



September 9, 2020

MICHAEL GOLDBERG, RPP, MCIP
mgoldberg@goldberggroup.ca
(416) 322-6364 EXT. 2100

Mr. Chris Raynor
Regional Clerk
The Regional Municipality of York
17,250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 6Z1

Dear Mr. Raynor,

**Re: Major Transit Station Areas Endorsement Report (September 10, 2020)
MTSA 40 – Major Mackenzie BRT Station, Richmond Hill
Comments Provided on Behalf of The Acorn Development Corporation**

We are planning consultants to The Acorn Development Corporation (“Acorn”), the owner of lands at the northwest corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and Arnold Crescent (one block west of Yonge Street), which comprise a largely vacant and under-utilized 6.5 acre land assembly (the “Acorn Block”).

On January 28, 2020, we provided comments to the Region on behalf of Acorn in connection with the intensification strategy being developed by Regional staff. A copy of our previous submission is attached for ease of reference.

We have now reviewed the staff recommendation report entitled “Major Transit Station Areas Endorsement Report” which we understand is to be considered by the Committee of the Whole during its electronic meeting scheduled for September 10, 2020 (Item H.2.1). In that report, staff are proposing to maintain the same boundaries and minimum density target for the Major Mackenzie BRT Station Major Transit Station Area (MTSA 40) as previously proposed in the April 2019 Planning for Intensification Background Report, notwithstanding the comments provided by Acorn. The reasons stated in the report for not expanding the boundaries of MTSA 40 to include the Acorn Block are based on the land use designations for a portion of the Acorn Block in the *existing* Richmond Hill Official Plan, and the assertion that “the subject property is fairly disconnected from the proposed MTSA boundary”.

With respect, we disagree with these observations and do not believe that existing land use designations should be determinative of the MTSA boundaries required to be established through the current municipal comprehensive review exercise. As you know, the Province has mandated through the Growth Plan that the Region establish its MTSA boundaries “in a transit-supportive manner that maximizes the size of the area and the number of potential transit users that are within walking distance of the station”. The Acorn Block is capable of accommodating significant intensification and is located entirely within a 500–800 metre radius of the Major Mackenzie BRT Station. Therefore, it should be included within the boundary of MTSA 40. Moreover, there are other similar

circumstances of irregular MTSA boundaries proposed by staff in its recommendation report (including MTSA 5 and 44, for example) where other equally “disconnected” lands are proposed for inclusion.

We also note that, while the MTSA boundaries are being recommended for endorsement at this time, the balance of the Region’s proposed new intensification hierarchy has not yet been identified. Accordingly, it is difficult to determine how the Acorn Block would fit within that hierarchy if it is not included within MTSA 40. While we understand that the Region must ultimately determine how its MTSA’s should be delineated, Major Mackenzie Drive is a very important corridor within the Region which can and should accommodate significant intensification in certain locations, particularly in the vicinity of its intersection with other transit corridors.

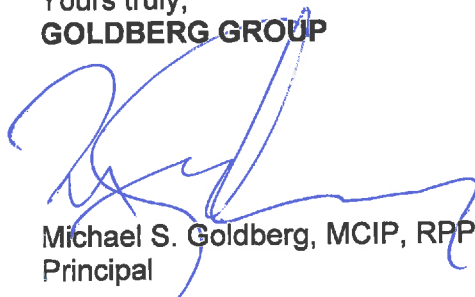
Acorn is in the final stages of preparing an official plan and zoning by-law amendment application for the Acorn Block. Acorn and its consultants have discussed this proposal with City staff on several occasions and will be submitting the application within the next two months. Through the processing of that application, the City (with input from the Region) will consider and evaluate the appropriate land uses, built form and density for the Acorn Block, and therefore it would best serve the public interest to defer the final delineation and density target for MTSA 40 until the City and Region have had an opportunity to review the Acorn application and to properly consider how the Acorn Block should fit within the MTSA framework and broader intensification hierarchy.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Given that staff are not proposing to finalize a draft of the new Regional Official Plan until mid-2021, we respectfully request that the Committee of the Whole and/or Regional Council defer the endorsement of a final boundary for MTSA 40 at this time, to allow the westerly boundary to be considered through the evaluation of the forthcoming Acorn application.

Thank you for considering our comments and deferral request in respect of MTSA 40. We remain available and willing to discuss these matters with the Region at any time.

