

City Council Report

REPORT NUMBER 332-2025-Growth-Development Services-Planning Services			
DATE PREPARED		FILE	
October 14, 2025		OZ-05-2025	
CITY COUNCIL MEETING DATE		November 4, 2025	
SUBJECT		Report 332-2025 - Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments - 869 Golf Links Road	

RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL

WITH RESPECT to Report (332-2025-Growth-Development Services-Planning Services), we recommend that for the subject lands being Part of the NW Quarter and Part of the SW Quarter of Section 54 described as part of Part 5 of PAR103, Parts 5, 6, and 7 of RP 55R-10380, Part 6 on RP 55R-12453, and Parts 1, 2, and 3 on RP 55R-15020, municipally referred to as 869 Golf Links Road, all shown as “Property Location” on Attachment A, the Official Plan and Zoning By-law be amended as follows:

1. That the Official Plan be amended to redesignate the lands from Industrial (Business Area) and Natural Heritage System (Evaluated Wetland and Natural Corridor) to Commercial – Community Commercial as shown on Attachment A;
2. Rezone the subject lands by removing them from the “BU” – Business Zone and “BU^{SP91}” – Business Zone (Site-Specific Provision 91) with Environmental Overlay and instead rezone to the “CC^{SP91}” – Community Commercial Zone (Site Specific Provision 91);
3. Amend Site Specific Provision 91 of Schedule “C” of the Zoning By-law to the following:

“SP91: Site-specific provision 91

The following provisions apply to lands zoned CC^{SP91} as shown on Map 7L and 8L of Schedule “A”:

- a. The definition of lot means the entirety of the lands zoned CC^{SP91}, despite potential multiple ownerships;
- b. Despite Tables 5.2 and 5.3, the following shall apply:

- Minimum front setback – 3.0 m
- Minimum rear setback – 3.0 m
- Maximum building height – 23.0 m
- Maximum driveway width – 13.0 m
- Minimum landscaped area – 13% of lot area, including a 3.0 m strip along street frontages

4. Holding Provision 18 of Schedule “C” of the Zoning By-law be amended to apply to Map 8L of Schedule “A”:

Subject to the following conditions:

1. That the corresponding Official Plan Amendment is approved by City Council; and
2. That the lands be designated Site Plan Control prior to the passing of the amending by-law.

AND THAT the necessary By-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Forum Thunder Bay GP Inc. has submitted a concurrent application for Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment for lands municipally known as 869 Golf Links Road. The amendments would permit the development of a community scale commercial shopping centre consisting of eight (8) commercial buildings with a combined gross floor area of approximately 10,770 m², including restaurants (with drive-throughs) and retail stores. With access from Innovation Drive and Golf Links Road, a total of 505 parking spaces (including 13 accessible spaces) and 46 drive-through queuing spaces for three restaurants are proposed.

The proposed Official Plan Amendment would redesignate the lands from Industrial (Business Area) and Natural Heritage System (Evaluated Wetland and Natural Corridor) to Commercial – Community Commercial, to permit a full range of retail and service uses. The concurrent Zoning By-law Amendment would rezone the property from Business Zone (BU and BU^{SP91}) with EO – Environmental Overlay, to the Community Commercial Zone with site-specific standards to implement the development concept. Though residential uses are not proposed at this time, the Applicant requests that certain residential uses continue to be permitted on the site.

Submitted studies include an Environmental Impact Study (EIS), Functional Servicing Report (FSR), Traffic Impact Study (TIS), and Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment. These studies confirm that the site can be appropriately serviced, that natural heritage functions will be replicated through the planned Stormwater Management Facility on adjacent lands, and that significant adverse impacts are not anticipated.

The proposal represents a positive contribution to the City's growth and economic development objectives by expanding the commercial land supply, supporting new investment, and providing enhanced retail and service opportunities for surrounding neighbourhoods and the broader community. The development will also strengthen the commercial corridor along Golf Links Road, improve consumer choice, and generate employment and assessment growth consistent with the City's vision for sustainable, community-oriented development.

Administration has reviewed the proposal and finds it to be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement, the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, and in keeping with the general intent of the City of Thunder Bay Official Plan. Accordingly, Planning Services recommends in support of the requested amendments.

