

# Vandyk to make it a GO

PAUL BARKER

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## Planning for new developer-built Mimico GO station set to ramp up

A unique venture that will see a developer and Metrolinx jointly rebuild a transit station for the first time in the GTA will soon reach the critical public discussion stage.

In October, the provincial government announced a funding initiative in which the Vandyk Group of Companies agreed to cover the bulk of construction costs associated with the new Mimico GO station in exchange for being allowed to build a new mixed-use development along an existing transit line.

"The announcement laid the groundwork," said Sherman Chan, the firm's vice president of acquisitions and development. "We're now kick-starting our planning. We are gauging the comments from the community, city planning and various parties."

In exchange for the right to develop above the station and secure air rights, the Mississauga-based company has agreed to pay all construction costs for the main station building as well as expenses for a new parking and greenway.

"Bringing a new station into a community at little



The Vandyk Group of Companies will cover the bulk of construction costs of a new GO station in exchange for the rights to build a mixed-use development on the site.

or no cost to the taxpayers is something that has great potential," said Phil Verster, president and CEO of the transit authority. "It also makes good business sense."

Allowing developers to build above transit stations in exchange for construct-

ing new facilities, the provincial transport ministry said in a release, "reduces the cost of transit expansion projects and creates mixed use communities at our stations."

With an expected completion date of 2023, plans call for the construction of

a new station building, two new pedestrian tunnels and elevators, refurbished platforms, new entrances and below grade parking.

In addition, there will be revisions to the existing parking lot as well as the passenger drop-off and pick-up area, bike lanes, pedestrian

walkways and bike shelters.

The next phase, said Chan, will revolve around a number of discussions with both Metrolinx and local residents.

"We want to hear what is important to those who reside in the community," he said. "Through the plan-

ning process we hope to be able to mutually reshape this project together.

"We are going to invest the next two or three months in spending our time meeting with organized community groups who have a responsibility to disseminate information to their followers."

Early in the New Year, there will also be an open house for the public "and at that time we hope to also receive additional comments," he added.

The mixed-use development adjacent to Mimico GO will take place at 327 Royal York Road, which the company bought last year and is one of several property holdings it owns in south Etobicoke.

In 2017, Vandyk purchased the two-acre, 70,000 sq. ft. New Toronto Studios located on nearby 23 Buckingham St.

"South Etobicoke's appeal for homeownership is no longer a secret," said John Vandyk, the company's president and CEO, at the time. "We are seeing a real movement by the creative class - pioneering artists and designers, media and advertising types, savvy urban professionals, millennials and boomers - who are willing to move west out of the downtown core."

"They want to be part of the authentic urban vibe and value the lifestyle of the rapidly gentrifying west end."

## Ontario's Growth Plan: Planning by numbers is not enough



RICHARD LYALL  
RESCON

The chronic under-supply of new housing in the GTA has artificially increased prices — a problem that Queen's Park is addressing though its consultation paper "Increasing Housing Supply in Ontario."

According to our colleagues at the Building Industry and Land Development Association, the supply of new homes and condos is at a 10-year low.

Too many millennials are being excluded from ownership and rental markets, and few empty nesters living in detached houses can find transit-oriented, mid-rise condominiums or rental

apartments within their community.

The lack of affordable housing makes the GTA less competitive, reducing job-creating investment.

The bottom line: Ontario's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe has failed the region and Ontario.

How did this happen? Too much focus on planning by numbers and not on building form.

The Growth Plan calls for higher housing density near transit stations but implementation is glacial. Municipalities have five years to update their Official Plan through a comprehensive review and then three years to update zoning — that's eight years if time frames are met, which is rare.

The Growth Plan has broad-brush population density targets for fringe greenfield areas whether transit exists or is

planned, and this results in unnaturally high urbanized densities; for example, buyers of new townhouses have to drive everywhere. On the flip side, in leafy east Toronto, we still find low-density detached houses adjacent to Danforth Avenue subway stations.

If the Growth Plan had actually worked, Ontario would not need a Housing Supply Action Plan. However, to its credit, the Ford government has set up a working group including industry to address the Growth Plan's implementation problems.

Ontario needs bold measures such as a complete planning package for at least the inner portion of key mass transit station areas and adjacent avenues.

This includes 3D digital representations of updated official and secondary plans, site-plan guidelines, along with

pre-zoning or community development permits, finalized in one year — not eight — with technical support from the province and outside consultants.

Perhaps some additional provincial guidance is needed during the transition. If time frames are not met, a minister's zoning order would do the trick.

This gives builders the certainty they need to construct more than 100,000 mid-rise housing units that Toronto's avenues can easily accommodate — as well as higher densities near transit stations elsewhere in the GTA.

Also, with control over new subway construction, Ontario can now kickstart intensification with well-designed residential developments above and adjacent to existing and new subway stations, similar to approaches in Melbourne,

Australia, and Hong Kong.

"Capturing and recycling the land value increment arising from public subway and GO transit investments could help the province to fund a significant portion of transit system expansion, while adding to housing supply and reducing road congestion," says Michael de Lint, RESCON's director of regulatory reform.

"Transportation Minister Jeff Yurek announced the redevelopment of Mimico GO station funded through the sale of air rights above the station for a mixed-use development — and this is just the beginning, judging from a recent press release." (See also, story on this page).

A July 2017 RESCON report outlined ideas for enhancing regulatory agency transparency and speeding up

planning updates as well as development and building approvals. (Find it at [rescon.com/reports](http://rescon.com/reports).)

The province should focus on two fundamentals: first, ensuring that all existing and new transit is accompanied by appropriate built form that includes attractive, pedestrian-oriented, higher-density development transitioning to existing neighbourhoods; second, fixing the huge transit capacity problem through innovative funding.

If that can be accomplished, the rest will follow. We need bold action now — for the people.

— Richard Lyall, president of RESCON, has represented the building industry in Ontario since 1991. Reach him at [media@rescon.com](mailto:media@rescon.com) or @RESCONprez.