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THIRD MUNICIPAL BENCHMARKING STUDY ANALYZES PERFORMANCE OF 16 GTA MUNICIPALITIES

BENCHMARKING HOUSING OUTCOMES

Matt Durnan

Ontario municipalities are under substantial pressure to approve housing developments speedily in order to achieve the Ontario government’s

goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031. As the clock ticks closer towards 2031, the only study that assesses municipal planning outcomes in Ontario comparatively could be a critical resource in guiding municipalities towards best practices for getting housing development applications

approved more expeditiously. And one of the study’s authors warns that in some cases, a municipal planning approach that is too bureaucratically focused on ‘ticking all the boxes’ of the planning process, may be unnecessarily lengthening approval timelines and missing opportunities to help expedite

the relevant and desired planning outcomes for a project. The **Building Industry and Land Development Association’s** (BILD) third Greater Toronto Area Municipal Benchmarking Study was released on September 25, evaluating 16 GTA

Table showing the combined rankings in the 2024 BILD (Building Industry and Land Development Association) GTA Municipal Benchmarking Study across three categories. The study was released on September 25 and measures municipal planning outcomes based on factors like municipal fees, approval timelines and planning features available to developers and the public. For the third time, the City of Barrie topped the list due to its quick approval timelines, wealth of planning features and relatively low municipal fees.

SOURCE: BILD/ALTUS GROUP

CONTINUED PAGE 8

Municipality	Municipal Fees			Approval Timelines			Planning Features				Combined Scoring	
	Total Value	Index	Rank	Average Timelines	Index	Rank	Score	Rebased	Indexed	Rank	Overall Index	Overall Rank
	Per Unit (\$), weighted average of development scenarios	Divided by series average	(Lowest to Highest)	Months	Divided by series average	(Lowest to Highest)	%	(for lower to equal better)	Divided by series average	(Lowest to Highest)	Weighted Average	(Lowest to Highest)
Barrie	105,029	0.86	5	11.2	0.55	1	0.92	0.08	0.22	2	0.57	1
Oakville	109,126	0.89	7	14.1	0.69	3	0.88	0.12	0.33	5	0.66	2
Mississauga	108,597	0.89	6	25.0	1.23	13	0.96	0.04	0.11	1	0.76	3
Brampton	117,796	0.96	9	14.1	0.70	4	0.75	0.25	0.72	7	0.81	4
Markham	152,390	1.24	14	22.6	1.11	9	0.92	0.08	0.22	2	0.90	5
Milton	96,441	0.79	3	23.3	1.15	10	0.71	0.29	0.83	8	0.91	6
Toronto	143,990	1.18	13	25.0	1.23	12	0.90	0.10	0.28	4	0.92	7
Vaughan	166,904	1.36	16	18.1	0.89	6	0.81	0.19	0.55	6	0.98	8
Clarington	102,567	0.84	4	14.3	0.70	5	0.42	0.58	1.66	13	1.04	9
Innisfil	112,281	0.92	8	19.8	0.98	7	0.52	0.48	1.38	11	1.07	10
Whitby	128,349	1.05	11	12.4	0.61	2	0.38	0.62	1.77	14	1.13	11
BWG*	94,606	0.77	2	23.5	1.16	11	0.38	0.62	1.77	15	1.19	12
Caledon	143,493	1.17	12	26.9	1.33	14	0.54	0.46	1.33	10	1.27	13
Oshawa	125,129	1.02	10	20.7	1.02	8	0.27	0.73	2.10	16	1.35	14
Richmond Hill	164,149	1.34	15	33.6	1.65	15	0.44	0.56	1.61	12	1.51	15
Burlington	87,776	0.72	1	--	--	--	0.62	0.38	1.11	9	--	--

UPCOMING DATES

OCTOBER

2 Barrie Council, 7:00 p.m.

Brampton Committee of Council, 9:30 a.m.

Caledon General Committee, 2:30 p.m.

Hamilton General Issues Committee, 9:30 a.m.

Mississauga General Committee, 9:30 a.m.

Richmond Hill Committee of the Whole, 9:30 a.m.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Council, 1:00 p.m.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

7 Ajax Community Affairs & Planning Committee, 1:00 p.m.

Brampton Planning & Development Committee, 7:00 p.m.

Brock Committee of the Whole, 10:00 a.m.

Burlington Committee of the Whole, 9:30 a.m.

Clarington General Government Committee, 9:30 a.m.

Halton Hills Council, 3:00 p.m.

King Council Public Planning Meeting, 6:00 p.m.

Milton Council, 7:00 p.m.

Mississauga Planning & Development Committee, 6:00 p.m.

Newmarket Council, 1:00 p.m.



STOUFFVILLE EXPLORES LIMITING OFFICE USES AT GRADE ON MAIN STREET TO ENCOURAGE PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY

REVITALIZING MAIN STREET



Lana Hall

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is exploring the idea of limiting at-grade office use along the central stretch of its Main Street in an attempt to encourage more pedestrian activity in the area. As commercial vacancies in the town have increased and foot traffic has diminished post-pandemic, Town staff say this proposed policy change could be an opportunity to reimagine Main Street as the gathering space it once was. But those who own properties or businesses along the stretch of Main Street in question worry prohibitive legislation could have the opposite effect.

In the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's official plan, the 'Core Area—Main Street' designation permits a broad mix of uses, including mid-rise buildings in the form of apartments, mixed-use

buildings, restaurants, retail, personal service, office, entertainment and cultural uses.

At a statutory public meeting on September 25, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville staff outlined some proposed amendments for its Main Street, which would prohibit new 'Office Uses' from operating on the ground floor of any building fronting onto the stretch of Main Street between Albert Street and Park Drive. Medical offices would be exempted from this prohibition, as would any existing office-based businesses. The Town would permit what it calls "pedestrian-

oriented" businesses to occupy those ground floor spaces, such as restaurants, takeout-establishments, breweries, art galleries, museums, pop-up shops or markets.

