



Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan

1. Recommendations

1. Council approve Amendment No. 41 to the Richmond Hill Official Plan (Attachment 1), with the proposed housing policy modifications in Appendix A to encourage affordable rental and ownership housing in the Richmond Hill Centre Transit Oriented Community lands.
2. Director of Development Services be authorized to issue notice of Council's decision.
3. Staff be authorized to appear before the Ontario Land Tribunal in support of the Region's decision, if required and if requested by Richmond Hill, and the Regional Solicitor or designate, be authorized to execute Minutes of Settlement, if appropriate.

2. Purpose

Amendment No. 41 to the Richmond Hill Official Plan, known as the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan, is presented to York Region Council for approval. Regional Council remains the approval authority for local Official Plans and amendments until Bill 23 becomes fully in effect, at the earliest in winter 2024. The Richmond Hill Secondary Plan area is approximately 94 hectares in size and is generally located north of Highway 7 and east of Yonge Street. The primary purpose of the Secondary Plan is to establish policies to create a mixed-use high-density community and new downtown for the City of Richmond Hill.

The Secondary Plan provides the land use planning vision for this important intensification area. The Province has recognized the area's importance and identified a portion of the area as a Transit-Oriented Community and has approved an Enhanced Ministers Zoning Order (EMZO) for the Transit Oriented Community lands. This gateway location is Richmond Hill's premier location for the most dense and most diverse set of land uses.

Key Points:

- The Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan is before York Region Council for approval as Bill 23 has yet to fully come into effect
- Richmond Hill Centre is planned as a high-density transit hub to accommodate up to 51,000 people and minimum of 10,000 jobs, served by the future Yonge North Subway Extension (High Tech and Bridge Stations), the Yonge Street and Highway 7 VIVA Rapid Transitway, GO Rail Station, and future 407/ETR Transitway.
- Existing and planned public transit improvements elevate this important Major Transit Station Area with the highest built densities in Richmond Hill
- An EMZO for the Richmond Hill Centre Transit Oriented Community (TOC) within a large portion of the Secondary Plan area permits significant residential growth, reduces employment space requirements, exempts development from site plan control, and reduces/eliminates requirements for affordable housing
- Affordable housing remains an issue across York Region. While the EMZO issued by the Province exempts the TOC lands from the minimum 35% affordable housing policy requirement, a modification to the Secondary Plans' housing policies pertaining to the Transit Oriented Community area is proposed, to encourage provision of affordable housing to the greatest extent possible notwithstanding the EMZO. Negotiations as part of the TOC initiative will continue with the Province seeking to maximize affordable rental and ownership housing opportunities as part of the TOC development proposals.

3. Background

Richmond Hill Centre will include a mix of uses at the highest densities

Richmond Hill Centre intensification area is identified in the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe as an Urban Growth Centre and Major Transit Station Area. The 2022 York Region Official Plan identifies the area as a Regional Centre and a Protected Major Transit Station Area. The 2010 Richmond Hill Official Plan designates the area as Richmond Hill Centre. These higher-level policy documents set the growth direction for the subject Secondary Plan, which provides more detailed context sensitive policies to direct growth. The planned function of this Regional Centre is to accommodate the highest intensification densities in the city, while providing for the widest range of land uses: residential, commercial, office, retail, personal service, institutional and community services, parks, and open space.

York Region Council is still the approval authority for local Official Plans until Bill 23 comes into force and effect, expected in winter 2024

Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, received Royal Assent on November 28, 2022. Once fully in force and effect, the Bill will remove Council's approval authority for local Official Plans and Plan Amendments. Until this section of the Bill is proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor,

York Region Council continues to approve local Official Plans and Plan Amendments. Regional staff are working collaboratively with Richmond Hill to move this Secondary Plan forward during this transition period.

Background work and consultation process were extensive

City of Richmond Hill is commended for their consultative and background/supporting study process. The lead-up work involved extensive public and stakeholder engagement and consultation process. This included three public open houses, four Special Council (Education) meetings, a Statutory Public Meeting, and a Public Information Session.

