

February 27, 2024

MGP File: 19-2836

VMC Sub-Committee (c/o Office of the City Clerk)  
City of Vaughan  
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive  
Vaughan, ON L6A 1T1

**C 3**  
**Communication**  
**Vaughan Metropolitan Centre**  
**Sub-Committee – February 28, 2024**  
**Item No. 2**

via email: [Alannah.Slattery@vaughan.ca](mailto:Alannah.Slattery@vaughan.ca) / [Clerks@vaughan.ca](mailto:Clerks@vaughan.ca)

Dear Members of the VMC Sub-Committee:

**RE: VMC Secondary Plan Recommended Land Use Option  
Portage Conversion Landowners Group  
Response to Staff Comments**

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**”) representing 7.00 hectares in Expansion Area B.

The Portage Landowners have been actively participating in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Secondary Plan (“**VMCSP**”) Update process by attending landowner engagement meetings and meeting with staff and members of the VMC Subcommittee including Mayor/Chair Del Duca and Ward Councillor Ainsworth. Comments were previously provided to the VMCSP Update Project Team (letter dated September 29, 2023, and attached). The following letter is in response to the updates to the VMC Land Use Options and Schedules presented at the VMC Subcommittee on Wednesday, January 31<sup>st</sup> and Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and Staff’s response to our previous letters in a letter dated February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

We thank staff for the opportunities to discuss the VMCSP Update as it relates to the Expansion Area B lands and note that there has been some progress to resolve our concerns. However, we remain concerned with the preferred land use option and the various draft schedules as outlined in this letter. In the absence of any policy framework updates, it remains difficult to provide a fulsome review of the Recommended Land Use Option. In our opinion, providing details with regards to land use policies is required to fully understand the recommendations.

**1. Non-Residential Requirement**

We thank staff for clarifying that this component would be calculated on a gross floor area per application basis (i.e. block or parcel basis); however, we continue to request clarification as to what uses can contribute towards the non-residential requirement and request that it include retail, service, commercial, office, community facilities, flexible building amenity space (such as co-working suites), cultural or institutional facilities and other public uses in addition to traditional office spaces and other non-traditional employment uses.

We understand that non-residential uses are a component of creating complete communities and are important to supporting a thriving Central Business District. However, we request that the non-residential use requirement apply only to buildings that have frontage along Portage Parkway or are adjacent to the existing employment area to the north. Application of this requirement across the block will dilute the potential for a vibrant street along Portage should this non-residential requirement be required for buildings or parcels internal to the blocks.

***We continue to recommend that the requirement be revised to a minimum of 8% non-residential uses or alternatively prescribe that the majority of the ground floor area and possibly additional upper floors (i.e. 2 and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors) along Portage Parkway be used for non-residential uses.***

## **2. Continued Permission for a Luxury Hotel and Convention Centre Use**

The Portage Landowners Conceptual Master Plan envisions the redevelopment of the existing Monte Carlo Hotel at 705 Applewood Cres., into a luxury hotel and convention centre with a mix of residential uses supported by world-class amenities and services. This hotel is currently owned and operated by Dominic Meffe, an active member of the VMC and Vaughan business community. Mr. Meffe envisions the redevelopment of the existing Monte Carlo Hotel into a landmark venue and building for the VMC.

Precluding the conditioned use of these lands for a hotel and convention centre in a mixed-use format with residential uses is not appropriate or conducive to creating complete communities. These lands contain an existing hotel use and are near other hotel uses to the north of the VMC. The proposed redevelopment of the property into a luxury hotel and convention centre will support nearby businesses and tourism in the VMC, it helps to achieve the Secondary Plans goals for a higher portion of non-residential uses, and would provide for a significant number of new jobs within the VMC. It aligns with the vision of a mixed, economically viable downtown area. The Hotel and Convention Centre use is compatible with other uses permitted within the Neighbourhood designation.

The Portage Lands designated as Neighbourhood between Applewood Crescent and Edgeley Boulevard interface with the employment lands to the north and are situated between Mixed Use designations to the east and west. Portage Parkway is a major secondary artery for the VMC providing direct connections to the east and west and is an alternative trucking route for Hwy 7. The proposed “Neighbourhood” designation creates challenges in achieving a cohesive urban fabric along the north side of Portage and establishing an appropriate transition to the existing employment and commercial uses to the north. The proposed height and density schedules identify this portion of lands for lower heights (max 10 storeys) and density (max 3.0 FSI) as opposed to the lands along the east and west (6 FSI and 35 storeys to 3 FSI and 20 storeys). This would in essence result in a dip or step down in height and density along Portage between the mixed uses at Highway 400, only to rise again east of Edgeley Blvd, which would create an inconsistent urban fabric.