The proposed changes stem from a member's motion put forward by Whitchurch-Stouffville Ward 4 councillor **Rick Upton** in June, which asked Town staff to study options for limiting office space at grade on that stretch of Main Street as part of a strategy that would encourage people to "actively explore, live, shop, work and play along Main Street."

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We are a historic farming community, so this is where people gather. So what we're trying to do is re-invigorate that feeling of place where people want to come and want to be.

- Dwayne Tapp

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REVITALIZING MAIN STREET

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COVID-19 lockdowns made it commonplace for some businesses, such as accounting firms and real estate agencies, to conduct business remotely, making it less likely for their clients to visit them on-site, Upton told *NRU*.

“I don’t think I’ve been to my accountant’s office in 10 years. It’s not a big traffic area,” he says. “...I hope what would happen [with the proposed amendments] is if we could put these services that don’t draw a lot of foot traffic onto the side streets, then that would encourage more retail to come and open up on the main street, so we would get a cascading effect. It would take a while, but it would hopefully pay off.”

According to Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville commissioner of development services **Dwayne Tapp**, foot traffic along Stouffville’s Main Street has slowly decreased over the past few years, likely due to a combination of COVID-19 lockdowns and the shifting landscape of retail shopping.

“Like most small towns, there’s been a change in how people come together,” Tapp told *NRU*. “Historically [Main Streets] have been a gathering place, especially in farming communities. We are a historic farming community, so this is where people gather. So what we’re trying to do is re-

invigorate that feeling of place where people want to come and want to be.”

But not everybody is on board with the proposed restrictions. At the September 25 public meeting, several deputants who own property or businesses along Main Street expressed concern that prohibiting office use could lead to more vacancies on Main Street and discourage entrepreneurs and professionals in the knowledge economy from doing business in Stouffville.

Alsop Insurance Brokers partner **Scott Alsop** referenced the Town’s official plan, which lists economic prosperity as a guiding principle and calls for an “economically sustainable community” to drive economic development and competitiveness in Stouffville. Alsop argued that prohibitive legislation for business use

along Main Street would do the opposite by making it more difficult for property owners to find tenants and for business owners to survive on Main Street.

“The idea of trying to legislate a desired economic outcome into existence through prohibitive and restrictive laws has been proven throughout history to be at the very least risky, to at the very most, utterly destructive,” Alsop said.

At the September 25 meeting, **Stouffville Chamber of Commerce** executive director **Christian Buhagiar** referenced Stouffville’s pending redevelopment of its downtown, which will be required to accommodate the population’s doubling in size over the next 25 years. Offices are more likely to weather the disruption that comes with

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Map showing Stouffville’s Main Street between Albert Street and Park Drive, where the Town is exploring the idea of limiting at-grade office use in an attempt to encourage more pedestrian activity in the area. Town staff and local councillor Rick Upton say encouraging more restaurant and retail uses along this stretch would bring more foot traffic into the downtown core. But business and property owners along Main Street are concerned that restrictive land use like this could lead to more vacancies and discourage entrepreneurs, commercial landlords and professionals in the knowledge economy from doing business in Stouffville.

SOURCE: TOWN OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE



REVITALIZING MAIN STREET

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

redevelopment, said Buhagiar, and will be required to maintain the kind of economic diversity Main Streets require to be successful.

“Imposing these conditions would favour retail and food service, while overlooking the challenges these sectors face,” Buhagiar said. “Over-reliance on retail poses risks due to higher turnover and failure rates compared to professional service firms, which offer more stability.”

Entrepreneurs, commercial landlords and professionals in the knowledge economy are all less likely to do business in a municipality with restrictive legislation like the proposed amendments, Buhagiar told the public meeting attendees. Others suggested that office use *does* attract foot traffic to Main Street, and wondered whether a better solution might involve the Town incentivizing the types of businesses it wants to attract, instead of excluding a certain subgroup.

“My staff, they eat downtown on a very regular basis. I can assure you they shop at every shop that is available to them and they spend their money and their time downtown,” said **Birkett-Hassard Insurance Brokers** president **Michelle McBeth**, who also owns the building on

Main Street that houses her brokerage office.

“...If you take that office use away, then the businesses that are there are going to close ... I think we should incentivizing businesses to open up downtown, incentivize landlords to rent to the types of businesses that the downtown wants.”

McBeth also referenced the metrics of existing uses on Main Street, asking whether it was the responsibility of offices, which make up 28 of the 96 at-grade units on the portion of Main Street under consideration for change, to “fix” the pedestrian traffic challenge. “Is this the vehicle that is going to bring retail and restaurants and pedestrian traffic downtown? I would argue not.”

Should the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville implement the proposed by-law amendments, it wouldn't be the first GTHA municipality

to experiment with land use restrictions along its Main Street. Previously, the **City of Markham** made changes to its Comprehensive Zoning By-law to prohibit certain uses, such as business and medical offices, as well as personal services establishments, from occupying buildings within 10 metres of the ‘Heritage Main Street Zone’ in Unionville.

Councillor Upton said he met with the Unionville **Business Improvement Area** and toured its Main Street as part of the research for his motion. “I drove down to Unionville and I saw that their realtors and lawyers were on the side streets and not on the Main Street, and I think they're doing very well in Markham,” he said.

For Whitchurch-Stouffville's part, Tapp stresses that the Town is still very much “exploring” the proposed amendments and will undertake further research – including a jurisdictional scan of similar policies – as part of its study on Main Street uses.

“We don't know if this is the right approach. The challenge is we're not having any success finding statistics right now. It

might require us to do more statistical analysis to determine if this is the appropriate thing to do.”

Town staff are expected to present a report with recommendations to Whitchurch-Stouffville council before the end of 2024. 🌱

Imposing these conditions would favour retail and food service, while overlooking the challenges these sectors face. Over-reliance on retail poses risks due to higher turnover and failure rates compared to professional service firms, which offer more stability.

- Christian Buhagiar

THE MISSING LINK?



Matt Durnan

A mixed-use development proposed for a site near Mississauga's western boundary would bring six new mid-rise buildings and a number of townhouse blocks to a vacant lot that is one of the last undeveloped swaths of land of this size within the city's urban boundary. It would also add more than 1,200 new dwelling units to the site, and new retail uses at grade within one of the mid-rise buildings.