Yours truly,
GOLDBERG GROUP



Michael S. Goldberg, MCIP, RPP
Principal

Cc: Paul Minz, Lynn Barkey, Acorn
Roslyn Houser and Ian Andres, Goodmans



January 28, 2020

MICHAEL GOLDBERG, RPP, MCIP
mgoldberg@goldberggroup.ca
(416) 322-6364 EXT. 2100

Mr. Paul Freeman
Chief Planner
The Regional Municipality of York
17,250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 6Z1

Dear Mr. Freeman,

**Re: Planning for Intensification, Background Report (April 2019)
Determination of Major Transit Station Areas (MTSA) and Related Policies
MTSA 40 – Major Mackenzie BRT Station, Richmond Hill
Comments Provided on Behalf of The Acorn Development Corporation**

Introduction

We are planning consultants to The Acorn Development Corporation (“Acorn”), the owner of lands at the northwest corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and Arnold Crescent (one block west of Yonge Street), which comprise a largely vacant and under-utilized 6.5 acre land assembly (the “Acorn Block”).

On behalf of Acorn, we are writing to provide comments in connection with the intensification strategy being developed through the Region’s Municipal Comprehensive Review exercise.

Updated Regional Intensification Matrix

The Region’s April 2019 Planning for Intensification Background Report (the “Background Report”) indicates an intent to update the Region’s 2009 Intensification Matrix, an inverted pyramid that established priority areas for intensification. The highest densities were to be accommodated in the Regional Centres followed, in descending order, by the Regional Corridors, GO Transit train stations and terminals and subway stations, Local Centres and Corridors. Within the Regional Corridors, local municipalities were to designate Key Development Areas (“KDAs”), which would accommodate the highest mix of uses and densities in those corridors.

The Region’s 2009 Intensification Matrix was implemented in Richmond Hill’s 2010 Official Plan by the designation of the Richmond Hill Centre, two KDAs (at Yonge and 16th Avenue and at Yonge and Bernard), a Regional Mixed-Use Corridor along Yonge Street, two Local Centres, three Local Development Areas, and a Local Mixed-Use Corridor along segments of Major Mackenzie Drive.

The Region's Background Report proposes an updated Regional Intensification Matrix where the highest densities would still be accommodated in the Urban Growth Centres/Regional Centre but followed this time, in descending order, by KDAs, Regional Corridor Areas, GO Rail Stations and Local Centres and Corridors, with the potential for Major Transit Station Areas at all levels of the hierarchy.

The Background Report does not include the Acorn Block within MTSA 40 notwithstanding its significant development potential and close proximity to the Major Mackenzie BRT Station and existing Downtown Local Centre. For the reasons set out below, we believe that the boundary of MTSA 40 and/or the corresponding KDA should be expanded to include the Acorn Block.

Delineation of the MTSA 40 (Major Mackenzie BRT Station) Boundary

On page 51 of the 2019 Background Report, a radius of approximately 500 m measured from the Major Mackenzie BRT Station was generally utilized to delineate the boundary of MTSA 40, although the boundary exceeds 500 m at its northerly section along Yonge Street and its southwesterly portion adjacent to an existing apartment complex on Harding Boulevard.

We note that the Background Report was produced prior to the current 2019 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe coming into effect. The previous 2017 Growth Plan defined a MTSA as the area within an approximate 500 m radius of a major transit station, while the current 2019 Growth Plan has amended that definition to now include a distance range of approximately 500 to 800 m, intended to represent about a 10 minute walk.

The entire Acorn Block is located within an 800 m radius of the Major Mackenzie BRT Station (with its closest point at the northwest corner of Arnold and Major Mackenzie just over 500 m from the BRT station). The attached location map shows the 500 m and the 800 m distance bands.

The Background Report includes lands along both sides of Major Mackenzie Drive, from east of Church Street to Lawrence Avenue, within the MTSA 40 boundary. While we acknowledge that such lands are within 500 m of the BRT Station, these lands are comprised of single detached dwellings with minimal lot depth. Their limited lot depth combined with the constraints caused by their direct adjacency to lands designated Neighbourhood will restrict the intensification opportunities for these lands. At best, medium density and lower mid-rise opportunities exist along this reach. As such, this segment of MTSA 40 will have limited opportunity to contribute to growth and intensification around the Major Mackenzie BRT Station.

In contrast, the Acorn Block is a large consolidated parcel with direct frontage on Major Mackenzie Drive that is capable of accommodating significant intensification within a range of housing types and built forms. It is in close proximity to Don Head Park and Alexander Mackenzie High School, and a short walk from the Mackenzie Richmond Hill Hospital and associated medical office buildings, which present employment opportunities. Encouraging the optimization of the Acorn Block would provide for more housing options within walking distance to this important mixed-use node at the intersection of Trench Street and Major Mackenzie Drive. It is also very close to Downtown Richmond Hill, with its many retail, service, institutional, entertainment and restaurant facilities, as well as the City-owned lands within the southwest quadrant of

Yonge and Major Mackenzie, which include the existing library, Wave Pool, public park and future civic uses. As such, adding more population through intensification on the Acorn Block would significantly contribute to this MTSA achieving important Growth Plan objectives. It would assist in the creation of ‘complete communities’, contribute to achieving the City’s minimum targets, and optimize the use of this valuable and strategic parcel of urban land.