Enhanced Minister's Zoning Order governs one third of the Secondary Plan area

Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan incorporates permissions granted by the Province to the High-Tech Transit Oriented Community, which is approximately 19 hectares in size or about one third of the net developable area of the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan area.

The Province approved an EMZO (O.Reg. 344/22) for the High-Tech Transit Oriented Community area which:

- Establishes permitted uses and development standards
- Restricts the use of inclusionary zoning
- Eliminates affordable housing requirements
- Permits up to 31 mixed use towers ranging in height from 40 to 80 storeys
- Increases built densities and planned population
- Decreases employment targets
- Exempts development from site plan control.

The EMZO's permits densities exceed those contemplated in the earlier draft Secondary Plan. The EMZO also increases the residential Gross Floor Area, reduces the non-residential Gross Floor Area and revised the street and block network. Consistent with the draft Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan, the EMZO directs the lowest building heights and densities to the development blocks located along Yonge Street and Beresford Drive, with the tallest buildings and highest densities centered around the planned subway station.

Richmond Hill Council adopted the Secondary Plan and forwarded it to the Region for approval

City of Richmond Hill Council adopted the Secondary Plan on May 10, 2023. The Secondary Plan is a policy document that guides development in conformity with the Richmond Hill Official

Plan, the York Region Official Plan, and relevant Provincial plans and policies. The permissions of the EMZO have been incorporated into the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan.

4. Analysis

Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan is planned to accommodate 51,000 people and minimum of 10,000 jobs at full build-out

Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan establishes area-specific policies identifying permitted land uses, built form, urban design, transportation and mobility, public realm, parks and open spaces, community facilities and facilities, sustainability, servicing, stormwater management, and district energy.

Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan is planned to be the focus for business, arts and culture, a leader in innovation, a key Regional destination, and will be a transit oriented urban community defined by its diversity of architecture and building types, its vibrant urban spaces, and fine-grained walkable neighbourhoods.

Secondary Plan contains policies to direct growth in a comprehensive and coordinated manner

According to the primary 2010 Richmond Hill Official Plan, the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan area is designated “Richmond Hill Centre”. The Secondary Plan further identifies eight-character areas, as defined on Schedule 1 of the Secondary Plan, with their respective planned functions and specified building heights and densities. Generally, the High-Tech Transit Oriented Community areas, closest to the High-Tech Subway Station, have the tallest and most dense buildings, with the outer edges of the Secondary Plan, closest to existing neighbourhoods, identified as Transition Areas.

Secondary Plan contains more detailed policies pertaining to:

- Land use permissions and building heights and densities
- Urban design to support architectural excellence and improved public realm
- Mobility and transportation to ensure all modes of movements, especially active transportation, be optimized to enable the efficient movement of pedestrians and vehicles
- Parks, open spaces, and community services to enhance the overall liveability of the downtown community
- Hard services, including water and wastewater infrastructure, stormwater, and district energy

- Staging and phasing of development aligned with the provision of infrastructure improvements and the provision of parks, recreation, and school facilities

Policies for protected Major Transit Station Areas are not appealable

According to the 2022 York Region Official Plan, the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan area encompasses two Protected Major Transit Station Areas: PMTSA #49 Richmond Hill Centre Subway Station and part of PMTSA #41 Bantry-Scott BRT Station.

As per section 36.1.4 of the *Planning Act*, the land use permissions, prescribed heights, and densities policies are not appealable, as they pertain to Protected Major Transit Station Areas.

Secondary Plan is consistent with and conforms to Provincial and Regional policies

Richmond Hill staff recommendation report, dated May 3, 2023, contains a lengthy and thorough review of all the applicable Provincial and Regional policies that the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan must be consistent with and conform to. The following table summarizes consistency and conformity to the various Plans.