At its September 16 meeting, Mississauga planning and development committee considered **Your Home Developments'** official plan, rezoning and draft plan of subdivision applications for a 5.8-hectare site at 5034, 5054 and 5080 Ninth Line.

Mississauga planning staff recommended approval of the applications, but committee voted to defer the item until the details of a cost-sharing agreement for a new sewer system are ironed out between Your Home Developments and the owners of two nearby sites to the north, **Mattamy Homes** and **Branthaven Development**.

"The scope of this project is that it's about 1,243 condo apartments, and there's another approximately 36

townhouses. The nice thing about the area is that it's a fully-established development, so what differentiates us from other condos that have been selling in Mississauga, is this is one of the few that is in an area that's family-friendly. The infrastructure is there, the parks are there, the transportation is there, shopping and schools are there," Your Home Developments chief executive officer **Stewart Turk** told *NRU*.

"A young family can buy here and live in a community, as opposed to elsewhere in the

city where you're across the street from a car dealership. This is a livable area, and there's going to be a small element of some retail. There's a large park and many parkettes, so this is definitely a very family-friendly area."

The site is in the area of Eglinton Avenue and Ninth Line, which was formerly part of the **Town of Milton**, before the lands were transferred to the **Region of Peel** and the **City of Mississauga** in January of 2010.

In 2011, the City of Mississauga commenced the

Ninth Line Lands Study, which resulted in the Ninth Line neighbourhood character area policies which were integrated into the city's official plan, designating the entirety of the area as residential medium-density, mixed-use, business employment, public open space, greenlands, parkway belt west, utility and natural hazard.

The official plan amendment for the Your Home Developments site would increase the designated building heights within the Ninth Line neighbourhood character area to 10 and 12 storeys, where the current "Residential Medium Density" designation for the site permits all low-rise building types height permissions of three to six storeys on the

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Aerial image showing the location of the site at 5034, 5054 and 5080 Ninth Line in Mississauga where Your Home Developments is proposing to develop a mixed-use residential community that would accommodate more than 1,200 dwelling units. It would also bring park space to the site, as well as retail uses within the base of one of the six proposed mid-rise buildings. The site is currently vacant. It previously served as farmland. Mattamy Homes is in the process of developing the property to the north of the site.

SOURCE: CITY OF MISSISSAUGA

THE MISSING LINK?

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northern portion of the site and four to 10 storeys on the southern portion.

The proposed development would bring six mid-rise buildings (one mixed-use and five residential) one of each standing six storeys, eight storeys and 10 storeys, and three 12-storey buildings.

“The site is currently vacant, while detached dwellings, townhouses and commercial uses are located in the vicinity. The approved and in-progress Mattamy townhouse development is immediately north of the site,” City of Mississauga director of development and design **Chris Rouse** told *NRU*.

Turk believes that Your Home’s proposal is the ideal type of development for this part of the city. He says that these types of complete communities that are targeting first-time homebuyers are exactly what cities like Mississauga need, as in many cases, first-time home buyers are being pushed out of larger cities as they are just unable to afford to live there.

“We’re looking at six to 12 storeys, and some three-storey townhomes as well, so there is a whole mix of options. And it’s not these big 35-storey towers that you’d see in the downtown, families with young kids can

live here and walk up to their homes,” Turk said.

“We’re excited that we’re proposing what we think is a missing link in affordable housing in what is a very expensive market. We’re in the low-rise market as well, with stacked townhouses, and it’s hard to find these for under

\$1 million. We really need to think about housing for young families, that’s where the need is. I don’t think the condominium market has done a very good job in allowing for young families who are being pushed out of that market.”

Turk says that projects like the Your Home Developments proposal on Ninth Line, which is also proposing roughly 150 purpose-built rental units within the development, should be the type of projects that upper levels of government are looking at for potential

partnerships that would help first-time buyers actually get into the housing market.

“I think this would be a great place to have a program to give first-time buyers and young families direct assistance, because for developers like us, with today’s interest rates, it’s hard to get enough buyers to actually start a project,” said Turk.

“We have a project here in a great area in Mississauga that

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Concept site plan of Your Home Developments’ mixed-use development proposal for 5034, 5054 and 5080 Ninth Line in Mississauga. Your Home is seeking to develop six residential buildings ranging from six to 12 storeys in height, one of which would include retail at grade. The development would accommodate more than 1,200 dwelling units, with at least 150 designated as purpose-built rental units. A new 0.4-hectare public park is proposed for the northeast corner of the site (top left of image), and stacked townhouses are proposed at the northernmost portion of the site accommodating roughly 40 dwelling units (far left of image).

SOURCE: CITY OF MISSISSAUGA
PLANNER: KORSIAK URBAN PLANNING
ARCHITECT: KIRKOR ARCHITECTS + PLANNERS

Rendering of Your Home Developments’ proposal for a mixed-use development at 5034, 5054 and 5080 Ninth Line in Mississauga’s west end, close to the Town of Milton border. This rendering shows a view looking west at the northernmost portion of the site with a 10-storey residential building to the south (left of rendering) and a row of stacked townhouses to the north (right of rendering). Your Home’s proposal would bring a total of six mid-rise buildings to the site and a number of townhouses, accommodating more than 1,200 dwelling units.

SOURCE: CITY OF MISSISSAUGA
ARCHITECT: KIRKOR ARCHITECTS + PLANNERS

THE MISSING LINK?

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could be started in six months and built within three to four years. We would gladly sit down with the provincial or federal government to work with them to get more than 1,200 homes built and get people into houses as soon as possible.”

The proposed project includes nearly 850 bicycle parking spaces across the entire development, along with a roughly one-to-one vehicle parking rate, with around 1,340 vehicle parking

spaces for residents and around 260 parking spaces for visitors, mostly located within underground parking structures.

“There are bus routes here, but Mississauga still doesn’t have the type of higher-order transit that you would find in Toronto,” said Turk.