Given these land attributes and its proximity to the BRT Station, there is a strong planning rationale for including the Acorn Block within the boundary of the MTSA 40.

The ultimate determination of the Acorn Block’s built form and level of height and intensity will occur at the local level through development applications. As a result of recent discussions with the Region, City and TRCA, the Acorn Block is currently being planned to relocate the existing creek within a naturalized and reconfigured Open Space block along its west and north limits, which could provide an appropriate natural boundary to delineate the western edge of the MTSA 40 intensification area.

In our view, if the Acorn Block is included within the boundary of MTSA 40, it would still be appropriate to exclude the lands on the north side of Major Mackenzie Drive between the east side of Arnold Crescent and the west boundary of MTSA 40 as shown in the Background Report. Unlike the segment of Major Mackenzie Drive between Church Street and Lawrence Avenue, which is currently designated Local Mixed Use Corridor and which is comprised of residential lots fronting on Major Mackenzie, the residential lots east of Arnold Crescent are reverse frontage single detached lots accessed from Glenada Court and Guinevere Court, with rear lots backing onto Major Mackenzie Drive. These properties do not have intensification potential and therefore should not be included within the MTSA 40 boundary, notwithstanding the irregular configuration that would result.

The Acorn Block is distinguishable from the residential lots on the north side of Major Mackenzie east of Arnold Crescent, and its redevelopment would not set an undesirable precedent or result in undue redevelopment pressure on the Neighbourhood lands. The relationship of the Acorn Block to the Neighbourhood lands on the east side of Arnold Crescent is similar to the relationship of the portion of MTSA 40 on the west side of Church Street where Neighbourhood lands exist on the opposite side of the street. Accordingly, the irregular boundary created by including the Acorn Block within the MTSA 40 boundary (while excluding the reverse frontage lots to the east) would respect and reinforce the Neighbourhood to the east while advancing important public policy objectives. We also note that several other MTSAs identified in the Background Report are delineated with similarly irregular boundaries, so this would not be an unusual outcome.

Finally, one other important factor to consider is that the current York Region Official Plan and Richmond Hill Official Plan identify both Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive as “Regional Rapid Transit Corridors”. The 2016 Regional Transportation Master Plan (“TMP”) also identifies Major Mackenzie Drive as a “Rapid Transit Corridor” which extends into Markham and Vaughan and links with other existing and planned rapid transit routes in those municipalities. According to the 2016 TMP, within the years 2022 – 2026, Major Mackenzie Drive is planned with “Viva Curbside Service” which links to other rapid transit routes in the Region (Map 13 of the TMP). By 2027 – 2031, Major Mackenzie Drive is planned to be upgraded with a “Dedicated Rapidway” (Map 14 of the TMP). As such, the Region’s current planning direction is to upgrade Major Mackenzie

Drive within the horizon of this review (2041) for higher order transit facilities and function.

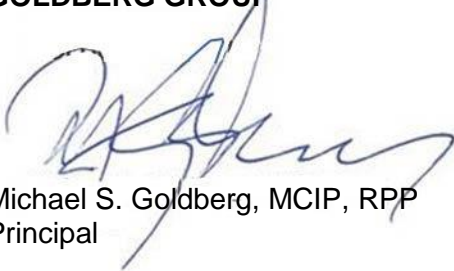
In the not too distant future, the Acorn Block will be located in very close proximity to the junction of two Regional Rapid Transit Corridors, which has significant implications for the planned structure of the City and Region. The current municipal comprehensive review is a forward-looking planning exercise which will establish the intensification framework to 2041. With the Region actively planning for the Acorn Block to be directly serviced by two intersecting rapid transit routes, it would be a mistake to exclude the Acorn Block from the MTSA 40 boundary as this could result in its long-term under-utilization.

In view of the above planning considerations, we respectfully request that the Region include the Acorn Block within the final boundary of MTSA 40 and/or a KDA associated with the Major Mackenzie BRT Station.

We trust that the above is helpful input into the Region's comprehensive review of its Urban Structure and Intensification Framework. We would be happy to make ourselves available to meet to discuss this further should you desire to do so.

