

UNIMIN WATERFRONT LANDS PLANNING JUSTIFICATION REPORT

Town of Midland, Ontario

February 2014



**Proposed Amendment to the Town of Midland Official Plan as Part of a
Municipal Comprehensive Review**

The Planning Partnership
Urban Design . Landscape Architecture . Planning . Communications

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1. Introduction/Purpose

The Planning Partnership has been retained by the Town of Midland to prepare a Planning Justification Report that supports the redevelopment of the Subject Site, which is currently owned by Unimin Canada Inc. The Subject Site (which includes three contiguous land parcels) is identified on Map 1.

The redevelopment proposal that would be facilitated by the proposed Official Plan Amendment has been articulated through *The Unimin Waterfront Lands Master Plan (2013)* process sponsored by the Town of Midland. The proposed Official Plan Amendment facilitates the redesignation of the Subject Site from its current “Employment Area” designation to a “Waterfront Mixed-Use” designation that supports a mixed-use waterfront redevelopment project that includes a mixture of complementary land uses.

2. Background

Site Context

The Subject Site is located within the fully serviced urban settlement area of the Town of Midland, immediately adjacent to the Downtown and adjacent to existing residential neighbourhoods. It has direct frontage and access on Midland Bay, of Georgian Bay, with water frontage of almost 1100 metres, and an area of 16.24 hectares, making the Subject Site one of the most important waterfront development locations in the Town.

Adjacent Land Uses

The Subject Site is surrounded by:

- **North** - Midland Bay of Georgian Bay, one of the premier boating destinations in Ontario;
- **South** - Midland Rotary Trail (Municipal) and Bayshore Drive, and further to the south, a low density residential neighbourhood;
- **West** - The Central Marine Marina and the Town Harbour and associated Harbourside Park. Downtown Midland and its associated Main Street are also located just to the west of the Subject Site; and,
- **East** - Midland Bay, Marine uses and a waterfront-related residential development.

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Map 1: The Subject Site



- The Subject Site - Unimin Lands Boundary
- - - Rotary Waterfront Trail (Municipal Trail)
- Trans Canada Trail

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3. The Proposed Redevelopment

The Town of Midland adopted the Master Plan for the Subject Site in June 2013 (*The Unimin Waterfront Lands Master Plan (2013)*). Council is committed to facilitating this exciting and important project, in partnership with the private sector.

The Master Plan that forms the basis for the proposed Official Plan Amendment is a result of extensive consultation with the Midland community, Council, staff and other key stakeholders. The Master Plan includes a mixed-use community consisting of residential, recreational, cultural, commercial, employment and open space uses, and a street pattern that supports a range of higher density housing types, promotes walkability, and includes multi-modal connections to and from the Georgian Bay waterfront and the Town's open space and trails system.

The proposed redevelopment also complements the Downtown by establishing the Subject Site as a new destination neighbourhood and by accommodating an increased population base in proximity to the Main Street. A key aspect of the Master Plan is that the lands abutting the water's edge will be in public ownership, and will provide a publicly accessible promenade along the entire property.

The Town's commitment to overseeing the future of this project will allow for appropriate phasing and implementation of municipal services to occur as required. Important to the Town, the Subject Site is a decommissioned industrial site, and a full environmental clean up and Environmental Site Assessments will be undertaken pursuant to the Environmental Protection Act and Ontario Regulation 153/04. The proposed redevelopment encourages remediation of the natural environment as part of the redevelopment of the Subject Site.

Land Use

The total area of the Subject Site is 16.24 hectares. The proposal's Land Use Framework, as shown on Map 2, consists of:

- **Parks and Open Space** - (approximately 4.3 hectares or 27% of total area) – Parks are programmable areas that include green spaces, hard surface urban squares, plantings and pedestrian amenities and will be used for recreational purposes and as gathering spaces. Open Spaces are not programmed and may not be considered parkland due to steep slopes, but are expected to be renaturalized with appropriate landscaping and plantings;
- **Waterfront Mixed Use 1** - (3.5 hectares or 21% of total area) - Downtown compatible, higher density buildings with a more diverse mix of uses including civic buildings, hotels, retail, office and service commercial and residential land uses;

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- **Waterfront Mixed Use 2** - (2.1 hectares or 13% of total area) - Lower scale, mixed use but predominately residential with less retail;
- **Waterlot** - (3.1 hectares or 18% of total area) – Possible future marina, pier, dock uses; and,
- **Roads** - (3.3 hectares or 21% of total area).

The Public Realm

The Public Realm Framework, as identified on Map 3, offers a permeable road network that includes sidewalks and cycling opportunities and an open space system that provides programmed and passive areas, hardscapes and green parks, multi-modal trails and a pedestrian boardwalk. Together, the diversity of the public realm will serve the varying needs of future residents and visitors and contribute to the vitality of this waterfront area. It is also seen as a tremendous enhancement for public access to the waterfront for all of the residents of Midland. All parks, open spaces, sidewalks and trails will link into the Town's existing open space system that connects directly to Downtown Midland and the adjacent neighbourhoods.










Built Form

The Built Form Framework is identified on Map 4. It responds directly to the conditions and context of the proposed waterfront mixed-use neighbourhood, including the slope down to the water's edge, the view of Midland Bay and the proximity to Downtown Midland. As such, buildings are higher and denser closer to the centre and the western edge of the neighbourhood. The building typologies proposed include 2 storey, primarily residential buildings in the eastern portion of the site and up to 6 storeys in the western portion of the site.