**Table 1
Conformity to Various Plans**

Policy Document	Policy Directions	Consistency and Conformity
Provincial Policy Statement, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient use of land • Supports sustainability • Promotes strong, liveable, healthy, and resilient communities • Protects public health, safety, and economic growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building compact, vibrant, and complete communities • Provide convenient access to appropriate mix of jobs, local services, housing, and community infrastructure • Efficient use of land and infrastructure • Promotes range of housing options • Supports transit viability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Policy Document	Policy Directions	Consistency and Conformity
York Region Official Plan, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects Regional urban structure • Conforms with Regional Centre policies • Meets minimum MTSA development densities • Conforms with complete community policies • Conforms with 35% housing affordability policy • Conforms with sustainable transportation policies • Conforms with phasing policies to ensure development aligns with provision of servicing infrastructure • Sustainability and energy conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Policies encourage affordable housing notwithstanding the EMZO exempts the Transit Oriented Community lands from the minimum requirement for affordable housing

Affordable housing remains an issue across York Region. While the Secondary Plan provides for a significant residential population, it cannot implement the new inclusionary zoning tools to provide affordable housing within the lands subject to the EMZO, since its specifically prohibited. The EMZO states that “despite any provision of any applicable municipal zoning by-law, there is no minimum requirement for affordable rental or ownership housing”. The future Yonge Subway Extension to this area elevates the importance of this high-density intensification area, making it a prime location for more affordable housing. Through discussions about the TOC proposals, the municipalities have encouraged the Province to collectively explore innovative ways to assist with providing affordable purpose built rental and ownership housing, given the restrictions imposed by the Province through the EMZO.

The approved Regional Official Plan requires 35% affordable housing. The Richmond Hill Plan includes policies to implement this requirement to the extent possible. It specifically states “a minimum of 35 per cent of all new residential units shall be affordable, according to the definition of affordability in York Region except for development on lands subject to Ontario Regulation 344/22 [EMZO lands]. Affordable housing will be provided through the applicable

legislative framework, and may be achieved through community benefit charges, and/or Inclusionary Zoning, where applicable.”

Affordable housing is an important quality of a complete community. While the EMZO exempts the TOC lands and restricts the ability for Richmond Hill to require minimum affordable housing, the Province is encouraged to work with municipalities to produce affordable rental and ownership housing options. A modification to the Secondary Plan’s housing policies pertaining to the Transit Oriented Community area is proposed, recognizing the need to encourage provision of affordable housing to the greatest extent possible notwithstanding the EMZO. Richmond Hill staff support the proposed modifications.

Policies continue to encourage a mix of employment and residential uses despite implementation challenges of the EMZO

The targets in the Secondary Plan consider the EMZO which increased the maximum residential gross floor area and reduced the minimum employment gross floor area previously contemplated by Richmond Hill. This imbalance of population to jobs ratio creates an implementation challenge for establishing a complete community, by offering potentially fewer employment opportunities for its residents. This important intensification area should be planned to accommodate employment generating land uses, in conjunction with high density residential uses.

According to the 2022 York Region Official Plan, Regional Centres have a long-term resident-to-employee target ratio of 2:1. This ratio could be achieved with the EMZO in place, but it cannot be required. Considering this, regular market reviews and promotion of Richmond Hill Centre as a desirable employment destination well served by transit would assist in achieving targets more in keeping with the 2:1 ratio. Within the transit core area, policies continue to direct development to “maximize opportunities to attract office uses, reinforcing the transit core as a major office node.”

New Secondary Plan strives to achieve healthy communities and economic vitality identified in Regional Council’s Vision areas of focus

Approval of the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan will help to achieve the following objectives of the 2023 to 2027 Strategic Plan:

- Protects and promotes residents’ well-being - the Secondary Plan provides much needed housing near rapid transit
- Support safe communities – Secondary Plan is designed with dedicated pedestrian and active transportation connections; active ground floor uses increases eyes on the street
- Sustain and increase affordable housing choices – the Secondary Plan, as amended, requires a minimum 35% of housing to be affordable

- Invest in a safe, effective transportation system that connects people, good and services – the existing Yonge and Highway 7 VIVA Rapid Transitway, the existing Highway 407, the existing GO Station, the future High Tech and Bridge Subway Stations, and the future 407 Rapid Transitway will provide an excellent transportation system

5. Financial Considerations

Approval of this Secondary Plan will enable development applications that will generate Regional and local assessment to help pay for needed infrastructure and services. Growth in this area has been anticipated through the York Region Official Plan. Future updates in the Regional Transportation Master Plan and Regional Water and Wastewater Master Plan will be required to accommodate full buildout.

