

VMC Secondary Plan Update: Heights and Densities

Presentation to VMC Sub-committee

June 26, 2024



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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





SUBWAY

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Vision and Principles

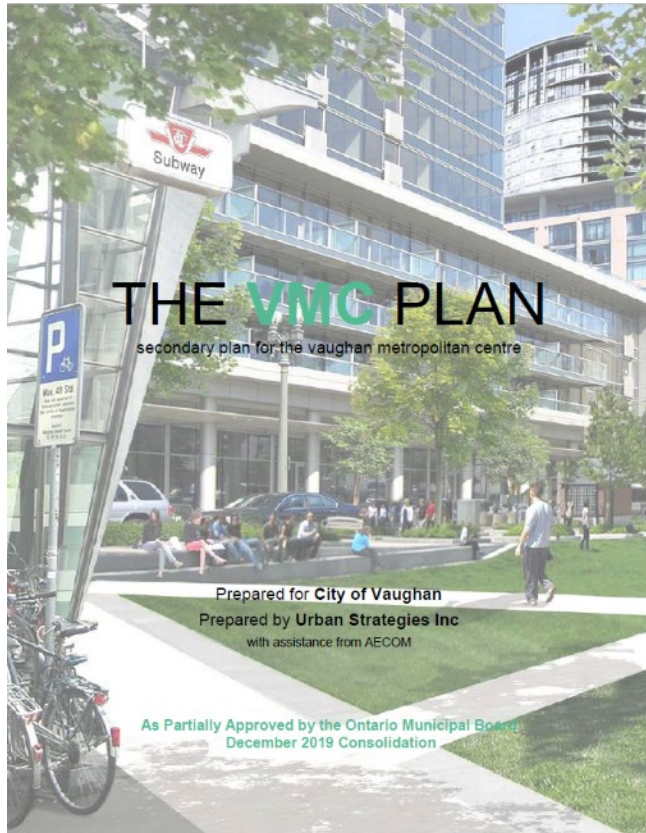


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Vision and Principles



“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:

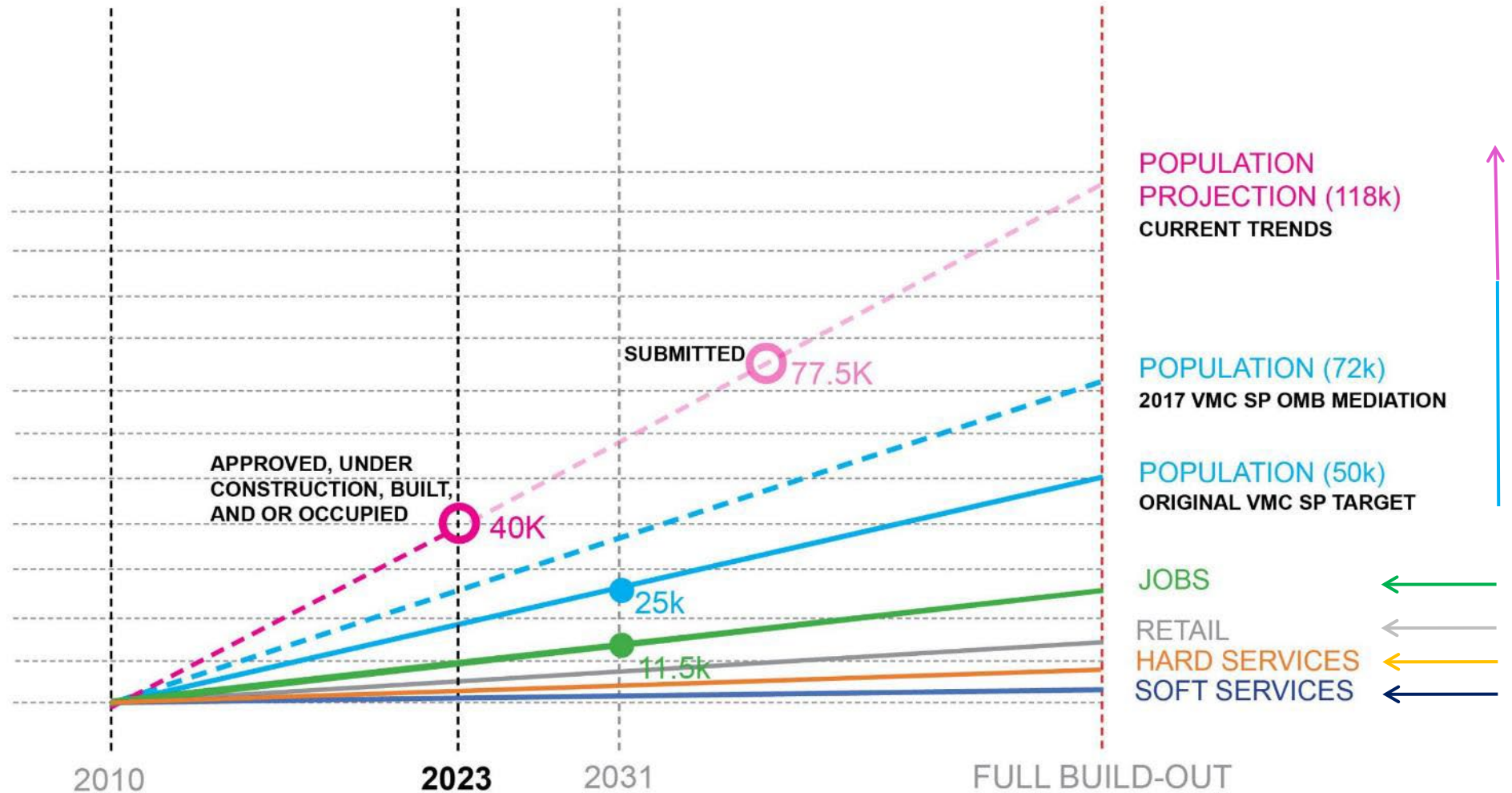
- Managing the intensity of growth
- Reestablishing a balance of uses
- Achieving Built Form Variety, Including Mid-Rise Built Form
- Serving the Population with Public Amenities
- Creating an efficient multi-modal transportation network
- Achieving excellence in the public realm
- Realizing the Housing 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.



