



CARDING MILL TRAIL

Activity Node Market Review

Oakville, Ontario

Prepared for **The Remington Group**

October 14, 2021



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Ms. Emma Barron RPP MCIP
The Remington Group Inc.
7501 Keele Street, Suite 100
Vaughan, Ontario
L4K 1Y2

Dear Ms. Barron:

RE: Carding Mill Trail – Activity Node Market Review (Oakville, Ontario)

urbanMetrics inc. is pleased to provide you with this study to review the market and feasibility with regards to the Activity Node designated at the intersection of Carding Mill Trail and future “Street B” in the North Oakville Secondary Plan.

The Remington Group is preparing a plan of subdivision in North Oakville south of William Halton Parkway and west of Neyagawa Blvd. The future community would be comprised of single detached, townhome, and lane-based townhome units, in addition to two mixed use apartment blocks. In addition, there would be a 4.34 hectare neighbourhood park between Street B and C, immediately west of Carding Mill Trail. The mixed-use blocks would be situated at the intersection of William Halton Parkway and Carding Mill Trail. As per the North Oakville East Secondary Plan, an Activity Node has been identified at the intersection of Carding Mill Trail and Street B.

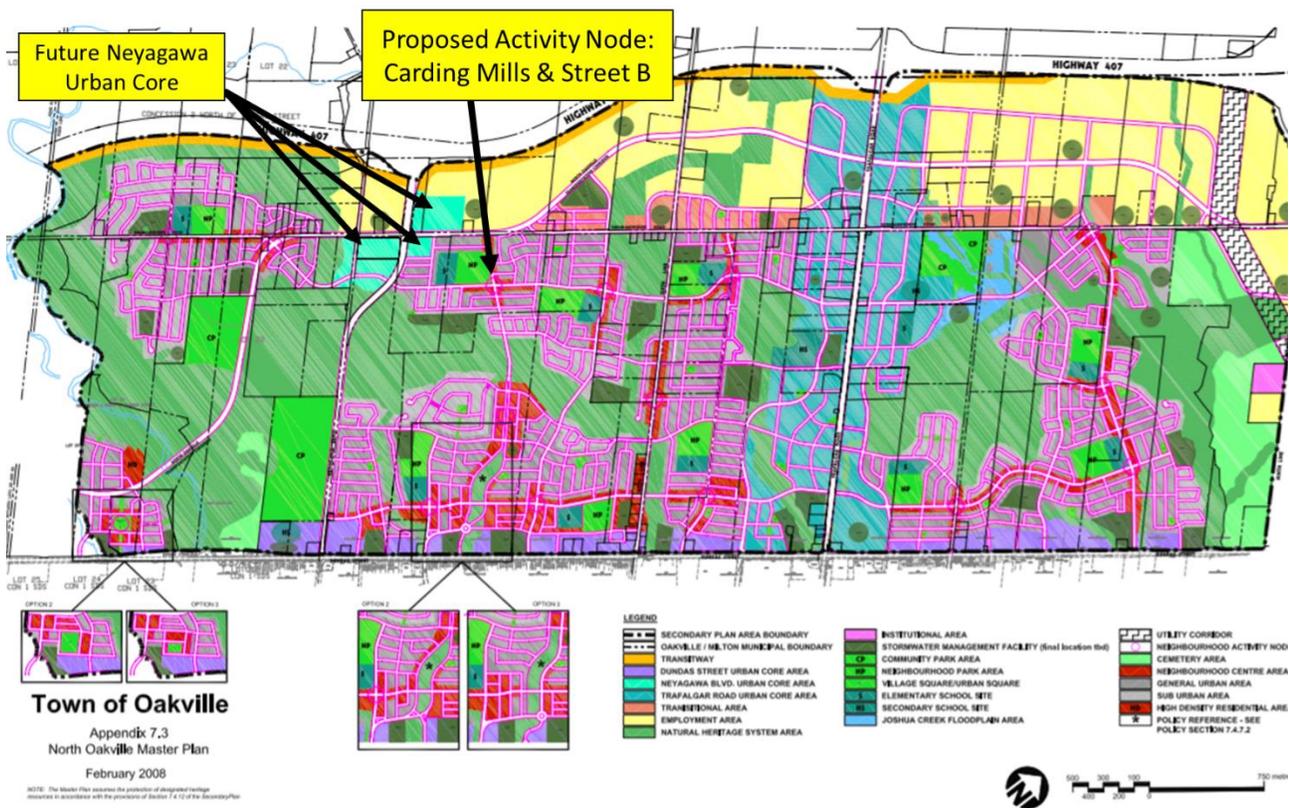
The intent of Neighbourhood Activity Nodes is described in Policy 7.5.12 of the North Oakville East Secondary Plan:

Each neighbourhood will include at its centre, approximately a five minute walk from most areas of the neighbourhood, a neighbourhood Activity Node which would include a transit stop and other public facilities which serve the neighbourhood such as central mail boxes or mail pickup facilities. In addition, convenience commercial facilities or similar uses will be encouraged to locate at the neighbourhood Activity Node.

