



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: February 11, 2020

SUBJECT: Supplementary Report: City of Markham Comments on York Region's Draft Employment Framework – 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review

PREPARED BY: Marg Wouters, MCIP, RPP, Senior Manager, Policy & Research, ext 2909

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report entitled “Supplementary Report: City of Markham Comments on York Region’s Draft Employment Framework – 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review” dated February 11, 2020 be received;
2. That the February 11, 2020 report entitled “Supplementary Report: City of Markham Comments on York Region’s Draft Employment Framework – 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review, which includes the report dated September 23, 2019 entitled “City of Markham Comments on York Region’s Draft Employment Framework – 2041 Regional Comprehensive Review” attached as Appendix ‘A’, as well as the direction from Development Services Committee regarding 11 requests for employment land conversion, be forwarded to York Region as Markham Council’s input to date on the Region’s 2041 Municipal Comprehensive Review;
3. That Council supports the consideration of the following additional request for the conversion of employment area lands to a non-employment land use, as described in Appendix ‘B’ to the February 11, 2020 report, in the 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review:
 - a) Neamsby Investments Inc, 5821 to 5933 14th Avenue;
4. That Council does not support the consideration of the following additional request for the conversion of employment area lands to a non-employment land use as described in Appendix ‘B’ to the February 11, 2020 report, in the 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review:
 - a) Varmo Investment Company, 108, 111-113, 112-118 Doncaster Ave;
5. That Council supports the staff-initiated conversion of the following additional employment areas lands for non-employment uses, as described in the September 23, 2019 report attached as Appendix ‘A’ to this report, as follows:
 - a) The parcel(s) municipally known as 110 Copper Creek Drive in Box Grove, as described in Appendix ‘E’ to the September 23, 2019 report; and
6. That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to the resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the September 23, 2019 Development Services Committee meeting, a staff report providing comments on York Region's draft employment framework as part of the 2041 Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) was considered. Recommendations contained in the report, regarding 10 requests for employment land conversion, were referred to a Sub-Committee for further consideration and recommendation. This report brings forward the Sub-Committee's recommendations on those 10 conversion requests as well as an additional request, for a Development Services Committee recommendation. The staff recommendation for each of these requests remains unchanged from the September 23, 2019 report.

This report also provides staff recommendations on two additional conversion requests that were not received in time for Sub-Committee consideration, and brings forward a staff recommendation regarding a City-initiated conversion from the September 23, 2019 report. A summary of all 13 conversion requests, including staff and Sub-Committee recommendations, is provided in Table 1.

Regional Council is the approval authority for employment conversion requests. Regional staff are currently undertaking their own analysis of each of the conversion requests in Markham and elsewhere in York Region, and expect to bring forward their recommendations to Regional Council in early 2020.

It is recommended that the February 11, 2020 staff report, along with Development Services Committee recommendations on the 11 conversion requests considered by Sub-Committee, be forwarded to York Region as Markham Council's input to date on the Region's 2041 Municipal Comprehensive Review.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to bring forward the recommendations of the Development Services Sub-Committee regarding requests to convert certain employment area lands to non-employment uses. The report also provides recommendations on two additional requests for conversion that were not considered by Sub-Committee. The requests for conversion are being considered as part of the Region's 2041 Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR).

BACKGROUND:

On September 23, 2019, Development Services Committee considered a staff report (attached as Appendix 'A' to this report) providing comments on the Region's Draft Employment Framework prepared as part of the 2041 MCR. The report contained recommendations on a number of requests for employment land conversion submitted to the Region as part of the MCR. Committee received the report but referred the consideration of staff's recommendations regarding the 10 conversion requests to a Sub-

Committee for further discussion and a report with recommendations back to Development Services Committee.

The Sub-Committee held four meetings between October and early December 2019. At the meetings, both staff and the applicants presented their positions on the requests for conversion. In addition, at the November 8th Sub-Committee meeting an additional request for conversion, and an outstanding request for redesignation from 2013 were also considered.

The minutes of the Sub-Committee meetings were brought to the January 27, 2020 Development Services Committee meeting. The recommendations of the Sub-Committee as well as background information on the two additional matters dealt with by the Sub-Committee are provided below. In addition, staff recommendations are provided for two additional conversion requests not considered by Sub-Committee. A summary of all 13 conversion requests, including staff and Sub-Committee recommendations, is provided in Table 1.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Regional Council is the approval authority for employment conversion requests. The Region imposed a deadline of November 29, 2019 for submission of conversion requests to be considered as part of the 2041 MCR. Regional staff are currently undertaking their own analysis of each of the conversion requests in Markham and elsewhere in York Region, and expect to bring forward their recommendations to Regional Council in early 2020. Development Services Committee recommendations on conversion requests in Markham will be considered as input to Regional staff recommendations. Following conclusion of the Region's 2041 MCR, employment land conversions cannot be considered until the next Regional MCR.