The proposed Official Plan Amendment, drawing from the Master Plan, also includes a green buffer zone and number of public park spaces appropriate for this type of urban development. To showcase the Bay and enhance parks and open spaces, including the boardwalk and squares, building fronts will be designed to face and address the waterfront, helping to create an animated public realm. Similarly, buildings at the south end will be designed to front and address Bayshore Drive, although at a different elevation than at the waterfront. This will create a boulevard condition, reinforcing Bayshore Drive as a 'green ribbon', and enhancing connections to Huronia Park.

Map 2: Land Use Framework Plan



-  The Subject Site - Unimin Lands Boundary
-  Street Right-of-Way
-  Potential Street Right-of-Way
-  Water Lot
-  Park
-  Open Space
-  Waterfront Mixed-Use 1
-  Waterfront Mixed-Use 2
-  Potential Park

Map 3: Public Realm Framework Plan



- The Subject Site - Unimin Lands Boundary











- Open Spaces and Connections**
- Neighbourhood Park
- Linear Park
- Square
- Multi-Modal Trail
- Boardwalk
- - - Midblock Connections
- Crossings

- Streetscapes**
- Waterfront Promenade
- Park Mews
- Local Streets

- Civic Elements**
- ⊗ Gateways
- Public Art
- - -> View Corridors
- //// Strategic Civic Site

Map 4: Built Form Framework Plan



-  The Subject Site - Unimin Lands Boundary
-  Property Lines
-  Low Rise 1 (2-3 storeys)
-  Low Rise 2 (3-4 storeys)
-  Mid Rise (3-6 storeys)
-  Conditional Height Zone (max.8 storeys)
-  Priority Retail Frontage
-  Key Terminus Treatment
-  Key Corner Treatment
-  Open Space

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Summary

In summary, the proposed Official Plan Amendment, and the redevelopment that it facilitates, will transform this important area of Midland into a compact, mixed use, pedestrian-orientated and accessible mixed-use waterfront neighbourhood that is compatible with the surrounding context. It will:

- Support Downtown Midland by establishing a new and exciting destination neighbourhood, and will enhance the population base in proximity to Midland's Main Street;
- Provide a range of higher density housing types,
- Promote walkability through its inclusion of sidewalk, trail and road connections to and from the Midland/Georgian Bay waterfront and the Town's open space, trails and road systems;
- Protect, in public ownership, the lands abutting the water's edge which will provide a publicly accessible promenade along the entire property;
- Facilitate a full environmental clean up and Environmental Site Assessments; and,
- Encourage the remediation of the natural environment.

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4. Planning Policy Analysis

The Subject Site is currently designated as an “Employment Area” on Schedule ‘A’ in the Town of Midland Official Plan. The Official Plan Amendment that is the subject of this Report proposes a change in land use designation from “Employment Area” to a new “Waterfront Mixed-Use” designation.

Employment lands – the “Employment Area” designation in the Town of Midland Official Plan - are protected from conversion to non-employment uses by the *Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement and Places to Grow: The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*.

To release the Subject Site from this Provincial policy protection and to facilitate its conversion to the proposed and desired waterfront related, mixed-use neighbourhood, a Municipal Comprehensive Review is required that supports the proposed Official Plan Amendment. One of the key purposes of the Municipal Comprehensive Review is to ensure that a municipality has an appropriate supply of employment lands that meet the long-term expected demand for growth in the industrial/business park sector in the Town.

In response to this requirement, the Town of Midland has carried out a number of studies including the *Growth Management Strategy, (2009)*, the *Employment Area Policy Review, (2010)*, and the subsequent *Employment and Commercial Lands Strategy Update, (2012)*. These studies conclude that the Subject Site is not considered a core “Employment Land” asset in the Town of Midland, and consequently may be considered for conversion to other, non-employment generating land uses.

This Report will review and provide comment on the policies of various levels of government that are applicable to the subject lands, including the following:

- *The Provincial Policy Statement (2005)*;
- *Places to Grow: the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006)*;
- *Amendment 1 to Places to Grow, reflecting changes related to Simcoe County (2012)*;
- *County of Simcoe Official Plan (January 2013 Draft – adopted in 2008, awaiting approval)*;
- *Town of Midland Official Plan (updated July 9, 2013)*.

The Provincial Policy Statement (2005)

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides municipalities with policy direction to implement appropriate development and land use regulations. It allows for development to occur while protecting resources of provincial interest, public health and safety, and the quality of the

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natural environment. The PPS supports improved land use planning and management, which contributes to a more effective and efficient land use planning system.

In respect of an exercise carried out by any authority that affects a planning matter, Section 3 of the Planning Act requires that decisions affecting planning matters “shall be consistent with” policy statements issued under the Act.

The PPS focuses growth within settlement areas and away from significant or sensitive resources and areas which may pose a risk to public health and safety. It recognizes that the wise management of development may involve directing, promoting or sustaining growth. It also stresses that land use must be carefully managed to accommodate appropriate development to meet the full range of current and future needs, while achieving efficient development patterns.

Efficient development patterns optimize the use of land, resources and public investment in infrastructure and public service facilities. These land use patterns promote a mix of housing, employment, parks and open spaces, and transportation choices that facilitate pedestrian mobility and other modes of travel. They also support the financial well-being of the Province and municipalities over the long term, and minimize the undesirable effects of development, including impacts on air, water and other resources. Key policy directives from the Provincial Policy Statement relevant to this proposed Official Plan Amendment include:

- **Policy 1.1.1(b)** requires that an appropriate range and mix of residential, employment (including industrial, commercial and institutional uses), recreational and open space uses be accommodated to meet long-term needs;
- **Policy 1.1.3.2** promotes densities and a mix of land uses which efficiently use land, resources, infrastructure and public service facilities, minimize negative impacts to air quality and climate change and support energy efficiency;
- **Policy 1.1.3.3** requires that planning authorities are to identify and promote opportunities for redevelopment and intensification, where this can be accommodated taking into account existing building stock or areas and the availability of existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities; and,
- **Policy 1.1.3.4** promotes appropriate development standards that facilitate intensification, redevelopment and compact form, while maintaining appropriate levels of public health and safety.