2

Achieving the Vision for the VMC

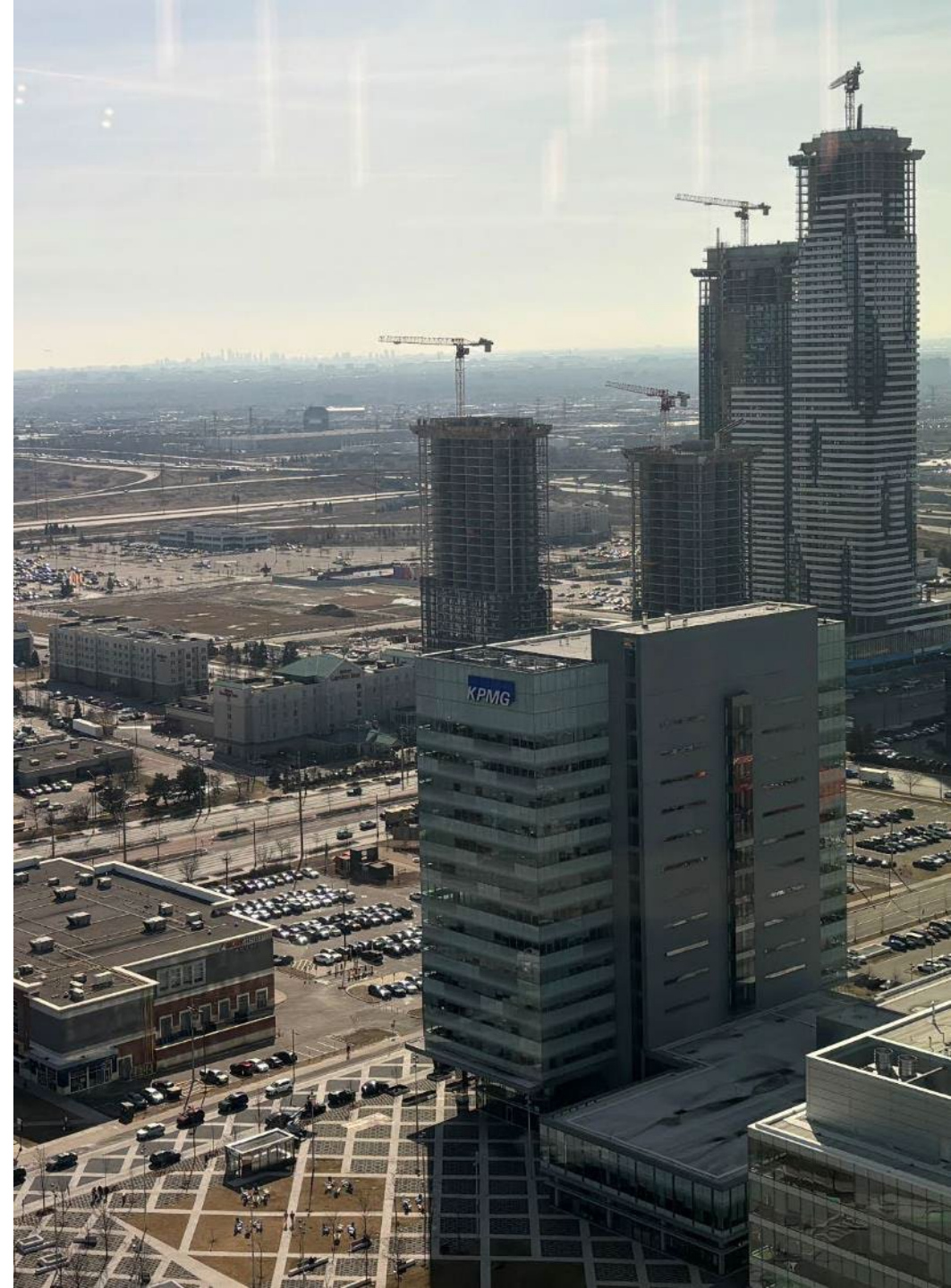
- **Complete and Balanced Community:** The heart of the city, economically, culturally and physically
- **Quality and quantity:** Continue to achieve the vision for the VMC, focusing on creating a high-quality community.
- **A Means to Achieve Other City Building Objectives:** Pairing the removal of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