***We request that the Portage Lands between Applewood Crescent and Edgeley Boulevard be designated as “Mixed Use” with height and density permissions that would provide for a gradual increase in built form from Hwy 400 to the east/core of the VMC.***

### 3. Recommended Framework for Maximum Density and Height

The heights and densities identified in the updated schedules presented at the January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 VMC Subcommittee meeting continue to downplay the VMC's role as an Urban Growth Centre and Protected Major Transit Station Areas (PMTSAs). In accordance with the York Region Official Plan and *Planning Act*, lower-tier municipalities are required to include policies in their official plans that identify MINIMUM height and density targets that will achieve the minimum density target for those PMTSAs. Alternatively, the preferred concepts presented by the City provide for MAXIMUMs that restrict height and density. The proposed heights and densities aim to remedy or “reduce” the unanticipated level of growth within the current VM CSP area by downgrading heights and densities within the expansion areas and rely on the expansion areas to compensate for the lack of hard and soft services in the VMC.

Additionally, the proposed maximum heights north of Portage of 35 storeys will not establish an appropriate transition or “stepping down” from the existing heights on the south side of Portage which are 55 storeys. The recommended heights and densities along the north side of Portage Parkway should reflect a more gradual transition from the heights on the south side of Portage to the existing employment lands. As per the Portage Landowners Conceptual Master Plan, a gradual transition to the employment lands which anticipates the redevelopment of adjacent employment lands into more Prestige Employment uses in the north would offer a better transition in built form and reflect the extremely close distance to the TTC station just south of Portage at Millway (see **Figures 1 and 2** on the following page).

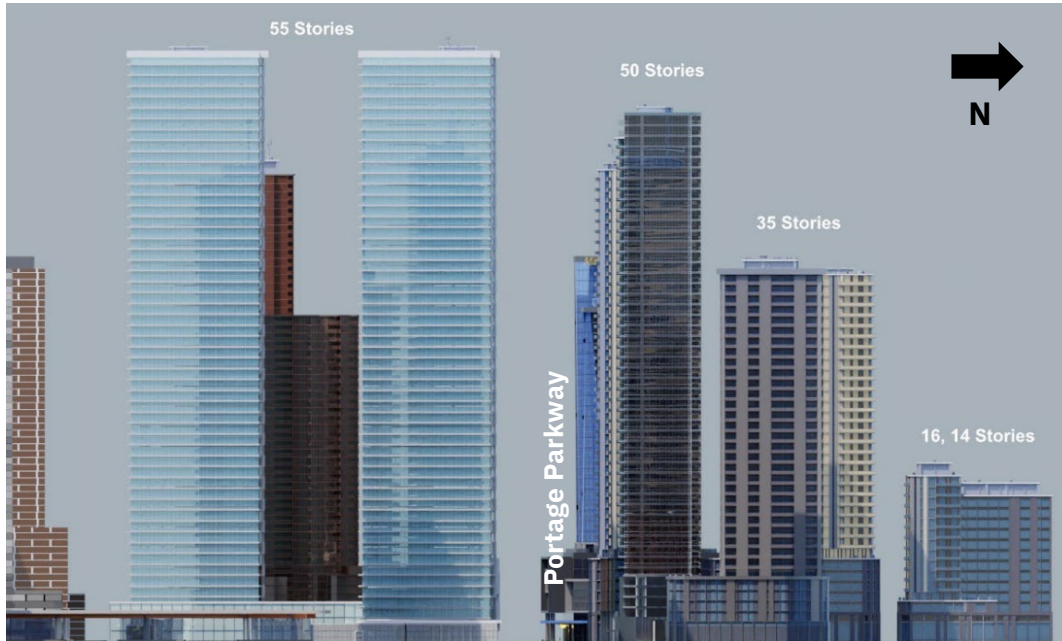
Furthermore, to maximize opportunities for new housing and to address climate change to the greatest extent possible, lands within PMTSAs should provide significant opportunities for housing including family housing units and affordable housing types. Limiting the height and density permissions in the immediate vicinity of the bus and subway station limits the opportunities to achieve a greater propensity of these important dwelling types.