The proposed Official Plan Amendment for the Subject Site will facilitate an intensified, mixed-use neighbourhood that offers appropriate densities and a range and mix of uses while utilizing land and infrastructure efficiently. The proposal is intended to use this land resource more efficiently and appropriately given the Subject Site’s prominence, location and development potential. The Town of Midland has identified, and is promoting the comprehensive

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redevelopment of the Subject Site through its *Employment Area Policy Review Study (2010)* and through the adoption of *The Unimin Waterfront Lands Master Plan (2013)*.

- **Policy 1.3.2** states: that “*Planning authorities may permit conversion of lands within employment areas to non-employment uses through a comprehensive review, only where it has been demonstrated that the land is not required for employment purposes over the long term and that there is a need for conversion.*”

The Employment and Commercial Lands Strategy Update Report (2012) was prepared in response to amendments to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe policies for Simcoe County Sub-Area regarding employment and population targets to 2031 (discussed in more detail later in this Report). *The Employment and Commercial Lands Strategy Update Report* offers analysis and conclusions stating that there has been an over-estimation of employment land required for Midland, therefore the conversion of the Subject Site to other, non-employment generating land uses can be appropriately justified.

- **Policy 1.4.3** requires provision to be made for an appropriate range of housing types and densities to meet projected requirements of current and future residents by, among other matters, facilitating all forms of residential intensification and redevelopment, and promoting densities for new housing which efficiently use land, resources, infrastructure and public service facilities and support the use of alternative modes of transportation and public transit.

The proposed Official Plan Amendment provides the opportunity for a range of higher density house forms – apartments and townhouses, that will appropriately augment the range and mix of housing types within the Town. Further, the densities proposed are greater than the typical neighbourhood within Midland. Further, since this site is mostly vacant today, its comprehensive redevelopment represents a major intensification initiative within the Town. The proposed Official Plan Amendment uses land, resources, infrastructure and public services much more efficiently than the current use of the Subject Site.

- **Policy 1.6.5.4** promotes a land use pattern, density and mix of uses that minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and support the development of viable choices and plans for public transit and other alternative transportation routes.

The layout of the proposed development provides a structure that ensures a walkable and cycle-friendly environment. The location of the Subject Site close to Downtown Midland and existing trails means that walking and cycling are viable options with public transit options close by.

- **Policy 1.7.1** indicates that economic prosperity should be supported by optimizing the use of land and infrastructure, promoting the redevelopment of brownfield sites and planning so that major facilities (including rail corridors and industries) and sensitive land uses are appropriately designed, buffered and/or separated from each other.

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The proposed Official Plan Amendment will facilitate a brownfield site redevelopment located adjacent to Georgian Bay. The proposed development will promote an increase of economic prosperity to the Town by optimizing land and infrastructure and by attracting new residents and tourists/visitors to the area with a new destination neighbourhood in proximity to Downtown Midland.

Based upon a detailed review with respect to the proposed Official Plan Amendment, the proposed development plan for the Subject Site is considered to be “consistent with” the Provincial Policy Statement.

Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006)

The Growth Plan was prepared as a framework for the Province’s vision for building stronger, prosperous communities by better managing growth and new development within the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This vision is grounded in the following principles that provide the basis for guiding decisions on how land is developed, resources are managed and public dollars are invested:

- Build compact, vibrant and complete communities;
- Plan and manage growth to support a strong and competitive economy;
- Protect, conserve, enhance and wisely use the valuable natural resources of land, air and water for current and future generations;
- Optimize the use of existing and new infrastructure to support growth in a compact, efficient form;
- Provide for different approaches to managing growth that recognize the diversity of communities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe; and,
- Promote collaboration among all sectors – government, private and non-profit – and residents to achieve the vision.

The Growth Plan encourages building “complete communities”, whether urban or rural. These are communities that are well-designed, offer transportation choices, accommodate people at all stages of life and have the right mix of housing, a good range of jobs, and easy access to stores and services to meet daily needs.

- **Policy 2.2.2** specifies that population growth will be accommodated by, in particular,
 - a) Directing a significant portion of growth to the built-up areas of community through intensification, and...

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- d) Reducing dependence on the automobile through the development of mixed-use, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly urban environments.
- **Policy 2.2.3(7)** directs that all intensification areas will be planned and designed to provide a diverse and compatible mix of land uses, including residential and employment land uses, to support vibrant neighbourhoods, to provide high quality public open spaces with site design and urban design standards that create attractive and vibrant places, and to support transit, walking and cycling for everyday activities, among other matters.
- **Policy 2.2.6.5** acknowledges the requirements of the PPS, while also providing the conversion criteria for a comprehensive review. The criteria are also presented in the County of Simcoe Official Plan Policy 3.2.9 discussed in more detail later in this report.

The Subject Site is located adjacent to Downtown Midland and within the Built Boundary as defined by the Province through the Growth Plan. Its location is proximate to diverse amenities and is well positioned to support walking and cycling with transit as a viable option. Council of the Town of Midland, through the preparation and adoption of *The Unimin Waterfront Lands Master Plan (2013)*, and subsequently the proposed Official Plan Amendment, has identified their strong commitment to ensuring a well-designed and high quality redevelopment strategy for the Subject Site, providing high quality public open spaces and a mix of housing types for people in different stages of life.