“This is a great area for transportation as far as the bus routes, and this is very close to Highway 407. And I believe GO transit has plans for designated

[public transit] lanes on the 407 that will take people directly to Toronto, so this is a good area for public transit, but we also know that young families today still have one primary vehicle, so this development will allow for that.”

Mississauga planning and development committee deferred the application at its September 16 meeting, citing the need for a private cost-sharing agreement for provision of sewer servicing. The item will be brought back before the planning and development committee for consideration at its next meeting on October 7.



7801 Cochrane Street

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municipalities on a number of planning-related factors that influence the supply of housing, such as development application requirements, supporting study requirements and the availability of useful planning tools and resources to developers. The study was undertaken by **Altus Group Economic Consulting**, which was retained by BILD once again to carry out the study.

The benchmarking study is released biennially by BILD: first in 2020, then in 2022 and now, in 2024, and takes a deep dive into the municipal approvals process, calculating government charges on development applications and comparing approaches across selected municipalities for managing approvals and achieving the development of new housing.

“There is a big deficit in data that can provide us the insights into planning outcomes, and our report is the only report that exists that provides any sort of insight into planning outcomes, however amazing or shortcoming that people believe it is,” Altus Group senior consultant **Alex Beheshti** told *NRU*.

“Typically, what we have or review when we talk about housing data is data on population, households and construction. But that’s not planning. None of those three things are planning. There is a desire from municipalities—because they don’t control construction or immigration or birth rates—but what they do control is planning, so there’s a desire from them to be assessed

on what they directly control.” One of the metrics on which each of the 16 municipalities whose work was reviewed in the study was graded was municipal application analysis, which assessed the timelines associated with housing development applications from time of submission to time of approval at council.

“When we’re calculating timelines, we are only looking at approved applications for what we call a ‘typical residential project’—so greater than three storeys—it’s not affordable housing, it’s not seniors’ housing. It’s what you would expect of a residential project,” Beheshti said.

In short, the study only considered application timelines for residential development applications of three dwelling units or more, such as multiplexes and multi-family housing, ruling out applications for more specialized applications like additions to single-family

homes, accessory dwelling units, and student dorms. For the 2024 iteration of the study, a total of 1,244 development applications were analyzed, nearly double the number that were assessed in the 2020 and 2022 Municipal Benchmarking Studies, allowing for a larger sample size through which to evaluate the actual application timelines for a ‘typical residential project’.

For the third straight time, the **City of Barrie** ranked at the top the list when it comes to the average approval time for development applications, which includes official plan amendments, zoning by-law amendments, site plan applications, plan of condominium and plan of subdivision.

On average, across all types of applications for typical residential projects, Barrie’s approval timelines come in at just over 11 months, while **Town of Whitby** sits in a

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Table from the 2024 BILD (Building Industry and Land Development Association) GTA Municipal Benchmarking study showing the average development application timelines from submission to approval for all types of development applications across 15 GTA municipalities. Barrie topped the list and improved its performance from last year, with an average of 11.2 months from submission of an application to approval, shortening their application review timelines from the 2022 benchmarking study by nearly two months.

SOURCE: BILD/ALTUS GROUP

Rank	Municipality	2022 Study	2024 Study	Trend in Time	
		Months	Months	Difference	Change
1	Barrie ¹	13.1	11.2	(1.9)	Better
2	Whitby	12.6	12.4	(0.2)	Same
3	Oakville	13.9	14.1	0.2	Same
4	Brampton ¹	19.1	14.1	(5.0)	Better
5	Clarington	21.9	14.3	(7.6)	Better
6	Vaughan	26.9	18.1	(8.8)	Better
7	Innisfil	23.2	19.8	(3.4)	Better
8	Oshawa	26.1	20.7	(5.4)	Better
9	Markham	23.5	22.6	(0.9)	Same
10	Milton ¹	10.2	23.3	13.1	Worse
11	Bradford West Gwillimbury	20.4	23.5	3.1	Worse
12	Toronto	32.0	25.0	(7.0)	Better
13	Mississauga ¹	27.4	25.0	(2.4)	Better
14	Caledon	34.4	26.9	(7.5)	Better
15	Richmond Hill ¹	35.9	33.6	(2.3)	Better
Average ²		22.7	20.3	(2.4)	Better

BENCHMARKING OUTCOMES

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close second place at 12.4 months, followed closely by **Town of Oakville** and **City of Brampton**, both at 14.1 months estimated average application approval time.

While ranking high for shorter approval timelines is a point of pride for high-ranking municipalities, Beheshti notes that the benchmarking study is not without some discrepancies when it comes to calculating these timelines, a matter that he says has caused an element of frustration from municipalities who feel they didn't score as well as they could have.

One major factor that could be a cause for longer timelines, as noted in the study methodology, is a municipality's efforts to work with an applicant more closely in order to avoid a project moving to a lengthy **Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT)** appeals process.

"You have to be careful with what metrics you put in place and measure against. If it takes longer but everyone is getting to the table and we're getting an approval and it's not going to the OLT and there's no dispute, that's preferable to going to the OLT, because it will always take longer," Beheshti said.

"A municipality like **Milton**, for example ... They're a bit frustrated because they went down (in ranking from 2022),

but they also told me that they had a less than one per cent appeal (to the OLT) rate, which is great. Milton is a very homebuilder-friendly place."

Barrie has set the pace when it comes to its tighter approval timelines, and much of that can be credited to the City's adoption of technology in application review, specifically in the form of an online application portal, some years ago. The City has also reviewed previous BILD benchmarking studies to assess where they are succeeding in the planning application process and how to continue to improve.

"I've said all along—and you hear this from other municipalities—we can't build houses. Our role in community building is development review and recommendations and approvals. The City of Barrie has really focused on the application review and making that better, so when this study came along to look at those things, we ranked quite high because the things we're being evaluated on are things that, as a corporation, we value and have put a lot of investment into in order to get into this position," City of Barrie executive director of development services **Michelle Banfield** told *NRU*.

"One of the things that Barrie did before a lot of

municipalities was transition to online applications, which really started around 2016 when other municipalities hadn't quite got there yet. This really turned out to be a godsend when COVID hit, because we had already transitioned so many of our applications online."