Lastly, we have reviewed the servicing and transportation requirements of the height and densities requested in the Portage Landowners Conceptual Master Plan and can confirm that the system can accommodate this level of development with little infrastructure requirements. We note that a small portion of the sanitary sewer on Portage between Buttermill and Millway will need to be upgraded to accommodate the levels of development proposed by the City. We have been working with staff at the City to advance and fund this servicing upgrade with the current works underway for Portage Parkway.

***We request that the lands immediately north of Portage, between Millway and Edgeley and within the 500-metre distance to the Subway (part of PMTSA 67) be permitted maximum densities up to 9.0 FSI and heights up to 50 storeys. Heights and density permissions should 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.***

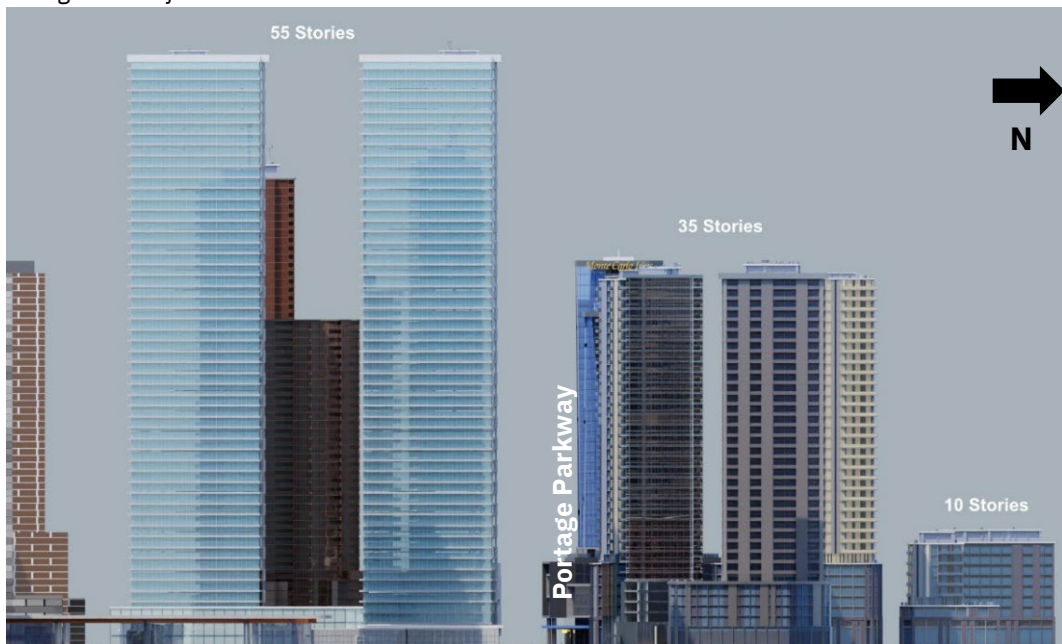
***Similarly, an FSI of 9.0 for the lands at the northeast corner of Applewood and Portage to support the development of a world-class hotel and convention facility as mentioned above. Permitting higher heights and densities within a PMTSA serves to further incentivize transit and multimodal transportation uses, contributing to the development of more sustainable and resilient communities.***

**Figure 1:** Heights proposed by the Portage Landowners Conceptual Master Plan provide for a gradual transition from South to North



Source: Rasky Property Management Inc.

**Figure 2:** City of Vaughan Proposed Height per Preferred Land Use Option would establish a more abrupt change in built form to the north.



Source: Rasky Property Management Inc.

#### 4. Recommended Framework for Civic Facilities

##### Parkland

We continue to disagree with the proposed approach for parkland and do not support a large park designation at the northeast corner of Edgeley and Portage. Alternatively we suggest a

more appropriate distribution and greater amount of parkland can be delivered through the arrangement illustrated in the Portage Landowners Conceptual Master Plan. This approach would provide immediate access to open space for adjacent new residents, users and visitors in the Expansion Area B and would help to break up and provide relief to the built form and massing. The Portage Landowners Conceptual Master Plan illustrated three (3) public parks sized at 0.57 ha (1.4 acres), 0.41 ha (1 acre), and 0.33 ha (0.82 acres) for a total of 1.31 ha (3.24 acres). We believe that this arrangement of parks is more consistent with the goals and parkland illustrated in the VMC Parks Master Plan Update (more parkland, better connectivity) and is consistent with the policies of the VOP 2010.