The conversion of the Subject Site from “Employment Area” to a mixed-use waterfront neighbourhood will also offer employment opportunities and provide access to local stores and services for the future residents, making the Subject Site an ideal location for a new waterfront destination adjacent to the Downtown, and a prototypical site for innovative intensification.

Amendment 1 to Places to Grow, changes related to Simcoe County (2012)

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe has been in effect for 7 years. However, the Simcoe Sub-area (including Simcoe County) is facing strong development pressures and was identified as requiring further focus including updated growth forecasting (667,000 people by 2031, compared to 437,100 in 2006).

An amendment to the Growth Plan was made in 2012 to introduce the following key policy areas for ensuring sustainable, long-term growth in the Simcoe Sub-area by:

- Allocating population and employment growth to support the primary settlement areas and other serviced settlement areas;
- Providing flexibility to approve development in existing settlement areas;

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- Identifying primary settlement areas that are the focus for growth and intensification; and,
- Identifying employment areas and economic districts to support jobs and investment.

Midland is identified as a *Primary Settlement Area* for the Simcoe Sub-area, and therefore updated population and employment figures identified in Amendment 1 to Places to Grow (discussed later in the report) are applicable.

- **Policy 6.3.1.2** states that municipalities with *Primary Settlement Areas* will, in their Official Plans and other supporting documents –
 - a) identify *primary settlement areas*
 - b) identify and plan for *intensification areas* within *primary settlement areas*
 - c) plan to create *complete communities* within *primary settlement areas*
 - d) ensure the development of high quality urban form and public open spaces within *primary settlement areas* through site design and urban design standards that create attractive and vibrant places that support walking and cycling for everyday activities and are *transit-supportive*.

The Subject Site, although currently designated as “Employment Area” in the Town’s Official Plan, are a suitable candidate for intensification. *The Unimin Waterfront Lands Mater Plan (2013)* was purposefully designed to be compatible with the existing community and as a complete community. The Master Plan promotes a high quality urban form, including key public open spaces. The Master Plan also promotes strong urban design standards and walkability that are integrated into the proposed Official Plan Amendment.

The updated population and employment figures (discussed later in this report) reinforce the previous conclusion that the Subject Site is not required for employment land purposes, and will create a new, vibrant complete community and destination for the Town of Midland.

- **Policy 6.3.2.8** states that municipalities in the Simcoe Sub-area are encouraged to achieve greater efficiency and conservation in energy, water and wastewater management through building and community design.

The higher than typical densities promoted in the proposed Official Plan Amendment will result in new development that is indicative of a compact neighbourhood. The development that will be facilitated by the proposed Official Plan Amendment promotes efficient use of land, and therefore efficient use of energy, water and wastewater.

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Based upon a detailed review with respect to the proposed Official Plan Amendment, the proposed development plan for the Subject Site is considered to be “in conformity with” the Growth Plan and Amendment 1.

County of Simcoe Official Plan (in-effect Plan 2007)

The County of Simcoe Official Plan from 2007 is the in-effect Plan for the County. The County Official Plan designates Midland, and therefore the Subject Site, as being within a “Settlement Area” on Schedule 5.1.

The following policies have been identified as relevant to the review of the in-effect County Official Plan:

- **Policy 3.5.4** states that *Settlements will be the focus of growth and their vitality and regeneration shall be permitted.*
- **Policy 3.5.8** also states *Settlement areas should be planned to accommodate a diversity of land uses, including residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional, to reinforce their traditional role as central places and services centres.*
- **Policy 4.10.7** requires that *Local municipal official plans and zoning bylaws shall include policies that provide opportunity for a range of housing types, densities, and costs to meet the needs of current and future residents.*
- **Policy 4.10.10** *Local municipal official plans shall, where applicable, allocate future residential growth according to location and form of development such as settlement expansion, settlement infill, country residential subdivisions, rural consent lots, or other similar categories.*
- **Policy 4.10.11** requires that *Local municipal official plans shall require official plan amendments for the following developments: settlement expansions, country residential subdivisions, country recreation facilities which include significant building developments and/or site alteration or are greater than 160 ha in size, business parks, shoreline development, airports, new waste disposal sites, and aggregate developments, except where existing approved local municipal official plans do not require an official plan amendment for new or expanded aggregate developments. Policies shall be included setting out the criteria and/or circumstances for the establishment of such uses including more detailed locational, design and performance criteria than contained in this Plan.*
- **Policy 4.11.7** requires that *Local municipalities shall consult with the County of Simcoe during the preparation of official plans and amendments.*

The proposed development is considered a settlement infill project that will regenerate a former

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industrial site to become an area that accommodates a diversity of land uses including residential, commercial and public and civic uses within the Town of Midland. It will provide a range of housing types and densities for current and future residents.

As a shoreline development, the in-effect County Official Plan indicates that the proposed development be implemented through an Official Plan Amendment, as per Policy 4.10.11. The in-effect County Official Plan, however, does not address employment lands or their conversion to other uses.

As per Policy 4.11.7, the Town of Midland and its consultants undertook consultation with the County during the preparation of the Official Plan Amendment.

The Subject Site is not within the Niagara Escarpment Plan boundary, as per Policy 4.11.11, or the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan Area, as per Policy 4.11.12.

Based upon a detailed review, the proposed Official Plan Amendment for the Subject Site is “in conformity with” the in-force County of Simcoe Official Plan and an Amendment to the County Official Plan is not required.

