

November 1, 2019

Chair & Members of Community Council
North York Community Council
City Clerk's Office
North York Civic Centre
5100 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 5V7

Attention: Francine Adamo, Administrator

Re: Laird in Focus – City-initiated Official Plan Amendment
Meeting 10 – Item NY 10.2

We are writing on behalf of our client, the Zentil/Benedetto Group of Companies (“Zentil/Benedetto”) which own substantial land holdings both within and adjacent to the Laird in Focus Study area which is the subject of the proposed City-initiated draft Official Plan Amendment (proposed OPA 450 (SASP 568)).

We, together with our client and its other professional advisors including The MBTW Group (master planning/urban design) and Lea Consulting (transportation) have participated throughout the Laird in Focus Study including attending and commenting through various consultations including workshops, meetings with City staff and the most recent public open house on September 12, 2019. Throughout the planning process, our client has communicated its comments. Our working meetings with City staff have been collaborative and are scheduled to continue on November 8th.

While we appreciate the respectful dialogue, collaborative planning process and extensive consultation, we have a number of issues and concerns with respect to the proposed draft OPA (SASP 568).

Unfortunately, we note that not much has changed in terms of the planning direction set out for the Zentil/Benedetto lands, since Council considered City Planning's Proposals Report with the consultant team final report and (led by The Planning Partnership) recommended direction over a year ago in July 2018. This, despite comments from and on behalf of our client then and at each stage of the process.

Most recently, on October 9, 2019, the MBTW Group provided City Planning with a summary of our client's participation, meetings with staff and initial comments (as were requested) on the draft OPA 450 (SASP 568). City Planning acknowledged receipt of those comments and advised that they would be considered through the review process. While some of their general comments were highlighted in City Planning's Final Report now before you, it appears, again, that nothing substantive has changed in the draft OPA 450.

The Zentil/Benedetto Lands

Within the Laird in Focus Study area, our client owns lands on the southeast corner of Eglinton Avenue East and Brentcliffe Drive, extending south to Vanderhoof Avenue and east to Aerodrome Crescent. The lands are presently occupied by a low-rise commercial plaza known as “Hyde Park Plaza” which includes, among other commercial uses, a Staples and Homesense store. These lands are presently designated “Mixed Use Area” in the Official Plan.

Our client also owns all the lands designated for Employment along the south side of Vanderhoof Drive east of Brentcliffe Drive and south to Research Road. The exception is Leonard Linton Park, which was conveyed and dedicated to the City through a previous comprehensive planning and subdivision approval about two decades ago.

As part of the previous comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment on our clients lands, once including some 12 hectares (30 acres) of land in the original Leaside Business Park, lands were sold and developed by Aspen Ridge for the three-phase “Scenic” residential condominiums, which includes a road connection to Eglinton Avenue East conveyed to the City.

Our client also developed and continues to own the Hyde Park rental townhomes between the high-rise condominiums (east) and the Hyde Park Plaza (west) within the proposed Laird in Focus OPA. All these lands north of Vanderhoof Avenue between Brentcliffe Drive and the Don Valley are designated Mixed Use including Hyde Park Plaza.

We raise this, as we have with City staff, because our client’s extensive land holdings afford certain planning opportunities that are contextually relevant to the comprehensive planning process the City is undertaking through Laird in Focus.

Draft OPA 450 (SASP 568)

The MBTW Group’s October 9th letter to City Planning highlighted our client’s lands and set out some of its initial planning and urban design concerns with respect the draft OPA.

We note that many of these planning issues and concerns remain unresolved in the draft OPA now the subject of this public meeting. Simply put, there appear to be no substantive changes made to the draft OPA since its release a month ago, perhaps some fine-tuning.

We do generally agree with the Vision and Goals of the draft OPA for Laird in Focus. We also generally support the proposed street and block plan set out for the Hyde Park Plaza lands included in the study and draft OPA.

