

DATE: March 15, 2022

TO: Mayor and Members of Council

FROM: Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager, Planning & Growth Management

RE: **COMMUNICATION – March 22, 2022, Council**
Item #2, Report #11, Committee of the Whole (WS)
**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING MUNICIPAL FINAL AUTHORITY
FOR DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**
Additional Staff Input on the Housing Affordability Task Force Report

Purpose

To provide further staff analyses/opinions in addition to the staff comments presented to Committee of the Whole Working Session on March 2, 2022, with respect to the recommendations contained within the Affordability Task Force report released on February 8, 2022.

Analysis

The Housing Crisis Has Complex Causes

Population growth, low supply of new homes, decreasing rental units, record low interest rate, increasing material and labour costs, and the general desire to live in or near the city can all be factors that may change the balance between housing supply and demand. Thus, a collective effort from all levels of government, as well as developers and communities, is needed to address the current housing crisis.

Municipalities have a significant role to play to help increase the supply of new homes through expediting planning approvals, infrastructure developments and issuance of building permits. In the meantime, municipalities also have the responsibility to protect community characters and ensure quality of living in existing communities.

Staff support all efforts to increase housing supply. Planning staff have been working closely with colleagues of other departments to explore in detail opportunities to streamline the development approval process and will be reporting to Council our findings and the progress of ongoing efforts next month. Through the process, we have discovered some other factors contributed to missed deadlines and slow processing, which include the province's own reply to circulations, timely input from required agencies and stakeholders and the quality of the initial applications and subsequent submissions. Staff believe the province should consider simplifying its own regulations,

delegating certain approval authorities, and leading by policy – no micromanaging municipalities - to help speed up development approval process, cut red tape, and get homes built quicker.

“As-of-right” Approvals Allow Intensification to Spread to Existing Communities

Staff are gravely concerned with the following recommended "as of right" developments and approvals:

- Up to four units and up to four storeys on a single residential lot;
- Secondary suites, multi-tenant housing, conversion of underutilized or redundant commercial properties to residential or mixed residential and commercial use;
- Zoning up to unlimited height and unlimited density in the immediate proximity of individual major transit stations within two years if municipal zoning remains insufficient to meet provincial density targets;
- Zoning of 6 to 11 storeys with no minimum parking requirements on any streets utilized by public transit (including streets on bus and streetcar routes).

These recommendations would lower design standard and allow intensification to spread to the existing neighbourhoods where there is no major infrastructure improvement to support such a growth. If implemented, municipal councils will no longer have the authority to decide on these developments, and instead they will receive all complaints about reduced quality of life, e.g. lowered water pressure, excessive street parking, and shadowed backyards.

Staff believe “as-of-right” permissions need to be fully and carefully re-assessed to ensure conformity, good planning, and the best interests of the public are protected. Limited site specific “as-of-right” approvals may be considered, but not a broad application as recommended.

Treating All Municipalities Homogeneously is not Good Planning

The City of Vaughan has convenient access to highways and passenger GO rail services. It is also the only municipality that has a TTC subway station outside the City of Toronto. Its preferred location together with major infrastructure improvements allows the City to plan and support significant intensifications in areas such as the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, Yonge and Steeles area, and many Major Transit Station Areas. These developments have already contributed and will continue to significantly contribute to the housing supply and thus help ease the housing crisis.

What the City has been experiencing is not easily transferrable to another municipality. The recommended province-wide zoning standards or prohibitions by the task force would cause all municipalities to consider their land use regulations homogeneously, and limit their authorities to regulate minimum lot sizes, maximum building setbacks, minimum heights, angular planes, shadow rules, front doors, building depth, landscaping, floor space index, heritage view cones, and parking requirements based on planning merit and in accordance with their respective Official Plans.

Official Plan Authority Must be Protected

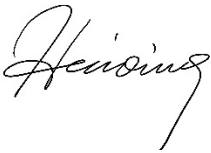
Official Plan is a very important local planning tool to establish the desired urban structure and land uses throughout the City. It is used to direct growth to urban growth centres, mobility hubs and major transit station areas while maintain and protect the character of established residential areas.

The City's Official Plan designates lands that are sufficient to meet future growth needs based on provincial growth forecasts. Also, it is a critical policy document that helps coordinate between infrastructure and growth. The City undertakes regular reviews of the Official Plan, as required by the *Planning Act*, to ensure land use decisions are consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

Staff believe the City's Official Plan, once update and approved, should not be subject to further appeals, so that its policies can be immediately translated to zoning regulations to guide and expedite development approvals.

For more information, contact Christina Bruce, Director, Policy Planning & Special Programs at ext. 8231.

Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Haiqing Xu', written in a cursive style.

Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager,
Planning & Growth Management