

August 16, 2023

Hon. Steve Clark, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

17th Floor – 777 Bay Street

Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

RE: ERO #019-7195

1085 Columbus Road, Whitby

Comments on Regional Municipality of Durham Adopted Official Plan

TBG Project No. 22967

The Biglieri Group Ltd. (“TBG”) represents the owner of lands known municipally as 1085 Columbus Road in Whitby, ON (the “Subject Site” or “Site”). On behalf of my Client, Coronation Columbus Investments Inc., to provide commentary on the Regional Municipality of Durham’s Adopted Official Plan, and to request support for the Subject Site to be considered for a partial Employment Land Conversion (“ELC”).

The Subject Site is directly north of Highway 407, south of Columbus Road, east of Coronation Road and west of Country Lane (**Figure 1**). The Site is approximately 37 hectares (91.8 acres) with a frontage of 395.55 m on Columbus Road. The Subject Site is on the northwest side of the Town of Whitby and is in an area poised for future development.

The surrounding land uses include:

North: Low-density single-detached residential dwellings, farmland, Lakeridge Links Golf Club and commercial services.

South: Farmland and Highway 407.

East: Farmland and commercial services.

West: Farmland, Watson’s Glen Golf Club and commercial services.

We applaud Regional Staff and their consulting team on the extensive amount of work they have undertaken as part of their Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR). We support the inclusion of the Subject Site within the Town of Whitby’s future urban boundary, as the Province anticipates significant growth within the Region. The Subject Site being situated on the periphery of the existing urban boundary and abutting a 400-series highway represents a logical area for expansion to the municipal border with the City of Pickering, making it a logical place for growth. The Region’s current Adopted Official Plan identifies the lands as Employment Areas.

Figure 1: Aerial View of the Subject Site



While our Client is pleased with the lands being identified as part of the proposed urban boundary, we are requesting that the proposed designation identified for 1085 Columbus Road be modified. It is our position that the proposed Employment Area designation is not appropriate for the entirety of the Subject Site, (exclusive of the portion directly south of Columbus Road, which is designated Regional Corridor).

Our request stipulates that the western portion of the Subject Site adjacent to Coronation Road and the southern portion of the Subject Site that abuts the Highway 407 corridor maintain the proposed Employment Area as the lands will have close access to the 407 interchange and a prominent view from the highway. These areas of the Subject Site represents a location with an adequate size and configuration to accommodate a wide range of future parcels and uses. The Site is also close to the Regional Strategic Goods Movement Network and can function as a strategic long-term site to accommodate Regional employment growth. It is anticipated that the best use of these lands would be for Prestige Employment uses. The ELC demonstrates support for the maximization of underutilized *Employment Areas* lands, with the minimum loss of employment uses, through intensification, infill development and optimization of services.

The remaining central portion of the Subject Site should instead be identified as Community Areas. The purpose of the partial conversion is to contribute the housing supply in the Town of Whitby in response to an increase in demand for housing, would be consistent with the land use patterns

proposed further east and west along the Columbus Road corridor and to create a transition area between the proposed employment areas to the west and the more sensitive land uses to the east. Ultimately the proposed ELC supports the development of a complete community.

Figure 2: Proposed Re-designation of Subject Site



We recognize that any change in designation would impact the overall supply of employment lands and could potentially result in an oversupply of one land use (Community Areas), and an under supply of another (Employment Area). While we recognize that the overall growth numbers utilized by the Region were provided by the Province to direct growth, these are minimums intended to guide the MCR. Per the Durham Region Growth Management Study (G.M.S.) – Phase 2 (Area Municipal Growth Allocations and Land Needs, 2051), the Town of Whitby was forecast to require an additional 192 hectares of Employment Lands. However, the final allocation proposed to the Town was approximately 202 hectares, which provides some flexibility for the Region to amend the proposed Employment Area designation for the Subject Site, in favour of the Community Area designation.

The Community Areas designation seeks to offer a complete living environment (Policy 5.4). Community Areas are to be developed such that there are opportunities for residents to live, shop, work and access services and amenities within their community (Policy 5.4 i). Per Policy 5.4.6. the proposed ELC will support the implementation of complete communities by encouraging the achievement of more compact and higher density forms of development beyond the minimum designated greenfield areas density target prescribed under the Growth Plan.

The Council-Endorsed Growth Scenario requires that 2,500 developable ha of greenfield land be added to the Region's urban land supply by 2051. Based on the expected population and employment growth across the Region's Designated Greenfield Area (D.G.A.) lands, this results in a Region-wide D.G.A. density of 53 people/jobs per ha by 2051.

The introduction of the Housing Supply Action Plan (3.0), the suite of accompanying legislative changes (Bill 109, Bill 23) and the introduction of new planning tools (e.g., the Community Infrastructure and Housing Accelerator tool) over the last year, demonstrates a noticeable shift in provincial priorities.

As part of its commitment to expand the current housing supply, the Province has established a goal to have 1.5 million new homes built by 2031. A factor in the changes that the Province has made to the Planning Act through Bill 109 and Bill 23 is to provide the municipalities with the tools to meet this target in an efficient and timely manner. Furthermore, the ongoing review of the Growth Plan and the PPS, and the integration of policies could impact density and intensification targets to better align with the caveats of Bill 23 and its focus on expanding the provincial housing supply. The development on the Subject Site strongly aligns with the change in provincial priorities towards the expansion of the housing supply as it provides for a diversification of the area's housing typology and contributes to the increase in available housing options in Durham Region. Considering the increasing challenges faced by Ontarians in the face of the ongoing housing crisis, the ELC facilitates a solution to this issue by supporting the development of much-needed residential communities.

Furthermore, the *Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act* (Bill 97), restricts the definition of "area of employment" per the *Planning Act, 1990* such that it excludes institutional, commercial, retail and office uses where they are not associated with or related to manufacturing or warehousing uses. In addition, the Province proposed a new Provincial Planning Statement in April 2023, that includes a similar definition to the revision proposed to the *Planning Act, 1990* which limits the uses permitted within an employment area to manufacturing, warehousing, and certain associated or ancillary uses. While municipalities have the option to grandfather the existing permitted commercial and institutional uses in an employment area (if the uses are established prior to the proposed amendments to the *Planning Act, 1990* coming into effect), it is clear the intention of the changes proposed through Bill 97 is to streamline the definition of employment areas to describe "*only those uses that cannot locate in mixed-use areas and require protection against conversion (e.g., heavy industry, manufacturing, large-scale warehousing, etc.)*".

We recognize that the change in designation will result in minimal loss of employment lands, we feel that this loss can be accommodated through the greater promotion of intensification of industrial sites throughout the Region and Town. However, we feel this loss can be accommodated through the ELC, through efficient land use planning through the greater

promotion of intensification (for residential uses), and the infill in the employment area and ensuring an appropriate transition between employment areas and adjacent non-employment areas. It is therefore our opinion that the designation of a portion of these lands as Community Area rather than Employment Area will not impact the Town and Region meeting the overall employment targets.

The Biglieri Group appreciates the Minister's consideration of this request and looks forward to further discussions and collaborations with respect to the Subject Site.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachelle Larocque', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rachelle Larocque, BES, M.Sc., MCIP, RPP
Senior Associate

cc. Joe Lombardi