

DATE: March 23, 2021

TO: Tecumseh Town Council and Town Administration
Attention: L. Moy, Clerk

FROM: Tamra Tobin Teno
[REDACTED] Little River Blvd., Tecumseh

RE: 12433 Dillon Drive- Proposed Residential Development
Submission for Public Council Meeting on March 30, 2021

Land use planning affects almost every aspect of our lives and the public has a crucial role in the planning process. When Council makes a planning decision it directly affects everyone in our Town. I live in Area 1 where Briday wants to squeeze in its development on the former Victoria School property. My property abuts the proposed development. As such, I have reviewed Briday’s Planning Justification Report and the Addendum thereto. I have also reviewed the report to Council dated March 30, 2021 from Brian Hillman, Director of Planning & Building Services. I am again submitting my comments on the proposal development.

During the first public meeting on September 10, 2019, I was part of that ninety-nine percent of the overflow crowd who attended who were not against proper development of the land, but who were vociferously opposed to Briday’s proposal. Many residents spoke and many submitted written comments. The main concerns were and still are:

Residents’ concerns	Briday’s response
Density is too high	No change
Design of buildings didn’t fit the area	No change
Height of the buildings is excessive	No change
Development is overcrowded – too many units; too many buildings	No change to number of units. Briday adds additional structure for parking
Flooding	Briday will elevate its own lands

It is very disappointing that these public concerns weren’t reflected in the revised proposal.

Both Briday's and the Town Planners' reports are in lockstep in their certainty that the planned development is a good fit for the area. I do not agree in the slightest. I think it may be helpful to breakdown the main points outlined in the reports.

Housing Diversity

Mr. Hillman states that our area has a lack of housing diversity. He says that it has mostly single unit detached dwellings so if a person doesn't want upkeep and maintenance there is no option but to move from the area. Well, the same could be said for all of old St. Clair Beach and practically all of the rest of Tecumseh. All it means is that this is an established, stable neighbourhood of single-family homes that has been here for decades. It is exactly the way our former town leaders and residents envisioned it; our neighbourhood doesn't have to be 'fixed'.

Mr. Hillman goes on to say that to serve an aging population, it will be necessary to have a greater diversity of smaller units requiring less maintenance and located in shorter walkable distances from other key destinations. Of course, Briday's proposed development doesn't magically move any downsizing residents any closer to key destinations! So, the proposal doesn't support Mr. Hillman's argument. As well, the vast majority of the aging population in our neighbourhood currently live in one-storey homes. They will NOT be well served by Briday's planned three-storey walk-ups and two-storey townhouses. The solution is a development of single-storey semi-detached townhomes that appeal to all demographics, including and especially seniors.

The Town Planners' report echoes Briday's position, saying that multi-unit residential development is a built form and land use mix that currently exists in town. This is true, but it exists on the main streets, in commercial hubs. And this is exactly where multi-residential development belongs. It does NOT belong in the middle of the Town's oldest, established residential neighbourhood, full of single-family homes. Our Official Plan reflects this belief. And Council believes this too, because it has recently approved 3 condo and apartment developments with a total of 343 units, all on or just off Tecumseh Road in our main business area.

Mr. Hillman points to the St. Anne Arms on Lesperance Road and Lanoue Street as being a good example of a higher-density development in a low-density area. He suggests it is well-integrated into and well-received by the neighbourhood. If that is true, it is because St. Anne Arms is a charming, unobtrusive set of 2 small buildings of 6 units each with delightful design elements. It looks like it belongs and it is not overwhelming. There are houses only on two sides of the development. And, it fronts on an arterial road in a main commercial section of town where it is appropriate to have a greater density. One expects it to be there. But Briday's plan is to plop down its buildings on a local road right in the middle of an entire neighbourhood. So, it is easy to make the distinction between the appealing St. Anne Arms and Briday's plan.

Briday says their plan provides a range of housing types and densities not typically found in Tecumseh. This is precisely why this development doesn't belong in the oldest, most established neighbourhood in town. Briday's housing types should be built in a new subdivision like the ones the Mayor says will be developed in the area south of County Road 22, west of Manning. Or, when the principals of Briday built the Lakewood South subdivision, they should have put their 3-storey stacked townhome buildings next to the 4 and 5 storey existing residential buildings where they would have been better suited. Instead, they built a section of one-storey townhomes next to those big buildings. Also, logically, the Lakewood South development should have had a higher density because it is just steps from the 3 shopping plazas on the corners of Tecumseh road. If Council had wanted more density in Tecumseh it should have insisted that Lakewood South have multi-residential units. They didn't and that was strange.

Compatibility: Design

Briday contends that its proposal is compatible with abutting low density uses. Well, just because they say it is, doesn't make it so.

- This is a low-density neighbourhood. Briday wants a medium density which will be surrounded by low density.
- Our Official Plan says medium density development must have frontage and/or access onto an arterial Road. Dillon is a local road, so Briday's plan is not compatible here.

