbours. The role of large urban active parks in a dynamic high-density area is in our opinion less important than that of small parkettes and open spaces frequently embedded into the urban fabric.

***In this regard and in support of the vision for the VMC, the VMC Secondary Plan and Parks Master Plan needs to be reconsidered to better promote and emphasize the role of publicly accessible, small parks and opens spaces provided frequently at street level, such as parkettes, POPS, plazas, courtyards, squares, etc.*** Development should be encouraged to- if not required to- provide these types of small parkettes and other urban open spaces at regular frequencies. The Parks Master Plan should include these small parkettes and open space (private or public) as they are an important and necessary component of the overall system of parks and open space. Further, parkland credit should be granted for providing these valuable urban parks and open spaces.

***Lastly, we are concerned that the expansion areas are being unjustly burdened with parkland requirements to make up for an under supply of parkland that was generated from existing or planned development within the VMC.*** The proposed public parkland illustrated in the Portage Lands is well beyond what would be required under the Planning Act and Vaughan’s Parkland Policies. Providing for parkland deficiencies on the periphery and not within reasonable distances from the residential units that generate the need for the parkland is not good planning or urban design. We suggest that the City consider more creative implementation strategies such as early acquisition to improve cost/value ratio and consider strata parkland models to provide the necessary parkland within the VMC.

#### **VMC SECONDARY PLAN UPDATE – LAND USE OPTIONS**

Based on the June 21, 2022 Staff Report on the VMCS Update, we understand Land Use Option 1 proposes to maintain the current intensity of development with a lens on achieving built form variety and supply adequate social infrastructure, while Land Use Option 2 proposes to recalibrate uses to deliver a thriving central business district, utilizing an Office Feasibility Assessment that was undertaken to improve the feasibility of development that delivers office uses.

Regarding the Portage Lands, both Land Use Options propose a linear park of varying widths and an adjacent “Private Mews”. Option 2 includes a requirement for office uses on land proposed as Mixed-Use and currently not developed. Option 1 proposes a large public park on the lands north of Portage between Applewood and Edgeley; whereas, Option 2 proposes these lands be designated as a new school site for a high school (larger than 6 acres). However, we note that no specific details or policies have been provided with regards to land use permissions, height, density and other aspects of city building that would help to understand the two options more fully.

***As such, we request more details with regards to the policies that will guide the land uses, built form, height, densities, and other development criteria in order to fully understand the two options.***

### **Mixed Use Designation**

The Portage Landowners Group is generally supportive of the requirement for other non-residential uses as part of the Mixed-Use designation. The Portage Landowners envision redevelopment of their properties in a manner that would at a minimum maintain, but most likely increase, the amount of employment that is currently within their lands. They are supportive of policy that would permit or require the first floors for active retail and / or service commercial uses while the upper floors permitted for a combination of employment generating uses and residential. We have questions with regards to Option 2 and what is meant by “Office Uses Required”.

***We suggest that the requirement not be too narrowly focused that it doesn't permit other employment generating uses such as cultural facilities, institutions, schools and the “Office Uses Required” be revised to state “Non-Residential Uses Required”.***

### **School/Park Use at 705 Applewood Cres.**

Both options propose public land uses either a public park or school on the lands between Applewood and Edgeley on the north side of Portage Parkway. This equals almost 4 hectares (10 acres) of land which is a very suburban sized model for a Secondary School and in a location that does not provide a future high school with immediate access to a transit station. The owners of 705 Applewood Cres. (currently the Monte Carlo Inn) and the properties immediately to the north and east (BK 9, Plan 65M3606 Vaughan and PT BK 8 Plan 65M3606 PT 2 65R27375 ET PT 1 Expropriation Plan YR3091961 Vaughan) envision the redevelopment of their property into a world class hotel in combination with other uses such as retail, cultural, institution and residential.

***As such, we do not support the designation of park or school on these three properties (705 Applewood Cres, BK 9, Plan 65M3606 Vaughan and PT BK 8 Plan 65M3606 PT 2 65R27375 ET PT 1 Expropriation Plan YR3091961 Vaughan) and we request they be designated for a mix of uses which would permit a hotel in combination of office/employment, retail and service commercial, residential, cultural and institutional uses.***

### **Linear Park and Private Mews**

It appears that the intent of the linear park along the north edge of the expansion area provided two functions besides passive recreation, 1) it created a northern trail linkage and 2) provides a “buffer” between existing employment uses further north. We question the appropriateness and rationale for locating public parkland in this location and suggest there may be alternative ways to design and organize the land uses to achieve the linkage and necessary buffer. Further work needs to be done to consider the best approach to successfully design and plan these areas given the immediate context south of Portage Parkway.

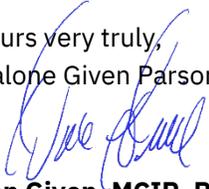
***We request additional information with regards to the linear park designations and private mews along the northern edge of the Portage Lands and opportunities to discuss the overall vision for the Portage Lands.***

**Meeting Request**

Given our concerns with the Land Use Options and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, we request a meeting with staff to further understand the Land Use Options and what the implications on the Portage Lands and discuss the overall vision for the Portage Lands and how it align with and will advance the VMC vision.

On behalf of our clients, we appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments and input. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours very truly,  
Malone Given Parsons Ltd.



**Don Given, MCIP, RPP**

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