Following the direction given at the September 23, 2019 Development Services Committee meeting, the following Sub-Committee recommendations are brought forward for a recommendation.

Sub-Committee Recommendations

The Sub-Committee's recommendations on the 10 requests for conversion outlined in the September 23, 2019 staff report (see Appendix 'A'), as documented in the minutes of the Sub-Committee meetings of November 8th and December 3rd 2019, are as follows:

1. Markham Woodmills Development Inc – Hwy 404/Elgin Mills (Cathedral)

That a decision on the request for conversion submitted by Markham Woodmills Development Inc. for the lands located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Highway 404 and Elgin Mills Road be postponed until such time as the feasibility of access from Elgin Mills Road to the subject property is determined.

2. 162870 Ontario Ltd and 162871 Ontario Ltd (Tucciarone) – 2718 and 2730 Elgin Mills Road (Cathedral)

That a decision on the request for conversion submitted by 1628740 Ontario Inc. and 1628741 Ontario Inc. for the lands located at 2718 and 2730 Elgin Mills Road be postponed until such time as the feasibility of access from Elgin Mills Road to the neighbouring properties to the west and northwest is determined.

3. Condor Properties Ltd, 2920 16th Avenue (Cachet)

That a decision on the request for conversion submitted by Condor Properties Ltd for the lands located at 2920 16th Avenue be postponed for further consideration of the feasibility of securing affordable, purpose-built rental, and/or seniors housing as well as significant retention of on-site employment and acceleration of the Highway 404 overpass.

4. Wemat Group - Hwy 7/Hwy 404 (Commerce Valley/Leitchcroft)

That a decision on the request for conversion submitted by The Wemat Group for the lands located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Highway 7 and Highway 404 be postponed to allow for the submission of a revised development concept plan to be considered at a future meeting.

5. Belfield Investments Ltd - Hwy 407/Woodbine Ave (Rodick Road)

The Development Services Sub-Committee not support the request for conversion submitted by Belfield Investments Inc. for the lands located at 8050 Woodbine Avenue, consistent with Recommendation 4.d. of the September 23, 2019 report to Development Services Committee entitled "City of Markham Comments on York Region's Draft Employment Framework - 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review".

6. Wu's Landmark/First Elgin Developments Ltd - 10900 Warden Ave and 3450 Elgin Mills Rod (ROPA3 – FUA Employment Block)

That the Development Services Sub-Committee supports the deferral of Council's consideration of the request for conversion submitted by Wu's Landmark/First Elgin Mills Development Inc. for the lands located at 10900 Warden Avenue and 3450 Elgin Mills Road through the Future Urban Area Employment Block Secondary Plan study, consistent with Recommendation 3.b. of the September 23, 2019 report to Development Services Committee entitled "City of Markham Comments on York Region's Draft Employment Framework - 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review".

7. Meadow Park Investments Inc – 77 Anderson Avenue (Mount Joy Business Park)

That the Development Services Sub-Committee supports the deferral of Council's consideration of the request for conversion submitted by Meadow Park Investments Inc. for the lands located at 77 Anderson Avenue to the Markham Road-Mount Joy Secondary Plan study, consistent with Recommendation 3.a. of the September 23, 2019 report to Development Services Committee entitled "City of Markham Comments on York Region's Draft Employment Framework - 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review".

8. Norfinch Construction (Toronto) Ltd (Cornell)

That the Development Services Sub-Committee supports the deferral of Council's consideration of the request for conversion submitted by Norfinch Construction Ltd. for the lands located at 7485 Highway 7 to the Cornell Centre Secondary Plan study and Markham Sub-Committee, consistent with Recommendation 3.d. of the September 23, 2019 report to Development Services Committee entitled "City of Markham Comments on York Region's Draft Employment Framework - 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review".

9. Cornell Rouge Development Corporation, Varlese Brothers Limited, 2432194 Ontario Inc., and 2536871 Ontario Inc., 7386-7482 Highway 7, 8600-8724 Reesor Road

That the Development Services Sub-Committee support the deferral of Council's consideration of the request for conversion submitted by Cornell Rouge Development Corporation, Varlese Brothers Ltd., 2432194 Ontario Inc. and 2536871 Ontario Inc. for the lands located at 7386-7482 Highway 7 and 8600-8724 Reesor Road to the Cornell Centre Secondary Plan study and Markham Sub-Committee, consistent with Recommendation 3.c. of the September 23, 2019 report to Development Services Committee entitled "City of Markham Comments on York Region's Draft Employment Framework - 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review".