- Our Official Plan caps the maximum height requirement. Briday's stacked townhomes are about 8 feet higher than the maximum allowed. It's also curious that both reports only mention the two-storey townhomes as being height compliant and nothing about the 2 stacked townhome buildings which exceed the rules. Both reports also trumpet the idea that there is a 'gentle' transition in height with the 2 storey townhomes on the outside and the 3-storey townhomes on the inside. This transition is meaningless when there are still 2 overly tall buildings dominating the entire area.
- Briday wants to put in Stacked Townhomes. This type is not allowed under our Official Plan. Again, neither report mentions this. This type of design is for cities like Toronto. The look of it is stark, uninviting and just plain ugly. It belongs among crowded buildings squished in urban cities, not in a small town like Tecumseh. Thus, it is not compatible with our neighbourhood.
- In terms of form and style, both Briday and the Town planners agree that compatibility with the neighbourhood exists because the proposed buildings will have brick and stucco like our houses have!
- Mr. Hillman says that scale and massing can help achieve compatibility. Massing means generally what a building or buildings look like in terms of basic masses or chunks. The two-storey townhomes are very narrow, joined together, cramped and have non-descript, identical, rather flat fronts. The massing is that of a strip mall. This 'massing aesthetic' in no way fits with the houses in our neighbourhood. The visual impact of this development cannot be judged properly as the wide-angle drawings submitted by Briday obfuscate the cramped reality.
- Briday and Mr. Hillman say there will be additional buffers, fences and trees, etc. to shield the adjacent neighbours from the townhomes. Well, if they have to shield us so we don't see it, then again it points to the fact that the development does not fit in. It is not compatible. Shielding and hiding don't make a proposed development any more compatible or appropriate, nor does it enhance the neighbourhood.

It is quite evident that the solution to all the problems with this proposed development is an enclave of single-storey semi-detached townhomes like Carmelita Court (where the Mayor lives).

Compatibility: Traffic

Briday has submitted a traffic impact study full of stats and charts, but it doesn't bode well when the study begins by identifying Dillon as a collector road when it is defined as a local road in all of the Town's various reports. It also states that Lesperance road is a 3-lane road which it is not. One wonders if the stats are wrong, too. Notwithstanding that, what is not mentioned in the traffic study is the fact that with 63 units there will be a minimum of 63 cars going in and out all day long on a local road, PLUS the delivery and service vehicles for 63 new units, PLUS friends and family who visit, and finally all the surrounding neighbours who must pick up their mail right where the entrance and exit will be. This is the impact of traffic that concerns the neighbours, not just waiting another minute to access Lesperance road.

Flooding

The only thing mentioned in Mr. Hillman's report is that the Town has confirmed that the subject land would be accessible for emergency response during a flood event and that safe access can be provided. What is this safe access? Dillon Drive is demonstrably flood prone; it is in the middle of a flood plain. What does the Town mean? Briday says that it will elevate its lands to alleviate flooding. Well, that will exacerbate the problem for the not-so-elevated neighbours. One does not have the same confidence in Briday's assertions that its on-site storm water management system will retain runoff on its property and avoid run-off into adjacent properties.

Official Plan Compliance

Briday knows its proposal is not compliant with the relevant sections of our current Town Official Plan under which it is bound. That is why it spends 9 of its 18-page report discussing how it would be more compliant with the new *draft* Official Plan which has yet to

receive all of its regulatory approvals. The future Official Plan will be for just that...future developments, future growth of the town. We are concerned with our neighbourhood which is already here and is being threatened with bad development.

Overall design

We have all made note of Briday's unmitigated gall in saying there is no overall character to this neighbourhood. According to them there is nothing significant about the built forms or the architectural styles, streetscape and landscaping. Hence, as they term it, there is no benchmark that they must meet. Briday's dismissive statements totally miss the point. This has been a neighbourhood since 1792 when the first settlers came here. And like those first settlers, we are proud of where we live. Also like our forebears, we have been good stewards of this, one of the first neighbourhoods of Tecumseh. We still maintain original farmhouse designs, and post-war homes built by returning soldiers, and pretty clapboard houses with little spring flowers, and sprawling ranch houses with lovingly tended yards. And we did it all within our Official Plan. We play by the rules. THAT is part of our character. Briday disrespects us with its flippant commentary designed to get its way.

Intensification

Briday announces that its proposal will ensure that the Town can meet the 15-year supply of land designated for residential development. Its overly dense, crowded development is not needed. According to Brian Hillman's comments during the January 26, 2021, Council meeting, Tecumseh has an excess of 25 years of land supply which is quite significant given the growth forecast. He went on to say the Town has not hit previously projected growth targets. Mr. Hillman said he is comfortable with the land designated for potential development for a long period of time going forward. The Mayor states this in the media quite often. And recent Town Planning reports bear this out when they identify and map out all available land for infilling and intensification and the former Victoria School property is not even counted as part of the available land. Briday's type of over-intensification is just not needed. In addition, I remind you of the Province's own position in its Planning Framework legislation. As the

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Provincial Planning Policy Branch says: “Each community’s form and level of intensification will differ, based on their specific characteristics such as location, history, community strengths and preferences”. (my emphasis)

Conclusion

We are not against development of the former Victoria School site. We are, however, staunchly opposed to the proposed development design application by Briday.

The neighbourhood wants and deserves one storey town homes, similar to those built in our Community Improvement Plan area, on Carmelita Court. The density precedent is acceptable and would result in about 39 units on the former Victoria school site. These types of units are the best-selling units in Windsor and Essex County now. They command starting prices for new units of over \$700,000. At this level, there is plenty of profit to be made for any developer. Compared to Briday’s design, these one-storey units are aesthetically pleasing and definitely compatible with our neighbourhood. These types of units are assiduously sought by all demographics of home buyers including seniors, people looking to downsize, people with mobility issues, people just entering the housing market and young families. I can’t imagine why a developer would be so short-sighted as to not build something that appeals to **all** demographics.

I remind Council that none of you actually live in this neighbourhood. None of the members of the Planning Department live here, either. We do and we are trying to protect where we live.

The above solution of one-storey popular townhomes solves the problem. The taxpayers of the Town will be happy. Council will have made the right decision. There will be no need for a costly, time consuming appeal to the LPAT. Briday makes a significant profit.

Finally, I am confident in Council’s ability to see the correct path forward. I will quote Councillor Tonia’s sentiments that were published in December, 2018, in the local newspaper when he was elected... he said he planned to take a logical approach to his work on Council and that this meant making decisions which make sense to the majority of residents. I trust all of Council will do the same.