DISCUSSION

Description of Proposal

The Applicant has requested site-specific Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments to develop the property with eight commercial buildings comprising a mix of restaurants and retail uses, including three restaurants with drive-throughs, a grocery store, and several general retail buildings. Two driveway accesses are proposed from Innovation Drive and one from Golf Links Road. The lands are fully serviced and located on an existing transit route.

The subject property is proposed to be developed as shown on "Attachment B".

Description of the Subject Property and Surrounding Area

The lands are approximately 4.4 ha in size and are located on the most easterly limits of the property, bounded by Innovation Drive to the north, Harbour Expressway to the south, and Golf Links Road to the east. The lands are currently vacant.

Directly west of the subject property is Innova Business Park which is developed with office and light industrial uses. Lands to the south and east are comprised of residential uses. Confederation College is located southeast of the lands on the opposite side Harbour Expressway and Golf Links Road is to the east, and lands to the immediate north are vacant and proposed for a retail warehouse and gas bar.

The lands are zoned "BU" - Business Zone and "BU^{SP91}" - Business Use Zone with Site Specific Provision 91 and "EO" – Environmental Overlay" on a portion of the lands. The lands are designated Natural Heritage and Business Area.

Policy Review

Provincial Planning Statement (2024) and Growth Plan for Northern Ontario (2011):

The proposed development is consistent with the *Provincial Planning Statement (2024)* and *Growth Plan for Northern Ontario* as it supports compact, service-oriented development that enhances access to local stores and services. The site is within the urban settlement area, supports mixed use and transit, and provides an appropriate transition between employment and residential uses. The Employment Land Strategy (2020) concluded that the introduction of retail and service commercial uses adjacent to Innova Business Park would not limit its potential to develop as a premier office and prestige industrial hub within the city. Rather, convenient access to nearby retail and service amenities is expected to enhance the area's attractiveness to prospective businesses and employees. The study determined that the overall employment land supply is more than sufficient to accommodate anticipated employment growth through the Strategy's forecast horizon. As such, the removal of the lands from an Employment Land designation for commercial purposes is supported.

Official Plan:

The proposed amendments implement a land-use transition between the Innova Business Park to the west and nearby residential neighbourhoods to the east and south. The proposal aligns with the PPS (2024) direction to optimize infrastructure, support a diverse mix of uses within settlement areas, and promote economic growth. The Employment Land Strategy (2020) determined that the conversion of certain Business Area lands for retail-commercial uses along Golf Links Road is appropriate.

Redesignating the lands to Community Commercial and rezoning them to CC - Community Commercial Zone is consistent with the Official Plan objective to concentrate commercial uses along arterial roads and to serve multiple neighbourhoods with a balanced range of retail and service uses. The proposed floor area of 10,770 m² is within the 20,000 m² limit for this designation. Residential development may be permitted within the Community Commercial designation in areas where it does not detract from the function of the Community Commercial designation. Where it is appropriate, residential units will be encouraged on the upper floors of buildings to promote pedestrian and commercial activity at the ground level.

Submitted Studies

An Environmental Impact Study (EIS) and Wetland Assessment determined that the existing evaluated wetland is not provincially significant and that its function can be replicated through the planned stormwater facility on adjacent lands. As such, the Evaluated Wetland and associated Natural Corridor designations on the lands may be removed and instead designated as Community Commercial. The Lakehead Region Conservation Authority does not oppose this change, however, notes the development may be subject to permitting. Further, the EIS provided mitigation recommendations that can be addressed through the Site Plan Control Agreement such as time of year restrictions for vegetation clearing and implementing erosion/sediment controls.

The Functional Service Report confirms adequate water and sewer capacity exists.

The Traffic Impact Study indicates manageable traffic impacts.

A Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment was completed and identified a relic shoreline feature (Sault/Algoma phase of Glacial Lake Minong) crossing over or near the property. This landform type is associated with elevated archaeological potential due to historic Indigenous settlement patterns along former lake beaches. The Stage 1 study recommended a Stage 2 study be conducted to confirm the presence or absence of archaeological resources before development proceeds. Development will not be permitted until the Archeological Studies are concluded and recommendations assessed by Administration. Any recommendation and or mitigation measures can be incorporated into the Site Plan Control Agreement.

