



**WESTON
CONSULTING**

planning + urban design

c <u>3</u>
Communication
COUNCIL: <u>Oct 19/16</u>
<u>CW</u> Rpt. No <u>34</u> Item <u>9</u>

City of Vaughan
2141 Major Mackenzie Drive
Vaughan, Ontario L6A 1T1

June 16, 2015
File 4020-3

Attn: Mayor and Members of Council

**RE: Low-Rise Residential Designation Policy Review
Public Hearing Item #1
June 16, 2015**

We are the Planners for Fiducia Ventures Inc., the owners of 4433, 4455, and 4477 Major Mackenzie Drive West. We have recently undertaken a pre-application consultation meeting with City staff for the development of the subject lands for a medium density development on lands that are designate Low-Rise Residential in the 2010 Vaughan Official Plan.

Our client's lands are located on the south-east corner of Major Mackenzie Drive West and Pine Valley Drive, both Regional arterial roads. In addition, Major Mackenzie Drive West is designated as part of the *Regional Transit Priority Network*. The property is surrounded by Estate Residential development along with a six-storey seniors building adjacent to the south.

The unique characteristics of the site make it well-suited for a medium density form of development as this will support the future investments that are planned in the Regional transit system. An initial review of the report is concerning as the recommendations have the potential to greatly restrict low-rise development at transit-supportive densities. Should the recommendations move into policy, our client will have to give serious consideration to increasing the density of the proposed development through a mid-rise development of a similar scale as the development to the south.

While we have not had time to analyze the above-mention report in detail, we offer the following comments regarding the proposed modifications to the Low-Rise Residential designation policies:

- The origin of the report lies in the Keele Street Interim Control By-law Review. It does not appear that there has been any consultation outside of the Keele Street area. Thus, the research is scoped and skewed towards an area dominated by a heritage conservation area;
- The report extrapolates policies that are potentially appropriate for a heritage district and extends them across all of the existing residential neighbourhoods. Heritage district policies have different overlying objectives that are not necessarily applicable outside of

the heritage district. Thus, the basis for the recommendations for the broader review of the Low-Rise Residential designation policies is questionable and not necessarily supportable;

- The recommendations in the report appear to have been developed based on an examination of existing policies without obtaining any input from the public, landowners or the development industry. Thus, the recommendations have not been informed by a full public discussion and should be considered premature;
- The recommended policies in the report appear to centre on 'compatibility' with existing residential development. While this is an important element of determining the appropriateness of development, it is not the only consideration. Medium density development is an important factor in achieving transit supportive densities yet none of the policies addressing transit-supportive development were listed in the report. Thus, the recommendations need to be reconsidered in light of the entirety of the Official Plan;
- The policy framework in the report does not take higher-level planning policies into account. Regional and Provincial policies on intensification have not been considered or addressed in the proposed recommendations;
- The report recommendations seem to require that future medium density development needs to look like surrounding single family residential development. Recommendations contemplate requiring frontage on public roads only, thus prohibiting private roads without providing any substantial support for the direction. While problems regarding 'safety and security' are alluded to, no evidence has been provided that a problem exists in current medium density developments;
- The Conclusion to the report conflates medium density development in the *Low-Rise Residential* land use designation with 'the substantial intensification of Community Areas'. No data is presented to back the assertion that there is 'substantial intensification' in the Community Areas. Also, there is no analysis of higher level planning policies to determine if a certain level of intensification of 'Community Areas' is appropriate or not. Thus, the recommendations potentially contravene higher level policy or are based on a lack of research and evidence;
- The recommendations, if implemented, will have the effect of preventing any development that is not the same as what is currently in place in the Low Rise Residential designation. For example, the recommended policy "New development shall be oriented to a public street and have the same or similar lot widths, building heights and yard setbacks as those that prevail in the immediately surrounding residential area", would force development to only continue an existing built form and lot fabric without any regard to transit supportive development or Provincial intensification policies. In addition, the policy would not recognize opportunities where medium density residential development is appropriate, such as at the intersection of arterial roads where transit service is plentiful.

In summary, the recommendations in the report require additional analysis and input to better balance the need to protect the 'character' of the existing community while achieving the growth and evolution of the City that is envisaged in the 2010 Official Plan, the Regional Official Plan and the Provincial policy framework.

Yours truly,
Weston Consulting



Kurt B. Franklin BMath, MAES, MCIP, RPP
Vice President