While every Ontario municipality has its own unique set of planning challenges, the industry as a whole is very much a copycat one, and studies like the BILD Municipal Benchmarking Study are highly important for municipal planning departments to be able to review to learn where their peers are succeeding and how those successes can be implemented locally.

"What this study does is it gives us an independent baseline of how the BILD community perceives what it is we do. Forget what we talk about, because we have our own internal benchmarking in terms of timelines and processes, but this gives us an independent baseline that we can go back and proof what it is that we're doing," **Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury** deputy CAO

Mahesh Ramdeo told *NRU*.

"We look at places like Barrie and some others, and looking at what they're doing from a technology perspective, and how does that align with where we're going. We have conversations with them about what they've tried that maybe didn't work as well, and what lessons were learned. The second thing, and we've asked Altus to do this, is to come back to us as municipalities and debrief us and tell us what works and what you're seeing that is working and I'll bluntly copy it."

One very notable takeaway from the study, is the increasing number of studies that applicants are required to submit in support of typical housing development applications, studies that are not only time consuming and costly for the developer to supply, but are time consuming for municipal planning departments to review.

"One thing we looked at is the number of studies that are required and that is increasing. We did notice that while

CONTINUED PAGE 10 ■

What this study does is it gives us an independent baseline of how the BILD community perceives what it is we do. Forget what we talk about, because we have our own internal benchmarking in terms of timelines and processes, but this gives us an independent baseline that we can go back and proof what it is that we're doing.

- Mahesh Ramdeo

BENCHMARKING OUTCOMES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

comparing old official plans to new official plans, because we're in the cycle where a lot of municipalities are updating their official plans, and in a lot of instances, the new official plans have a lot more study requirements," Beheshti said.

"For every one of those studies, someone like me has to produce it. But there are times where I feel that the studies that I'm being asked to produce aren't about improving planning outcomes, but they're about a

planning process and checking boxes. There are councillors who have asked me, 'Why does that three-storey townhouse have a shadow study?' The problem is you develop these lists, and it creates a risk for a municipal planner not to ask for something. So they're risk-averse and they just ask for everything."

Similar situations are cropping up when it comes to developing affordable housing as well – which was not part of

the Municipal Benchmarking Study, but is indicative of the overarching issue of planning applications being drowned in process and box-ticking exercises as opposed to focusing on getting housing built.

"A lot of non-profit builders get really annoyed because they're asked to do these housing needs assessments or reports. What these reports are is you read back the municipality's housing policies, tell them the situation of housing, which you'd think the municipality should know—I don't know why they're asking anybody about this information—and then how your development slots into all of this," Beheshti said.

"If you're a for-profit builder, I get it, it's pretty much to see if you can get affordable housing [included in the development proposal]. But why are you asking a non-profit who is building affordable housing [for this report]? Municipalities need to understand what they're asking for and who they should be asking it from, and they should help their employees understand as much as they should help the applicants; this would help create a lot less work for everybody and a lot less cost for everybody."

To view the full 2024 GTA Municipal Benchmarking Study, please visit the BILD GTHA website [here](#).

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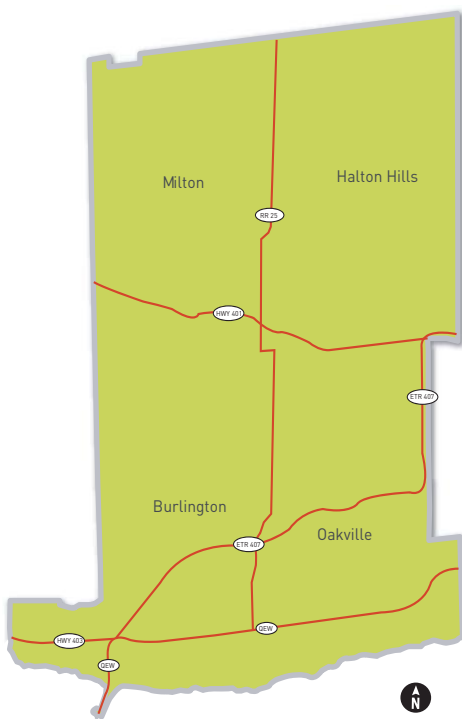
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IN BRIEF

[Brampton hosting open houses to introduce Downtown Brampton secondary plan review](#)

The **City of Brampton** is undertaking review of its downtown secondary plan to refine its planning and approval processes, to integrate priorities for the city's Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) and to reflect recent provincial government legislative changes for planning in its policy framework for Brampton's downtown. The City will be hosting to open houses to introduce members of the public to this project, one to be held in person, and one to be held virtually.

An in-person open house will be held on Tuesday, October 8 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Brampton city hall conservatory.

The City will be hosting a virtual open house for the Downtown Brampton Secondary Plan Review on Thursday, October 17 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. To register for the October 17 virtual open house, please visit the City's Webex portal [here](#). To learn more about the downtown Brampton secondary plan review, please visit the City website [here](#).

[Vaughan developing city-wide standards and guidelines for POPS](#)

In response to legislative changes introduced by the province through Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, the **City of Vaughan** is undertaking study to help develop city-wide standards and guidelines for privately owned publicly accessible spaces (POPS). The study seeks to establish parameters that will guide the development, design, maintenance and operations of these spaces city-wide. It will also identify different types of POPS, address site design, public-private interface, access and landscape considerations for the various communities, intensification areas and employment areas in Vaughan as defined in the Vaughan official plan 2010 and the Vaughan draft official plan 2022.

The City has posted a pre-recorded video presentation on its website to give a sense of the scope and intent of the project. Members of the public are invited to view the video presentation [here](#) and submit feedback on how they would like to see these spaces planned, designed and used, and what features they might include through an online comment form by Thursday,

October 17.

[Mississauga launches online guide to city planning and development](#)

The **City of Mississauga** has launched a new online resource that simplifies planning and development topics for Mississauga residents. The City's new online Guide to Planning and Development is organized around five frequently broached subjects:

- What is city planning?
- How is the City of Mississauga planning for growth and where is growth targeted?
- What municipal processes must be navigated to get land developed?
- Where can I find information about proposed development and construction in my neighbourhood?
- As a resident or business owner, how can I get involved in City of Mississauga planning and development processes?

