

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

Item 8, Report No. 27 of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on September 24, 2024.

8. VMC SECONDARY PLAN UPDATE – HEIGHTS AND DENSITIES (TRANSMITTAL REPORT)

The Committee of the Whole recommends:

- 1) That the recommendations contained in the report forwarded from the VMC Sub-Committee meeting of June 26, 2024, be approved; and**
- 2) That Communication C3. from Irene Ford, dated September 9, 2024, be received.**

Recommendations

1. That staff be directed to proceed with making the required changes to the VMC Secondary Plan to set parameters for minimum heights and densities without prescribed maximums;
2. That the presentation by Christina Bruce, Director, Policy Planning & Special Programs, and C1., presentation material, titled “*VMC Secondary Plan Update: Heights and Densities*”, was received; and
3. That the following Communications were received:
 - C2. Grant Uyeyama, Principal Planner, KLM Planning Partners Inc., Jardin Drive, Concord, dated May 23, 2024;
 - C3. Glen Gambell, Owner, Willpower Leasing Inc., Doughton Road, Concord, dated May 29, 2024;
 - C4. Lauren Capilongo, Malone Given Parsons, Renfrew Drive, Markham, dated June 24, 2024;
 - C5. Naomi Mares, Aird & Berlis LLP, Brookfield Place, Toronto, dated June 25, 2024; and
 - C6. Don Given, Founding Principal, and Allyssa Hrynnyk, Associate, Malone Given Parsons, Renfrew Drive, Markham, dated June 25, 2024.

Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, September 10, 2024

WARD: 4

TITLE: VMC SECONDARY PLAN UPDATE – HEIGHTS AND DENSITIES
(TRANSMITTAL REPORT)

FROM:

VMC Sub-Committee

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To forward recommendations from the VMC Sub-Committee meeting of June 26, 2024, (Item 1, Report No. 4) with respect to the subject matter, for consideration by Committee of the Whole.

Report Highlights

- This is a transmittal report from the City Clerk, on behalf of the VMC Sub-Committee, forwarding recommendations for consideration by Committee of the Whole.

Recommendations

1. That staff be directed to proceed with making the required changes to the VMC Secondary Plan to set parameters for minimum heights and densities without prescribed maximums;
2. That the presentation by Christina Bruce, Director, Policy Planning & Special Programs, and C1., presentation material, titled “*VMC Secondary Plan Update: Heights and Densities*”, was received; and
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Background

The VMC Secondary Plan (VMCSP) is currently within Phase IV of the project, which involves the development of a draft updated Secondary Plan for the VMC, in consultation with landowners, stakeholders, and the public. Updated and new Secondary Plan policies will be developed to align the Plan with the land use schedules developed through Phase III, and refined through Phase IV, to address provincial and regional policy updates while responding to the area's intensive growth. In Q1 of 2024, additional scope was added to Phase IV, resulting from direction provided by VMC Sub-committee.

At the February 28, 2024, VMC Sub-committee meeting, Mayor Del Duca brought forward a motion as a New Business item, relating to the merits of permitting unlimited building heights and densities within the VMC. The motion directed staff to:

1. evaluate the merits of permitting unlimited building heights and densities through the VMC Secondary Plan Update;
2. explore potential community benefits, such as affordable housing, if permitting unlimited building height and density limits is a viable option; and
3. report back to the VMC Sub-committee at its meeting on April 24, 2024.

Following direction from the February 28, 2024, VMC Sub-committee meeting, staff undertook research and consultation on unlimited heights and densities (UHD) regimes to understand the merits of implementing a UHD regime within the VMC. Policy Planning & Special Programs (PPSP) staff met with municipalities that have implemented, or are exploring implementing, a UHD regime, which included the cities of Brampton, Mississauga, Toronto and Kitchener.

As directed by the VMC Sub-committee, these findings were [presented to the VMC Sub-committee on April 24, 2024](#). The presentation summarized the benefits and challenges other municipalities have experienced while implementing UHD regimes. This presentation also included a high-level summary of key principles that should be considered should a UHD regime be implemented within the VMC. Within this

presentation, PPSP staff advised that a recommendation on UHD regimes would be brought forward to the May VMC Sub-committee meeting.

