



December 10, 2009

Jim Baird, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner of Development Services
Town of Markham
101 Town Centre Boulevard,
Markham, ON L3R 9W3

**Re: Langstaff Built Form Master Plan – Final Report
Town of Richmond Hill Staff Comments**

Dear Mr. Baird,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Langstaff Land Use & Built Form Master Plan Report (October 2009), prepared by Calthorpe Associates and circulated on November 16, 2009.

We support the ongoing collaboration with the Town of Markham and York Region to appropriately plan for the future redevelopment of the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway Urban Growth Centre, and look forward to continuing this collaboration as the Langstaff Land Use & Built Form Master Plan and Richmond Hill Centre Design and Land Use studies are completed.

Richmond Hill staff has had an opportunity to review the draft Langstaff Land Use & Built Form Master Plan. We note that many of our comments and concerns remain the same as those stated in our letter dated March 6, 2009.

Proposed Height and Density

- We are concerned about the density proposed in the Langstaff Plan and the impact of that potential density and traffic on Richmond Hill. At a regional level, the proposed density for the Langstaff site is disproportionate considering the limited connectivity of the site and the lack of direct higher order transit access, primarily to the eastern half of Langstaff. We are aware that the density provisions identified in the Growth Plan (200 pj/ha) and the RTP (400pj/ha) are minimum targets to be achieved across the entire UGC, however the density proposed in the Land Use & Built Form Master Plan for Langstaff is estimated at 881 persons and jobs per hectare, a figure that is well in excess of what is contemplated by the Provincial target.
- We note that more than half of the Langstaff site is not within walking distance to higher-order transit, particularly the area east of the CN Rail line, but is supported with a connection via a pedestrian concourse into Richmond Hill. We suggest that a concentric ring around the entrance to the proposed concourse is not an appropriate measure of walking distance to the mobility hub station in Richmond Hill, as transit users would be required to walk a further

400 metres to reach the mobility hub station. The proposed concourse should not be relied upon to justify the level of development proposed for that area of the Langstaff site, outside of an appropriate walking distance.

- There does not appear to be any detailed commentary on the proposed building heights in the Langstaff Plan except on page 111 in Table 5.05. The table shows high-rise residential buildings to have what appears to be a height equivalent of 15-50 stories, however it is unclear as to how this height range was established and why the eastern portion of the site adjacent to the woodlot proposes high density considering this portion of Langstaff is not within proximity to higher order transit. We also do not agree with the statement on Page 60, which states *"it is desirable to have a concentration of density near the Langstaff woodlot for 'eyes on the street' informal surveillance of this natural environment."* Surveillance of the woodlot cannot be used as justification for higher densities on this eastern half of the Langstaff site. Experience would suggest exactly the opposite: that extraordinary concentrations of density have a severe detrimental impact on woodlots.
- The Langstaff Plan's greatest allocation of density appears to be around the CN Rail corridor. This density allocation also appears contrary to the principles established by the Region that call for concentrating densities at the planned higher order transit facilities and decreasing with distance from those facilities. To conform to these principles, the density shown adjacent to the CN Rail corridor is more appropriate closer to Yonge Street in proximity to the Longbridge subway station area.

Balance of Proposed Land Uses

- The report estimates that the Langstaff portion of the UGC will be comprised of 9,624 jobs and 31,790 persons by full build-out (pg. 33). As stated in our March 6, 2009 letter, we have concerns regarding the significant disparity in the total number of jobs relative to the total number of persons forecasted for the Langstaff portion of the UGC. Our understanding is that there is a proposed ratio of 0.30 jobs for every resident within Langstaff, however the report is not specifically clear on how it meets the Region of York Official Plan target of a 1:1 ratio of people and jobs. We suggest the Langstaff site contribute more to achieve a long-term 1:1 ratio of people and jobs per hectare consistent with the Growth Plan and the York Region Official Plan so that it along with the Richmond Hill Centre can provide a more even balance of jobs and residents and contribute to the overall development of the UGC as a healthy, vibrant complete community.

Transit Facility and Location

- We agree with the comment on page 14 which states, *"Creating a single multi-modal transit facility will be key to getting the high mode split for transit that will be necessary to support an effective and environmentally sustainable Transit-Oriented Development."* For the mobility hub to operate efficiently and provide the most effective transit-user service possible, the hub should integrate all modes of transit into the mobility hub station. Densities within

proximity to the higher order transit station and mobility hub should be within an acceptable “walk to” catchment area, rather than relying on shuttle bus services.

