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File: 5275

Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, ON  
L3Y 4W5

**Attn: Members of Regional Council  
Region of York**

**RE: Region of York Municipal Comprehensive Review  
Planning for Employment and Employment Conversions (CW Item H.2.3)  
201 Millway Avenue, Vaughan**

John Zipay and Associates is the planning consultant for York Region Condominium Corporation 945 ("YRCC 945"), collectively on behalf of the owners of the property municipally addressed as 201 Millway Avenue in the City of Vaughan (herein referred to as the "subject property").

The purpose of this letter is to reiterate our request that the subject property be excluded from the Regional Official Plan employment designation and that the subject property be referred to the local municipality to determine an appropriate land use designation.

### **Description of Subject Property and Context**

The subject property is located on northwest corner of Portage Parkway and Jane Street, east of Millway Avenue and immediately bordering the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Secondary Plan area to the south. It consists of 28 employment-related condominium units and has an approximate lot area of 1.92 hectares (4.74 acres). The property has frontage onto three separate public roadways, including Jane Street (124 metres), Portage Parkway (160 metres) and Millway Avenue (113 metres) and is adjacent to a mix of uses, including employment uses to the north and west and existing and future high-rise (up to 55 storeys) mixed-use to the south. To the east, at the northeast corner of Jane Street and Portage Parkway is an office complex designated for employment uses; and in the southeast quadrant of this intersection, the lands are within the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre ("VMC") and are occupied by high-density, high-rise (35 storeys) mixed-use development.

The subject property is located approximately 457 metres walking distance north of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre ("VMC") Subway Station, which is the northern terminus of the TTC Spadina Subway Extension (Line 1), and 156 metres walking distance from the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Bus Terminal. The site abuts the northern boundary of the proposed draft Major Transit Station Area ("MTSA") 1 for the Vaughan Metropolitan

Subway Station. The area of the proposed MTSA is bounded by Portage Parkway to the north, Maplecrete Road to the east, Highway 407 to the south and Edgeley Boulevard to the west.

### Provincially Significant Employment Zone (PSEZ)

Following submissions to the Province, the subject property was removed from the Provincially Significant Employment Zone (“PSEZ”) mapping. This suggests that the subject lands are not deemed significant on a provincial level for meeting the Province’s employment needs and achieving forecasted growth targets. Additionally, the removal from the PSEZ gives the subject property the same treatment by the Province as the lands immediately to the south outside of the PSEZ, whereas the lands to the north and west remain within the PSEZ designation. It is our opinion that this property will be better suited for a greater range and mix of uses, which includes significantly increasing the current level of employment on site and introducing compatible residential and commercial uses in a mixed-use context.