Following the April VMC Sub-committee meeting, PPSP staff, in consultation with the consultant team, undertook further analysis to understand how a UHD regime could impact the goals and vision of the VMCSP. Through this analysis, multiple considerations were identified which illustrate how UHD regimes relate to the key priorities of the VMCSP Update. Staff, in coordination with the Director of Policy Planning & Special Programs, prepared a presentation for the VMC Sub-committee to highlight key considerations associated with UHD regimes. As the May VMC Sub-committee meeting was cancelled, this presentation was rescheduled to June 26, 2024.

Previous Reports/Authority

The following are links to previous reports regarding the VMC Secondary Plan update:

1. [VMC Studies Update, November 10, 2020, VMC Sub-committee](#)
2. [VMC Secondary Plan Update – Phase I, March 2, 2021, VMC Sub-committee](#)
3. [VMC Secondary Plan Update – Phase II Approach, June 8, 2021, VMC Sub-committee](#)
4. [VMC Secondary Plan Update: Phase 2 - Land Use Options, June 21, 2022, VMC Sub-committee](#)
5. [VMC Studies Update – April 2023, April 11, 2023, VMC Sub-committee](#)
6. [VMC Secondary Plan Update: Phase IV – Recommendations, October 4, 2023, VMC Sub-committee](#)

Analysis and Options

At its meeting on June 26, 2024, the VMC Sub-Committee considered a presentation by the Director of Policy Planning & Special Programs on the VMC Secondary Plan Update – Heights and Densities [Attachment 1]. This presentation analyzed how a UHD regime may impact the ability to achieve the vision and key principles of the VMC Secondary Plan based on findings from other municipalities that have implemented or are in the process of implementing unlimited heights and densities, in addition to key principles that have been used to guide their programs. At this meeting, the Director of Policy Planning & Special Programs, and the Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management, indicated their support of pursuing a UHD regime within the VMC.

Following the presentation, the VMC Sub-committee recommended that Council direct staff to proceed with making the required changes to the VMC Secondary Plan to set parameters for minimum heights and densities without prescribed maximums.

Financial Impact

There are no anticipated financial requirements for new funding associated with this report.

Operational Impact

There are no anticipated operational requirements associated with this report.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Ongoing collaboration with regional stakeholders continues, which is an important factor in realizing the success of the VMC. Through Phase IV, additional consultation will be undertaken with internal and external TAC, including, but not limited to, York Region, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, York Region District School Board, York Catholic District School Board, Ministry of Transportation, Infrastructure Ontario, York Region Transit and Toronto Transit Commission. The TAC will continue to be engaged as part of the subsequent phases of this project, and their feedback will be instrumental in advancing the VM CSP Update.

Conclusion

The VMC is continuing to transform into a vibrant, modern urban centre, encompassing all amenities required for a healthy urban lifestyle, complete with residential and office development. As the intensity of residential development continues to increase, it is imperative that this residential density be supported by hard and soft infrastructure.

The removal of height and density caps within VMC presents both opportunities and challenges. While additional height and density may result in some benefits such as increased housing stock, the ability to continue to achieve a complete and balanced community within the VMC will require strong policy that supports a unique, high-density residential, office and mixed-use downtown, structured around a transit-oriented, fine-grain street network for all modes of transportation – including walking, driving and cycling – and plans for development linked by a network of high-quality parks, public squares, and open spaces. If endorsed, Phase IV will develop the policies required to achieve this vision.

For more information, please contact: Christina Bruce, Director, Policy Planning & Special Programs, extension 8231.

Attachment

1. VMC Secondary Plan Update – Heights and Densities.

Prepared by

John Britto, Legislative Specialist, Office of the City Clerk, extension 8637.

In consultation with

Gaston Soucy, Senior Manager, Planning and Urban Design-VMC, Policy Planning & Special Programs, extension 8266.

