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Date: October 7, 2020

Project: RM.RH

**VIA EMAIL**

Clerks  
The Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

**Re: York Region Employment Conversion Council Meeting – October 15, 2020  
1577 – 1621 Major Mackenzie Drive, Richmond Hill, ON**

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We are writing to you on behalf of our client, Rice Commercial Group, 'Mackenzie Commons', and owner of 1577 – 1621 Major Mackenzie Drive. Our client has previously written to the Region on March 1, 2019 to request the addition of residential uses to the permitted uses and have met with staff on September 5, 2019 to discuss this request. Regional staff's initial response was not in support of the request, and that continues to be the case.

Several important milestones have occurred since our client's letter to the Region which help confirm and reinforce our client's request. The purpose of this letter is to express our clients continued desired to add to the current OMB approved designation of Major Commercial by creating a truly mixed use, complete neighbourhood.

As noted, this site is currently designated as Major Commercial. Originally envisioned as a big box retail destination, this vision is no longer an appropriate use for these lands. Our client, along with support from the City of Richmond Hill, sees this site as a mixed use complete community. On September 18, 2019 a Member Motion was adopted by Richmond Hill Council that stated:

**Council Meeting C#33-19:**

**"Whereas, the Rice Group has submitted correspondence and master plan (copy attached) regarding 1577-1621 Major Mackenzie Drive - Request for Employment Land Conversion.**

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Now Therefore Be It Resolved that Council of the City of Richmond Hill has considered the Major Mackenzie and 404 Master Plan prepared for Rice Group by Studio TLA dated June 26, 2019 and approves in principle the addition of such uses to give effect to this plan; and,

That staff are hereby directed to process an Official Plan Amendment, initiated by the landowner, in accordance with A Place to Grow (Growth Plan 2019) Policy 2.2.5(10) and a corresponding Zoning Bylaw Amendment to permit the additional uses and the proposed development. A Recommendation Report is due back before Council by the end of March 2020."

On December 19, 2019 a pre-submission meeting was held with staff to review the necessary revisions to the existing plan. After that meeting, our client engaged a team of consultants to prepare a Master Plan for a complete mixed-use neighborhood. (see plan attached).

On March 12, 2020, the Master Plan Concept was presented to staff. The Concept was very well received, and staff provided positive feedback for the proposed complete community with particular attention given to how the plan responded to the natural environment, respected the cultural heritage and included a variety of residential and community uses including parks and trails as well as the inclusion of stand-alone office, a hotel, and retail commercial uses in a mixed use format and no longer a big box format. Employment is an essential part of a complete community for both Richmond Hill as a City and overall for the Region and is an essential component of our Master Plan for these lands.

It is important to note that these lands were not designated as part of the Provincially Significant Employment Zones. As you know, in 2019 the Provincial Government introduced A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe as part of the More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan to increase housing supply, create more jobs, attract business investments and better align infrastructure. An important change in A Place to Grow was the inclusion of policies that give municipalities enhanced flexibility to change the use of lands from employment to other uses, while making sure key employment areas are protected for the longer term. To do this, the province introduced provincially significant employment zones as economic development tools that would require provincial approval for employment area conversions within the zone. The addition of non-employment uses on these lands to create a mixed-use neighbourhood moves forward a better agenda in dealing with employment and a work/life balance for both residents but also for those employers who will want to locate here and attract and keep employees. The current proposal of a mixed-use neighborhood also includes population-related employment, which we feel strengthens this request for these additional uses. It is important particularly in these times, to ensure flexibility to respond to changing demographic and economic needs.

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On behalf of our client, we respectfully request that the Region support the conversion of the subject lands to a mixed use designation, which includes Major Commercial, Major Office, Population-related employment, Community facilities and Residential uses.

We would be happy to discuss this request further or to meet with Staff to provide any additional information.

Yours very truly,  
SGL PLANNING & DESIGN INC



Paul Lowes, MES, MCIP, RPP  
Principal

c.c Paul Freeman, The Regional Municipality of York  
John McGovern, Rice Group

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# MACKENZIE COMMONS

MAJOR MACKENZIE & 404 MASTER PLAN  
RICHMOND HILL, ON