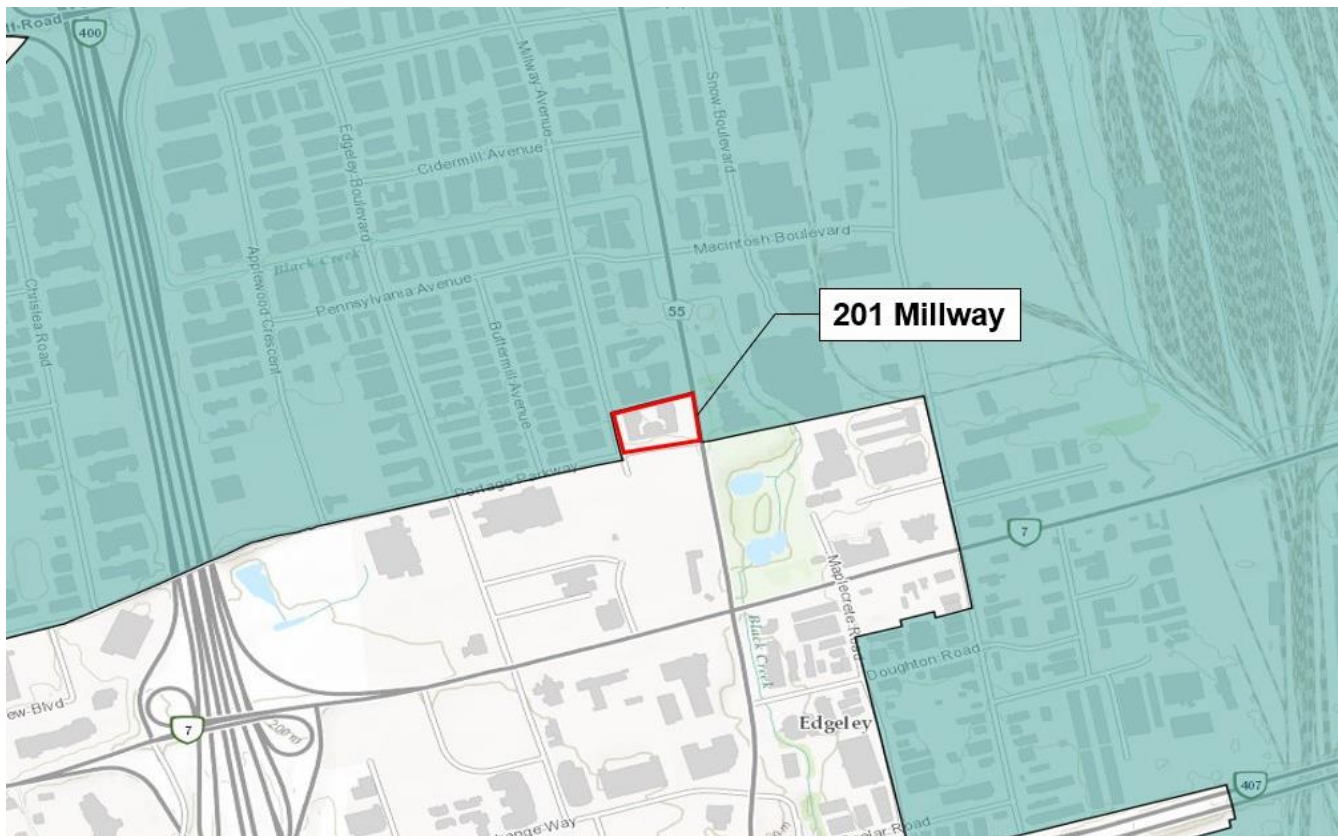


Figure 1 - Provincially Significant Employment Zone Mapping (December, 2019)

### Conceptual Development

The conceptual development for the subject property contemplates the creation of a transitional area and gateway to the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre through the transformation of the site into a mixed-use employment and residential development, while significantly increasing the current level of employment, or greater, on the property.

The proposal contemplates the redevelopment of the existing two-storey commercial/ employment building and associated parking area into a higher-density, compact mixed-use built form. The contemplated built form and land uses will provide for an appropriate transition between the high-density VMC to the south and the surrounding low-density employment lands, while accommodating significant employment opportunities on the site. The proposed design mimics the development at the southwest corner of Portage Parkway and Jane Street but at a smaller scale to provide a transition between the very high density at the south side of Portage Parkway and the employment lands to the north. The proposed development concept similar to the development on the south side of Portage Parkway privately-owned public spaces, urban plazas and gateway features.

Given the more diverse land use permissions, as well as the current and planned physical conditions of the VMC on the south side of Portage Parkway compared with the existing and restrictive land uses and low-rise employment development of the north side of the street, it creates an environment which provides little incentive for the employment lands to the north to be redeveloped under an employment designation in a more contemporary way, creating a stark contrast between the land use designation on either side of the street

### **Analysis of Staff Report**

We have reviewed the Planning for Employment and Employment Conversion Staff Report, dated March 12, 2020, and its associated attachments, including Attachment 5 – York Region Site Specific Employment Area Conversion Assessment Summary for Request V15 as it relates to the subject property. Staff are recommending that the subject lands not be converted to non-employment uses and that they be designated as employment in the Regional Official Plan for the following reasons:

- 1. Lands are part of a larger contiguous employment area and non-employment uses would destabilize and/or adversely affect the overall viability of existing and/or future employment uses in the employment area.*
- 2. The conversion would impact a currently logical employment boundary.*
- 3. Lands should be retained as employment as they provide an appropriate transition between the employment area and the adjacent non-employment uses and may offer the potential for more permissive employment uses to be assessed through the development of the Region's employment policy framework.*

While the three reasons stated above may appropriately apply to the majority of the employment designated lands in proximity to the subject property, it is our opinion that the subject property has unique attributes which sets it apart from the general surrounding employment lands. The reasons provided in the staff report are general and not specific in terms of an evaluation as the assessment fails to recognize the special attributes and unique locational characteristics of the subject property to make it a candidate for different and enhanced treatment.