County of Simcoe Official Plan (Council-adopted but not approved 2008)

The adopted, but not approved *County of Simcoe Official Plan* was adopted by the County of Simcoe Council on November 25, 2008, and is under appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). The document has been modified by the County to incorporate provisions put forth in Provincial legislation, including the Growth Plan Amendment #1 (discussed earlier in this report). This updated version was endorsed by County Council on January 22, 2013 and is what is currently before the OMB for approval. This is the version of the Official Plan that is assessed below.

The County of Simcoe Official Plan is a document designed to assist in growth management in a County expected to experience continued strong growth in population and urban development over the next twenty years in accordance with *The Growth Plan (2006)*, as amended. *The County Official Plan* attempts to achieve a balance between the demands for economic development, community building, and environmental conservation and provides a framework for coordinated planning with adjacent municipalities, agencies, and other levels of government.

Section 3.5 outlines the policies for Settlements. The following objectives and policies have been identified as relevant to this review of the County Official Plan:

- **Policy 3.5.2** there is a requirement for compact urban form that promotes the efficient use of land and provision of water, sewer, transportation, and other services;
- **Policy 3.5.3** requires development of mixed-use settlements as strong and vibrant central places and to create healthy settlements and communities that are sustainable;

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- **Policy 3.5.4** promotes development forms and patterns which minimize land consumption and servicing costs; and,
- **Policy 3.5.24** requires that *local municipalities shall promote the intensification and efficient use of land in built-up areas, the development of mixed use communities within settlements, the revitalization and redevelopment of developed areas where appropriate, and the development of cost-effective and land-efficient development standards.* Midland has been identified to accommodate a minimum of 40% of all new residential units annually to be developed within the built boundaries of settlement areas.

The compact urban form and mixed-use proposed on the Subject Site will enable a vibrant and healthy community to develop that minimizes land consumption and servicing costs due to its compact design and density. The new residents of the neighbourhood will contribute to the Town's targets for density and accommodating new residents within the Town's built boundary. The housing forms and employment opportunities anticipated by the proposed Official Plan Amendment, will assist the Town in achieving its intensification target. The proposed Official Plan Amendment will facilitate cost-effective and land-efficient development, and will support and help revitalize Downtown Midland.

- **Policy 3.2.9** provides a framework for the consideration of employment land conversions:

Across the County conversion of employment lands within employment areas to non-employment uses will only be considered through a municipal comprehensive review where it has been demonstrated that:
 - a) There is a need for the conversion;*
 - b) The local municipality will meet the employment forecasts allocated to the municipality pursuant to this Plan;*
 - c) The conversion will not adversely affect the overall viability of the employment area, and achievement of the intensification target, density targets, and other policies of this Plan;*
 - d) There is existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities to accommodate the proposed conversion;*
 - e) The lands are not required over the long term for the employment purposes for which they are designated; and,*
 - f) Cross-jurisdictional issues have been considered.*

The need for the conversion is established by a combination of factors. Primarily, the Town of Midland needs to promote growth that is identified as intensification within its defined built

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boundary, and the Subject Site, with its prime waterfront location, is considered a prototypical example of a site suitable for intensified redevelopment, as identified in *The Unimin Waterfront Lands Master Plan, (2013)*. In addition, there are a number of other key factors that, from a planning perspective, support the need for the proposed Official Plan Amendment that would facilitate a comprehensive redevelopment of the Subject Site, including:

- Support Downtown Midland by establishing a new and exciting destination, and will enhance the population base in proximity to Midland's Main Street;
- Provide a range of higher density housing types;
- Promote walkability through its inclusion of sidewalk, trail and road connections to and from the Georgian Bay waterfront and the Town's open space, trails and road systems;
- Protect, in public ownership the lands abutting the water's edge which will provide a publicly accessible promenade along the entire property;
- Facilitate a full environmental clean up and Environmental Site Assessments; and,
- Encourage the remediation of the natural environment.

In addition, analysis and conclusions provided in the *Employment and Commercial Lands Strategy Update* (discussed in more detail later in this Report) states that due to revisions of growth statistics for the Simcoe Sub-Area there has been an over-estimation of "Employment Area" lands required in Midland. Therefore it is concluded that the conversion of the Subject Site will not adversely impact the overall viability of employment areas and intensification and density targets in Midland. The Subject Site is not required over the long term for the employment purposes for which they are currently designated.

The Subject Site is within the urban boundary of the Town of Midland. Full municipal services are available or in proximity to adequately service the development anticipated by the proposed Official Plan Amendment. Cross-jurisdictional issues have been considered, and there are none identified.

Based upon a detailed review, the proposed Official Plan Amendment for the Subject Site is "in conformity with" the adopted but not approved County of Simcoe Official Plan.

Town of Midland Official Plan (updated July 9, 2013)

The *Town of Midland Official Plan* was adopted in December, 2002 and approved by the County of Simcoe in June, 2003. Since the approval of the Official Plan there have been many changes to Provincial planning legislation, policy and plans. Changes to the *Planning Act* in 2004 and 2007, a new Provincial Policy Statement in 2005, the *Places to Grow Act* in 2005 and the *Growth Plan* for

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the Greater Golden Horseshoe in 2006 have all changed the legal and policy frameworks for planning in the Town and have obligated the Town to reflect these changes in its planning program and Official Plan. An Official Plan Review and Update Project was started in 2008, but due to proposed amendments to the Growth Plan that would have a direct impact on Midland, the Official Plan Review was put on hold.

The Subject Site is located in the Town's Settlement Area, as defined by the Official Plan, and is located within the Town's "Built Boundary" as defined by the Province through the Growth Plan. The Subject Site is currently designated as "Employment Area" in the Town of Midland Official Plan.