The guide includes maps and data used by Mississauga city planners to guide their work, and also provides an overview of the City's housing targets, a description of the City's role in and plans for developing affordable housing, and

information about how development applications get approved. To access the new online Guide to Planning and Development, please visit the City of Mississauga website [here](#).

[OPPI recognizes 13 projects with PlanON awards this year](#)

The **Ontario Professional Planners Institute** (OPPI) recognized 13 projects across seven categories with PlanON awards last week at the OPPI 2024 Conference 'Adaptation Transformation'. The PlanON awards program celebrates the exceptional achievements of OPPI Members (and their colleagues) whose work demonstrates professional excellence and a commitment to advancing professional planning in Ontario. Of the 13 projects and people recognized with PlanON awards, nine were GTHA-based.

City of Kitchener's "Growing Together" was named PlanON project of the year. OPPI recognizes it as "a bold, first-of-its-kind planning framework for Major Transit Station Areas", calling it "the most housing-forward, permissive and flexible planning framework in Canada" for among other things, its "removal of parking

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IN BRIEF

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minimums and density maximums and implementing new, responsive built-form regulations.”

OPPI members on the Growing Together project team were **City of Kitchener** director of planning **Rosa Bustamante**, Kitchener manager of policy & research **Natalie Goss**, and Kitchener senior planner **John Zunic**. Non-OPPI members on the project team were Kitchener senior urban designer **Adam Clark**, and former Kitchener senior planner (now GSP Group planner) **Richard Kelly-Ruetz**.

Three GTHA-based projects were recognized with PlanON vision awards of excellence:

City of Kitchener’s “Growing Together” was recognized with a PlanON vision award of excellence in addition to being named PlanON project of the year. Team members on Growing Together are noted in the project of the year entry above.

Brampton Plan was recognized with a PlanON vision award of excellence. The document, which is the culmination of more than three years of background and technical studies, paired with an extensive public consultation process that

serves as a model of inclusive community engagement, provides an implementation framework for Brampton 2040 Vision to realize a sustainable, urban, vibrant future for the city.

OPPI members on the Brampton Plan team were former **City of Brampton** official plan & growth management manager (now City of Hollywood planning manager) **Anand Balram**, WSP director of urban & community planning **Gregory Bender**, current Brampton official plan & growth management manager **Shannon Brooks-Gupta**, Brampton senior policy manager **Tristan Costa**, Brampton commissioner of planning, building & growth management **Steve Ganesh**, former WSP senior planner (now City of Kitchener senior planner, policy & research) **Matthew Rodrigues**, WSP senior planner & project manager **Andria Sallese**, Brampton acting manager of official plan & growth management **Geoffrey Singer**, Brampton planner **Jessica Yadav**, and Brampton director of integrated city planning **Henrik Zbogor**.

City of Hamilton’s Environmental Remediation & Site Enhancement (ERASE) Community Improvement Plan Review was recognized

with a PlanON vision award of excellence. The 2023 review significantly shifted focus of the ERASE CIP first introduced in 2001 to better incentivize environmentally sustainable, climate-friendly remediation and redevelopment of brownfields, offering new financial incentives to not-for-profit housing developments on brownfields and leveraging the inclusion of affordable housing in private sector market developments on brownfields. The review was completed and implemented by the **City of Hamilton’s** economic development division, and received unanimous stakeholder and council support. The vision of OPPI member Hamilton senior project manager of urban renewal **Phil Caldwell** is recognized for this review.

Vision SoHo was recognized with a PlanON vision award of merit for a redevelopment of the Old Victoria Hospital lands in London, Ontario. The master-planned project will deliver 684 dwelling units, including 379 affordable dwelling units, through an innovative, first-of-its-kind partnership among six local non-profit organizations including the London Community Foundation, the City of London, and a number of local community groups. The vision of OPPI member **Zelinka Priamo** principal planner **Harry Froussios** is recognized for this project.

Township of Clearview Official Plan was recognized with a PlanON vision award of merit for a process assisted by **GSP Group** to renew the Township’s 2001 official plan that entailed multiple rounds of public engagement and consultation from 2019 to 2023. The vision of OPPI members **Township of Clearview** planning & building services **Amy Cann**, GSP Group planner **Patrick Casey**, and GSP Group president **Steve Wever** is recognized for this project.

Two projects were recognized with PlanON innovative research awards:

Aging but not Forgotten: An Analysis of Older Adult Health Care Access in Elliot Lake was recognized with a PlanON award for innovative research for this study evaluating older adult access to health care facilities using Elliot Lake’s existing transportation services, via access to a private vehicle or to public transit. The innovative research of OPPI student member **Queen’s University** department of geography & planning PhD candidate **Rachel Barber** is recognized with this award.

Affordable Housing Tools for Rural Greenbelt Communities: Balancing Growth, Conservation, and Economic and Social Sustainability was recognized with a PlanON award for

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COMMITTEE AGENDAS



HAMILTON

New Green Building standards recommended for Hamilton

At its October 1 meeting, **Hamilton** Planning Committee considered a [staff report](#) recommending endorsement of the Green Buildings Standard Guidebook to apply to all new industrial, commercial, and residential development within the urban area. The standards would be implemented as a two-year pilot project, with an update provided back to committee in Q1 2026, including reporting

on outcomes and future recommendations. The report also recommends that staff be directed to develop an Implementation Plan that includes a review of financial incentives available through Community Improvement Plans.



YORK

Approval recommended for Thornhill multi-tower development

At its October 1 meeting, **Markham** Development Services Committee considered a [final report](#) recommending

approval of official plan and zoning by-law amendment applications by **Greencapital Limited Partnership Inc.** for 10 Royal Orchard Boulevard and 8051 Yonge Street. The applicant proposes a mixed-use development comprising four towers of 25, 40, 45 and 55 storeys, and containing 4,051 square metres of commercial space and 1,955 residential units. The development would include a 0.19-hectare public park.

