

September 29, 2023

MGP File: 19-2836

VMC Secondary Plan Update Project Team
City of Vaughan
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan, ON L6A 1T1

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Communication
CW(1) – October 31, 2023
Item No. 9.2

via email: Andrew.Haagsma@vaughan.ca & gaston.soucy@vaughan.ca

Dear Mr. Haagsma and Mr. Soucy:

**RE: VMC Secondary Plan Update Phase III – Recommended Land Use Option
Portage Conversion Landowners Group**

As you are aware, Malone Given Parsons Ltd. (“MGP”) is the land use planner for the Portage Conversion Landowners Group (“**Portage Landowners**”). The Portage Landowners own lands on the north side of Portage Parkway between Millway Avenue and Applewood Crescent in the City of Vaughan (“**Portage Lands**”). The Portage Landowners have been actively participating in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Secondary Plan (“**VMCSP**”) Update process, including attending the VMC Landowners Meeting on September 8, 2023, where the Recommended Land Use Option was presented for discussion as part of Phase III of the VMCSP Update.

At this meeting, staff and its consulting team confirmed they would be recommending the Expansion Areas be incorporated into the VMCSP. We agree with this recommendation, specifically with the inclusion of Expansion Area B (to which the Portage Lands are part of) into the VMCSP boundary. We are encouraged by the changes made to the Recommended Land Use Option and note that it now better aligns with the vision and Conceptual Master Plan for the Portage Lands which was submitted to the City in support of a Pre-application Consultation Meeting request (See **Attachment 1: Portage Landowners Conceptual Master Plan**). We have prepared several renderings illustrating the vision for the Portage Lands, as seen in Figures 1 and 2.

The following provide additional comments with regards to the Recommended Framework presented, including each of the various draft schedules. It should be noted that it is difficult to provide a fulsome set of comments on the Recommended Land Use Option in the absence of any policy framework. In our opinion, providing details with regards to land use policies is required to fully understand the recommendations. Notwithstanding, we provide the following comments and requests:

Figure 1: Views Looking Southwest – Vision of Portage Lands

Source: Tom Rasky (2023)

1. Recommended Option for Land Use & Mixed-Use Non-Residential Requirement

We note that consistent with the Portage Lands Conceptual Master Plan, the Recommended Land Use Option identifies the lands west of Millway Ave and east of Edgeley Blvd as “Mixed Use (Non-Residential Uses Required)”. We generally agree with this land use designation and the non-residential requirement; however, we request additional details with regards to how the non-residential use requirement would be applied and calculated. We request confirmation that this requirement would be calculated on a Gross Floor Area and would include ground floor retail, service commercial, community facilities, cultural or institutional facilities and other public uses in addition to traditional office spaces and other non-traditional employment uses.

Furthermore, we only support the non-residential requirement for buildings that have frontage along Portage Parkway or are adjacent to the existing employment area to the north. However, we think it will dilute the potential for a vibrant street along Portage if it should be required for internal buildings and parcels. Additionally, with this comment in mind, we conclude that the 11.5% requirement for lands north of Portage is too much space. Based on the Portage Lands Conceptual Master Plan which assumes similar building heights and densities as on the south side of Portage, reserving the ground through 3rd floor on buildings that have frontage along Portage Parkway would result in less than 10% of the GFA for non-residential uses (discounting residential lobbies and other shared spaces). We recommend that the requirement be revised to a minimum 8% non-residential uses for buildings along the north side of Portage and buildings adjacent to the existing employment area. It would be helpful to this discussion if we understood the amount / percentage of non-residential uses constructed to date in the VMC per building or parcel in the VMC.

Regarding the lands between Applewood and Edgeley identified as “Neighbourhood”. We request additional information regarding what uses besides residential would be permissible. The Portage Lands Conceptual Master Plan has identified the redevelopment of the existing Monte Carlo Hotel (at the NE corner of Portage and Applewood) into a luxury hotel and convention centre with a mix of residential uses supported by world-class amenities and services (See conceptual rendering in Figure 2). This use is compatible with residential uses and should be permitted in the Neighbourhood designation.