In the Town of Midland, there are five areas that are designated as "Employment Area" in the Official Plan and zoned as Industrial and/or Institutional. The Subject Site is identified as an "Employment Area".

The Town's array of supporting studies (discussed in more detail later in this report) have concluded that there has been an over-estimation in the amount of "Employment Area" lands required for the Town and that the Subject Site is suitable for conversion from the "Employment Area" designation to other uses, specifically to facilitate a mixed-use waterfront neighbourhood.

- **Policy 2.1.1(d)** encourages growth of the tourist industry by providing areas for the development of visitor attractions.

The proposed Official Plan Amendment enables the development of a hotel or conference facility (discussed in more detail below) on the Subject Site. The creation of a vibrant, publicly accessible waterfront with commercial and retail uses will ensure that it will become a destination and a tourist attraction. The boardwalk and the longer term potential for recreational boating opportunities will also be an attraction.

- **Policy 2.3.1** states that it is the goal of the Plan to provide residential land development, which will offer a wide variety and choice of accommodation.

The Town acknowledges the need to ensure the provision of an adequate supply and variety of housing, including affordable housing opportunities with different forms and levels of tenure and cost. The proposed Official Plan Amendment for the Subject Site proposes a framework for a variety of housing types including townhouses, low-rise and mid-rise apartments that will provide appropriate intensification and innovative housing options. In addition, higher density house forms have the propensity to be more affordable due to decreased per unit land costs and lower development costs due to smaller units. These higher density house forms are considered to be intrinsically more affordable.

In regard to community design, Policy 2.4.1 states that the Town recognizes the value of having the highest quality of built and natural environments. In addition to a distinctive physical form,

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many social, economic and environmental benefits are realized by well-designed environments. To achieve the community design goals the Town strives for, the following objectives are considered relevant:

- **Policy 2.4.4.1** *Encourage private and public developments to provide an integrated mix of uses, activities and experiences;*
- **Policy 2.4.4.2** *Encourage, through the design process, the need to preserve, protect and enhance the natural environment of the land and adjacent bodies of water;*
- **Policy 2.4.4.3** *Encourage the creation of an overall physical form related to pedestrians and cyclists;*
- **Policy 2.4.4.4** *Encourage the design of road patterns, buildings and spaces which makes it easy for pedestrians and vehicles to move efficiently;*
- **Policy 2.4.4.6** *Encourage developments that fit within the surrounding neighbourhood which consider the uses, massing, height, scale, architecture and details of adjacent buildings;*
- **Policy 2.4.4.7** *Encourage the creation and preservation of landmarks and other distinctive elements including buildings, open spaces, landscapes and natural features;*
- **Policy 2.4.4.8** *Encourage developments that can be used for a variety of purposes and which can adapt over time to changing circumstances and opportunities.*

The proposed Official Plan Amendment, which implements and facilitates the Council adopted *The Unimin Waterfront Lands Master Plan (2103)* establishes a framework for future public-private partnership that will deliver a development project that includes an integrated mix of uses, activities and experiences on the Subject Site. This new waterfront neighbourhood will become a place to live, work, shop and play while making the most of the spectacular waterfront location.

The proposed Official Plan Amendment will facilitate an exceptional public open space network that will enhance public access to Georgian Bay and ensure the environmental restoration of the land through the provision of a remediation program as well as new landscaping and trees, a public park as well as a green ribbon of linear parks.

The overall physical form that is permitted within the proposed Official Plan Amendment, has been designed for pedestrians and cyclists as a priority, not only within the Subject Site itself, but linking to the downtown, the existing neighbourhoods and the multi-mode trail running along the southern boundary of the Subject Site. Vehicles will be accommodated but will have secondary priority in the area. Structured parking (where feasible) will hide the majority of

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vehicles, whereas on-street parking will help calm traffic and provide additional public access to the waterfront.

The proposed built form framework will ensure that future development will be compatible with its immediate context and will fit with the surrounding neighbourhood – buildings are higher and denser closer to the centre and western edge of the Subject Site to relate to the adjacent Downtown. Low-rise, primarily residential buildings will be located to the east of the site to complement the existing lower density residential form adjacent to the south of the Subject Site. To showcase the waterfront and enhance parks and open spaces, building fronts will be designed to face and address the open spaces to animate the public realm. The proposed Official Plan Amendment establishes an urban structure framework on the Subject Site that can be adapted over time to changing circumstances and opportunities.

The Town of Midland Official Plan also provides a number of key objectives that are to be achieved when planning the Town's waterfront, including the Subject Site, which is a significant waterfront land parcel with over 1100 metres of frontage on Midland Bay/Georgian Bay.

- **Schedule A** of the Official Plan identifies the eastern portion of the Subject Site as being subject to a Secondary Plan in **policy 3.1.5 f**: *The lands located north of Bayshore Drive, between Midland Avenue and William Street, may, in the future, provide for an ideal setting to locate a convention centre/tourist accommodation facility. Prior to any alternative new use being considered on this site the opportunity to establish a tourist accommodation use should be thoroughly investigated.*

Work carried out for *The Unimin Waterfront Lands Waterfront Master Plan (2013)* for the Subject Site, considered the appropriateness of a number of convention centre/tourist accommodation facilities options. It was concluded through that study process that:

- A hotel/convention centre is appropriate should a private developer wish to pursue such a development, but it shouldn't be a requirement;
- A marina development is appropriate should a private developer wish to pursue such a development, but it shouldn't be a requirement;
- A Casino is not anticipated;
- A campground should only be permitted as temporary or an interim use; and,
- A waterfront-orientated event space is appropriate, and is included within the proposed Official Plan Amendment.