Approval recommended for Hwy 7-Markham Rd mid-rise development

At its October 1 meeting, **Markham** Development

Services Committee considered a [final report](#) recommending approval of official plan and zoning by-law amendment applications by **648321 Ontario Inc.** for 5871 Highway 7. The applicant proposes to develop a 13-storey mixed-use building containing 165 square metres of at-grade retail space and 137 residential units above. 🌱

IN BRIEF

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

innovative research for a study that explores how housing intensification best practices tools can support the diverse needs of the agriculture and tourism economies of the Greenbelt. The innovative research of the following OPPI student members and current/former **University of Waterloo** planning students: **Township of Malahide** planner **Karsten Brix, Timmins Martelle Heritage Consultants**

cultural heritage & community engagement lead **Natalie Majda**, and University of Waterloo M.A. planning students **Amanda Morielli** and **Michael Ricci**.

OPPI recognized **Dillon Consulting** partner **Rory Baksh** with this year's PlanON leadership award.

County of Simcoe planning program supervisor chair

of OPPI Lakeland District **Kristin Dibble Pechkovsky** was recognized with a PlanON volunteer service award.

For more information on the OPPI 2024 PlanON winning projects and winning people, please visit the OPPI website [here](#). We noted the Toronto-based winning projects in last week's issue of Novae Res Urbis Toronto on Friday, September 27. 🌱

OLT NEWS

RICHMOND HILL TOWERS APPROVED AFTER CONTESTED HEARING

In a September 16 decision, OLT Member **Carmine Tucci** allowed appeals by **Yonge Sixteen Inc.** against the **City of Richmond Hill's** failure to make a decision on its official plan and zoning by-law amendment applications for 9251 Yonge Street.

The subject property was previously approved by the **Ontario Municipal Board** for a two-tower development of 24 and 28 storeys containing 527 residential units, 1,300 square metres of commercial

space, and 93 square metres of community space.

In 2019, Yonge Sixteen filed applications with the City seeking to permit the development of a revised two-tower development of 27 and 29 storeys, maintaining the same amount of commercial space but increasing the number of residential units to 659. In June 2021, Yonge Sixteen appealed the applications to the OLT due to the City's lack of decision within the prescribed *Planning Act* timeframes.

At the hearing, Yonge Sixteen requested that the Tribunal approve a revised

proposal for two towers of 38 and 43 storeys, linked by a six-storey podium. The revised development proposal sought to accommodate 1,400 square metres of retail space and 962 residential units.

Although City staff had recommended in support of this iteration of the proposal, Richmond Hill city council did not support it and the City of Richmond Hill appeared at the hearing in opposition to the proposal and appeals. The City's primary areas of objection pertained to the proposed development's height and density, massing, parking rate, tower separation distance,

and interface with the public realm.

On behalf of Yonge Sixteen, the Tribunal heard evidence from planner **Antonio Volpentesta (Bousfields)**, from urban designer **Chris Pereira (M. Behar Planning & Design Ltd.)** and from transportation planner **Nixon Chan (LEA Consulting)**.

For the City of Richmond Hill, the Tribunal heard evidence from planner **Allan Ramsay (Allan Ramsay Planning Associates Inc.)** and from transportation planner **John McGill (MobilSafe Solutions Ltd.)**.

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Land Use Planner / Project Manager

State Building Group ("State") is seeking a Land Use Planner/Project Manager to join our team.

State is a multifaceted generational real estate company with over 60 years of land development experience. We pride ourselves on being experts at building forward-thinking projects, master-planned communities and forming strategic partnerships across North America. We offer meaningful career opportunities, invest in professional growth, and foster an inclusive environment. We continue to push boundaries, lead with integrity and set the highest standards of quality, innovative design and genuine care.

The Land Use Planner/Project Manager will work closely with our VP, Land Development to undertake research, complete policy analysis and technical report review, application preparation, submission and community engagement in support of development proposals and projects for municipal approval. The Land Use Planner/Project Manager will understand and determine the applicability of relevant local, provincial, and federal government regulations on an individual project basis. They will manage projects, consulting teams and complete internal reporting as necessary. Following municipal approvals the candidate will manage residential subdivision servicing contract tendering, coordination during home construction, implementing landscaping and obtaining municipal assumption and release of securities.

We are looking for candidates with a degree in land use planning, geography, project management (PMP) or related field. They should have a minimum 3-5 years' experience in the development (public or private) industry, with thorough knowledge of the Planning Act process and related legislative and policy framework. The successful candidate should possess a strong understanding of land use planning and development, sustainable community design and urban redevelopment. They should possess established skills and capabilities in project management, with the ability to manage dynamic projects of varying scales, including overseeing proposals, managing budgets, and leading project teams. They should understand the site servicing process (earthworks, infrastructure installation, landscaping and assumption). We are seeking a candidate with strong communication, report writing, organization and interpersonal skills; ability to work independently and also with a team, as well as strong time management and prioritization skills. Travel will be required – candidates must have a valid driver's license and vehicle.

If you meet the criteria noted above, please email jobs@statebuild.com with the Subject Line: **Land Use Planner/Project Manager role** for more information or to submit your curriculum vitae and reference page, if any.

For additional information on State Building Group, please visit www.statebuildinggroup.com



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For reasons explained in detail in the decision, the Tribunal found that the proposed development represents an appropriate scale of intensification at the prominent intersection of Yonge Street and Carville Road/16th Avenue in Richmond Hill, adjacent to existing bus rapid transit and in proximity to the future Yonge North Subway Extension.

The Tribunal allowed the appeals, on an interim basis, subject to finalization of the implementing amendments.

Solicitors involved in this decision were **Daniel Arsenosi** and **Natalie Ast (Overland)** representing Yonge Sixteen Inc. and **Carlton Thorne** representing the City of Richmond Hill. [See *OLT Case No. [OLT-21-001156](#)*.]

SETTLEMENT APPROVED FOR THORNHILL TOWER

In a September 26 decision, OLT Member **Steven Dixon** allowed appeals, in part, by **Curated North Inc.** against the **City of Markham's** failure to make decisions on its official plan and zoning by-law amendment applications for 17, 19, 21 & 23 Morgan Avenue.