The VOP 2010 identifies two park types appropriate for intensification areas – Urban Parks (>1 hectare) and Public Squares (0.2 – 1.0 hectare) (Policy 7.3.2.6). Policy 7.3.1.2.d. defines Urban Parks as “*highly programmed outdoor spaces that support the social and cultural fabric of Intensification Areas. Urban Parks are destinations for day-to-day use and special events. Features can include space for cultural and event programming, recreation, children’s play, social gathering, fountains/waterplay, outdoor skating, and small-scale park-supporting uses such as cafes, vendors and kiosks, as determined by the City.*” Whereas Public Squares are defined as “*social and civic spaces in Intensification Areas, preferably adjacent to shops, cafes, restaurants, institutions, and public streets that are part of daily life in a city. Public Squares may offer smaller scale, neighbourhood- oriented social opportunities, or accommodate larger City-wide entertainment and cultural events, depending on their size and location. Public Squares can include flexible hardscape areas, gardens and lawns, fountains/waterplay, concert facilities and stages, small outdoor game areas such as chess tables, seating areas and places to eat. They can also accommodate street related activities such as small-scale retail kiosks, vendors, temporary markets, performance and exhibit spaces, and a range of other facilities.*” (Policy 7.3.1.2.e). These policies support the parkland size and distribution illustrated in the Portage Landowners Conceptual Master Plan.

Furthermore, the proposed parkland in the revised preferred land use option from the City is located at the intersection of two major collectors, particularly Portage which is an identified trucking route, which does not seem as appropriate given the expected usage of these roads and would be better suited internal to the blocks. The proposed location of the parkland in the revised preferred land use option would result in a park size of only approximately 1.0 hectare.

***We request the City identify an alternative approach and location for the proposed parkland in the Expansion Area B lands. If the city is looking for a larger single park in this location, it would be most appropriate adjacent to or closer to the proposed school on the south side of Portage to support co-locating and shared use opportunities between the school and parkland.***

#### Public Road

We note that the preferred concept now identifies a full public road along the north edge of the Expansion Area B lands, whereas previously it was identified as a Mews. We request flexibility be provided in the updated policies that clarifies that this connection as a public or private Mews and consideration as a Local Road like existing Policy 4.3.16. Furthermore, we request confirmation that the ROW size will be specified between 15 - 20 metres similar to existing policy 4.3.20 (Bent Tree Drive). The final determination of the cross-section size and

composition requires further study and policies should be provided to this regard in the updated VMCSPP as well as direction that requires this Mews or public road be coordinated across different ownerships to ensure consideration of existing parcel fabric and to maintain efficiency and usability of the adjacent properties.

### Secondary School

We support the City's removal of the secondary school symbol for Expansion Area B and maintain that it is not appropriate in the location previously identified.

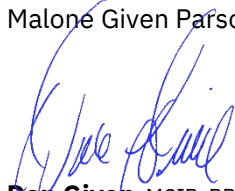
### Conclusion

As always, we thank staff and their project team for their efforts to address our concerns and comments regarding the VMC Secondary Plan Update. We are generally supportive of the changes made to the Recommended Land Use Option and request that the comments noted above be taken into consideration prior to the finalization of the land use schedules. Again, we note that no specific details or policies have been provided with regards to land use permissions 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.

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 Portage Landowners Conceptual Master Plan. We also note that that we have been working with staff to ensure that servicing is available to support the proposal and are looking for opportunities to upgrade a portion of Portage with the current works underway. We do not anticipate any servicing capacity or traffic issues with respect to the Conceptual Master Plan.

As always, 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  
Founding Principal



**Allyssa Hrynyk**, BES, MUDS, MCIP, RPP, AICP  
Associate

cc VMC Project Team: Haiqing.xu@vaughan.ca, christina.bruce@vaughan.ca,  
Gaston.Soucy@vaughan.ca, Alannah.slattery@vaughan.ca, Andrew.haagsma@vaughan.ca  
Portage Conversion Landowners Group

Attachment: *Letter to VMC Project Team, September 29, 2024*

September 29, 2023

MGP File: 19-2836

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

via email: [Andrew.Haagsma@vaughan.ca](mailto:Andrew.Haagsma@vaughan.ca) & [gaston.soucy@vaughan.ca](mailto: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.