However, we reiterate some particular issues and concerns with the draft OPA including:

- **Study Area Context and Building Heights** – the proposed urban structure and building heights (demonstration plan) has been predicated on diminishing height moving east along Eglinton Avenue away from the Laird transit station, and transitions down to the existing townhomes along and east of Aerodrome Crescent. While these townhomes are lower scale, they are proximate to transit, designated Mixed Use Area and adjacent to 18-storey existing residential buildings to the east along the valley. The low-rise residential Neighbourhoods in the Official Plan and are actually further away from most existing residents in the mature residential areas of Leaside west of Laird Drive and north of Eglinton Avenue (Neighbourhoods in the OP) than lands between Laird and Brentcliffe Drives. We also note that the new draft OPA 450 would not allow stand-alone townhomes along Eglinton Avenue or Laird Drive as they do not represent an appropriate form and degree of residential intensification given this current planning context.
- While east of the Laird station on the Eglinton Crosstown, all these Mixed Use lands are also between and proximate to the Sunnybrook station at Leslie Street. To propose a maximum of 12 and 16 storey building's on our client's lands within Laird in Focus, fails to optimize their proximity to major transit, their separation and ability to appropriately transition from Neighbourhoods and their fit between planned and approved tall buildings (up to 28-storeys) to the west at 939 Eglinton Avenue (west side of Brentcliffe) and the existing tall building (Scenic) to the east (18-storeys). The proposed 12 to 16 storey buildings are also lower than the maximum 18-storeys allowed in a site-specific policy (SASP 142) approved over 20 years ago, prior to the City's current Official Plan, current Provincial policy and recent planning for Eglinton Crosstown.
- **Vanderhoof Avenue (Public Realm)**– we support the concept of Vanderhoof Avenue evolving to a multi-purpose street and mobility greenway linking the well-established residential communities west of Laird Drive, the employment/business lands (south) and the extensive open space areas along the Don Valley. However, it is not practical to implement the proposed multi-purpose path, 6-metre building setbacks and double row of trees from Brentcliffe Drive to the valley given the existing Hyde Park townhomes and Scenic condominiums. Consideration and flexibility should be afforded to shifting the location of this multi-purpose trail and greenway idea, perhaps to the south side of Vanderhoof Avenue east of Brentcliffe Drive or utilizing more of the public boulevard. We agree that Vanderhoof Avenue will play an important integrating role in achieving a complete new community, mobility and greening strategy for Leaside.
- **Public Park** – the public park shown on the Zentil/Benedetto lands north of Vanderhoof Avenue should have flexibility to be relocated to the south side of Vanderhoof Avenue to specifically expand Leonard Linton Park. We have actively discussed this concept with City staff since 2018, seemingly with positive support, but no change has been made or flexibility afforded in the draft OPA.

- **Built Form** – in addition to building heights mentioned above, there are some specific elements of the proposed built form policies such as setbacks, stepbacks, streetwalls, tower floor plates and design expression that we believe should be refined with more flexibility and/or reconsidered/moved to within the urban design guidelines.
- **SASP 142** – much of the Zentil/Benedetto lands both north and south of Vanderhoof Avenue are subject to an existing Site and Area Specific Policy (SASP) 142. SASP 142 is a two-decade old legacy of the previous mixed-use master plan governing the implementation of both the Mixed Use and Employment lands. SASP 142 has certain urban design and transportation policies that are, in our opinion, antiquated. While Planning staff acknowledge this in recommending that SASP 142 be deleted for the lands “within” Laird in Focus, in our opinion, the entire SASP 142 should be deleted. On its complete reading, if only part of the SASP 142 was deleted, its continued application and relevance to, for example, Employment lands south of Vanderhoof Avenue, makes little sense. The Final Report acknowledges that a comprehensive Transportation and Mobility study was completed that included an area much broader area of Leaside than just Laird in Focus including existing development and approvals.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments to Community Council and look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with City staff and other community stakeholders to realize a vibrant and complete mixed-use community that optimizes the significant public investment in the Eglinton Crosstown.

In our opinion, the draft OPA 450 (SASP 568) and proposed partial deletion (repeal) of existing SASP 142 needs more work and amendment prior to City Council’s consideration and adoption. After three years of work, we should be afforded appropriate time to do so, and work out these planning issues and concerns.

Yours truly,
HUNTER & Associates Ltd.



J. Craig Hunter, MCIP, RPP
President