Figure 2: Conceptual Vision - Monte Carlo Luxury Hotel & Suites



Source: Tom Rasky 2023

2. Recommended Option for Maximum Density

We believe that the recommended maximum densities for the Portage Lands are understated given the heights and level of density currently built, proposed, or under construction on the south side of Portage Parkway. Based on our review of approvals and applications, many sites have densities well over 9.0 FSI when calculated using gross land area, as per VMCSPP policy 8.1.17. We request that the lands immediately north of Portage, between Millway and Edgeley and within the 500-metre distance to the Subway (former part of MTSA 67) be permitted maximum densities up to 9.0 FSI and then transition north and west to lower heights and densities of up to 7.5 FSI and then 6.0 FSI adjacent to the existing employment area. This will help to provide for a better opportunity to transition the built form north.

Similarly, we are seeking a FSI of 9.0 for the lands at the northeast corner of Applewood and Portage to support the development of a world-class hotel and convention facility as mentioned above.

3. Recommended Option for Civic Facilities

MEWS

Consistent with the Conceptual Master Plan, we generally support the idea of a connecting mews along the north boundary of the Expansion area. As illustrated, this connection will help to provide a transition to the existing employment uses and better access / connectivity for the redevelopment of the Portage Lands (by directing access off Portage Parkway). This connection can provide an alternative east – west linkage that is less busy and away from the vibrant and active environment envisioned along Portage Parkway. The location of the mews should be considered in the context of the existing ownership patterns (as illustrated in the Conceptual Master Plan) to mitigate ownership issues and maintain efficiency and usability of the adjacent properties.

PARKLAND

We do not support the parkland designation at the northeast corner of Edgeley and Portage. We believe a more appropriate distribution and greater amount of parkland can be provided by delivering parks internal to each of the three blocks within the Portage Lands. The proposed arrangement is illustrated in the Portage Conceptual Master Plan would provide immediate access to open space for adjacent new residents, users and visitors in the Expansion Area and would help to break up and provide relief to the built form and massing. We believe that this arrangement of parks is more consistent with the goals of the VMC Parks Master Plan and Update (more parkland, better connectivity). Furthermore, the proposed location for the park indicated is at the intersection of two major collectors does not seem as appropriate given the expected usage of these roads and would be better suited internal to the blocks.

Given the urban context of the VMC, the updated VMCSPP should contain greater flexibility to allow stratified parkland rather than it being conditional on the provision of significant office development. There is an opportunity to explore stormwater management facilities underneath the proposed parkland that should not be considered when identifying location for parkland. Furthermore, the parkland policies should be consistent with the City's new Parkland Dedication Bylaw 168-2022 which permits the City to accept 100% parkland credit for stratified parkland, including those encumbered by underground parking.

HIGH SCHOOL

Lastly, although we support the approach of having an underlying neighbourhood designation on lands identified for schools or other community uses, we disagree that the lands at the northeast corner of Applewood and Portage should be reserved for a 6-hectare High School. As mentioned, the existing owner operates a hotel at this location and wishes to redevelop these lands in concert with the adjacent properties. The proposed hotel and convention facility is an important use that will help to expand the mix of uses in the VMC and provide a supportive service to the residents, employment uses, and the civic and cultural events envisioned for the VMC. These are also important jobs that should be considered and but are not included in the “by the numbers” slide 42 related to Jobs.

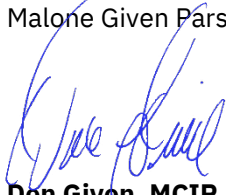
Furthermore, we would argue that the amount of land identified for a potential high school is a very suburban sized model and proposed in a location that would not provide future high school students sufficient access to transit. A location closer to Jane Street or Highway 7 would be more appropriate for high school students that rely heavily on transit service to access school. Similarly, a location adjacent to other major recreational uses should be explored to provide for co-locating opportunities for recreational fields and other facilities. This would support more efficient land use in dense urban areas where land is scarce, and property values are high. For such a land intensive use, it would seem more prudent to look for lands adjacent to but outside the VMC and expansion lands that have a lower market value. This is a similar approach proposed for the active parkland requirements for the VMC. Lastly, it is our understanding that the school boards prefer for elementary and high schools to be separated locationally, rather there is a proposed elementary/middle school site on the south side of Portage.

Conclusion

We thank staff and their project team for their efforts to prepare a recommended land use option. We agree with the conclusion that the expansion areas should be incorporated into the VM CSP, and we are generally supportive of the changes made to the Recommended Land Use Option (apart from those discrepancies and comments noted above). Again we note that no specific details or policies have been provided with regards to land use permissions, height, and other aspects of city building that would help to understand the option more fully and therefore reserve our final comments until those policies are available to review.