More specifically, reason #1 as stated in the staff report, considers the subject property in the context of a large contiguous employment area where non-employment uses would destabilize and/or adversely affect the overall viability of existing and/or future employment uses in the broader employment area. To the contrary, although the subject property is within a larger employment area, its specific location at the intersection of

Jane Street (an Intensification and Rapid Transit Corridor) and Portage Parkway (a Major Collector Road) coupled with the abutting land uses at this intersection, give this property and intersection a unique locational attribute to be considered in the context as a gateway to the VMC. The subject property is effectively on the edge of the broader employment area, within 500 metres of the VMC Subway Station MTSA, and is directly opposite and across the street of a high-density mixed-use development on the southeast and southwest corner of Portage Parkway and Jane Street.

Furthermore, as indicated previously, the Province as a result of our request has removed the subject property from the PSEZ which in our view indicates that the Province recognizes the property to be different and not the same as the surrounding employment area in proximity to this site. Thus, in our view, to allow a broader range and mix of uses at this site, including office and residential uses as contemplated, would not destabilize or adversely affect the existing or future employment uses in the surrounding employment area. The conversion of this property in the context of the overall employment area does not represent a significant amount of land. Accordingly, it would not destabilize the intended employment function of the larger area, but rather support and enhance the long-term viability and function of the surrounding employment area as well as the function of the VMC and MTSA.

Regarding reason #2, that a conversion would impact a currently logical boundary, we submit that given the planned physical conditions of the VMC lands immediately to the south of Portage Parkway approved for residential uses ranging from 35 to 55 storeys in height, the current employment area boundary is not logical nor appropriate given the current low-rise nature of the existing outdated employment development that has occurred in the past. As a Major Collector street and a key artery for pedestrian and vehicular movement, it is not appropriate that Portage Parkway act as a separation between modern current built form, high-density and diverse land uses on the south side juxtaposed with bland, low-rise and outdated employment buildings on the north side. The stark contrast between the land use designations on either side of the street will create an unappealing and inappropriate corridor with respect to community design and community living. With respect to the subject property in particular, since it is at a major intersection and within walking distance to the VMC Subway Station and Bus Terminal, and directly opposite to a high-rise residential mixed-use development, we are of the opinion that the subject property be viewed in the context of a gateway to the VMC. This would provide the opportunity to complement the uses within the VMC while also replacing and enhancing the existing employment uses currently on site. It will allow for the long-term protection of the larger employment area, while also providing for a complementary transition to the height and density planned for the VMC.

Regarding reason #3, permissions for solely employment uses will not provide an appropriate transition between the VMC lands to the south and the broader employment area to the north. Given the location of the subject property abutting an area that is planned to accommodate the greatest heights and densities in the City to support the downtown function of the VMC, the lands along the north side of Portage Parkway represent a unique condition. These lands should no longer function as a typical transition between what has been a traditional employment area and a non-employment area as typically found elsewhere in the City. Given that we have an opportunity to think outside the box and be innovative, it is our view that we should consider use, density and transition at a higher scale than has been experienced in the past. In this case, a complementary transition in height and density is required juxtaposed to the Transit City developments on the south side of Portage Parkway. As such, a traditional transition through employment uses will not be sufficient and will result in a stark contrast between the north and south sides of the street as described above. In order to provide for

an appropriate, attractive and viable transition between these areas, a greater mix of uses is required beyond employment uses.

In their Report, York Region Staff indicate that “some employment areas are more appropriately designated by local municipalities and not in the Regional Official Plan”. We submit that the subject lands are precisely the type of property which is more appropriately dealt with by the local municipality rather than at the Regional level for the reasons provided above. Largely, this relates to the land use considerations associated with these lands including land use compatibility with the VMC to the south and the need for an appropriate transitional area, the availability of municipal infrastructure to service the lands, and the range of community facilities and services available in the area, including the VMC Subway Station within 500 metres walking distance from the site.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The March 12, 2020 Staff Report sets out that properties may be appropriately assessed by the local municipality through a local Municipal Comprehensive Review process. In consideration of the special attributes associated with the subject property, its unique locational context, and its removal from the PSEZ, we request that the subject property be excluded from the Regional Official Plan employment designation and be referred to the City of Vaughan to determine an appropriate designation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. Please contact the undersigned should there be any questions related to the content of this submission.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Zipay', with a stylized, flowing script.

John Zipay, MSc., U.R.P., RPP

cc. YRCC 945