



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: October 26, 2020

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION REPORT, Corbett Land Strategies Inc., on behalf of Emix Ltd., Applications to amend the Official Plan and Zoning By-law to add commercial uses including a Commercial self-storage Facility at 8400 Woodbine Avenue, west side of Woodbine Avenue, north of Perth Avenue (Ward 8) File Nos. PLAN 19 132742 and PLAN 20 110587

PREPARED BY: Rick Cefaratti, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner, West District, (Ext. 3675)

REVIEWED BY: Ron Blake, MCIP, RPP
Senior Development Manager, (Ext. 2600)

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the report dated October 26, 2020, entitled “RECOMMENDATION REPORT, Corbett Land Strategies Inc., on behalf of Emix Ltd., Applications to amend the Official Plan and Zoning By-law to add commercial uses including a Commercial self-storage Facility at 8400 Woodbine Avenue, west side of Woodbine Avenue, north of Perth Avenue (Ward 8) File Nos. PLAN 19 132742 and PLAN 20 110587”, be received;
2. THAT the Official Plan Amendment application submitted by Corbett Land Strategies Inc., on behalf of Emix Ltd., to amend the 2014 Official Plan, be approved by Council, and that the draft Official Plan Amendment attached as Appendix ‘A’ be finalized and adopted by Council;
3. THAT the amendment to Zoning By-law 165-80, as amended, be approved and the draft implementing Zoning By-law, attached as Appendix ‘B’, be finalized and enacted, without further notice;
4. That in accordance with the provisions of subsection 45(1.4) of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13, as amended, the owner shall, through this Resolution, be permitted to apply to the Committee of Adjustment for a variance from the provisions of the zoning by-law attached as Appendix ‘B’ to this report, before the second anniversary of the day on which the by-law was approved by Council;
5. AND THAT Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

This report recommends approval of the Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment applications to broaden the range of permitted uses on the subject lands to include a commercial self-storage facility, restaurants a banquet hall, and a warehouse.

BACKGROUND:

Property and Area Context

The 1.24 ha. (3.07 ac.) subject property is located on the northwest corner of Woodbine Avenue and Perth Avenue. The property also has road frontage on the east side of Cochrane Drive. The site contains a large retail warehouse style, three storey commercial building with a gross floor area of 10,509 m² (113,119 ft²). Parking is provided on a surface lot surrounding the building. Existing uses operating within the building include a furniture outlet and an immigration office. Located to the north are various commercial operations. To the south, across Perth Avenue, is a hotel (Comfort Inn) and other commercial uses. An application for Site Plan approval, for a seven (7) storey, dual branded (Home 2 and True) hotel building and a four storey office building on the Comfort Inn property was endorsed in principle by Development Services Committee in April of 2019, and the associated site plan agreement is with the owner for execution. To the east, across Woodbine Avenue, are various commercial uses including an appliance store. To the west, across Cochrane Drive, are industrial uses and an office building (see Figures 1, 2 and 3).

Application Status

Applications submitted in support of the proposal include a site specific amendment to the 2014 Official Plan and a Zoning By-law Amendment.

- The application for a Zoning by-law Amendment was deemed complete on September 20, 2019.
- The application for an Official Plan Amendment was deemed complete on April 6, 2020.
- The Statutory Public Meeting for the Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment applications was held (electronically) on June 2, 2019.
- All of the proposed alterations to the existing building are internal and an application for Site Plan approval is not required.

Proposal

The owner is proposing to renovate a portion of the first floor at the front of the building, and the second and third floors of the existing three (3) storey building for a commercial self-storage facility. The existing immigration office use will continue to occupy most of the first floor. The remaining portion, and all of the space on the second and third floors is now vacant and is proposed to be converted to provide space for self-storage lockers. There are no external changes proposed for the existing building. In addition, the existing zoning is very specific as to the types of retail uses permitted, therefore the owner is also proposing to broaden permission for retail store type uses as well as to permit restaurants, a banquet hall and a warehouse as a large area within the building is currently vacant.

Conformity with Provincial Policy and York Region Official Plan

The proposal to establish a Commercial self-storage Facility and additional uses on the subject property conforms to the applicable provincial policy framework, including the Provincial Policy Statement and the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. In addition, this proposal conforms to the 'Urban Area' land use designation and policies of the Regional of York Official Plan which provides for a wide range of commercial and industrial uses on the subject property.

Official Plan

2014 Official Plan

The subject lands are designated Commercial in the 2014 Markham Official Plan (as partially approved on November 24, 2017 and updated by the LPAT on April 9, 2018). The designation provides for a broad range of commercial uses including large format retail, complementary retail, service, and office uses, as well as restaurants, banquet halls, financial institutions, light manufacturing, processing and warehousing. Staff note that lands designated 'Commercial' form part of the City's 'Employment Area' as shown on Map 1 – Markham Structure. The Official Plan does not provide for a commercial self-storage facility use, therefore an Official Plan Amendment is required.

Site Specific Official Plan Policy for a Commercial self-storage Facility

The draft Official Plan amendment, as shown in Appendix 'A', proposes to provide for a Commercial self-storage Facility use within the existing building on the subject property.

ZONING

These lands are currently zoned SC1 – Special Commercial One Zone under By-law 165-80, as amended, which permits very specific commercial uses including business or professional offices, lumber and building supplies outlets, sales of home improvement products, personal service shops, book stores, banks, hotels and motels, pet stores and supplies, furniture sales and repair, commercial schools as well as recreational and entertainment facilities.

