

07 May 2025

Planning and Housing Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

Attention: Nancy Martins

Dear Ms. Martins,,

**RE: Item PH21.1 – Official Plan Amendments to Align with Provincial
Legislative and Policy Changes Related to Employment Areas –
Decision Report
103 Vanderhoof Avenue
Toronto, ON**

WND File: 22.569

We are the planners and urban designers retained by the Owner of 103 Vanderhoof Avenue in the City of Toronto (the “Subject Site”) to assist in the land use planning approvals process with respect to the future redevelopment of the Subject Site for mixed residential and non-residential uses. To date, the Owner has engaged with City Staff, including attending a Pre-Application Consultation Meeting on May 6, 2025. This Letter has been prepared to provide our comments with respect to proposed Official Plan Amendment No. 804, as well as the Decision Report prepared by City Staff dated April 23, 2025.

The Subject Site

The Subject Site is located along the south side of Vanderhoof Avenue at the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Vanderhoof Avenue and Vaughan Street. The Subject Site is generally regular in shape, with approximately 51.02 metres of frontage along Vanderhoof Avenue to the north, and 39.69 metres of frontage along Vaughan Street to the east. To the south, the Subject Site fronts an existing public lane with an approximate width of 6.05 metres. The Subject Site is presently occupied with a one-storey non-residential building located in the eastern portion of the property, with the western portion occupied with a surface parking area accessed from Vanderhoof Avenue.

As currently configured, the uses on the Subject Site and currently permitted by the Official Plan mean the Subject Site is not an Area of Employment as defined by the Planning Act or an Employment Area as defined by the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024.

Draft Official Plan Amendment No. 804

In reviewing the Draft Official Plan Amendment No. 804, it is our understanding that City Staff recommend amendments to the land use policies of Sections 2 and 4.6 to generally remove the land use permissions for office and retail uses, unless associated with a permitted manufacturing use, research and development, or warehousing and goods movement in order to “align” with the Provincial definition for “Areas of Employment”.

The recommended policies also introduce policy 4.6.10 regarding “legally established” uses being permitted to continue through transition, however no definition or explanatory text is included as to how such will be interpreted. Further, as drafted these policies potentially allow for the continuation of a “lawfully established” use however provide no policy framework for any future expansion without amendment to the Official Plan. During the Open House on May 2nd, 2025 numerous questions were posed to City Planning Staff (including by our office) as to the definition of this term, and how it will be implemented. Such a lack of clarity is ripe for interpretation issues in the future, and is unhelpful to business owners and landowners affected by these proposed policy amendments.

In addition, there is no discussion within the Staff Report of future amendments to the Zoning By-law, which despite these policy amendments will continue to permit Office uses as-of-right within the Employment Zone and on the Subject Site without condition. It is not clear why policy amendments are being advanced without accompanying regulatory changes, given the rationale provided within the Staff Report for the amendments to be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024.

Should these policies be approved, an environment will exist where uses are permitted within the Zoning By-law, and not permitted within the Official Plan. This condition is inconsistent with the general approach to land use planning within the Province of Ontario, wherein the Zoning By-law implements the policy direction of the Official Plan. It is also inconsistent in approach to other recent City-initiated Official Plan Amendments, such as the “Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods” (Fourplexes) and “Major Streets” amendments, which amended Official Plan policy simultaneously with amendments to Zoning By-law 569-2013- in recognition that the By-law serves to implement the policies of the Official Plan.

The Draft Official Plan Amendment also proposes to redesignate various areas to “Regeneration Areas” from “General Employment Areas”, based on criteria such as areas of office parks, and “areas that do not act as a buffer to more sensitive uses”. In our opinion, while Staff have identified these four areas after study, there are numerous other areas within the City of Toronto which would benefit from similar redesignation either to Regeneration Areas or Mixed Use Areas, such as the Subject Site. Clearly, the Subject Site should not be treated as an area of employment under Provincial definitions.

WND Associates has previously provided comments regarding the Subject Site to the City of Toronto Planning and Housing Committee as part of the Municipal Comprehensive Review process, which considered employment conversion requests for nearby properties within the Leaside community. The Subject Site is presently designated by the City of Toronto Official Plan for Core Employment uses, which does not permit the establishment of residential uses. On December 13, 2023 the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (“MMAH”) approved Official Plan Amendment No. 653, which redesignated 20 Brentcliffe Road (immediately north of the Subject Site) from General Employment Areas to Mixed Use Areas. The OPA contains site-specific policies that require 15% of any gross floor area on the property to provide for employment uses, the provision of on-site parkland, a minimum 25.0 metre

tower separation distance, and a minimum 7% of all dwelling units secured as affordable housing for at least 99 years.

Similar to 20 Brentcliffe Road, the Subject Site is located within the central portion of the “Laird” Major Transit Station Area, having good proximity to the under construction Eglinton Crosstown LRT. The Subject Site is located directly south of Site and Area Specific Policy (“SASP”) No. 396, which was enacted through City of Toronto By-law 628-2020. This SASP generally provides for mixed use intensification on the north side of Vanderhoof Avenue, with tall and midrise building locations identified on Map 3 – Building Heights in Storeys. Through Map 3, building heights on the north side of Vanderhoof Avenue, directly northeast of the Subject Site are planned for up to 30-storeys, with tower heights generally decreasing as one moves east along Vanderhoof Avenue and north towards Eglinton Avenue.

The SASP includes policy language to require compatibility between residential and employment uses south of Vanderhoof, this policy could readily be applied to properties along the south side of Vanderhoof Avenue to similarly ensure future compatibility to be determined through subsequent Zoning By-law Amendment applications. This Policy for a compatibility requirement is also otherwise provided for within the parent Official Plan, with Policy 2.2.4 (5) requirement the location of sensitive uses near and or adjacent to *Employment Areas*.

Given the relatively narrow width of Vanderhoof Avenue (20 metres), the Subject Site is located immediately opposite the planned conversion site and is not materially different in its context than the approved conversion. It should be noted that in the Preliminary Assessment, Staff recommended that the lands be retained as *General Employment* and that concerns identified are not dissimilar to those identified for the adjacent 105 Vanderhoof Avenue, but for the separation of Vanderhoof Avenue itself.

The Owner has attended a Pre-Application Consultation Meeting for a 22-storey mixed use building containing rental dwelling units and retail uses, and is amenable to discussing the quantum of affordable housing to be secured.

As part of SASP No. 396, the planned context includes residential and mixed use midrise and tall buildings in direct proximity to the Subject Site, with the greatest heights planned for the area directly northeast of the Subject Site on the north side of Vanderhoof Avenue. In our opinion, it would be appropriate for the properties fronting the south side of Vanderhoof Avenue to be considered as equally appropriate for mixed use intensification as that planned for the north side.

We trust that this letter is informative as you consider the Staff Recommendations and potential adoption of Official Plan Amendment No. 804.

Yours very truly,

WND associates
planning + urban design

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sean McGaffey'.

Sean McGaffey, BES
Senior Associate, Planning and Urban Design
