

**C87.**  
**Communication**  
**CW(PM) – June 4, 2025**  
**Item No. 10**

June 2, 2025

City of Vaughan  
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**Attention: Todd Coles, City Clerk, Mayor & Members of the Committee of the Whole**

**RE: Committee of the Whole (Public Meeting) – June 4, 2025, 6:00PM**  
**Agenda item #10: Draft New Vaughan Official Plan 2025 (Inclusive of the Draft New Weston 7 Secondary Plan and the Draft New Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Secondary Plan)**

Urban Strategies Inc., are the land use planners for RioCan REIT (“**RioCan**”) with respect to their lands at 7501-7621 Weston Road, also known as the Colossus Centre, a 25-hectare site south and east of Highway 7 and Weston Road (the “**Colossus Centre Site**”). The Colossus Centre Site is currently the subject of active Official Plan amendment applications (OP.22.002 and OP.22.005) which were submitted March 1, 2022 and deemed complete on July 23, 2022 (the “**Colossus OPA Applications**”).

We have been closely following Vaughan’s Official Plan review process, in particular as it relates to our client’s site. We have previously provided comments on the January 2025 draft of the Vaughan Official Plan (the “**Official Plan**”) and Weston 7 Secondary Plan (the “**Secondary Plan**”) in March 2025. With the May 2025 draft documents, we continue to have concerns with a number of the policies proposed, in both the Official Plan and Secondary Plan. The enclosed letter provides a high-level overview of policies in both the proposed Secondary Plan and the Official Plan with which we have concerns, along with our suggested changes.

### **Land Use, Retail, and Active Frontages**

The Official Plan and the Secondary Plan both provide commentary on land use, retail provision rates, and active frontages. For ease of discussion, our comments related to land use, retail replacement, and active frontages across both documents have been summarized in this section.

**OP Policy 3.2.2.1.b** requires that ground floor uses in mixed-use areas predominately consist of retail or other active uses. The Secondary Plan takes the concept of non-residential ground floor uses further in **SP Policy 5.3.3. c)** which requires that a minimum of 75% of the ground floor gross floor area be occupied by non-residential uses. While active uses at grade are generally desirable, it may not always be possible to achieve 75% non-residential ground floor gross floor area. We would suggest the Secondary Plan include the type of relief that the Official Plan includes in **OP Policy 4.2.4.7**, to allow for a site-specific reduction for ground floor retail requirements through a Commercial Impact Assessment.

Relatedly, we encourage the City to reconsider the restriction on standalone residential buildings in mixed use areas (**SP Policy 5.3.3. b)**. **OP Policy 3.2.2.5** also appears to require at least two different land uses in developments within the high-rise mixed use designation. In large sites such as the Colossus Centre Site, a range of building forms and uses can be accommodated to create true, mixed use urban neighborhoods. Stand-alone residential buildings, such as those that we see in mature urban centres like Yonge-Eglinton or Downtown Toronto, can be an appropriate component of a complete community. We suggest the Secondary Plan policy be amended to allow for the appropriate site-specific policy direction for Weston 7 to allow for single-use buildings where appropriate.

We also continue to have concerns with the minimum GFA requirements for non-residential uses in Mixed Use I and Mixed Use II areas. **SP Policy 5.2.3 b)** requires that all development applications in the Mixed Use I designation have minimum 15% non-residential GFA, and **SP Policy 5.3.3. b)** requires that all development applications in Mixed Use II areas include minimum 20% non-residential gross floor area. Rather than a blanket approach to non residential use requirements which could significantly impact the viability of redevelopment, we encourage the City to encourage rather than require non residential uses. Flexibility is necessary in the policy framework to respond to market conditions while maintaining the important objective of encouraging a mix of uses in Weston 7.

## **Weston 7 Secondary Plan**

### **Growth Threshold, Hold Provisions, and Infrastructure Obligations**

**Policy 2.2 g)** introduces a new policy intended to require quadrant-based study of the transportation network and establishes that the Major and Minor Collector Roads “will be secured by the City prior to development proceeding” in that quadrant. This policy requires more clarity. As currently written, it may have the effect of preventing *any* development in the quadrant before all Major and Minor collector roads are in place, regardless of planned development phasing, or accommodating existing or interim uses while redevelopment unfolds over time. A more incremental approach should be contemplated by the Secondary Plan.

### **Land Use Designations: Priority Consideration Overlay**

We note and appreciate that the previously proposed Merit Based allocation approach has been removed from the Secondary Plan draft. The Plan now includes a Priority Consideration Overlay for applications that have been deemed complete, including the RioCan application on the Colossus Site. The intention of this overlay is to assign priority to these applications for development review and consideration for adoption in advance of any other applications received within WESTON 7, which may also include priority for the assignment of municipal service infrastructure systems capacity and transportation system capacity.