Policy 2.5.1 states: *It is the goal of this Plan to maximize the attributes of the Georgian Bay and Little Lake waterfronts to their full potential.* This can be achieved through the following:

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- **Policy 2.5.1.1** *In new development ensure reasonable, controlled, public access to all areas of the waterfront, for the benefit of the general populace of Midland;*
- **Policy 2.5.1.2** *Ensure that all waterfront development is of the highest standard and properly integrates with surrounding uses;*
- **Policy 2.5.1.3** *Ensure that the development of the Georgian Bay waterfront is supportive of the Downtown District, by enhancing the waterfront public trail (Trans Canada Trail), park system and Town dock with particular focus on the retention of scenic views;*
- **Policy 2.5.1.4** *Create and encourage facilities and spaces which will enhance the tourism economy.*

The proposed Official Plan Amendment will facilitate a comprehensive redevelopment of the Subject Site that will maximize the tremendous attributes of Georgian Bay by promoting waterfront development of the highest standard that also complements its surroundings including the Downtown and adjacent residential neighbourhoods. Public access to the waterfront is ensured. The proposed Official Plan Amendment includes permission for all of the appropriate tourist facilities and spaces, should the market deem those uses feasible.

While the proposed Official Plan Amendment is required to facilitate the desired redevelopment Plan, the goals, objectives and intentions of the Town of Midland have been appropriately considered, and substantially achieved.

5. Supporting Studies

Growth Management Strategy for the Town of Midland (2009)

The goal of the *Growth Management Strategy for the Town of Midland (2009)* was to provide guidance to the Town with respect to the amendments required to update the Official Plan. The study provided an employment lands strategy, a commercial lands strategy, and an intensification strategy, with the aim of bringing the *Town of Midland Official Plan* into conformity with the *Provincial Policy Statement, Places to Grow, The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* and the recently adopted *County of Simcoe Official Plan*.

The Growth Management Strategy identified that a portion of the Subject Site – identified as 288 Bayshore Drive - was an excellent site for waterfront development in proximity to the Downtown. The Growth Management Strategy acknowledged that the Subject Site is designated as “Employment Area” at present, but that conversion to a residential designation could be done as part of a Comprehensive Review.

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Employment Area Policy Review Study (2010)

Provincial, County and local policies set the framework for any potential modifications/conversions to Midland's existing industrial land supply. In the Town of Midland, there are five areas that are designated as an "Employment Area" in the Official Plan and zoned as Industrial and/or Institutional. The Subject Site is designated "Employment Area" on Schedule 'A' of the Town's Official Plan.

One of the critical issues that the Town must address is to meet the requirements of Section 2.2.6.5 of *Places to Grow: The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006)*, which specifically addresses the conversion of lands within areas of employment to non-employment uses.

The Town undertook a comprehensive employment area policy review to identify proposed strategic "Employment Areas" and the "Employment Areas" that could be candidates for conversion. The *Employment Area Policy Review Study (2010)* proposed a set of criteria to determine whether any of the Town's five "Employment Areas" would be appropriate candidates for conversion to non-employment uses that also reflect the requirements of the PPS, Growth Plan and best practices. The criteria included:

- A. Mixed Use Areas** - This criterion assesses all of the Town's "Employment Areas" based on the extent that they contain a significant mix of land uses - residential, industrial, and/or commercial uses. Areas that consisted of non-industrial land uses greater than forty-percent of the total land area are categorized as mixed-use areas or areas where transitioning to industrial uses has not occurred. This recognizes the "Employment Areas" where industrial uses are not the primary focus and where further industrial development could lead to land use conflicts.
- B. Surrounded by Non-Employment Uses** - This criterion determines the extent the "Employment Areas" are surrounded by non-employment uses or sensitive areas. Where the "Employment Area" is located within an area that is primarily residential or where it abuts natural features, such as a wetland or Georgian Bay, it is recognized as a less favourable location for employment uses. Employment/industrial uses may cause adverse impacts to these neighbouring land uses, including: traffic impacts, vibration, dust, odour and noise as set out in the Ministry of Environment D-Series guidelines.
- C. Stand-Alone Sites** - This criterion identifies the "Employment Areas" that are comprised of larger stand-alone industrial operations which are outside of multiple facility business or industrial parks. These "Employment Areas" are recognized as scattered sites and do not contribute to a logical employment land use structure in the Town, and could be restricted in changing to other employment uses.
- D. Not Part of a Planned Industrial Area** - This criterion is used to consider the original planned function of the "Employment Area", and whether its location was designed for

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employment uses.

- E. No Direct Access to Provincial or County Roads** - This criterion reviews the access that “Employment Areas” have to major roads and highways. “Employment Areas” should be located on major transportation corridors for ease of truck travel and to avoid travelling through mixed-use or residential areas of the Town. “Employment Areas” that rely on municipal roads with no ease of access to Provincial or County roads are favourable for conversion to non-employment uses.

It was found that the Subject Site, designated as an “Employment Area”, met criterion B, C, D and E, identifying it as a non-strategic “Employment Area”, and therefore a Candidate for Conversion in accordance with the approach taken in the *Employment Area Policy Review Study (2010)*.