Zoning By-law:

Concurrent with the Official Plan amendment, it is recommended to rezone the subject lands from “BU” – Business Zone and “BU^{SP91}” – Business Zone (Site-Specific Provision 91) with Environmental Overlay to the “CC” – Community Commercial Zone with a site-specific provision.

The Applicant’s proposed site-specific amendments seek to provide flexibility to achieve the desired site layout while maintaining compatibility with surrounding land uses.

To afford the ability to have multiple ownerships while having a cohesive commercial development, it is recommended to amend the definition of “lot” be amended to mean the entirety of the Subject Lands, despite potential multiple ownerships. This provision is common for developments of this size and nature.

The Applicant seeks to amend the following regulations of the Community Commercial Zone for the desired site plan:

- Minimum front setback – reduce to 3.0 m from 6.0 m;
- Minimum rear setback – reduce to 3.0 m from 6.0 m;
- Maximum building height – increase to 23.0 m from 17.0 m;
- Maximum driveway width – increase to 13.0 m; and
- Minimum landscaped area – reduce to 13% of lot area, including a 3.0 m strip along street frontages from 20% of lot area which must include a 6.0 m strip along all lot lines abutting a street allowance.

The requested modifications (reduced front and rear setbacks, height increase, driveway width, and landscaped area reduction) are reasonable given existing buffers, Hydro One corridors, the adjacent stormwater management area, and the planned landscaping along street frontages.

Holding Symbol:

The CC Zone permits residential uses (homes, care housing, long term care housing, and shared housing) on upper floors. While the Applicant does not propose these uses at this

time, the ability to further develop or redevelop in the future is desired. Previous amendments to the “BU” Zone in this Golf Links Road and Oliver Road Area established residential uses as permitted uses subject to a holding symbol with certain criteria to be met prior to removal. It is recommended to apply that same holding provision to these lands. The Applicant is aware that because of proximity to potential light industrial uses, a land use compatibility study would be required for residential development. The study would determine if residential issues are suitable and identify any necessary mitigation measures.

Site Plan Control:

It is recommended that the subject lands be designated as an area of Site Plan Control to support orderly development and implementation of all relevant mitigation measures. The Applicant is aware that, through the Site Plan Control process, and prior to any permits being issued, it will be a requirement to finalize the Municipal Servicing Report and Traffic Impact Study to the satisfaction of the City, and any other approval agencies. Any requirements for off-site improvements related to stormwater management, traffic, pedestrian, and transit improvements will be incorporated into the Site Plan Agreement.

CONSULTATION

A combined Notice of Application and Public Meeting was provided with a sign posted on the lands and a mailed notice on October 15, 2025. To date, one comment expressed concern with the potential extra traffic along Golf Links Road and the impact on the intersection of North Edward Street and Fanshaw Drive. Two comments expressed support but wanted to ensure that tree planting would be conducted along the Golf Links Road view.

Internal Departments and External Agencies:

The following agencies offered no concerns or objections relating to the proposal:

- Realty Services Section
- Parks & Open Space Planning Section
- Municipal Accessibility
- Synergy North
- Tbaytel
- Building Services Section
- Engineering Division

Climate Action suggests that the number of proposed parking spaces presents an ideal opportunity to incorporate EV charging facilities. Including at least two Level 2 charging stations in this design would provide future residents with convenient access to clean transportation options while directly supporting the City's long-term sustainability goals. These comments have been conveyed to the developer.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

All development costs associated with the proposed use of the property would be the Applicant's responsibility.

As the property is developed, additional commercial assessment will occur resulting in additional property tax revenue to the City.

BACKGROUND

A portion of lands were previously amended to permit retail service uses. Adjacent lands were also amended to allow for an increase in size to a retail warehouse and allowing a gas bar.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

Attachment A – Property Location

Attachment B – Applicant's Site Sketch

REPORT PREPARED BY

Decio Lopes, RPP, Supervisor – Planning Services – Growth Department

REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

Kerri Marshall, Kerri Marshall – Growth

Date (10/27/2025)