Regardless of their priority consideration, the RioCan Colossus site and others in this overlay are still subject to a holding provision, including the requirement for removal in 8.2.3 b) ii that states “The applicant/owner has, to the satisfaction of the City and, where appropriate, the Region, entered into all agreements... to ensure the provision of the identified and required elements and improvements *identified in this Plan*, including infrastructure systems improvements (water, wastewater, stormwater and transportation systems)...”.

This policy would benefit from additional clarity to ensure that the hold pertains to identified and required elements necessary to support the *proposed development in particular*, not all of the improvements identified in the Plan. For example, the proposed VMC Secondary Plan in section 4.2.2 includes language to this effect, stating that any infrastructure improvements “required to support any development application (emphasis added) shall be identified, funded, planned and implemented” prior to the removal of a holding symbol, as applicable. In addition, where capacity may already exist to support the proposed development, infrastructure improvements are not applicable prior to development. There should also be consideration for Zoning By-law Amendments in Priority Consideration areas to be permitted without a holding provision if it can be demonstrated that the development is relying on existing unutilized capacity within the transportation and servicing systems.

Finally, Policy **8.2.7 a)** requires that applicants and/or owners within the Secondary Plan Area “shall enter into a Weston 7-wide Landowners Group Agreement to implement the financial requirements for the growth related elements of this Plan”. However, this is not aligned with the Priority Consideration Overlay policies in 5.6, that contemplates priority for the assignment of servicing and transportation capacity to Priority Consideration Areas. We recommend changing the language in Policy 8.2.7 a) to be consistent with 8.2.3 b) ii., which states that the applicant/landowner will enter into a landowner’s group agreement

“where appropriate”, to reflect instances where the proposed development may leverage existing servicing capacity.

## **Built Form Policies**

We continue to be of the opinion that the prescriptive maximum building heights and FSIs found in Section 4.2 of the Secondary Plan represent an inappropriate height and density strategy for the Weston 7 Secondary Plan Area. As described in our comments on Secondary Plan Draft 4, we encourage Staff to consider less reliance on prescriptive height standards. However, should the City continue to implement height and density maximums per Schedule 2, the built form policies in Section 4.2 should be updated to more closely align with the heights and densities in the Colossus OPA Applications. We maintain that RioCan’s proposed approach to heights establishes an appropriate height strategy, with building heights transitioning from generally taller buildings in the north precinct to high- and mid-rise buildings in the southerly precinct.

**Policy 4.2.1 a) i.** provides the definition of Floor Space Index (“FSI”) for the Secondary Plan. Per the definition, FSI is calculated based on the net developable area of the site. Gross FSI requirements are more appropriate given that they give credit for public conveyances such as new streets and parkland, whereas net FSI requirements penalize developments that reduce their own site area through conveyances, creating a disincentive to providing critical public goods. We recommend updating the FSI definition to base calculations on the gross developable area of the site instead.

Further, a number of sections, including Live-Work Units (**4.1.6**) and Short-Term Accommodations (**4.1.7**) continue to include a level of regulatory detail better suited for a zoning by-law. The effect of restrictive policies in this section, for example the requirement that live-work units be located only at grade despite ample precedents of live-work units being successfully located above grade, is to trigger unnecessary Official Plan Amendments.

We encourage the City to streamline the policies within the Weston 7 Secondary Plan and utilize other tools at the City’s disposal to establish other more fine-grained development standards or guidelines. We note that the May 2025 Official Plan in section 4.5.4.6 points to the use of Zoning By-laws to regulate the size, configuration, siting, sunlight exposure, landscaping, setbacks among other matters related to the development of Schools and Day Cares. We agree with the direction of the May 2025 Official Plan in this regard and encourage the City to utilize other planning tools such as Zoning By-laws to govern fine-grained details.

## **Park System and Public Realm**

The Secondary Plan parkland classifications have been updated to match the parkland classifications in the Official Plan. The proposed consistency will support the simplification of the park planning process, however, we have concerns with the parkland dedication criteria detailed in policy 6.2.2 f).

The proposed criteria requiring a minimum depth-to-width ratio (6.2.2 f) ii), a minimum amount of flat land (6.2.2 f) iii), minimum width (6.2.2 f) iv), a regular-shaped parcel (6.2.2 f) iv), and an uninterrupted street frontage on at least 50% of the park (6.2.2 f) v), will significantly limit the land accepted as parkland dedication, resulting in limited parkland to serve the residents within the Secondary Plan Area. Though the policy 6.2.2 g) offers some relief to 6.2.2 f), the relief is not sufficient relative to the criteria established in 6.2.2 f). Additionally, this level of detail would be more appropriately addressed through the zoning by-law or a parkland dedication by-law, rather than as policies within the Secondary Plan.