As always, we appreciate the opportunity to collaborate proactively with staff and their team on this project and welcome any additional opportunities to meet with staff to discuss the vision for the Portage Lands as part of the VMC and constructive means to advance the redesignation of the Portage Lands. We kindly request to be notified of any future public or landowner engagement meetings regarding this process and reserve the right to provide comments on future versions of the VMC Secondary Plan. We look forward to working with the City on the development of a vibrant downtown.

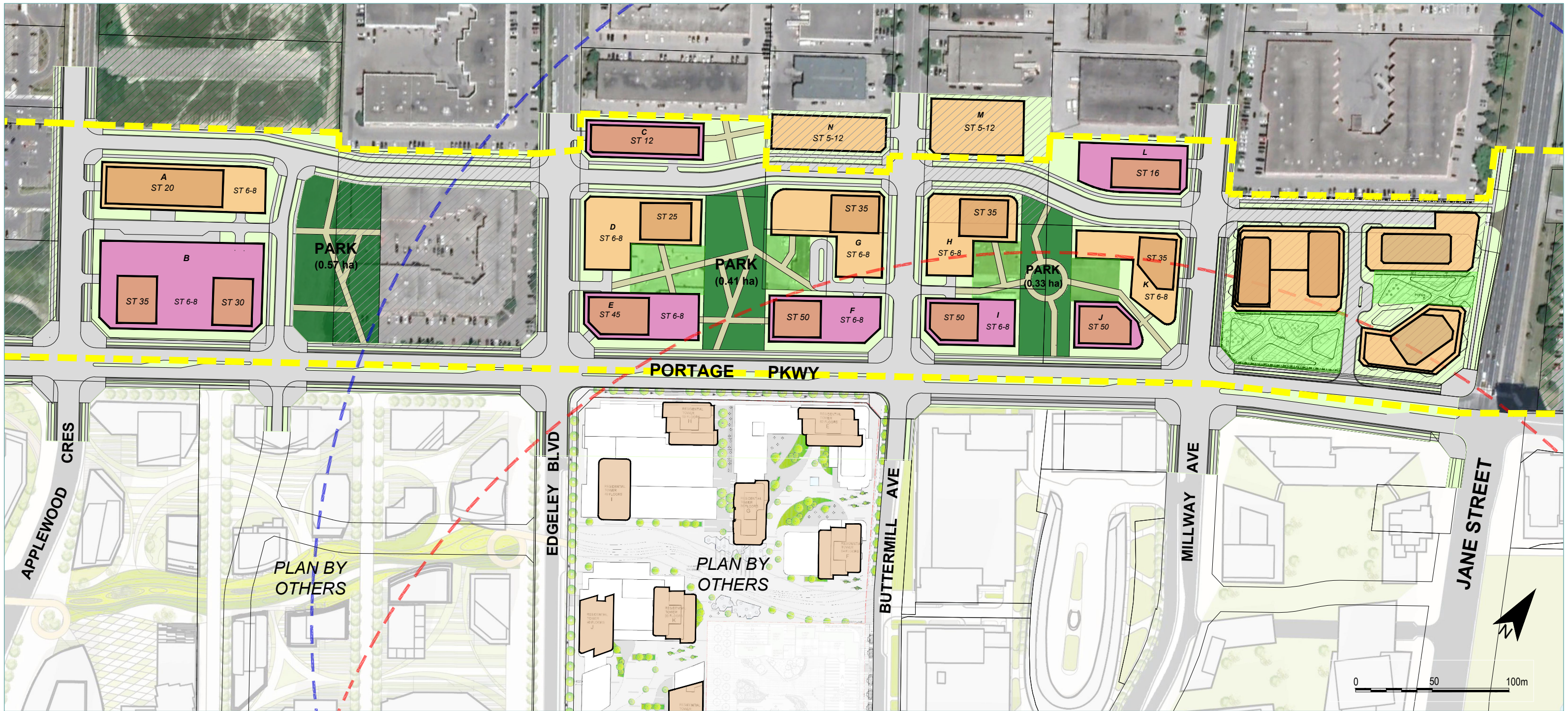
Yours very truly,
Malone Given Parsons Ltd.



