

October 22, 2021

**Mr. Jeremy Warson**  
Infrastructure Ontario  
Director, Portfolio Development

1 Dundas St W, Suite 2000  
Toronto ON M5G 1Z3

Dear Jeremy,

As requested, the following outlines our opinion on Infrastructure Ontario's lands at Trafalgar Road and Hwy 407 in Oakville.

As part of the ongoing analysis on those lands in regard to the appropriate land use mix to best facilitate the employment goals as targeted by the Town and Region, we have the following observations in regard to current market trends and realities that we feel are appropriate to highlight.

Whereas in past years/decades there was a suburban office model of standalone business parks "siloes" from any sort of residential component, we are now seeing a trend towards, and demand for, more "live/work" mixed use parks, where there is a mix of both office and residential uses (plus some supportive commercial) to allow workers to minimize commute time and improve their home/work balance. As more and more workers (especially from younger generations) demand this sort of convenience, the suburbs will fall behind downtown cores in their ability to attract these workers if appealing suburban alternatives are not available, and we believe that mixed use developments that embrace a balance of employment and residential uses are the best path forward to create such alternatives. We see the demand for traditional suburban office parks as being likely to wane over time, and municipalities that are positioned to deliver these new mixed use opportunities are likely to benefit as this shift continues.

We also feel that the current market during/post-COVID is also likely be supportive of mixed use developments, as companies who embrace hybrid work arrangements for their office operations (ie. mix of in person and remote) will likely prefer office space where a larger proportion of their employees are in close physical proximity, will prefer to be in close proximity to their work thereby allowing for more flexibility in how companies manage their hybrid workforce. It may also allow companies to be more creative in how they use their office space, effectively bringing a higher density of workers to a given area/municipality per square footage of office space, as with both work from home and hybrid attendance, these live/work communities will support and house workers both during their "in office" time and their "work from home" time.

Some examples of other municipalities where this sort of approach is being implemented are Markham ("Downtown Markham" and "Langstaff Gateway"), Mississauga ("Lakeview Village"), and Vaughan ("Vaughan Metropolitan Centre") and we feel that the subject lands could be equally suitable for this type of project, which would allow Oakville to compete successfully for office tenants/users looking the types of master planned, mixed-use opportunities that will allow them to attract and retain employees now and into the future.

A passage in a recent study co-authored by PwC and the Urban Land Institute [“2022- Emerging Trends In Real Estate® (Canada/US)”] is particularly evocative of these new dynamics and trends:

**“Even Greater Focus on Mixed-Use Communities:**

The implications of a changing world of work go beyond where people are choosing to live to the types of communities they want to be in. In 2020, we explored the trend of 15-minute cities, which refers to the growing focus on ensuring that people can meet their daily needs, such as a trip to the grocery store or school, within 15 minutes of their home either by walking or cycling. *This has only added to the push to build more complete communities with a vibrant live/work/play dynamic even outside of more urbanized areas.* (emphasis added) But giving even more impetus to this movement is the growing desire among Canadian workers to commute less or not at all. If more employees are going to look for jobs that let them either work from home or have shorter commute times, *the trend toward building mixed-use communities with retail services and offices nearby will become even more important for real estate players. This extends beyond transit-oriented communities, which are being embraced by municipalities across Canada that typically include mixed-use considerations from the start, to apply to other areas—like single-family neighborhoods in major urban centers, suburban communities, and secondary cities— that have typically incorporated less diverse uses.* (emphasis added)”

In short, we believe that by embracing a mixed use approach to the subject lands, a more vibrant and desirable community will be created, which will in turn result in an increased level of both office and residential occupancy. Given the prime strategic location at the nexus of a major highway interchange, a planned bus rapid transit line (i.e. the 407 Transitway) and excellent connections to the wider Oakville transit system, we believe that if the subject lands accommodate a mix of employment and residential uses, they would be ideally positioned to drive future office employment growth for the Town of Oakville in years and decades to come. Such a mix of uses would not detract from the Town’s ability to meet provincial employment targets and would support development of a more livable community.

We trust that this is of assistance and would be pleased to discuss in more detail as required.

Regards,



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