VMC Secondary Plan Update: Heights and Densities

Presentation to VMC Sub-committee

June 26, 2024

February 2024 Sub-committee Motion

Updated Motion

Whereas Vaughan has been and will continue to be one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada projected to add a quarter of a million people to its population by 2051;

Whereas Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) is expected to contribute nearly half of the growth where the tallest and most dense buildings are intended to be directed;

Whereas the VMC is the only community outside the City of Toronto that has a TTC Subway connection, which makes it the most desirable location to promote a Transit-oriented Community;

Whereas the VMC is situated adjacent to flight paths of Pearson International Airport that are already protected by federal aviation regulations from encroachment from new development, as well as construction cranes;

Whereas City of Vaughan wants to further streamline the development approval process and minimize disputes over building heights and densities; and

Whereas neighbouring municipalities in the GTA have already had policies in place to permitting unlimited building heights and densities, especially in Urban Growth Centres.

Therefore, be it resolved, staff be directed to

- Evaluate the merits of permitting unlimited building heights and densities through the VMC Secondary Plan Update;
- Explore potential community benefits, such as affordable housing, if permitting unlimited building height and density limits is a viable option; and,
- Report back to the Sub-committee at its meeting on April 24, 2024.

April 24, 2024

Sub-Committee Meeting

UHD Preliminary Findings

Staff have been investigating and have had conversations with other GTA Municipalities that have enacted, or are currently exploring implementing, Unlimited Heights and Densities:

- **Brampton**
- **Mississauga**
- **Kitchener**
- **Toronto**



UHD Preliminary Findings

Brampton

- The UHD has only been in place since November 2023, and is now being considered for amendment
- No noticeable increase in development applications since implementation.

Mississauga

- Mississauga staff have found that the program has been successful in attracting/incentivizing residential development
- Need solutions for securing a balance of uses and achieving complete community, majority of development is residential

Kitchener

- Approved program moves towards an approach focused on built form opposed to maximum heights and densities for MTSA areas
- Was approved by Council in March 2024, preliminary to understand the outcomes of the program

Toronto

- The UHD program is still fairly new, only being in place since 2018
- Need solutions for acquiring a variety of built-form





Vision and Principles

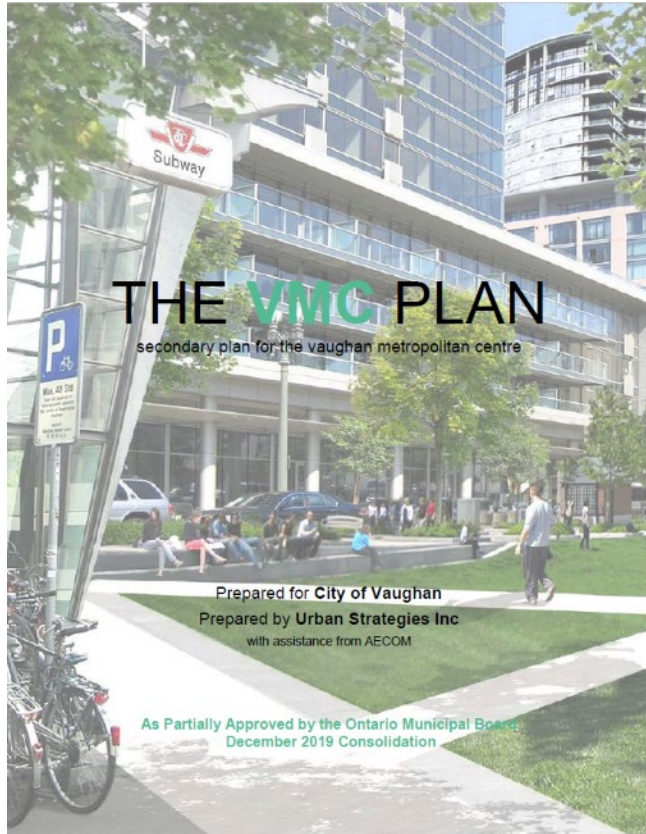


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Vision and Principles



“The City of Vaughan plans to create a downtown – an intense, dynamic community that in time will become the heart of the city, economically, culturally and physically.”

To date, the VMCSPP Update has aimed to provide a **nuanced recalibration** of the plan as originally proposed with many elements of the original vision remaining strong and relevant. The Update has provided an opportunity to **rebalance** the plan to **deliver a complete and balanced community**.