Don Given, MCIP, RPP

cc Haiqing Xu, Haiqing.xu@vaughan.ca
 Christina Bruce, christina.bruce@vaughan.ca
 Portage Conversion Landowners Group

Attachments *1/ Portage Conceptual Master Plan*
 2/ Portage Conceptual Massing Plan



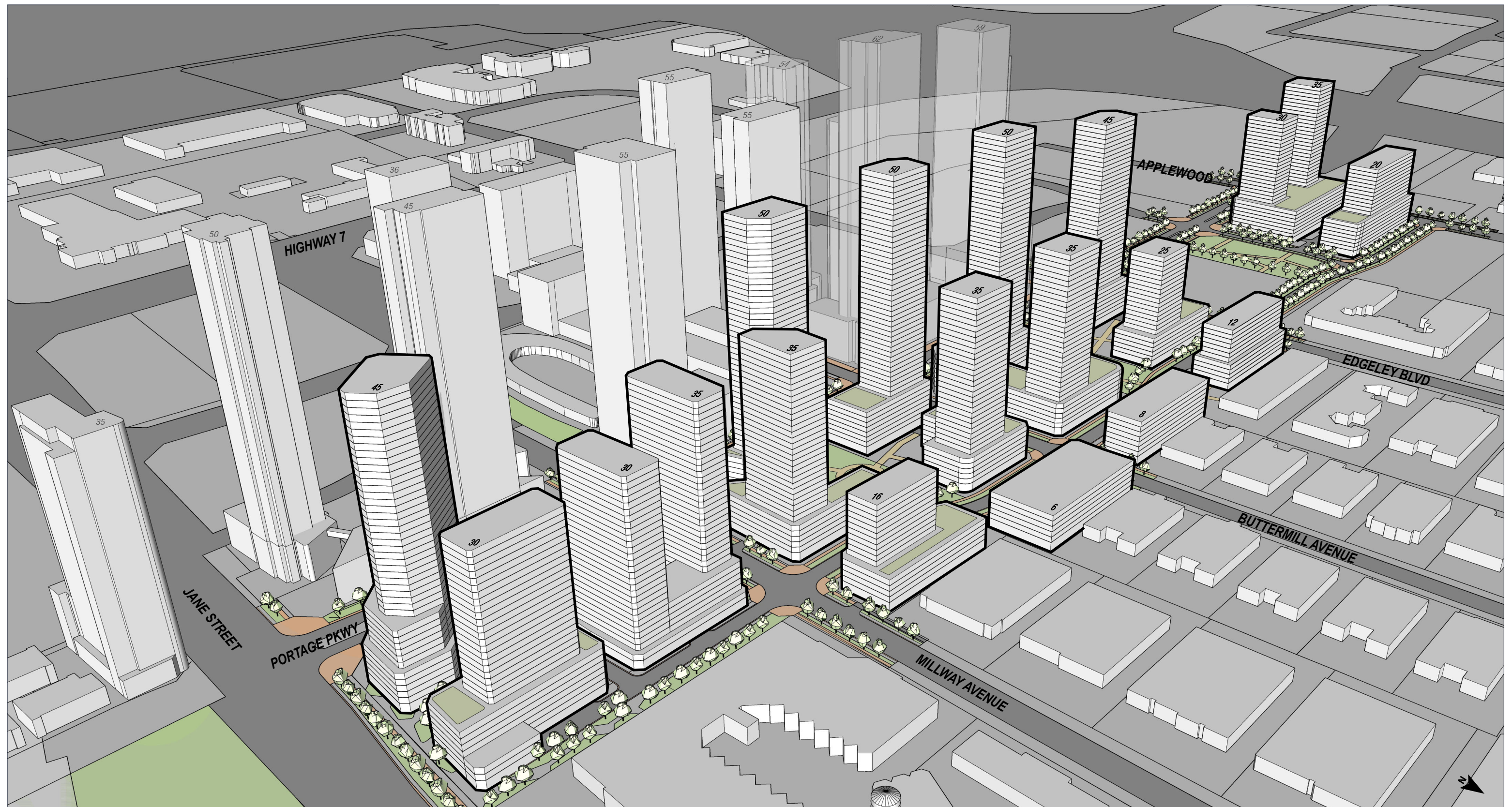
CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

Portage Conversion Landowners Group

Vaughan, ON

Legend

- Study Area B VMC Secondary Plan Update
- Podium
- Podium with Retail and Other Non-Residential Uses
- Tower
- Parkland
- POPS
- Sidewalks
- Bike Lanes
- Landowners part of the Portage Conversion Landowners Group
- Landowners NOT part of the Portage Conversion Landowners Group
- 500m Walking Radius from Subway Station
- 500m Walking Radius from Bus Station