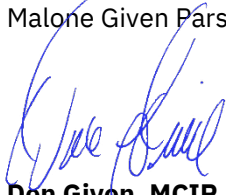
Furthermore, we would argue that the amount of land identified for a potential high school is a very suburban sized model and proposed in a location that would not provide future high school students sufficient access to transit. A location closer to Jane Street or Highway 7 would be more appropriate 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.

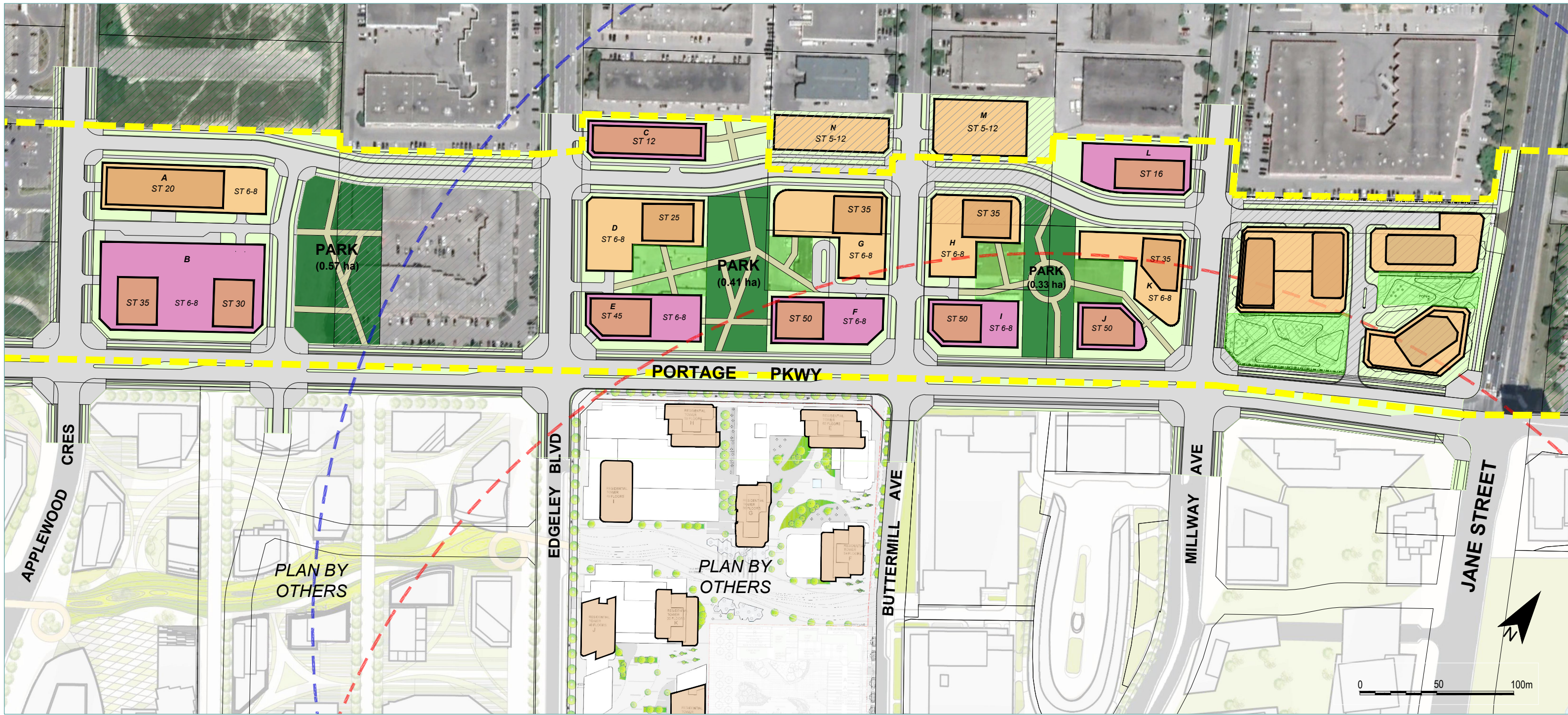
Yours very truly,  
Malone Given Parsons Ltd.