Official Plan Amendment 321 added the following requirement with regards to Neighbourhood Activity Nodes:

Notwithstanding the above, a minimum of one mixed use or non-residential building, in accordance with the provisions in Section 7.6.7.1.c) is required at the intersection of each neighbourhood Activity Node identified on Figure NOE 1. (Policy 7.6.7.1 b)

Figure 1: North Oakville East Secondary Plan Showing the Subject Activity Node

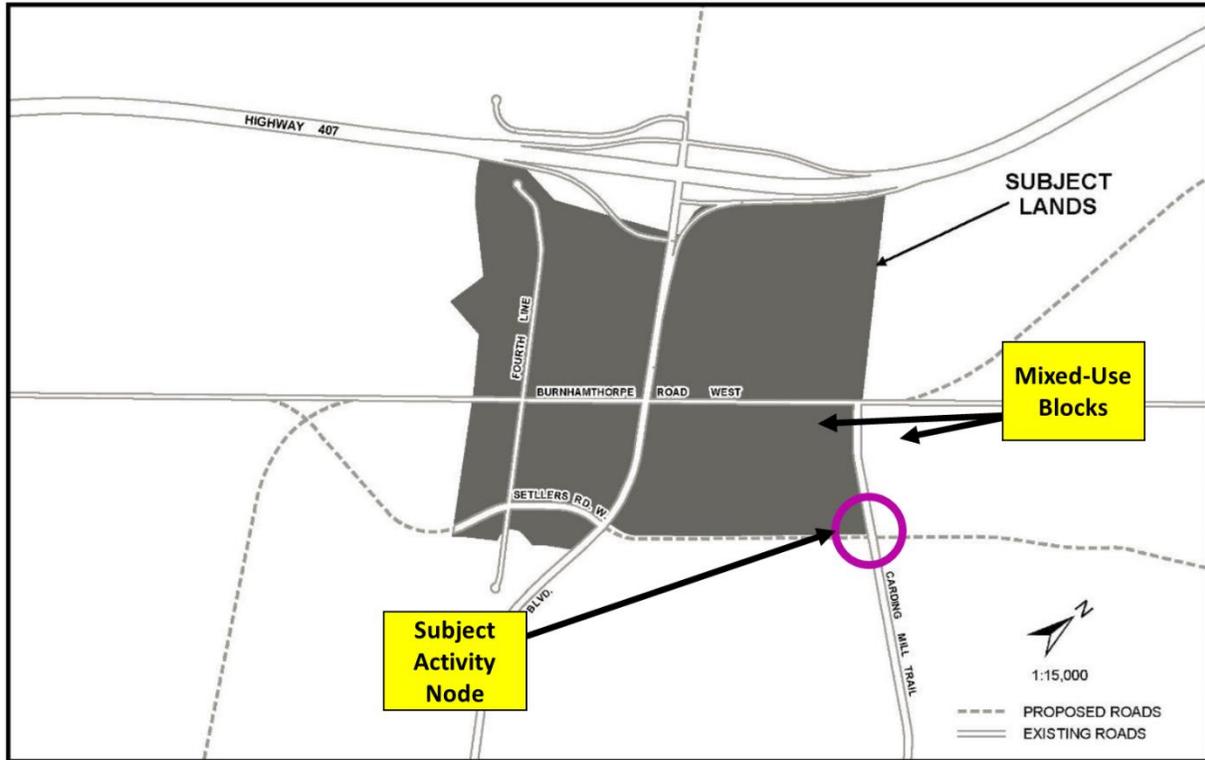


Source: urbanMetrics. Base map from the North Oakville East Secondary Plan.

The Remington Group is planning to include commercial uses within the two mixed use blocks and questions whether a mixed-use or non-residential building would still be necessary if commercial uses are also being provided some 250 metres to the north on the mixed-use apartment sites.