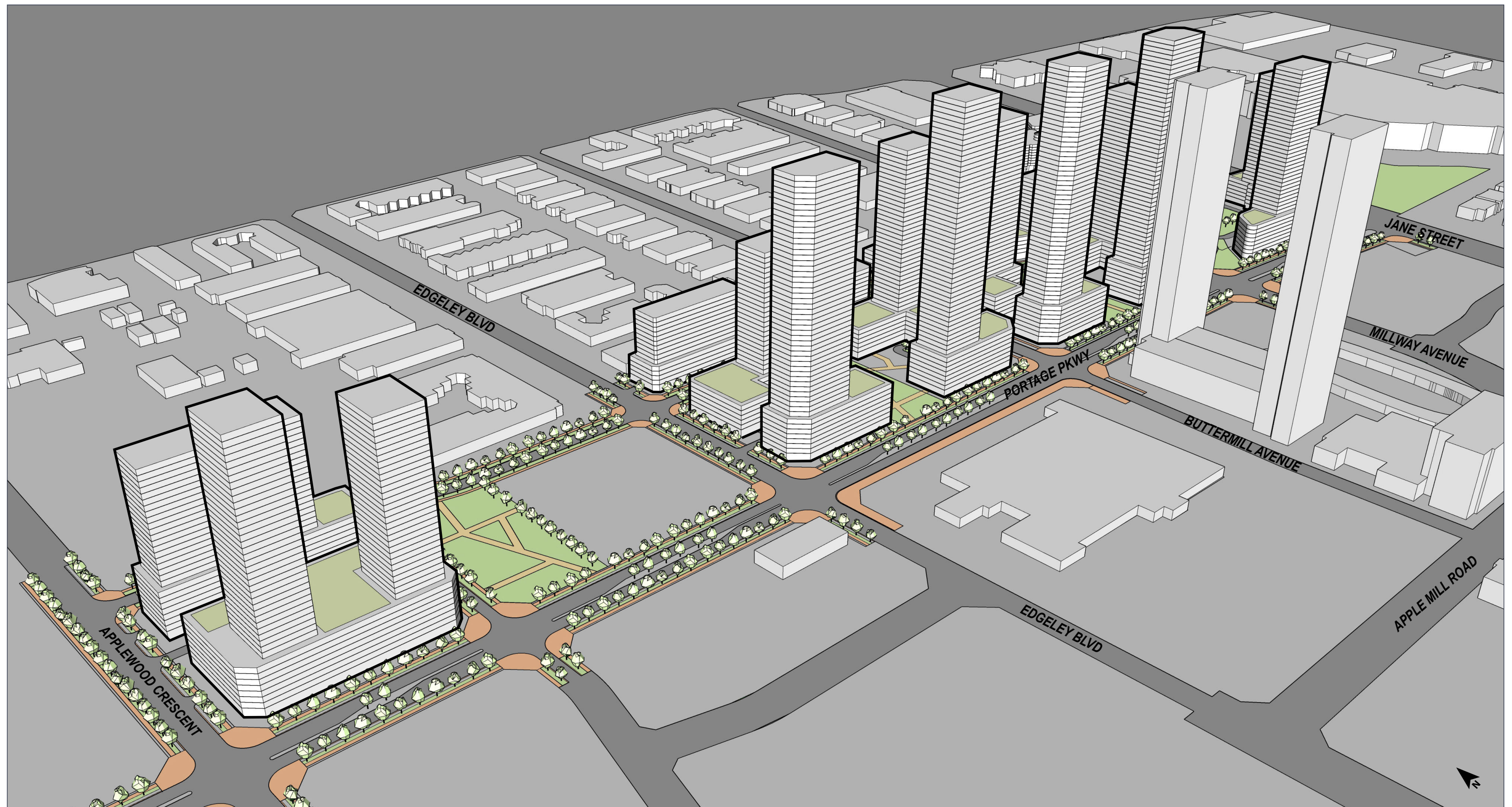
CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN
Portage Conversion Landowners Group
City of Vaughan

View 2

DRAFT
FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY!

MGP File No.: 19:2836
Date: September 22, 2023

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CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN
Portage Conversion Landowners Group
City of Vaughan

View 4

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MGP File No.: 19:2836
Date: July 21, 2023

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