**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*

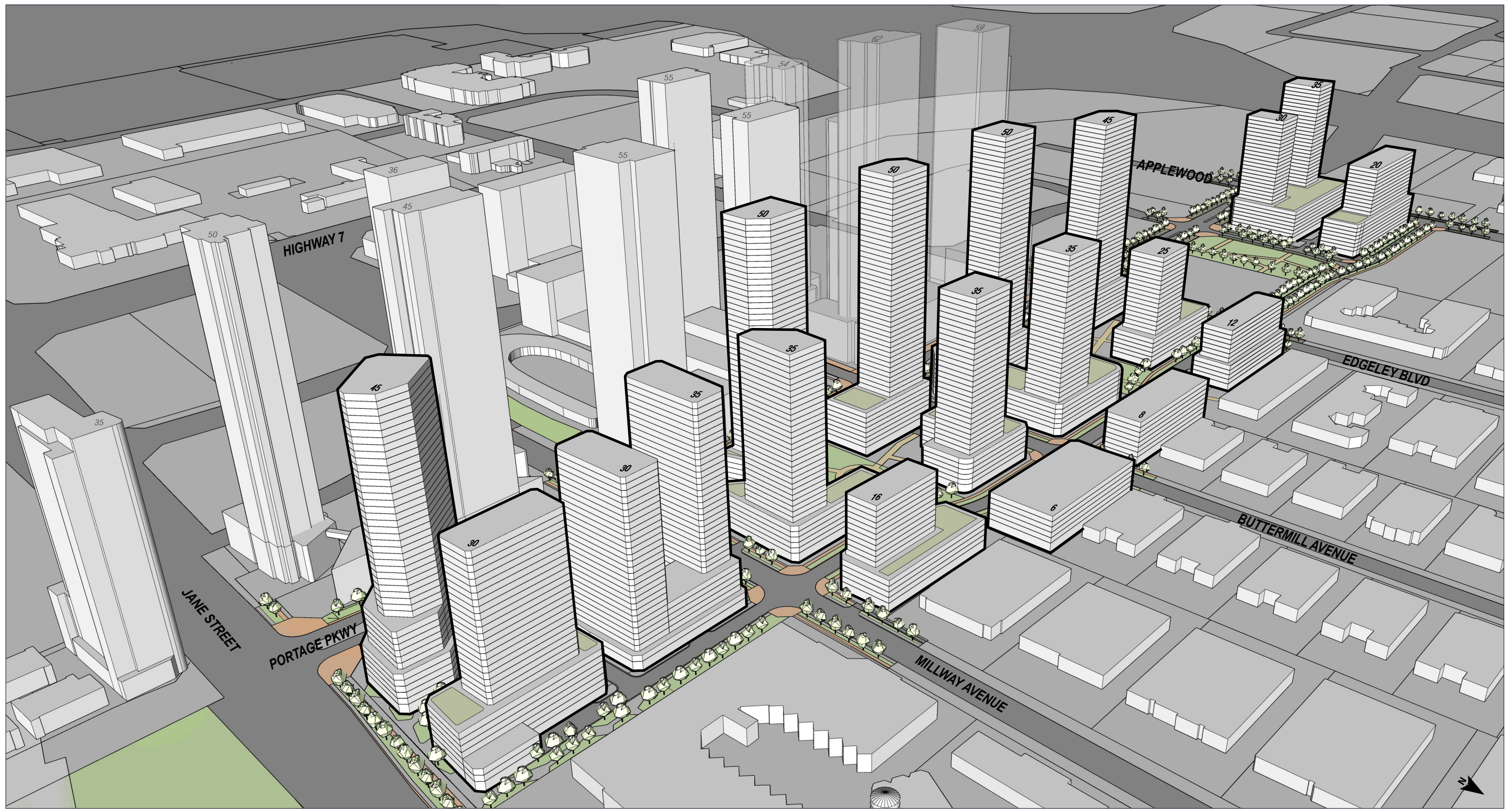


**CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN**  
 Portage Conversion Landowners Group

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

**MGP** Malone  
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**CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN**  
Portage Conversion Landowners Group  
City of Vaughan

View 4

**DRAFT**  
FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY!

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

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