

July 2, 2024

City of Markham
Clerk's Department
101 Town Centre Boulevard
Markham, ON L3R 9W3
Via Email: kkitteringham@markham.ca

Dear Mayor and Members of Council:

RE: MARKHAM CENTRE SECONDARY PLAN: DRAFT POLICY FRAMEWORK

On behalf of the Remington Group please accept these comments as a preliminary response to the Draft Policy Framework that has been issued in support of the new Urban Structure proposed for Markham Centre.

Remington has been a long-standing partner with Markham not just in Markham Centre but in Markham as a whole. The Remington Group of Companies have been active community builders in this Municipality for over 60 years. We were at the starting gate when the Municipal leaders decided they would like to make the move and create a downtown that was distinctly its own.

Remington's lands were chosen as the site for this bold initiative and we not only embraced the idea but we have tirelessly worked to create a community that is not only unique in the Greater Toronto Area but unique globally. I acknowledge that we have only just begun, but the success of what we have started and the way we have consistently gone over and above to create a dynamic center is evident in the celebrations we host. This past Canada Day 20,000 to 25,000 people attended the center to celebrate Canada, and by all accounts it was a huge success.

It is our desire to keep building on that success and improve the experience with each new build. We can only achieve this with the continued support and partnership with Markham Municipal leaders and Staff.

We received the "Draft Policy Framework" on June 28th and unfortunately, with the long weekend, have not had the time to review in detail this critical planning document. However, a cursory review of the proposed policies and the accompanying schedules has raised a number of questions and concerns which had been previously raised but seem to go unaddressed.

Mixed Use Office Priority Lands

While there are number of areas that seem to be inconsistent with work in progress, which has been a result of an on-going dialogue with Markham Urban Design and Planning Staff; my main area of concern relates to the schedule and language surrounding the "**Mixed Use Office Priority Lands**".

Over the past number of years Remington has worked with Staff to evolve the planning and development of the lands shown as “Mixed Use Office Priority”. The intent was to avoid creating a traditional land use plan that would be typical of a suburban development area. The land use plan Schedule SP7 shows all the lands south of Enterprise as Mixed-Use Office Priority. While it does include language which allows for a degree of flexibility; it unfortunately includes provisions that, if left, will result in no development being able to occur unless the Office Market rebounds and we get an influx of office users.

Office buildings are not built on speculation, they are design build when an actual end user decides to locate in the Centre. Should an office user not appear, these lands will be effectively sterilized from development long into the future and all the momentum we have achieved will be lost.

Remington has had a long-standing commitment to provide approximately 3.7 million square feet of office uses and we will stand by that commitment. However, this plan, if adopted as is, will effectively create a traditional suburban business park that can be found in any 905 community.

The most worrisome aspect of this one policy is that it clearly demonstrates a lack of understanding of what this Municipal Council has been working towards, and will not create a vibrant mixed-use downtown; but rather will create a sterile business park that will remain undeveloped for 50 years. And, when built, it will be not unlike our current business parks where you might as well roll up the streets on Friday evening until Monday morning. It has been our experience that modern Office Users want to locate in a community that is vibrant and active and not in a business park.

This is not the vision and it demonstrates a lack of appreciation for what this Council has been insisting that Remington create for Markham Downtown. We are of the opinion that an office user should be able to go anywhere on the plan and contribute to the development of a true downtown. The way this document is structured we would only put an office user south of Enterprise and we would only put residential north of Enterprise. This is not desirable and lacks a true understanding of Urban Place Making.

We respectfully request that Council allow Staff to continue to work with Remington to try and address not only the concerns that were previously raised but to evolve the policy language to avoid any potential conflicts moving forward.

Community Structure Plan Map SP4

I also note that the Community Structure Plan Map SP4 shows two civic uses on Remington Lands. While Remington welcomes the introduction of municipal uses to round out the community, there has been no discussion with Remington as to the nature of those uses and how they would be acquired. Is there a plan in place or a description of the intended uses? Is there a size requirement and timing of acquisition and funding available for construction? If there isn't then I would suggest they not be shown on any schedule that forms part of functional portions of the actual Planning Document. If we do a quick calculation of the land shown for these two uses and the civic square it would occupy 75% of the lands in that quadrant of our plan. The area in question is approximately 25 acres and the area shown as “Municipal Uses” is approximately 16 acres plus. This is unacceptable and it is worrisome that no detailed discussion with Remington has ever taken place despite our repeated attempts to get clarification.

Parks and Schools

It is noted that there are a number of parks of varying sizes and configurations shown on a number of the schedules. I would like clarification as to how the park areas were selected, how the size of parks was determined, and why certain parks that have been previously dedicated do not show up on any of the schedules. These Park areas need to be shown so Council and the Public get a full sense of the park areas that already exist through previous dedications and have yet to be constructed.

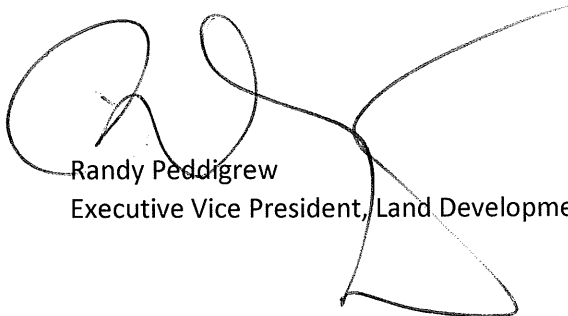
The plan includes two traditional School sites which have existed on the Remington Plan since 2006. These sites were selected over 20 years ago and do not reflect current approaches to school site in Urban Growth Areas. Has Staff or the consultants made contact with the school boards to engage in a discussion as to the size requirements for the school sites. Recently the school boards have agreed to a joint school site in a neighboring municipality that reduced the land area from 12 acres to 6 acres.

I would encourage Council and Staff to adopt the approach that was included in the Milliken Secondary Plan document. It is progressive in nature and understands that a secondary plan needs to be able to evolve over time to respond in changes to both market and municipal desires. A simple move like putting the heights and densities schedules in the appendix and including language that allows an iterative design approach for each development block would be appropriate and would allow this Council or successive Councils to decide how each new proposal helps achieve the vision and builds on what has already taken hold in Markham Downtown.

Remington does have other questions and comments and looks forward to working with Staff and Council to continue to evolve the policy language to ensure that Markham's Downtown is a vibrant community that is second to no other.

Sincerely,

THE REMINGTON GROUP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randy Peddigrew', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Randy Peddigrew
Executive Vice President, Land Development