It was concluded in the *Employment Area Policy Review Study (2010)* that the current Change of Use criteria (Section 3.1.4) in the *Town of Midland Official Plan* is not in conformity with the *Provincial Policy Statement (2005)* or *Places to Grow: The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006)* and does not address the full range of possible conversion applications and, therefore, recommends additional criteria to be included in the *Town of Midland Official Plan*. The new criteria are as follows:

- The proposed use will be more compatible with the adjacent uses in accordance with the MOE D Series Guidelines.
- The proposed use will not adversely impact the long term viability and functioning of the adjacent industrial or employment uses including large stand-alone facilities and their ability to accommodate other permitted employment uses.
- The change in use will not compromise any other policy objectives of the Town including the planned function of the Town’s existing and planned commercial areas and the primacy of the commercial Downtown District.
- Where the proposed use is residential, the application will assist the Town in meeting the intensification and density targets contained in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.
- The proposed change in land use will result in a more rational land use boundary between uses and contribute to the achievement of the overall goals and objectives of the Town’s Official Plan.
- The site has the full range of required services and infrastructure or the services and infrastructure can be made readily available including pedestrian, cycling and transit facilities.

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It is acknowledged that the Employment Area Policy Review Study (2010) identifies the Subject Site as a candidate for conversion from “Employment Area” to other, non-employment land uses. The proposed Official Plan Amendment which facilitates that conversion is also in conformity with the other criteria presented in the Report.

Town of Midland, Employment and Commercial Lands Strategy Update (2012)

In January 2012, *Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* was amended to include specific policies related to the Simcoe County Sub-area. It introduced employment and population targets to the year 2031, which superseded those contained in the *County Official Plan*, which were relied on in the *Town’s Growth Management Strategy (2009)*.

The Town of Midland, Employment and Commercial Lands Strategy Update (2012) examines the demand for, and supply of employment and commercial lands, and provides commentary as to how recent economic events and policy modifications have impacted the findings and recommendations of the *Town’s Growth Management Strategy (2009)*. Key findings include:

- The amended population and employment allocations from the Province resulted in increased population growth but reduced employment growth for Midland. As per the amended targets, the Town of Midland is planned to increase its population from 16,900 to 22,500 and to increase its employment base from 12,000 to 13,800 between 2006 and 2031.
- The report found that there are approximately 400 hectares of lands designated as “Employment Area” in the Town’s Official Plan, of which approximately 30% or just over 121.7 hectares are still vacant.
- Over the forecast period, the Town of Midland will need to accommodate some 1,800 new jobs (significantly less than the previous County of Simcoe Official Plan’s growth allocation of 4,000 additional jobs). After accounting for the work-at-home population, the employment with no-fixed-place-of-work, and growth in population related employment, this would result in a net growth of 100 employees requiring “Employment Area” locations by 2031.
- Thirty employees per hectare and excess land for expansion results in a demand for some 3.7 additional hectares of “Employment Area” land by 2031. With 121.7 hectares of vacant “Employment Area” lands in Midland, the Report concludes that this supply is far more than adequate to accommodate anticipated need to 2031.
- The Report also states that tourism and recreation are important to the local economy, and activities related to these sectors should be considered for excess vacant “Employment Area” lands.

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Based on a review of the Town of Midland Employment and Commercial Lands Strategy Update (2012), it is clear that the supply of available “Employment Area” lands far exceeds the anticipated demand. Based on this conclusion, and the conclusions of the previous growth management-related studies carried out by the Town since 2009, the Subject Site is not required to meet the demand for employment land employment, and can be considered as an excellent candidate for conversion, as facilitated by the proposed Official Plan Amendment.

6. Summary Conclusions

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing confirmed with Town of Midland staff in July 2013 that as long as the Municipal Comprehensive Review addressed the need/demand questions regarding employment lands on a Town wide basis as required by Provincial policy, the Municipal Comprehensive Review could be undertaken with the Official Plan Amendment for the Unimin lands and implemented on a site specific basis. The County of Simcoe Planning Department also confirmed that this approach is acceptable, subject to the larger issues being addressed in the Official Plan Review study.

This Report concludes that the proposed Official Plan Amendment, which promotes the conversion of the Subject Site from an “Employment Area” designation to a “Waterfront Mixed-Use” designation that facilitates a new mixed-use waterfront neighbourhood is justified , represents good planning and is in the best interests of the Town of Midland for the following reasons:

- The Town of Midland officially adopted *The Master Plan for the Unimin Waterfront Lands* on June 24, 2013 as the basis for further planning work. This work is comprehensive, and included a full stakeholder consultation process.
- The Town has carried out a number of studies that have clearly identified the Subject Site as an appropriate candidate for conversion from an “Employment Area” designation to other, non-employment generating land uses. Specifically, the Town’s *Employment and Commercial Lands Strategy Update (2012)*, has clearly demonstrated that the supply of available employment lands in Midland far exceeds the anticipated demand. Based on this key conclusion, the Subject Site is not required to meet the long-term demand for employment lands in the Town, and can be considered as an excellent candidate for conversion.
- The proposed Official Plan Amendment, that facilitates the proposed development plan for the Subject Site, is considered to be:
 - “Consistent with” the Provincial Policy Statement;
 - “In conformity with” the Growth Plan and Amendment 1 and,

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- “In conformity with” the County of Simcoe Official Plan.
- In addition, the proposed Official Plan Amendment facilitates a redevelopment strategy that:
 - Allows for a wider range of uses in addition to those currently permitted, thereby offering a more sustainable, long-term use that can meet present and future needs, as well as employment opportunities;
 - Enables the creation of a compact, complete mixed-use waterfront neighbourhood that is vibrant, walkable and offers a variety of housing options;
 - Promotes intensification, which will utilize brownfields land and infrastructure efficiently;
 - Integrates physically with the existing surrounding community and will be compatible with the abutting uses;
 - Enables a convention centre/tourist accommodation facility to be developed if the market wishes to pursue such development;
 - Includes an array of parks, open spaces and linkages;
 - Respects the local environment and supports efforts to enhance and protect ecologically important aspects of the subject lands; and,
 - Ensures full public access to the waterfront.