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:

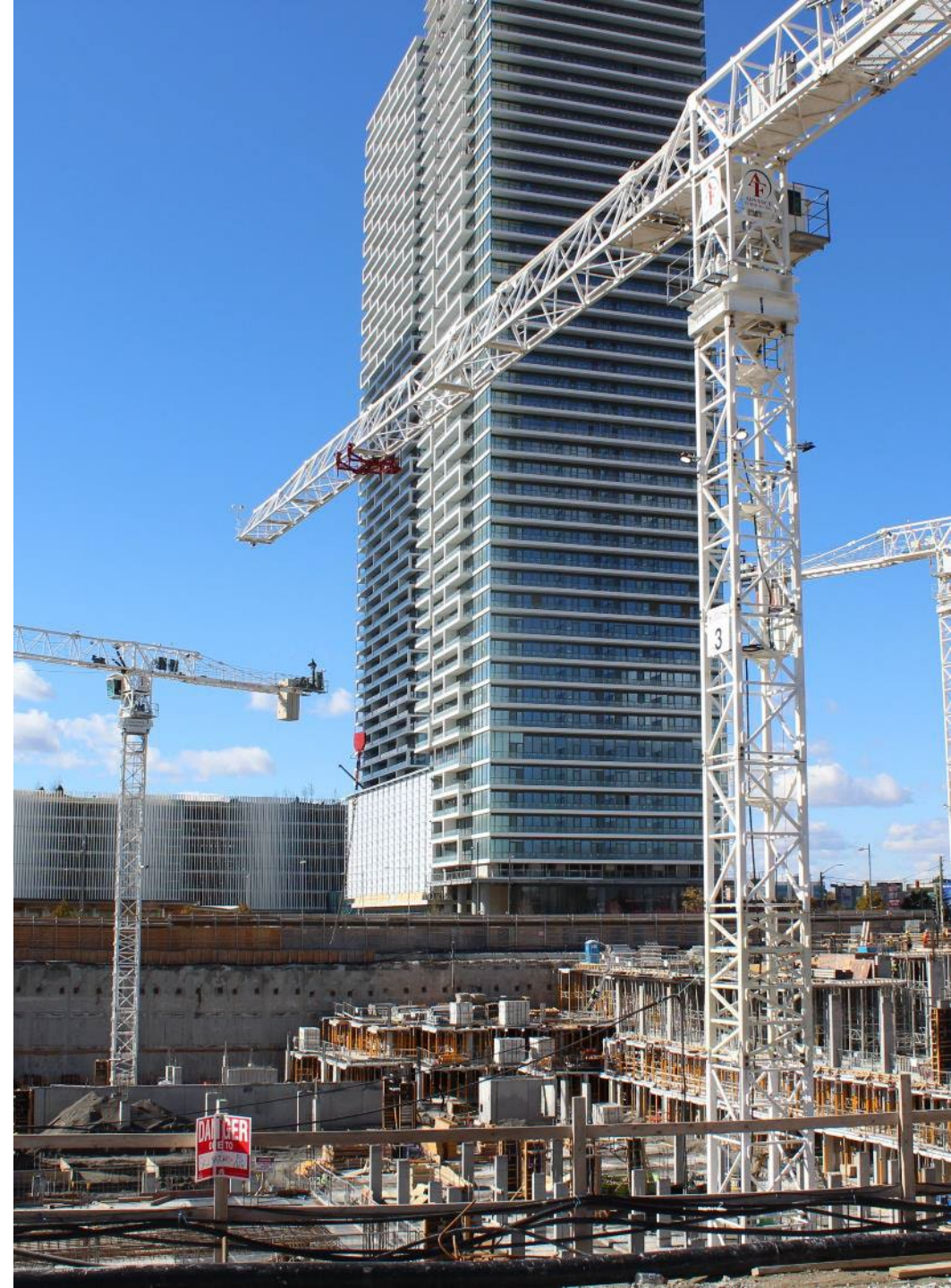
- Equal or suitable increase in jobs
- Infrastructure investment that protect against transportation challenges and encourages active transportation and commuting.
- Balanced growth in retail, services and social infrastructure provisions.