The draft Zoning By-law Amendment as shown in Appendix 'B' proposes to add the following uses on the subject property:

- Commercial self-storage Facility
- Retail stores
- Restaurants
- Banquet Hall
- Warehouse

In addition, the owner is proposing the following site specific parking rate be applied to the proposed Commercial self-storage Facility use:

- 0.81 spaces per 100 m² Gross Floor Area (GFA)

All other uses will be subject to the minimum parking rates required under the City's Parking Standards By-law (28-97).

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Issues identified in the Preliminary Report and at the Public Meeting

Preliminary Report

Several matters for consideration were identified in the April 21, 2020 preliminary report including:

Building Standards Department

The Zoning section indicated that 5% of the total parking spaces are required to be accessible spaces, whereas only 2% of the total parking spaces are currently accessible spaces.

Engineering

A Parking Study was reviewed by Transportation Engineering staff, and it was determined the current on-site parking supply of 188 spaces is sufficient to accommodate the proposed Commercial self-storage Facility and existing Immigration consulting office. However, the Study did not include an analysis for the other commercial uses proposed such as a retail store, a restaurant or a banquet hall.

Public Meeting

The Statutory Public Meeting was held electronically on June 2, 2020. Comments made at the Public Meeting included:

- Whether there is sufficient parking to support all the additional uses being requested;
- Whether the Parking Study needs to be revised to consider additional uses on the property;
- Whether there will be any restrictions on the amount of space in the building that may be occupied by a future banquet hall or restaurant; and,
- Appropriateness of permitting a Commercial self-storage Facility and additional commercial uses on the subject property;

These issues are addressed as follows:

Proposed commercial uses can be accommodated on a limited basis.

Transportation Planning staff support the Parking Study's findings that the commercial self-storage facility only requires parking at a rate of 0.81 spaces per 100 m² of GFA (76 spaces). However, the floor area to accommodate all other uses on the property, both existing and proposed, will be limited by the ability of each use to provide the required amount of parking from the remaining balance (112 spaces) in accordance with the Parking Standards By-law. In order to address the high parking demands for restaurants and banquet halls (parking required at a rate of 1 space per 9 m²), Staff recommends that the total combined floor area for restaurants and banquet hall uses be limited to a maximum of 10% of the gross floor area of the existing building (1,000 m²) to ensure there are no future parking deficiencies. Staff have advised the applicant of these limitations.

In light of the Zoning Section's comments that a minimum of 5% of the total parking be accessible spaces, it is recommended that prior to the establishment of any additional uses on the subject property, the pavement markings on the parking lot be revised to meet the minimum amount of accessible spaces required on-site.

Proposed Uses Are Appropriate

Staff are of the opinion that the proposed additional uses (commercial self-storage facility, retail store, restaurant, banquet hall and warehouse) can be supported on the subject property.

The proposed interior renovation of part of the first floor, all of the second and third floors of the existing underutilized warehouse style building for commercial storage use purposes will provide an adaptive reuse of this building from previous uses that existed on the property that are no longer considered viable. The existing business office for immigration services on the first floor will not be impacted. The Commercial self-storage Facility will provide a low intensity land use within the existing building until future redevelopment of the site is proposed, in accordance with the 'Commercial' polices of the Official Plan, and will contribute to the existing mix and range of commercial and employment uses in the area.

There is an increasing demand for commercial self-storage facilities across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), including in the City of Markham. This increased demand is due, in large part, to the market dynamics of the GTA where both older generations of residents are downsizing and younger family households are moving into smaller homes, and require additional storage space than they can accommodate on their properties. The increased demand for these facilities also comes from employment area customers that need additional storage space to grow their business operations.

The subject property is located at the edge of lands designated for Employment uses. Due to its proximity to employment and commercial areas and its access to a comprehensive transportation network (Woodbine Avenue, Perth Avenue, Cochrane Drive, Highway 7 East, Highway 404), the proposed Commercial self-storage Facility will provide storage space opportunities for both local businesses within the employment and commercial areas, and for residential customers requiring self-storage who will access the site from Woodbine Avenue.

The additional commercial uses proposed through the Zoning By-law Amendment application will be compatible with the surrounding developments in the area, and will add flexibility to address the difficulty the owner has recently experienced in maintaining full occupancy of the building.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the discussion above, Staff recommend adoption of the proposed Official Plan amendment attached as Appendix 'A', and approval of the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment attached as Appendix 'B'.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The proposed applications have been reviewed in the context of the City's Strategic Priorities of Transportation and Municipal Services.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

These applications have been circulated to various departments and external agencies and their comments have been addressed.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Biju Karumanchery, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Director, Planning & Urban Design

Arvin Prasad, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Commissioner of Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1 – Location Map
Figure 2 – Area Context/Zoning
Figure 3 – Air Photo
Figure 4 – Site Plan

APPENDICES:

Appendix 'A' – Draft OPA
Appendix 'B' – Draft ZBA

OWNER:

Emix Ltd.
C/O Christian Hepfer
63 Wingold Avenue
Toronto, ON
Phone: (416) 480-0006
Email: chepfer@emixprop.com

APPLICANT/AGENT:

Corbett Land Strategies Inc.
C/O John Corbett
483 Dundas Street West
Oakville, Ontario L6M 1L9
Phone (289) 725-9229
Email: john@corbettlandstrategies.ca