

CITY OF VAUGHAN URBAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

November 21, 2022

Re: Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022

The Urban Design Review Panel (DRP) of the City of Vaughan is writing this letter in response to the introduction of Bill 23 in the legislature of the Province of Ontario, which as of October 26, 2022 has been brought forward for a second reading.

We are an advisory body of design professionals with architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and engineering expertise to advise City staff on matters of design that affect the public realm, including proposed buildings, structures, landscape and associated streetscapes, in order to promote and uphold standards of design excellence in the City of Vaughan.

The proposed amendments to existing statutes proposed in Bill 23 raise serious concerns with respect to the capacity for us collectively to continue to advocate for design excellence and the appropriate planning, design and implementation of development. While we support the Province's goal of more rapidly delivering housing within our communities, of particular relevance and concern in Vaughan are the following proposed changes:

1. **Reduced role of the local Conservation Authority (TRCA) in Planning Approvals:** Vaughan is fortunate to contain within its boundary significant natural features including ravines and watercourses that define the communities of Kleinburg, Woodbridge, and Maple, as well as the soon-to-be-revitalized Black Creek running through the heart of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. Input from the TRCA on development adjacent to these features is critical to the preservation of their ecosystems as well as the effective maintenance of their role in the stormwater management of the entire municipality, and greater region. As extreme weather events increase in power and frequency due to climate change, reducing the ability for the TRCA and other conservation authorities to influence development imperils all residents, businesses and industries within our communities.
2. **Changes to the Ontario Heritage Act:** Vaughan is composed of a series of communities, many founded in the 19th century and valued today for their unique heritage building stock and character. The changes proposed to the Ontario Heritage Act do not support the ongoing work of preserving heritage buildings while intensifying around them in a way that is compatible with these existing heritage resources. Rather, the removal of heritage protections for the sake of more dense residential development will diminish the long-term desirability and quality of life within these communities that the thoughtful integration of heritage and intensification upholds and supports.
3. **Changes to the Planning Act pertaining to Site Plan Control:** The DRP most often review development proposals prior to the Site Plan Control phase, when our input on matters concerning the public realm, building exterior design and sustainability is most effectively integrated. Removing City staff's ability to comment on building exterior design, and by extension the sustainability of the building as it relates to its thermal performance, impacts the efficacy of the DRP to advocate for sustainable design excellence on the City's behalf. Our collective ability to address the climate crisis through the sustainable design of our buildings

starts with the design of the building envelope. It is short-sighted and counter-productive to limit staff's, and by extension the DRP's, influence in this area.

4. Changes to parkland dedications and the ability to provide and locate new parks at the discretion of development: The DRP often reviews development proposals for communities that are implemented by multiple land-owners, necessitating coordination to ensure the adequate quantity of parks and open spaces, but also ensuring that they are integrated into a network that supports the activities of future residents as well as the larger natural systems and stormwater networks. Eliminating this avenue will lead to piecemeal communities that lack adequate and connected parks.

We would hope that the Province reconsider the amendments contained within Bill 23 and engage in further targeted consultations with both the design and construction industries to chart a course that better balances the short-term housing development needs with the long-term impact of such intensification on our lands, communities and planet.

Respectfully,

City of Vaughan Urban Design Review Panel

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