6

Uncertainty for Infrastructure Planning

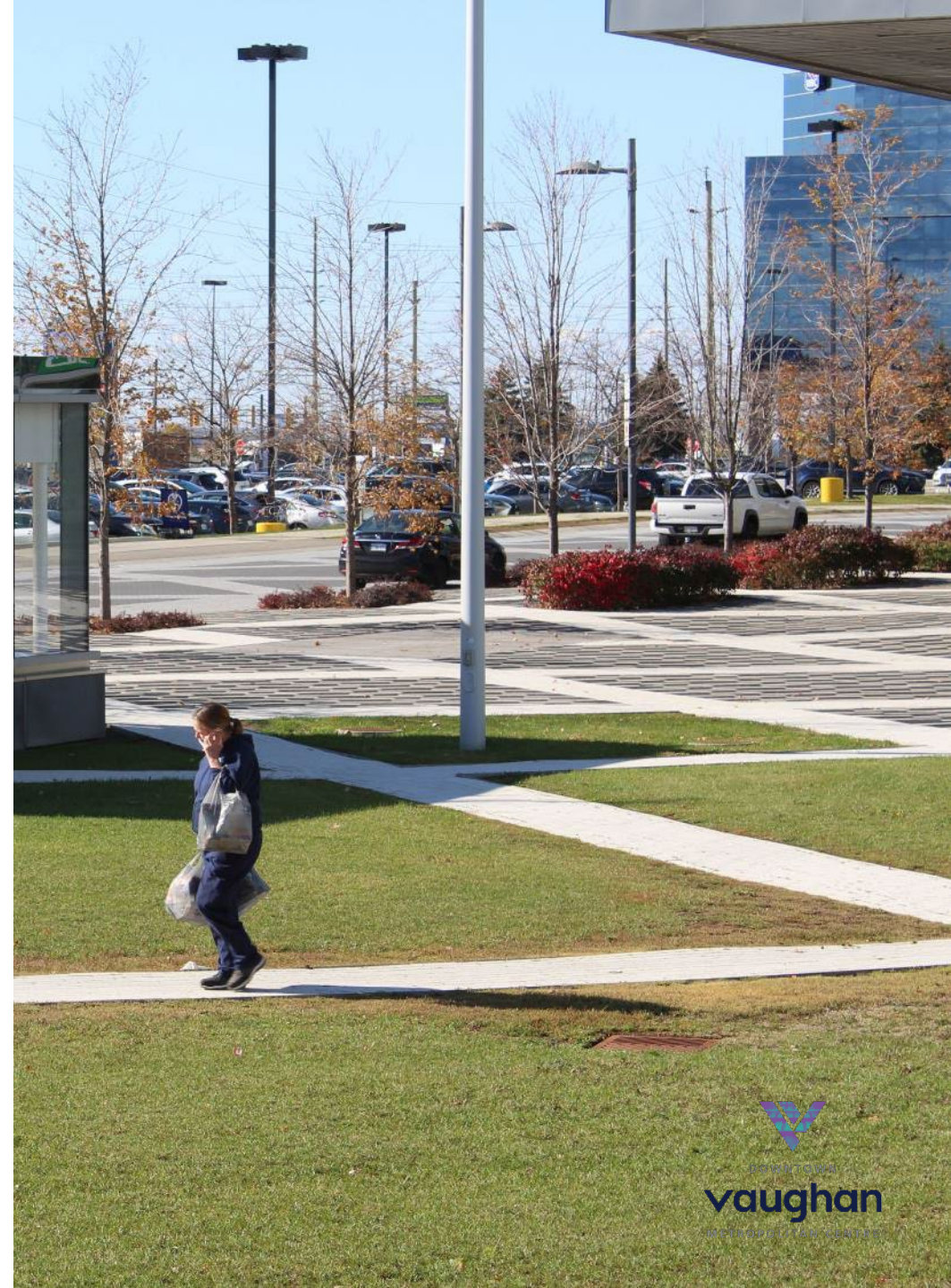
- **Unpredictable planning:** The removal of height and density caps can make infrastructure planning difficult.
- **Transportation and Servicing Thresholds:** Policies could set development limits, requiring transportation and infrastructure upgrades before further growth.



7

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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