Key Priorities of the VMC Secondary Plan Update

Create a Central Business District (CBD), a Downtown and a complete and balanced community by:

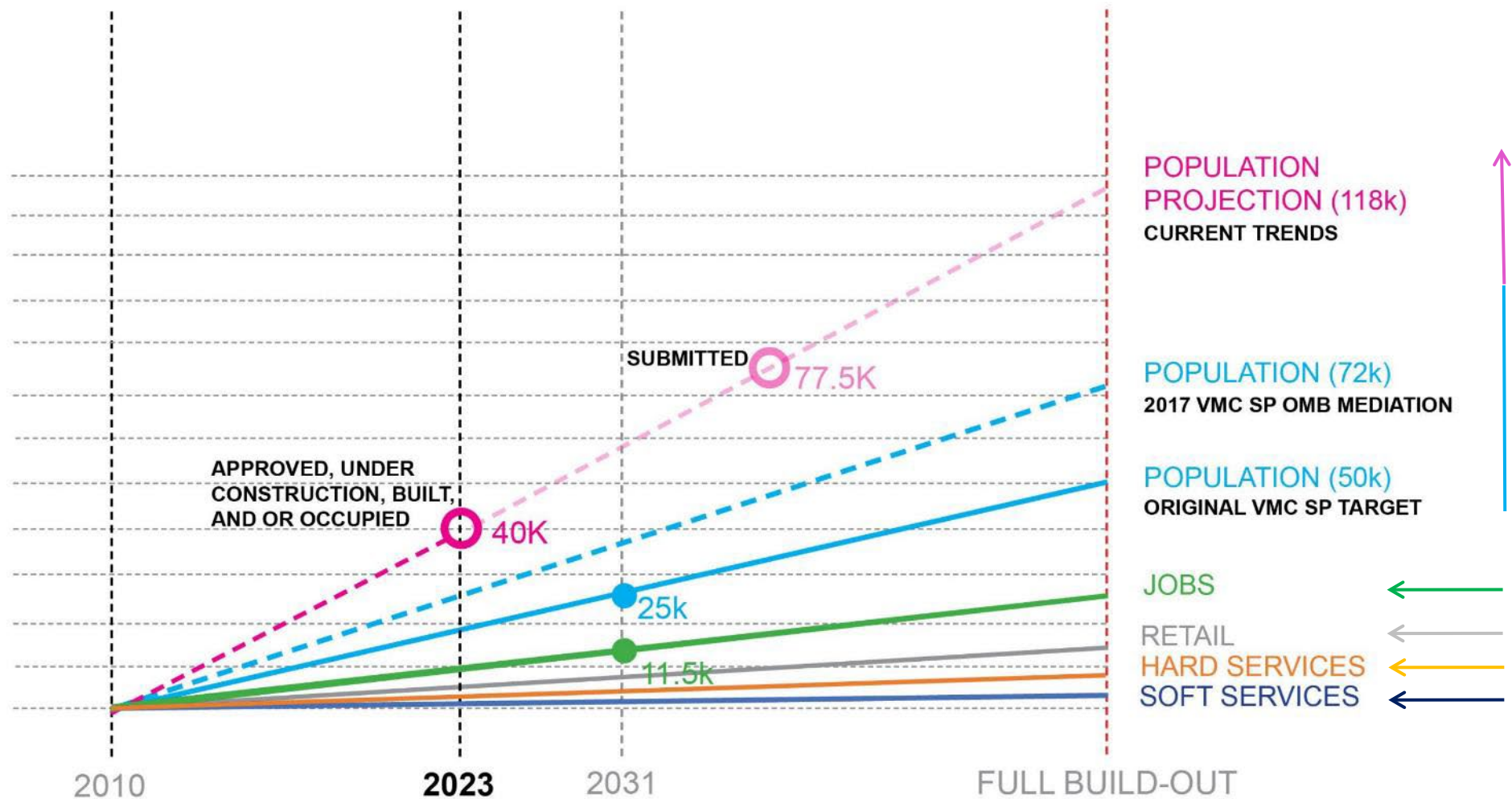
- Managing the intensity of growth
- Reestablishing a balance of uses
- Achieving Built Form Variety, Including Mid-Rise Built Form
- Serving the Population with Public Amenities
- Creating an efficient multi-modal transportation network
- Achieving excellence in the public realm
- Realizing the Housing Variety Necessary for an Inclusive Community
- Establishing Transitions at the VMC's Boundaries