Curated originally proposed to redevelop the 0.24-hectare property with a 40-storey residential tower containing 487 dwelling units.

The City did not make a decision within the prescribed *Planning Act* timelines, and Curated appealed.

As an outcome of Tribunal-assisted mediation, Curated and the City reached a settlement based on a revised proposal for a 44-storey residential tower containing 553 residential units, including a greater proportion of two- and three-bedroom units than originally proposed and with 1.5 percent of the total number of units to be provided as affordable housing.

Planner **David McKay (MHBC)** provided evidence on behalf of Curated, in support of the settlement. He described the revised proposal as an appropriate development outcome for the site, which is located within a Protected Major Transit Station Area focused around the planned Clark subway station on the Yonge North Subway Extension.

The Tribunal adopted McKay's planning evidence and allowed the appeals, in part, subject to finalization of the implementing instruments.

Solicitors involved in this decision were **David Bronskill (Goodmans)** representing Curated North Inc., **Maggie Cheung-Madar** and **Andrew Biggart (Ritchie Ketcheson Hart & Biggart)** representing the City of Markham, and **Sidonia Tomasella (Aird &**

Berlis) representing **Sunfield Homes Ltd.** [See *OLT Case No. [OLT-23-000720](#)*.]

SETTLEMENT APPROVED FOR PORT PERRY TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENT

In a September 13 decision, OLT Member **Pavel Tomilin** allowed appeals, in part, by **Magnum General Contracting Inc.** against the **Township of Scugog's** failure to make decisions on its official plan and zoning by-law amendment applications for a 1.62-hectare property at the northwest corner of Simcoe Street and King Street with no municipal address.

Magnum General Contracting proposes to re-designate the southerly portion of the property from *Neighbourhood Commercial* to *Residential* to permit the development of 78 dual frontage, back-to-back and street townhouses.

The Tribunal was advised that the parties had reached a settlement prior to the hearing. The decision does not outline

the nature of the settlement, but indicates that the proposal continues to consist of 78 townhouses in a mix of formats.

Planner **Scott Waterhouse (GHD)** provided evidence on behalf of Magnum General Contracting, in support of the settlement proposal. He opined that the proposal will result in desirable residential development on a vacant property and will support the Township's growth management objectives.

The Tribunal accepted Waterhouse's planning evidence and allowed the appeals, in part, approving the amendments as appended to the decision.

Solicitors involved in this decision were **Katarzyna Sliwa** and **Michael James (Dentons)** representing Magnum General Contracting Inc. and **Mark Joblin** and **Alexandra Whyte (Loopstra Nixon)** representing the Township of Scugog. [See *OLT Case No. [OLT-23-001009](#)*.]

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OLT NEWS

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AMENDMENTS APPROVED TO AURORA CBC BY-LAW

In a September 23 decision, OLT Member **Daniel Best** allowed an appeal, in part, by the **Building Industry & Land Development Association** (BILD) against the **Town of Aurora's** Community Benefits Charge By-law 6454-22 (CBC by-law).

BILD appealed the CBC by-law on the basis that its definition for “Value of the Land” in conjunction with Section 6 of the CBC by-law failed to exempt all existing pre-development buildings or structures from the levying of a community benefits charge, contrary to the requirements of Bill 23, the *More Homes Built Faster Act*, 2022.

The parties subsequently reached a settlement based on amendments to the CBC by-law that clarify that the application of a community benefits charge applies only in relation to new development.

The revisions to the CBC by-law were supported through the evidence of planner **Byron Tan** (**Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.**).

The Tribunal accepted Tan's planning evidence and allowed the appeal, in part, approving the modifications to the CBC by-law.

Solicitors involved in this decision were **Ira Kagan** (**Kagan Shastri DeMelo Winer Park**) representing the Building Industry & Land Development Association and **Patricia De Sario** representing the Town of Aurora. [See OLT Case No. [OLT-22-004781](#).]

AMENDMENTS TO BARRIE DC BY-LAW APPROVED

In a September 26 decision, OLT Vice-Chair **Shannon Braun** allowed appeals, in part, against the **City of Barrie's** city-wide Development Charges By-law 2023-74 (DC by-law). The DC by-law was appealed by multiple impacted

landowners.

As an outcome of Tribunal-assisted mediation, the parties were able to reach agreement and settle all 51 issues in dispute. A 20-day merit hearing was converted to a one-day settlement hearing, where the Tribunal heard evidence from planner **Jaclyn Hall** (**Hemson Consulting**) in support of an amended DC by-law.

The amended DC by-law includes reduced development charge rates, including an updated version of Schedule B (Residential and Non-Residential Development Charges) that is appended to the Tribunal's decision.

For landowners that already paid development charges based on the older (higher) rates, the *Development Charges Act* provides for refunds, with interest, to those landowners.

The Tribunal accepted Hall's planning evidence and allowed the appeals, in part, ordering the DC by-law to be amended in accordance with the revised version of Schedule B.

Solicitors involved in this decision were **Bruce Engell**

(**WeirFoulds**) representing the City of Barrie, **Alexander Suriano** (**Aird & Berlis**) representing 440 Essa Developments Inc. (One Urban Developments Inc.), **Matthew Helfand** (**Aird & Berlis**) representing Barrie Central Developments Inc. and 129 Collier LP, **Chris Barnett** (**Osler**) representing Hewitt's Creek Landowners Group Inc. and **Robert Howe** (**Goodmans**) representing Salem Landowners Group Inc. [See OLT Case No. [OLT-23-000794](#).] 🌸

PEOPLE

The **City of Vaughan** has appointed **Zoran Postic** as its new city manager, effective October 7. Since 2014, Postic has served the City of Vaughan in a series of increasingly responsible roles, most recently since May 2019 as Vaughan deputy city manager of public works. Postic succeeds current Vaughan city manager **Nick Spensieri**, who is retiring from the role after a lengthy career in the public and private sectors, including almost six-and-a-half years with the City of Vaughan, three-and-a-half of them as city manager.