- On Page 71, there is an image which illustrates the various alignments of the Yonge Street Subway extension. Below the image is accompanying text which provides the following notation: “*proposed subway extension and rapid transit route alternatives*”. The alignment of the Yonge Street Subway extension within the Town of Richmond Hill has been finalized as Option “C” and was confirmed through the approval of the Environmental Assessment process by the Minister of the Environment on April 06, 2009 and supported by Markham Council on October 14, 2008. The placement of the Richmond Hill Centre transit terminal, demonstrated in the Richmond Hill Regional Centre Preferred Concept Report together with the proposed Longbridge subway station south of the 407, positions the Richmond Hill Centre mobility hub in a central and accessible location to serve the UGC as much as possible. Richmond Hill does not support any alternatives that would result in the relocation of the proposed mobility hub station which would detract from the critical mass of development potential around the anchor mobility hub. To avoid confusion, Town staff recommends that the alignment (Option “C”) only be shown, and that any images from the approved EA be properly referenced.

Connectivity across the UGC

- On Page 72, in reference to the connections between the Richmond Hill and Markham portions of the UGC, the report states: “*These issues are complicated further by the presence of no less than 3 different municipalities within several hundred metres of the site. Differences of opinion have already surfaced, for instance, between the City of Richmond Hill and the Town of Markham as to how best to connect their respective developments to each other and to the planned regional transit infrastructure.*” To be clear, Town of Richmond Hill staff support a connection between Langstaff and the Richmond Hill Regional Centre. Both Markham and Richmond Hill show the same potential connections between the two portions of the UGC. The Richmond Hill Preferred Concept Report recognizes a connection to the Langstaff site via the multi-use corridor which runs parallel to the CN Rail line as well as an extension of Red Cedar Avenue south of Highway 7 and 407. To ensure proper connectivity, connections between the two sides of the UGC should be practicable and feasible in order to ensure the most efficient transit-user convenience possible across the entire UGC. Further discussion is required on the operational, construction, maintenance and safety of the proposed pedestrian concourse as a connection to the mobility hub station in Richmond Hill.

Transportation Capacity and Modal Split

- The report proposes a greater than 60% non-auto modal split. This is an aggressive assumption, and while in principle we support a high transit modal share over the private automobile, we recognize that assumptions on travel behavior need to be practical and realistic. The practicality of achieving this modal share is questionable considering half of the

Langstaff site is beyond a 400 m walking distance from higher-order transit and the proposed mobility hub.

- The circulation of people and movement of goods within the Langstaff site is restricted by the lack of public roads connecting Langstaff to the existing street grid. Due to the constraints of Highway 407 to the north and the Holy Cross cemetery to the south, the Langstaff Plan relies on three mixed-traffic roads for access and egress in and out of the site. This is recognized in the Langstaff report which states that: *"issues related to infrastructure and circulation in the Langstaff project area are extremely complex and will certainly require much ongoing study in the years to come"* While the plan is clear in that it contemplates a large number of car-free households and a high level of transit dependability, the lack of ingress and egress opportunities matched with the planned number of people and jobs not only in Langstaff but also in Richmond Hill could lead to unacceptable traffic conditions throughout the entire UGC and pose significant constraints on the road network already in place, including the road network in Richmond Hill.
- It appears that one of the main components of the road network within the Langstaff site is the Red Cedar Avenue connection under Hwy 407 and Hwy 7 to High Tech Road. This four (4) lane street connection is to permit cycling, pedestrian, buses and vehicles. The Langstaff Plan shows this connection as being constructed as part of Phase 1. Further discussions are required between Richmond Hill and Markham on the timing of this road connection. Following the analysis of the transportation study being undertaken by York Region, Richmond Hill staff will need to seek direction from Richmond Hill Council in order to approve the Red Cedar Avenue connection prior to the connection being constructed, with an understanding of supporting traffic mitigation measures needed before this road connection is made.

Triggers

- Overall, we are concerned that there is too much reliance on triggers to control the orderly development of the Langstaff lands. The phasing plan identified in the Langstaff report notes that approximately 5,000 units can proceed under Phase 1, prior to significant transit investments being in place. Almost two thirds of the total units occurring in this phase are within the eastern portion of the site near Bayview Avenue, which is not located within walking distance to any rapid or higher order transit service. The shared regional principles identify that the initial phases of development will include lands at and adjacent to the planned subway stations. While Page 174 notes that a transit shuttle circulator and a paved transit-only connection from Langstaff to the Richmond Hill transit station via the CNR underpass are required under Phase 1, we do not agree that these should be relied on for the proposed development density of the lands east of the CN Rail line as they are not directly served by rapid transit.

General Comments

- On Page 7, there is an out of date illustration of the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway Urban Growth Centre boundary. This image does not reflect the UGC boundary which was approved by the Province; however the correct boundary is shown on page 70.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the Langstaff Land Use and Built Form Master Plan.

Yours truly,



Ana Bassios
Commissioner of Planning and Development

cc: Dave Barrow, Mayor Town of Richmond Hill
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