Context

Growth Trends in the VMC



Note: Illustrations for representational purposes only

Final Concept Maximum Density (DRAFT)

Maximum Densities

- over 9.0 FSI
- up to 9.0 FSI
- up to 7.5 FSI
- up to 6.0 FSI
- up to 5.0 FSI
- up to 4.5 FSI
- up to 3.0 FSI

Parks and Open Spaces

- Public Park
- Environmental Open Space
- Mews
- S₁ School

- VMC Boundary
- Potential Expansion Area Boundaries
- Recent / Approved Development
- Subway / Station Entrance
- BRT / Station
- Future BRT / Station
- Stormwater Management Facility



DRAFT as presented in the February 28, 2024, VMC Sub-committee



Key Considerations

1

More Development and More Housing

- **Housing crisis:** Ontario and the GTA face a housing affordability crisis.
- **Removal of height/density caps:** Could create more housing in the VMC.
- **Limited affordability impact:** New supply alone in the VMC may not have an impact on affordability.
- **Maintain housing diversity** – Need solutions for a variety of housing products.



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2

Achieving the Vision for the VMC

- **Complete and Balanced Community:** The heart of the city, economically, culturally and physically
- **Quality and quantity:** Continue to achieve the vision for the VMC, focusing on creating a high-quality community.
- **A Means to Achieve Other City Building Objectives:** Pairing the removal of height and density caps with requirements for the provision of affordable housing and non-residential uses to improve viability.