10. Primont Homes and Cornell Rouge Development Corp – Hwy 7 (Cornell)

That the Development Services Sub-Committee support the request for conversion submitted by Primont Homes and Cornell Rouge Development Corporation of the lands located at the northwest corner of Highway 7 and Donald Cousens Parkway, consistent with Recommendation 2.a. of the September 23, 2019 report to Development Services Committee entitled "City of Markham Comments on York Region's Draft Employment Framework - 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review".

Additional Conversion Request Considered by Sub-Committee

At the November 8, 2019 Sub-Committee meeting, an additional conversion request received by the Region in October 2019 nor a 1.1 ha parcel at 136 Markland Street, was also considered. The lands are identified and described in further detail in Appendix 'B', and staff and Sub-Committee recommendations are provided below.

11. King Square Ltd, 136 Markland Street (Cachet)

Applicant request and justification: To allow the property to be developed with a building that would contain a mix of uses, including employment uses (office, personal service etc), residential uses, and potentially community uses. The applicant justification is that the building as proposed would maintain an employment function while adding complementary residential uses, and that the Business Park uses are not likely to locate on the site given its size and irregular configuration. A planning justification letter was submitted addressing the Growth Plan and Region's employment conversion criteria.

Staff recommendation and comments: Staff do not support the request for the following reasons:

- The subject lands are located within the portion of the viable Cachet employment area that extends along the west side of Markland Street from 16th Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive. Although the net developable area of the parcel is likely less than a hectare, allowing residential uses on these lands would compromise the viability of this employment area northward and southward of the property by, among other things, increasing land values.
- Staff also note that the subject lands are immediately north of the 5.9 ha lands which Condor Properties are seeking to convert. The King Square request is an example of staff's concern with conversion 'creep' or 'domino effect', i.e., having employment land owners seek the same non-employment use permissions when adjacent properties are approved for conversion.

At the November 8, 2019 Sub-Committee meeting, the applicant for King Square Ltd presented their position and staff presented their recommendation to not support the conversion request.

Consideration of this request, along with the adjacent Condor Properties request to the south, was deferred to an additional Sub-Committee meeting held on December 3, 2019 at which the surrounding land use context, road network, and development activity in the vicinity were to be considered. The December 3, 2019 Sub-Committee recommendation, consistent with the recommendation for the Condor Properties request, is as follows:

11. That a decision on the request for conversion submitted by King Square Ltd for the lands located at 136 Markland Street be postponed for further consideration for the feasibility of securing affordable, purpose-built rental, and/or seniors housing as well as significant retention of on-site employment and acceleration of construction of the Highway 404 overpass.

Status of Conversion Requests from the 2031 MCR/Markham Official Plan 2014

As part of the presentations to Sub-Committee, staff provided an update on the status of conversion requests approved in 2013 as part of the City's 2031 MCR. Of the 12 applications received, involving 116-149 hectares of employment lands, 8 applications (70 ha) were approved for conversion at the time. For the applications approved for conversion, the employment land designation in the Official Plan 2014 was shown as 'deferred' pending confirmation of an alternate non-employment designation through adoption of a site-specific official plan amendment.

Of the 8 approved applications, two were approved for solely residential uses (low-rise) and six applicants committed to making up lost jobs by delivering the equivalent or more jobs (mainly office and retail) on mixed use or remaining employment lands. As of late 2019, three draft plans of subdivision for low-rise residential were under review and one had been approved. Two site plan applications for residential development were also under review. No site plan applications for office or other non-residential uses had yet been received for any of the conversions supported by Council.

Catholic Cemeteries (OP 13-116842)

As mentioned in the September 23, 2019 report, one of the remaining outstanding requests for conversion/redesignation received in 2013 was for the 22 ha Catholic Cemeteries lands at 3010 and 3196 19th Avenue (see location map in Appendix 'C').

Prior to the adoption of the new Official Plan in 2013, Markham Council resolved to defer consideration of the application for two years to allow staff to work with the applicant to identify a mutually-agreeable alternate location for the proposed use. The lands are designated 'Future Employment Area' in the Official Plan with a 'Deferral' symbol linked to a site-specific policy to that effect.

Although the Mayor and staff have been working with Catholic Cemeteries since that time, an appropriate alternate location has not yet been identified.

It should be noted that in 2016 the Region undertook a Cemetery Needs Analysis and Policy Framework Study as input to the land needs analysis for the 2041 MCR. The study looked at cemetery needs Region-wide and found that York Region had a sufficient cemetery land capacity to accommodate 35-60 years of resident (York Region) and non-resident (outside York Region) demand. Although cemetery land shortfalls were identified for certain municipalities, Markham was not among them, and although Roman Catholics were identified as a user group with a Region-wide cemetery land shortfall, the study found that Markham already accommodated a large share of York Region's total cemetery lands, including Catholic cemeteries.