In addition to the Activity Node at Carding Mill Trail and Street “B”, the North Oakville East Secondary Plan also includes an Activity Node some 700 metres east of the Carding Mill Trail/Street “B” intersection at the intersection of Preserve Drive and Street “B” and another Activity Node some 800 metres to the south at Carding Mill Trail and Harold Dent Trail, which includes mini-mart, a hair salon, a dentist office and a tutoring office and other space at the ground floor of a three storey mixed use apartment building. Less than a kilometre to the Northwest is the Neyagawa Urban Core, which

Figure 3: Proposed Revision to the Neyagawa Urban Core



Source: urbanMetrics. Base Map from Oakville Staff Report dated September 21, 2021 and presented at the October 4, 2021 Planning and Development Council meeting.

The purpose of this letter is to review the potential function of an Activity Node at the intersection of Carding Mill Trail and Street “B” and whether or not the function could be as well or better fulfilled through commercial uses within the mixed-use apartment blocks.

What is the planned function of the Activity Node at the intersection of Carding Mill Trail and Street “B”?

As per the North Oakville Secondary Plan:

Each neighbourhood will include at its centre, approximately a five minute walk from most areas of the neighbourhood, a neighbourhood Activity Node which would include a transit stop and other public facilities which serve the neighbourhood such as central mail boxes or mail pickup facilities. In addition, convenience commercial facilities or similar uses will be encouraged to locate at the neighbourhood Activity Node. (Policy 7.5.12 a))

Policy 7.6.7.1 a) reiterates this:

The Neighbourhood Centre Area land use category on Appendix 7.3 will generally be used for areas located central to each neighbourhood. It is intended to accommodate a range of medium density residential development including live/work units and limited commercial and civic uses focused at a central neighbourhood Activity Node to serve neighbourhood residents.

Permitted uses as per 7.6.7.1 b) are as follows:

- *The permitted uses shall be medium density residential uses and small scale convenience retail, personal service, restaurants and business activity, as well as public and institutional uses including village squares. Business activity may include a range of small scale uses including offices, medical clinics, workshops for artisans and artists studios.*
- *Permitted uses shall be primarily located in live/work or medium density residential buildings. Both mixed use and single use buildings shall be permitted and this may include convenience commercial buildings in accordance with the provisions in Subsection c) below.*

In addition,

There will be a transit stop at the centre of each neighbourhood. Additional stops will be located so that all residents and employees are predominantly within 400 metre walking distance of a transit stop (Policy 7.7.2.2 ii).

In 2018, Oakville passed By-law 321, which among other policy changes, removed the permission for live/work units in Activity Nodes and replaced it with “mixed/use”, as per Policy 7.6.7.1. Presumably this broadens the type of uses permitted within Activity Nodes beyond live/work units, although the policy is silent as to whether the Town considers live/work units a type of mixed-use building.

In addition, By-law 321 added that a “mixed use or non-residential building” would now be “required” at the intersection of each neighbourhood Activity Node.

Several points can be derived from these policies. First that the neighbourhood Activity Node would be the focal point of a Neighbourhood Centre Area and it should be within a walking distance of most parts of the neighbourhood. However, it is difficult to definitively discern its “planned function”, as the range of permitted uses is very broad. For example, a non-residential building could include: an office, a medical clinic, an artist’s workshop, institutional uses, such as places of worship and schools, a restaurant, a personal service shop, or a convenience store. Similarly, one or more of these uses could be accommodated within a mixed-use building. Each of these uses would have a different

market draw and operational characteristics. Apart from being places of employment, most of these uses would likely be open to the public, although this would not necessarily be the case for an office or a workshop.

Housing these units in a “mixed use” building appears to be an added consideration as per the 2018 amendments to the North Oakville East Secondary Plan.

Walkability also appears to be important to the concept of an Activity Node, as the policies suggest that it be within approximately a five-minute walk of most parts of the “neighbourhood”. As neighbourhood boundaries are not identified in the policies, it is difficult to determine how it can be ascertained whether most parts of a neighbourhood are within a five minute walk of an Activity Node. The definition of what constitutes a “five-minute walk” would vary from person to person, but generally it would represent a distance of about 400 to 500 metres. The policies, however, acknowledge that it is not possible or feasible for the entire of the Secondary Plan Area to be within this distance of an Activity Node, as it indicates that additional transit stops would need to be added outside of Activity Nodes in order to attain the necessary coverage.