Additionally, as proposed by the City in Section 6, Schedule 3 includes conceptual locations for parks as well as other elements of the public realm network. The principle of the proposed Enhanced Urban Streetscapes as proposed by the City—focused areas where non-residential and other active uses play off each other to create a vibrant urban setting—is a sound one. However, it will be difficult to successfully create such an environment along major roadways such as Weston Rd and Highway 7. Therefore, we

would suggest that Schedule 3 be amended to remove Enhanced Urban Streetscapes from Weston Rd and Highway 7, encouraging these areas instead on the interior of the site along Famous Avenue, which is consistent with RioCan's approach in its proposed Colossus OPA Applications to activating Famous Avenue as a central spine in the quadrant.

#### **Schedule 4**

We are pleased to see that local roads, as described in **Policy 2.2 g**, are intended to be delivered at the time of development, and that local roads placement may vary from Schedule 4 provided they maintain the general principles of the local road network. While the local road network in Schedule 4 is similar to what has been proposed in the Colossus OPA Applications, we recommend further refinement to Schedule 4 to align with the road network proposed by the Colossus OPA Applications, to allow the Applications to advance as originally envisioned.

A new concept of Grade Separated Pedestrian Crossings have been added to Schedule 4, including three that conceptually abut the RioCan Colossus site. While we understand the objectives to create a well-connected and integrated pedestrian realm and active transportation network (**Principle 6, Principle 8**) grade-separated crossings require significant land on either side of the street which can impact development potential and disrupt the pedestrian experience of the streetscape at grade. We question the need for grade-separated crossings and suggest a focus on establishing a fined grained pattern of streets and blocks is a better way to achieve the desired vision for Weston 7 having a network of pedestrian oriented, well-connected streets.

#### **Implementation**

**Policy 8.1 h)** requires that applications be "consistent with" all relevant and Council adopted Manuals, Master Plans, Guidelines and Strategies. Consistency is not the appropriate test for non-statutory documents such as those listed above. We suggest that the W7SP be updated to direct that applications have "regard for" any relevant Manuals, Master Plans, Guidelines, and Strategies.

**Policy 8.2.2 c)** requires that, prior to any application for development being approved, the City shall require a Block Plan that, among other requirements, considers "the long-term development potential of all of the lands within the Quadrant, including lands owned by non-participants" (8.2.2 c) i.) and is adopted by Council (8.2.2. c) vii.). Block Plans are not prescribed by the Planning Act and therefore landowners would have no remedy to appeal a Block Plan. The Plan should more clearly reflect these processes as non-statutory and instead of requiring Council approval, refine the language to suggest "endorsement" which is more appropriate for a non-statutory document. We note that in Policy 5.1.2.1 in the Official Plan, the language speaks to Council endorsement, rather than approval: the language should be updated in the Secondary Plan to align with the policy in the Official Plan.

#### **Vaughan Official Plan**

In addition to the comments above on the Secondary Plan, we would like to note that numerous comments from our previous reviews have not been addressed in the draft Official Plan. We continue to uphold our planning opinions from our previous submission letters. In particular, we would like to draw attention to the following policies from the Official Plan.

#### **Transportation, Cycling Infrastructure, and Parking**

**Policy 2.14.2.11** provides a requirement for all collectors and arterials to provide a minimum 1.5m of dedicated cycling infrastructure with physical barriers. While we broadly support the goal of achieving a usable active transportation network, we are concerned with the broad requirement across roadway classifications which can lead to overly wide ROWs that will diminish developable areas and ultimately be detrimental to safety. Many collectors can be designed in a way that is safe for cyclists without the need for dedicated infrastructure. We would suggest flexibility in the application of these policies that will allow

for the development of a logical network of cycling routes, including physically separated lanes, without imposing one standard on all or almost all major roadways.

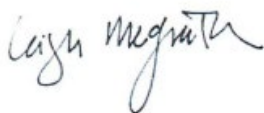
**Policy 2.14.2.1 a.** requires winter maintenance of pedestrian and cycling facilities, including on roads delivered as part of development applications. We would assume the intent of this policy is to promote municipal servicing of cycling infrastructure along public roads. However, we would like to seek clarity that the intent is not to place the burden on maintaining cycling infrastructure on private landowners.

## **Conclusion**

RioCan has a vested interest in the success of the Weston 7 area today as a major retail destination as well in its transformation into an urbanized mixed-use Centre. We thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments to reflect RioCan's priorities, and are appreciative of the work done to date to update the Official Plan and Secondary Plan in response to earlier feedback.

We request to be notified of any future reports, public meetings and decisions in relation to this matter.

Sincerely,



Leigh McGrath  
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RPP, MCIP