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March 5, 2021

Ann-Marie Norio, BA, Dipl. M.A., CMM III
Regional Clerk
Region of Niagara
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Thorold ON L2V 4T7

Dear Ms. Norio:

REPORT PDS 10-2021 LOCAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 26 - EMPLOYMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL RELATED POLICY AMENDMENTS - CITY OF ST. CATHARINES

On behalf of Timberlee Glen Developments Ltd., IBI Group submitted a local Official Plan Amendment (“OPA”) respecting lands legally described as Part Lot 61 CP Part Lot 5 Grantham as in RO527208 E/S 30R3062 except Part 2, 4 & 6, 30R10760; except PT 1 30R13649 City of St. Catharines, Regional Municipality of Niagara, (the “subject lands”), as shown in **Figure 1** below. The subject lands have an approximate lot frontage of 20 metres, lot depth of 340 metres, and lot area of 185,148.79 sq. metres (18.5 ha). The subject lands are located within Port Weller (east), predominately characterized by its industrial and agricultural uses, but also comprise low density residential and commercial land uses.



Figure 1: Aerial Image of the Subject Lands

Currently, the subject lands are identified as Designated Greenfield Area on Schedule ‘A’ Regional Structure of the Niagara Region Official Plan, Employment on Schedule ‘D1’ General Land Use Plan of the City of St. Catharines Garden City Plan, and ‘General Employment’ on Schedule ‘E2’

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North Planning Districts Land Use Designation of the City of St. Catharines Garden City Plan. Accordingly, the local OPA proposed to change the land use designation to permit a mix and range of residential types and densities, open space/ park areas, and a mixed-use commercial building fronting onto Lakeshore Road, as per the development scheme shown in **Figure 2** below (the “proposed development”).



Figure 2: Proposed Development

The proposed development includes an affordable housing component and a compatible interface with the adjacent Class III Industrial Facility to the west. Specifically, a single loaded corridor is proposed within the apartment buildings opposite the Heddle Shipyard without openings or balconies, transitioning from higher to lower densities and building heights as the development proceeds east. Based on current estimates prepared by RWDI Consulting Engineers and Scientists (“RWDI”) as part of their Land Use Compatibility Assessment, they determined that the shipyard noise may be mitigated with the use of suitable site layout, application of a Class 4 land use designation, and properly designed building materials.

The subject lands have been undeveloped throughout their history resulting in a remnant parcel that was intended to be developed for industrial purposes from when the canal was used as a primary method for freight transportation. The changing nature of Port Weller, including the introduction of residential neighbourhoods, has resulted in an increasingly less viable employment

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future for these lands. In addition, with the shifting need for employment lands to front on 400 series highways in order to be viable for employers, the Port Weller lands are now a remnant isolated parcel with little to no employment future. The proposed development by our client is a practical development solution for lands that would otherwise remain vacant indefinitely. Additional studies are currently being executed by RWDI to update the completed noise and emissions models to predict a worst case scenario and determine if further mitigation measures are required to ensure a viable project.

As you are aware, the City of St. Catharines conducted a Land Needs Assessment (“LNA”) where they determined that there are 113 ha of vacant employment land in the City, whereas 83 ha of employment land are required to accommodate the 4000 jobs allocated to the City by the Region of Niagara, resulting in an excess of 30 ha of vacant employment land in the City. As a result of their qualitative and quantitative LNA, the City of St. Catharines is recommending to designate 6 Employment ‘Areas’ for long term protection for employment land employment jobs, including Port Weller, and to:

- Re-designate 282 and 285 Ontario Street from General Employment to Mixed Use
- Re-designate the NHS Hospital site on Fourth Avenue from Employment to Institutional
- Re-designate lands west of the NHS Hospital site from Business Commercial Employment to Mixed Use
- Re-designate Brock University lands on the west side of Glenridge Avenue, and adjacent properties on the east side of Glenridge Avenue from Employment to Institutional; and,
- Increase the percent of site floor area permitted for accessory uses (i.e. retail, service commercial).

Specifically, the City of St. Catharines allocated 433 population / office jobs and 851 employment land employment jobs to the 26.8 ha of vacant land in Port Weller. The number of total employment jobs that were allocated to the City of St. Catharines by the Region of Niagara was based on their 2019 LNA, prepared by Hemson Consulting Limited (“Hemson”). A Regional Official Plan update report will be presented to the Planning and Economic Development Committee in May 2021. Within that report will be updated municipal level forecasts and an updated draft LNA. As such, they City of St. Catharines have based their LNA on the Hemson LNA forecasts from 2019, prior to considering updates to the Land Needs Methodology and Schedule 3 forecasts that were implemented as part of Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

On behalf of Timberlee Glen Developments, IBI Group is suggesting that approving local OPA No. 26 is premature without the Region having finalized their LNA. The Regional LNA should take into account “big picture” planning that considers the availability of vacant land across the Region when distributing employment jobs. Specifically, Fort Erie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara Falls, and West Lincoln all have Employment Area Land Needs or (Excess) (ha) greater than the 26.8 ha of land that Port Weller offers to accommodate their respective allocated employment targets. Therefore, redistributing these 433 population / office jobs and 851 employment land employment jobs from St. Catharines to one of these five municipalities in the Niagara Region will have no impact to the overall employment capacity in Niagara Region. It is a minor adjustment on a Regional basis that would significantly boost the City of St. Catharines residential lands inventory, as the majority of land within the urban boundary is already built-up and the City has a 95% residential intensification target. Our client is committed to mixed use development on these lands; however, the number of jobs assigned as “employment land” employment to these lands will not materialize.

The subject lands are also suitable for employment conversion to permit the proposed development, as they:

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- Have been undeveloped for employment purposes and farmed for many years;
- Have received no interest from the employment sector due to its remote location and lack of access to the 400-series highway;
- Are located along the Greater Niagara Circle Route and Related Trails, Regional Wine Route, and Strategic Cycling Network;
- Are a gateway entrance to and from Niagara-on-the-Lake;
- Encourage the expansion of the existing City of St. Catharines transit system and provide the opportunity to utilize active transportation infrastructure for inter-regional travel;
- Are feasible from a technical perspective (stormwater management, sewage treatment, water distribution, land use compatibility, and traffic);
- Are located within the Settlement Area where there is existing land, resources, services, and infrastructure that can support the achievement of a complete community;
- Facilitate a new public park that will offer recreational opportunities for the existing workforce and future residents;
- Include a broad range and mix of housing types and tenures, including affordable housing options through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity to cater to a broad range of demographics, incomes and abilities;
- Contribute to exceeding the minimum Greenfield Area target of 50 residents and jobs combined per hectare; and,
- Provide short and long-term economic prosperity by creating jobs related to processing building and planning applications, construction, retail and service commercial shops, and retirement home care.

Overall, it is our request that the Region of Niagara address Port Weller and its overall inability to accommodate employment by deferring local OPA No. 26 and reallocating 433 population / office jobs and 851 employment land employment jobs elsewhere in Niagara Region.

If you have any questions or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

IBI Group



Julia Redfearn MCIP, RPP
Planner

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Mr. Greg Bowie, Planner, Community Planning, Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Ms. Tami Kitay, Director of Planning and Building Services, City of St. Catharines
Mr. Don Manson, Timberlee Glen Developments Ltd.