In our opinion, the policies are intended to provide that some community and commercial services are available within a reasonable walking distance of residents. However, the policies are limited in that they cannot control the uses which are ultimately developed. Furthermore, there are many challenges with the inclusion of commercial uses within predominately low-rise neighbourhoods and low-rise buildings (i.e. single and semi-detached and townhomes). The types of commercial uses are severely limited by elements, such as parking, expensive ventilation systems in the case of food services, adequate on-street space for pick-ups and deliveries and commercial trash collection, the ability to accommodate tenant space requirements, and the potential for nuisance impacts. In our opinion, where possible, a larger mixed-use building with a larger floor plate and lot is a much more effective means of accommodating commercial tenants.

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate two examples of mixed-use buildings on sites comparable in size to the two mixed use blocks to be developed by Remington. Figure 3 shows a four-storey mixed use building at Mississauga Road and Olivia Marie Road (50 Sky Harbour Drive) in Brampton. The height of this building is lower than the up to 12 storeys being proposed by Remington for the mixed-use blocks, but still shows the greater opportunities and increased flexibility to accommodate retail and services tenants at the base of a multi-unit apartment block complex versus low-rise street related buildings, which would likely be the format for uses in the Activity Node at Carding Mill Trail and Street “B”. This building is on a 0.8 hectare site, which is approximately the size of the mixed use site on the east side of Carding Mill Trail. This building is situated at the gateway to a similar low-rise neighbourhood with townhomes, single and semi-detached dwellings as is planned for the part of North Oakville in which the Activity Node is situated. At the base of the building is a pharmacy, a small grocery store, medical offices and food services. In our opinion, this building demonstrates a very effective way of accommodating local serving commercial uses in a mixed-use building at the gateway to a low-rise neighbourhood. While we note that the proposed Remington mixed use buildings would be

somewhat taller at 12 storeys, this building provides an example of the variety of retail spaces that can be accommodated in a larger building footprint in a setting similar to that of North Oakville.

Figure 3: 4-Storey Mixed Use Building 50 Sky Harbour Drive, Brampton



Photo from Google Earth 2021

Another example of a mixed-use building of a scale more comparable to that of the mixed-use blocks proposed by Remington is a recently constructed mixed-use building in Richmond Hill at the intersection of Yonge Street and Observatory Lane shown in Figure 4. This building is 15 storeys in height and provides street front retail units suitable for tenants serving the local neighbourhood. It is situated on a 1.1 hectare site, which is similar in size to the mixed use site on the east side of Carding Mill Trail. Parking for the commercial units is provided at grade at the rear of the building. Residential parking is underground. Like the two Remington mixed-use blocks, this building is situated on an arterial roadway at the gateway to a predominantly low-rise neighbourhood. The base of the building includes some 20 units of approximately 600 to 800 square feet each, including dentists, personal services, and a pastry shop.

Figure 4: 15-Storey Mixed-use Building Yonge Street and Observatory Lane, Richmond Hill



As noted previously, the proposal by Remington would be to include commercial uses in two mixed use blocks a short distance to the north of the Carding Mill Trail/Street “B” intersection at Carding Mill Trail and William Halton Parkway. In our opinion, this location would provide far more opportunities to meet the objectives of the Activity Node policies than the current location. While the design of the mixed-use blocks is still in process, these sites could accommodate more commercial space with greater flexibility to accommodate different types of tenants than would the current Activity Node. Furthermore, the location at the gateway to the neighbourhood at William Halton Parkway would bolster the commercial market for uses on the site supporting stronger and more sustainable tenants.

How well served will the neighbourhood be in terms of commercial and community space?

Although the community is still developing and many non-residential uses are not in place, our opinion is that the neighbourhood will better served by community and commercial services if the Activity Node is moved further north to the mixed use blocks. As noted previously, there are already two other Activity Nodes within a short distance of the Carding Mill Trail/Street “B” intersection. The future Neyagawa Urban Core will be within one kilometre of the intersection and the Dundas Urban Core will be within two kilometres. If the proposed revision to the Neyagawa Urban Core is approved, then the core would be considerably closer to the planned subdivision and within a short walking distance, particularly for residents living west of Carding Mill Trail. In addition, for many residents of the neighbourhood, the path to commercial uses within the Neyagawa Urban Core would be through a neighbourhood park, which would further enhance the walkability of the neighbourhood.