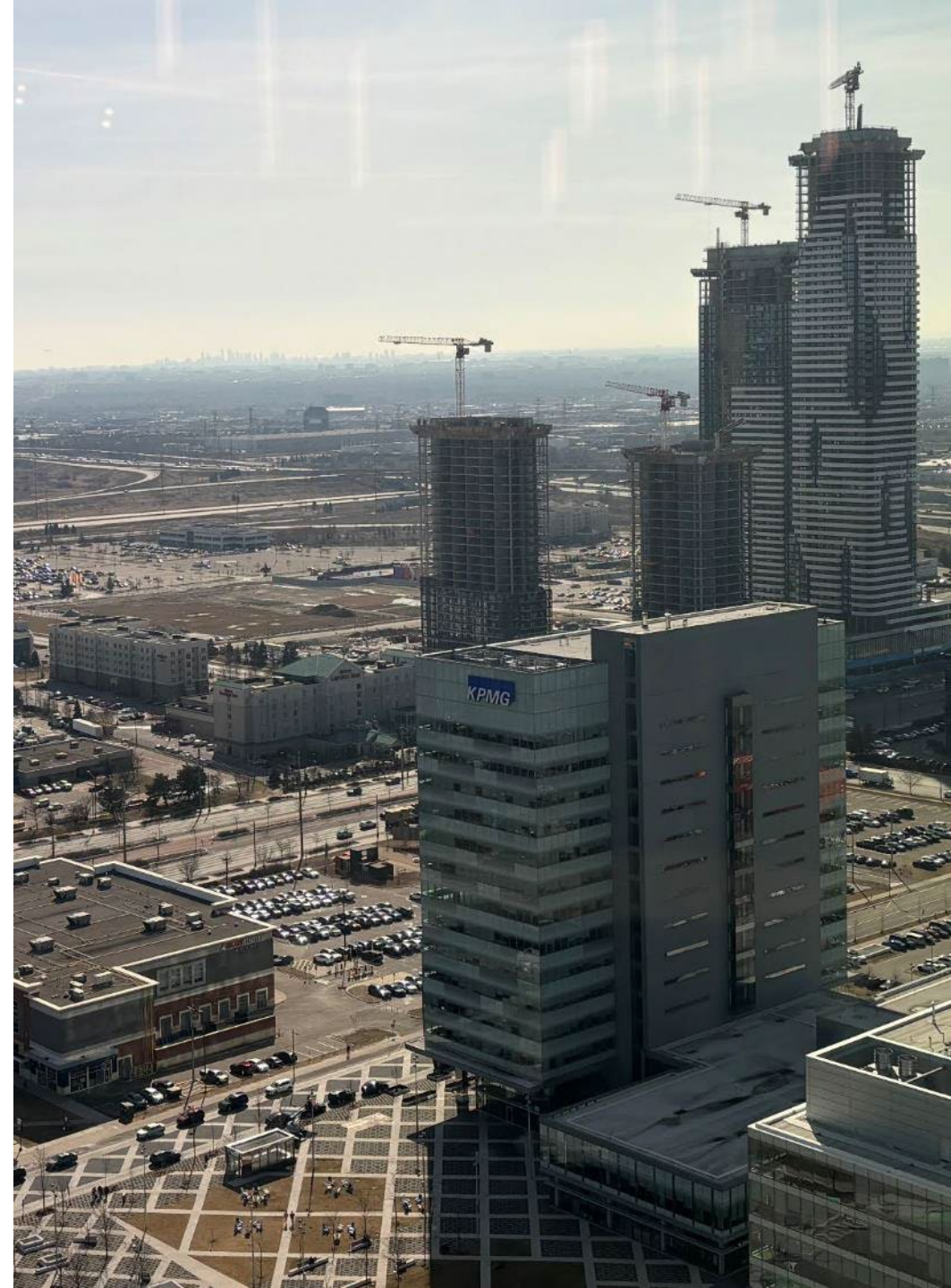


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3

Market Absorption and the Substitution Effect

- **No net new supply:** The removal of height and density caps in the VMC may not increase overall housing supply compared to the current scenario at the Vaughan scale.
- **Extended buildout timeline:** Large buildings may absorb market demand, delaying timely community buildout.
- Need to ensure timely delivery of the units.



4

Increased Land Speculation and Land Prices

- **Land speculation risk:** The removal of height and density caps could encourage land speculation without guaranteeing development.
- Ensuring what is approved is built.
- **Increased land values:** If market dictates buildings need to be taller, need to continue to strive for diversity in built form.



5

Balancing Residential with other Uses

Increased residential development permissions need to be balanced with:

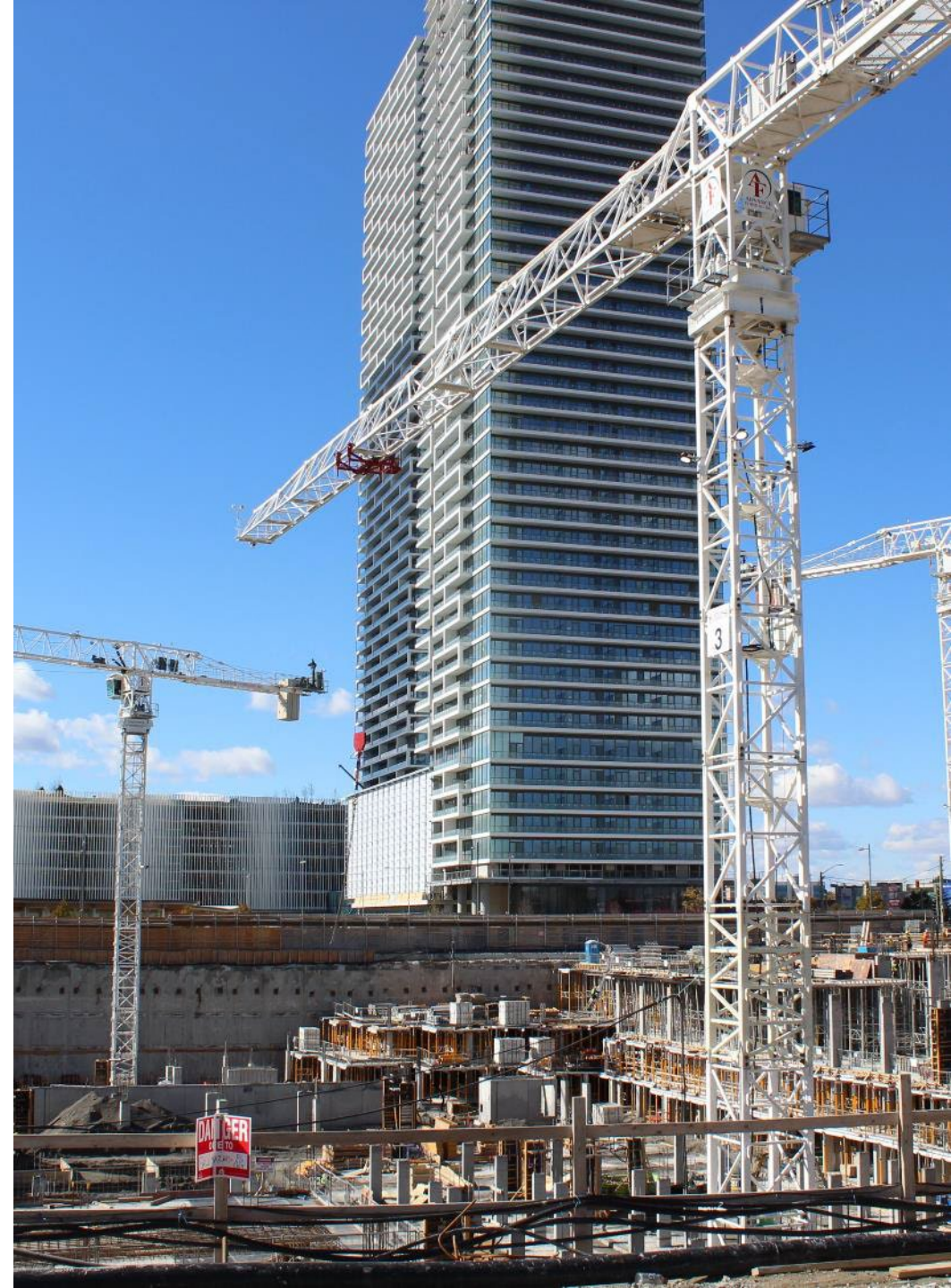
- Equal or suitable increase in jobs
- Infrastructure investment that protect against transportation challenges and encourages active transportation and commuting.
- Balanced growth in retail, services and social infrastructure provisions.