6. Local Impact

City of Richmond Hill Council adopted the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan on May 10, 2023. Council's approval of this Secondary Plan will enable the creation of a mixed-use high density downtown area envisioned to be a complete community that prioritizes people, is sustainable and livable, and built with a high quality of urban design.

7. Conclusion

City of Richmond Hill Council has adopted a new Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan that embodies the modern elements of city building. Regional Official Plan requires a Secondary Plan for this Regional Centre, to ensure the area is planned in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. Background studies were conducted supporting the Secondary Plan, and extensive public and stakeholder consultation occurred throughout the process. The Secondary Plan provides land use policies, including height and density provisions, urban design, transportation, community facilities, parks, and open space.


Approval of the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement 2020, and conforms to the Growth Plan 2020, and the 2022 York Region Official Plan. Richmond Hill has created a plan where new residents can thrive and benefit from a new community where they can live, work and play.

It is recommended that the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan (OPA 41 to the Richmond Hill Official Plan) be modified as identified in Appendix A and approved.

For more information on this report, please contact Augustine Ko, Senior Planner, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71524. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by: 
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Chief Planner


Dino Basso
Commissioner of Corporate Services

Approved for Submission: 
Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

September 5, 2023
#15512108

Appendix A – Modifications to OPA 41
Attachment 1 – Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan (OPA 41)

York Region Proposed Modifications to Richmond Hill OPA 41

- 1) Policy 10.7.1.2: add a period (.) at the end of, “according to the definition of affordability in York Region”. Then delete the following text, “with the exception of development on the lands subject to Ontario Regulation 344/22 as shown in Schedule 2 of this Plan.”
- 2) Add a new policy 10.7.1.3, as follows, “In accordance with the Minister’s Zoning Order for the Richmond Hill Centre Transit Oriented Community lands, policy 10.7.1.2 shall not apply to lands that are subject to Ontario Regulation 344/22 as shown on Schedule 2 of this Plan. Notwithstanding this exemption, development on these lands will be encouraged to provide affordable ownership and purpose-built rental housing units to the greatest extent possible.”
- 3) Renumber subsequent policies numbers 10.7.1.3 and 10.7.1.4 to policy numbers 10.7.1.4 and 10.7.1.5.

Tracked Change Version of Housing Policies 10.7.1

10.7.1. Housing Policies

1. A full range of housing in terms of tenure, unit sizes, and affordability will be encouraged in the RHC to provide for the housing needs for a diversity of households, including for low and moderate-income households, older residents, and residents with special needs.
2. A minimum of 35 per cent of all new residential units shall be affordable, according to the definition of affordability in York Region ~~with the exception of development on the lands subject to Ontario Regulation 344/22 as shown in Schedule 2 of this Plan~~. Affordable housing will be provided through the applicable legislative framework, and may be achieved through community benefits charges, and/or Inclusionary Zoning, where applicable.
3. In accordance with the Minister’s Zoning Order for the Richmond Hill Centre Transit Oriented Community lands, policy 10.7.1.2 shall not apply to lands that are subject to Ontario Regulation 344/22 as shown on Schedule 2 of the Plan. Notwithstanding this exemption, development on these lands will be encouraged to provide affordable ownership and purpose-built rental housing units to the greatest extent possible.
4. To support the needs of a diverse range of household types, development containing 20 or more new residential units shall achieve a mix of unit types. A minimum of 5 per cent of the total number of units shall have at least 3 bedrooms.
5. Purpose-built rental housing, including affordable purpose-built rental housing will be encouraged in the RHC.