At the November 8, 2019 Sub-Committee meeting, a representative for Catholic Cemeteries sought Council direction on the outstanding application. The Sub-Committee recommendation was that staff meet with the applicant prior to the end of 2019 to discuss options for either identifying a potential mutually-agreeable location for a cemetery, or proceeding with the processing of the Official Plan amendment application, prior to reporting back to Council. Staff met with the applicant in December 2019 and are continuing to work with the applicant to seek alternate sites for the cemetery.

Additional conversion requests not considered by Sub-Committee

In a March 2019 Regional staff report dealing with employment land conversions, an additional request for conversion was identified which was not included in the September 23, 2019 Markham staff report, or considered by Sub-Committee. This request, submitted by Neamsby Investments for lands on the south side of 14th Avenue between Middlefield Rd and Markham Rd, has been revived and is described in further detail in Appendix 'B' to this report. Staff supports this conversion request for the reasons outlined in the assessment below.

12. Neamsby Investments Inc, 5821 to 5933 14th Avenue (Armadale)

Applicant request and justification: To redesignate the 3.75 ha lands from employment to allow for residential uses. The applicant justification is that the lands are the only remaining employment lands on the south side of 14th Avenue and that they directly abut an existing and emerging residential neighbourhood.

Staff recommendation and comments: Staff support this request for the following reasons:

- these employment lands are the lands that remained after a larger 22 ha employment area south of 14th Avenue was approved for conversion to residential uses during the City's 2031 MCR. These remnant employment area lands are separated from the Armadale employment area to the north by 14th Avenue, and non-employment uses on the lands would not affect the viability of the employment lands north of 14th Avenue.
- the location of the lands on an arterial road in close proximity to a community centre and a major shopping centre would be suitable for a mixed use designation allowing for intensive commercial (e.g., office) and residential uses, particularly residential uses that achieve other Official Plan objectives, such as affordable housing.
- Council should also have regard for the Growth Plan requirement that redevelopment of employment lands should maintain or retain space for a similar number of jobs on the lands; provision of some type of employment in the form of small scale offices would be consistent with Council's recommendation in 2013.

A second additional request for conversion was submitted to the Region in late November 2019 for lands on Doncaster Avenue in the Thornhill employment area. The submission was made prior to the Region's November 29, 2019 deadline for accepting employment conversion requests to be considered as part of the 2041 MCR. Markham staff do not support the conversion request for the reasons outlined in the assessment below.

13. Varmo Investment Company, 108, 111-113 and 112-118 Doncaster Avenue (Thornhill)

Applicant request and justification: To redesignate the 0.94 ha lands (3 parcels) from employment to allow for residential uses (townhouses and stacked townhouses). The applicant justification is that a large retail presence along Doncaster Avenue makes it appear to function as a retail street rather than an employment area, and conversion of the lands to residential uses would be consistent with their location close to a school and park and at the end of a retail street. A planning justification letter was submitted outlining the applicable official plan and zoning designations.

Staff recommendation and comments: Staff do not support this request for the following reasons:

12. The subject lands are located within the portion of the Thornhill employment area that extends along both sides of Doncaster Avenue from just east of Yonge Street to just west of Henderson Avenue, and extending northward to Glen Cameron Rd. Although the total net developable area of the 3 parcels is about a hectare, allowing residential uses on these lands would compromise the viability of the employment area lands northward and southward of the property by, among other things, increasing land values.

Recommendation

The staff recommendations for the requests considered by Sub-Committee remain unchanged from the September 23, 2019 report. The Sub-Committee recommendations are being brought to Development Services Committee through this report for a decision.

It is recommended that the February 11, 2020 staff report, along with Development Services Committee recommendations on the 11 conversion requests considered by Sub-Committee, be forwarded to York Region as Markham Council's input to date on the Region's 2041 Municipal Comprehensive Review.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This report relates to the Safe and Sustainable Community priority of Building Markham's Future Together.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

The Planning & Urban Design and Economic Development departments have been consulted regarding the recommendations of this report.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Biju Karumanchery
Director, Planning and Urban Design

Arvin Prasad, Commissioner of
Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Table 1 - Summary of Employment Land Conversion Considerations in Markham

Appendix 'A' - September 23, 2019 Staff Report entitled "City of Markham Comments on York Region's Draft Employment Framework – 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review"

Appendix 'B' - Location Map and Description for Additional Employment Conversion Request - King Square Ltd, Neamsby Investments Ltd, Varmo Investment Company

Appendix 'C' - Catholic Cemeteries Lands at 3010 and 3196 19th Avenue