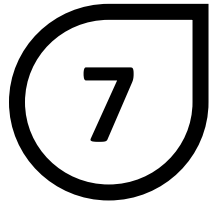


6

Uncertainty for Infrastructure Planning

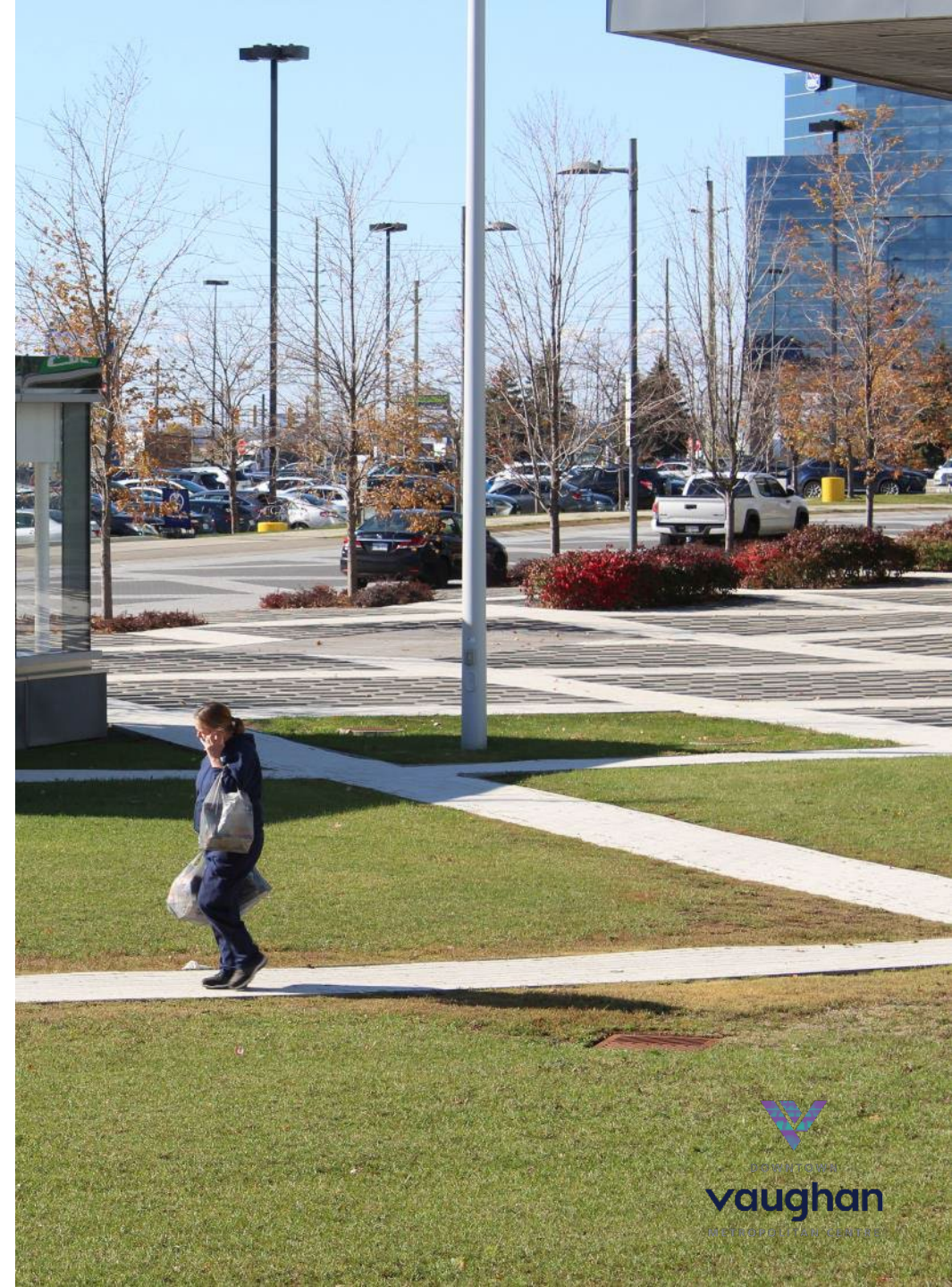
- **Unpredictable planning:** The removal of height and density caps can make infrastructure planning difficult.
- **Transportation and Servicing Thresholds:** Policies could set development limits, requiring transportation and infrastructure upgrades before further growth.





Growing the Parks System to Match Population Growth

- **Recent legislative changes:** City has weakened ability to provide public parkland in intensifying areas.
- **Full credit for POPS and strata parks:** Further review of opportunities to create a suitable parks system to support the projected population.
- **Opportunity for Surrounding Areas:** Access to public parks is an essential component of a complete community and need to continue to ensure usable and adequate parkland



8

Maintaining Built Form Variety

- **Maintaining Character:** Ensuring diverse built forms which contribute to distinct neighborhood character.
- **Maintaining Transitions:** Ensure transitioning of building heights across VMC
- **Protection of the public realm:** Awareness of shadows, sky views, wind and micro-climates.



Balancing density with **best city building practices**, sustainability and human-scale principles is crucial for creating **livable, resilient** cities.

Removing height and density caps in the VMC presents **opportunities** if continuing to focus on the ability to achieve a **balanced community** and recognizing equal investment in infrastructure and services.

Strong policy would be introduced to mitigate potentially **adverse circumstances** such as microclimatic conditions, balanced uses, housing mix, congestion and affordability issues.

Removing height and density caps could result in changes to the character of the downtown as originally envisioned in the VMC Secondary Plan, which would be supported by a different planning approach **to deliver a successful, complete and balanced community.**

Next Steps:

Staff are seeking direction from VMC Sub-committee on:

- Maintaining height and density caps within the VMC
or
- Proceeding with making the required changes to the VMC Secondary Plan to set parameters for minimum heights and densities without prescribed maximums

Once direction has been received, staff will work with the consultant team to identify next steps for the project.



Thank you!



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