

DEPUTATION REQUEST

SPECIAL REGIONAL COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

Subject: Employment Conversion Request #M2

Spokesperson: Patrick Kerney

Name of Group or person(s) being represented (if applicable): Belfield Investments Inc.

Brief summary of issue or purpose of deputation:

Comments on Staff Recommendation - Employment Conversion Request #M2

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CLERK

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Chairman Emmerson & Members of Regional Council
Re: Employment Conversion Request M2

C/O Regional Clerk
Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON
L3Y 6Z1

Dear Chairman Emmerson & Regional Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Staff recommendation for our employment conversion request. Please accept this letter on behalf of Belfield Investments Inc.

Belfield are the owners of approximately 8 acres (3.3 ha) of land located in the City of Markham fronting on the west side of Woodbine Avenue, lying immediately south of Highway 407 and north of the planned 407 Transitway. Lands Municipally known as 8050 Woodbine Avenue.

Importantly, the property is located within the geographic boundary of the Markham Suburban Knowledge Intensive District (SKID), which is characterized by the concentration of highly coveted knowledge intensive jobs that are clustered around the Hwy 404 & Hwy 407 interchange. The efficient use of this land should be viewed in this context.

The employment policy change of Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan; which would allow for conversion of employment areas to non-employment uses within a PSEZ that is located within an MTSA, is extremely relevant to the proper land use coordination of 8050 Woodbine Avenue, as the property does meet these defined parameters. **The policy came into effect on August 28th, 2020.**

In further detail;

In order to attract, retain & grow the numbers of these skilled workers to the Zone 7 PSEZ, the built environment can reflect the changing nature of this workforce by accommodating local companies with excellent access to the labour pool through live/work opportunities.

Additionally, a potential mix of options on the property could address the high barrier to entry into the housing market. A 2018 survey of young professionals, conducted by the Toronto Region Board of Trade, found that 42% of those surveyed would likely leave the GTA region because of the high cost of housing.

The redevelopment of the property as a mixed-use built form will help support the robust Transit Network which is emerging at this strategic urban node.

Firstly, the property frontage is located 250 metres away from the planned Woodbine/Rodick 407 Transitway Station. This proximity is at the periphery of the Primary Zone of the future station area and the remainder of the property is within the 800 metre boundary of the MTSA.

Woodbine/Rodick Station is included in the Priority Phase of the 407 Transitway and will provide higher order transit between 3 Urban Growth Centres (Markham Centre, Richmond Hill & Langstaff Gateway, and Vaughn City Centre), as well as direct connections to the existing Spadina TTC subway extension and the future Yonge TTC subway extension.

As of 2020, Woodbine Ave buses have been added to the York Region Frequent Transit Network during rush-hour, and will be transitioning to all-day Frequent Transit. Properties with immediate access to Frequent Transit should be identified as a Strategic Growth Area.

Although the future 407 Transitway will be the predominant mode of east-west Public Transit, the Woodbine Avenue buses now provide Frequent connections to the existing Highway 7 BRT Rapid Transitway. The mixed-use transit-supportive redevelopment of the Property has the potential to be a Major Trip Generator for the Highway 7 BRT and can optimize that Transit investment while the 407 Transitway plans proceed.

Finally, a greater mix of uses would increase the contribution toward the Land Value Capture model of Transit financing & help alleviate the mobility issues in the Region.

Belfield feels that the Proposed Amendment 1 to A place to Grow: Growth Plan for the GGH aligns with their vision for the property; by providing clarity to the numerous benefits of building housing & amenities close to valuable jobs & planned rapid transit.

In consideration of this, Belfield is requesting that Staff reconsider their initial opposition, and that Council would support our Employment Conversion Request.

Although Municipalities are encouraged to delineate the boundaries of planned MTSAs which are not identified on Priority Transit Corridors, and that the 407 Transitway remains a component of Official Plans; Unfortunately, the Woodbine/Rodick 407 Transitway station has not been included in the draft York Region MTSA mapping as part of the current Municipal Comprehensive Review.

In consideration of its central location within the Zone 7 PSEZ map, in addition to the Regional context of the Markham SKID and planned rapid transit network; a high density mixed-use redevelopment of the site would be the most prudent approach to fulfilling the vision for long-term prosperity, accelerating a post-Covid economic recovery, and supporting rapid transit investments in the immediate vicinity.

Thanks again for your consideration of our comments.

Best,
Patrick Kerney
President, Belfield Investments Inc.