Yours truly,

GOLDBERG GROUP



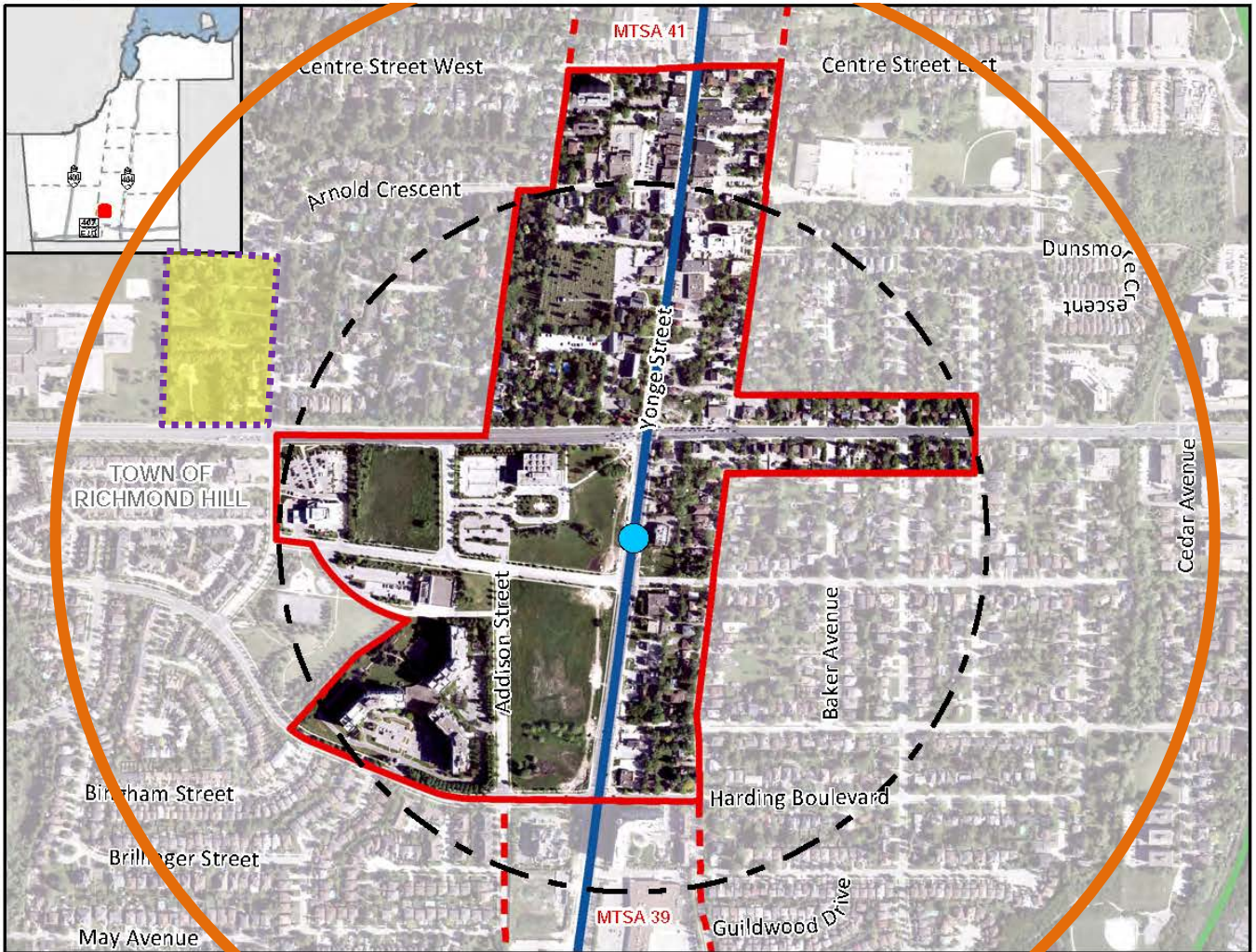
Michael S. Goldberg, MCIP, RPP
Principal

Cc: Paul Minz, Lynn Barkey, Acorn
Roslyn Houser and Ian Andres, Goodmans

Major Mackenzie BRT Station

On Yonge South BRT Corridor

Along Yonge Street at Major Mackenzie Drive, Richmond Hill



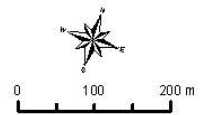
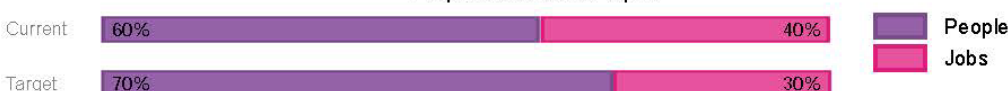
Legend

- Major Transit Station
- Required BRT
- 500m Radius
- ▭ Draft MTSA Boundary
- ▭ Adjacent Draft MTSA Boundary
- Priority Transit Corridors
- ▬ BRT
- ▬ Other Transit Corridors
- ▬ GO Rail
- ▭ Acorn's Site
- 800m Radius
- Major Mackenzie BRT Station Gross Area: 48.76 ha

Density (People & Jobs per Hectare) ¹



Population/Job Split ²



The Regional Municipality of York
 Corporate Symbols
 Planning and Economic Development
 March 2019
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¹ Values are rounded to the nearest 5 People & Jobs per Hectare

² Values are rounded to the nearest 5%