



land use planning
&
development

23 Foxwood Road. Thornhill, ON L4J 9C4
Tel: 905.889.1564 | Fax: 905.889.6309
Website : Manettplanning.com

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via email: regionalclerk@york.ca

York Region Committee of the Whole
The Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street,
Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 6Z1

Chair Emmerson and Members of Committee of the Whole:

Re: Item H.2.1 Regional Official Plan Update – Housing Challenges and Opportunities Report to the January 14, 2021 COW by the Chief Planner/Commissioner of Corporate Services (the “Report”)

I am the Principal of MPLAN Inc., the land use planning consultant for North Elgin Centre Inc. (“NEC”) with respect to their lands located at the north east quadrant of the Yonge Bernard Key Development Area (“KDA”) municipally known as 11005 Yonge Street, Richmond Hill.

This letter shall serve as NEC’s input to Regional Council concerning the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) and Regional Staff’s recommendations to Committee as set out in the Report.

Key Findings from the Report

Housing affordability targets are not being met in York Region, challenging complete community initiatives.

While the Report suggests possible reasons for the existing situation, in our experience, **the root cause is the delay** associated with creating the necessary planning conditions and policies for shovel ready projects, in planned intensification areas.

Below is but one example of delay and a negative planning outcome within the City of Richmond Hill and York Region.

Yonge Bernard Key Development Area - Background

The NEC lands are currently developed with one storey commercial buildings.

Notwithstanding the existing development on the site, the expectation is that the NEC lands will redevelop through intensification (see Appendix A), since the lands are within an intensification area, identified in the Richmond Hill Official Plan 2010, as a Key Development Area (KDA), more specifically the Yonge Bernard KDA. The lands are also within a Major Transit Station Area (MTSA #34).

The Viva Rapid Way (BRT) is immediately adjacent to the subject lands and is now operational. The subject lands also have access to the existing Bernard Bus Terminal located at the south east corner of Yonge Street and Bernard Avenue, immediately south of the site.

In November 2016, Richmond Hill Council passed an Interim Control By-law (ICBL # 100-16). As outlined at the time, “***The effect is to freeze development within the KDA and along the BRT***” until LPAT approves a Secondary Plan and Zoning Bylaw for the KDA.

Therefore, the timing of any planning approval for this area is uncertain. More importantly the LPAT process followed to date (which Regional Staff participated in) will not produce any meaningful solutions to address the current housing crisis noted in the Staff Report and the associated Watson Report.

Positions taken by Regional Staff at the LPAT hearing in July/September 2020 are not supportive of addressing a housing crisis, let alone acknowledging that one exists. Evidence of this can be referenced by viewing the YouTube video of the hearing – available from the City of Richmond Hill YouTube page.

The Region could/should have led by example in the Yonge Bernard KDA Secondary Plan process, and at the LPAT hearing and taken steps to actively promote and facilitate purpose built rental housing (as proposed on NEC site) and additional seniors/supportive housing (proposed for 70 Bernard, the lands adjacent to the NEC site). The Region also supported high minimum parking rates for the KDA as well as a whole host of Secondary Plan policies and zoning regulations proposed by City Planning Staff that render development in the KDA non- viable for existing commercial sites.

Staff, in the subject Housing Challenges and Opportunities Report, have recommended further dialogue with affected stakeholders and the development industry. Based on our previous interaction with Staff, it is not clear how this dialogue will lead to concrete actions that address the housing crisis in York Region and Richmond Hill, let alone the situation in the Bernard KDA.

Recommendation

1. Staff be directed to remove the requirement in the ROP to provide for minimum automobile parking rates within the Centres and Corridors in order to provide for the creation of “zero car households”.

2. Staff be directed to take a more hands-on approach to facilitate implementation of the ROP policies, and expedite approvals for rental housing and other supportive housing projects to be integrated into mixed use developments within the Centres and Corridors.

3. Staff be directed to deal with the stakeholders directly, including NEC for discussion and implementation of these measures.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this report and the York Region Municipal Comprehensive review process. We look forward to ongoing input to this planning exercise as it progresses.

Yours truly,

MPLAN Inc.



Per: Michael S. Manett, MCIP, RPP.

Encl.

cc. NEC
Jeffrey Streisfield
City of Richmond Hill

Appendix "A"

NEC CONCEPT PLAN JULY 2019 – North East Quadrant Bernard KDA