A large neighbourhood shopping centre anchored by a Fortino's supermarket already exists on Neyagawa Blvd. and Dundas Street - two kilometres from the Carding Mill Trail/Street "B" intersection. In our opinion, for low rise neighbourhoods, such as the subject area, two kilometres is an efficient distance for major food shopping. This distance can be reached by bicycle in approximately 6 minutes and by foot in approximately 25 minutes. The Neyagawa Urban Core is even closer at a walk of approximately 10 to 12 minutes and a bicycle ride of approximately 3 minutes from the intersection of Carding Mill Trail and Street "B". These travel times would be further shortened with the revised boundaries to the Neyagawa Urban Core. The commercial uses to be included within the mixed use blocks will further add to the commercial offering within the immediate vicinity of the intersection. In terms of community uses, there is a park site immediately adjacent to the intersection and an elementary school site beside the park – both of which are a short walk of the intersection.

Relocating the Activity Node to the mixed-use blocks to the north will still enable the neighbourhood to be extremely well served by community and commercial services within an easy walk or bike ride, and provide for a greater amount and diversity of commercial services than would be the case if it were to remain at the intersection of Carding Mill Trail and Street "B".

If the Activity Node were to be moved further north to the Mixed-Use Blocks, would the neighbourhood be better or worse served in terms of access to commercial space?

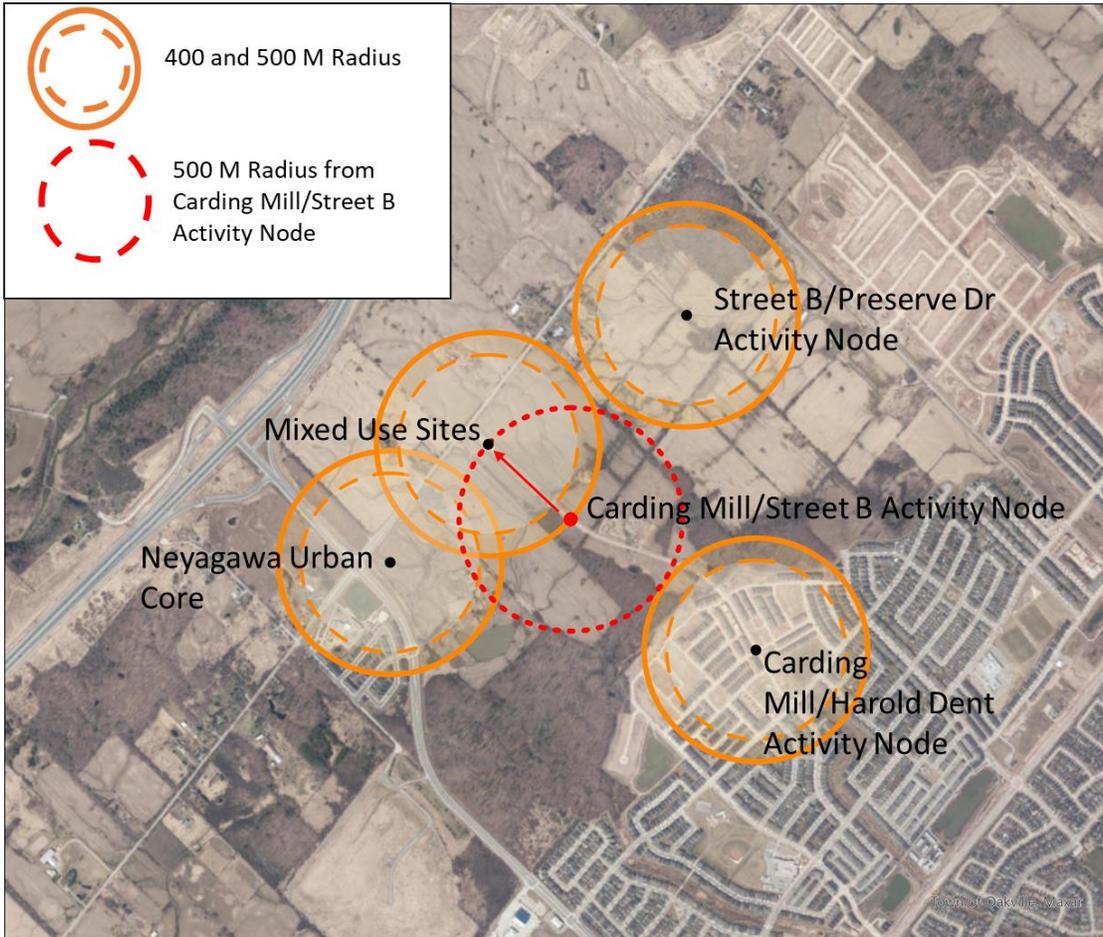
Excluding the Activity Node at Carding Mill Trail and Street "B", there are three nodes with either existing commercial space or the planning approvals for commercial space all within a short walk of the Carding Mill/Street "B" intersection, including:

- Carding Mill Trail/Harold Dent Trail, with existing commercial uses, including a mini-mart, a hair salon, a dental clinic and other tenants 800 metres south of the subject intersection;
- Street "B"/Preserve Drive some 700 metres west of the subject intersection. This area is not yet developed;
- The Neyagawa Urban Core, some 900 metres northeast of the subject intersection. Urban Core areas are to provide for the densest development and the highest order activities including a full range of residential, retail and service commercial, entertainment, cultural, business and institutional uses. The Neyagawa Urban Core is permitted up to 31,000 square feet of retail and other commercial space, including supermarkets. The intent of this Core Area is to permit the provision of convenience commercial, institutional and employment uses to serve adjacent neighbourhoods, as well as related residential development. The proposed revised boundaries of the Neyagawa Urban Core would extend this area to Carding Mill Trail and would include the northeast quadrant of the Activity node at Carding Mill Trail and Street "B". The planning application by Remington has requested a further extension of the urban core to include their entire frontage along William Halton Parkway, including both mixed-use development blocks.

In addition to these three commercial nodes, the commercial space within the mixed use buildings at Carding Mill Trail and William Halton Parkway would represent an additional commercial opportunity 250 metres north of the subject intersection.

An objective of the North Oakville Secondary Plan is to have Activity Nodes that are “approximately a five minute walk from most areas of the neighbourhood”. Assuming that a five minute walk would be between 400 and 500 metres, almost the entire neighbourhood would be within this distance of at least one commercial node - even if the Activity Node was moved north to the mixed use blocks. While there is no set definition of what a neighbourhood might be, there are natural heritage features that act as dividing points between different parts of the North Oakville community. In this case the “neighbourhood” in question might be defined as the area extending from the Neyagawa Urban Core to the natural heritage lands straddling the west side of Sixth Line between William Halton Parkway and the Natural Heritage feature to the south. Figure 5 illustrates that the majority of this area is within 400 to 500 metres of an activity centre or an Urban Core Area. Although this figure shows a gap between the three northern radii and the southern radius, much of the interstitial land is occupied by a natural heritage corridor. Of further note is that by moving the activity node further north to the mixed use sites means that portions of the neighbourhood to the north not currently within the 500 metre radius of the Carding Mill Trail/Street “B” intersection would now be within the radius of the Activity Node at the mixed use sites.

It is also important to note that what is considered a reasonable walking distance will vary. For example, the Growth Plan suggests a reasonable walk to a major transit station would be between 500 and 800 metres. If this definition were used, the entire neighbourhood would be within “walking distance” of commercial facilities in an activity centre or an Urban Core Area.

Figure 5: Neighbourhood Distribution of Existing and Future Commercial Areas

Overall, would the relocation of the Activity Node be supported from a planning and a market perspective?

In our opinion, relocating the Activity Node from the intersection of Carding Mill Trail and Street “B” to the mixed use blocks would be supported from both a planning and a market perspective. From a market perspective, the mixed use blocks provide much greater flexibility to accommodate community and commercial uses than the current Activity Node. It could provide for larger units and tenants whose space and infrastructure requirements would be difficult to accommodate within a low-rise neighbourhood. Overall, the mixed-use blocks could create a more robust community focal point with more sustainable tenants than would the intersection of Carding Mill Trail and Street “B”.

From a planning perspective, the relocation of the Activity Node to the mixed use blocks would still provide for the majority of the neighbourhood to be within an approximate five minute walk of commercial opportunities at an Activity Node or an Urban Core Area and would be closer to northern parts of the neighbourhood that would have previously been outside this walking distance.

Based on our review of the Town’s planning policies and the local market, we would conclude that the relocation of the Activity Node to the mixed-use blocks would be preferable to the current location at Carding Mill Trail and Street “B” and would be supportable based on the policies of the North Oakville East Secondary Plan and subsequent amendments to that plan.

It has been a pleasure preparing this report for you.

Yours truly,

urbanMetrics inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rowan Faludi." The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Rowan Faludi, MCIP, RPP, CMC PLE
Partner
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