

# NOVÆ RES URBIS

## GREATER TORONTO & HAMILTON AREA

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■ PROPOSED FOOD MANUFACTURING CAMPUS COULD GIVE WINGS TO INNOVATION CORRIDOR IN PICKERING

# EMPLOYMENT CORRIDOR TAKING FLIGHT

Rahul Gupta

A property located within the Seaton employment lands of the City of Pickering's 'innovation corridor' could become the future home of a 23-hectare food processing facility. Proponents of the project say that when fully built out the facility could bring hundreds of new, skilled jobs to the city.

City of Pickering planning staff are reviewing a rezoning request submitted by **Caplink Limited** in June 2022 to convert existing agricultural lands to permit the development of a campus-style food manufacturing facility to be operated by baked goods company **FGF Brands**. A staff report for the proposal is expected to be made available in time for a meeting of the City of Pickering's planning committee September 6 to discuss the proposed project.

Caplink Limited is proposing to develop four manufacturing plants as well as a distribution centre on lands located at

745 and 815 Highway 7 west of Whites Road. **The Biglieri Group** is the planner on the project.

The proposal also includes a 'learning centre' for employee training—proposed to be located within an existing one-and-a-half storey farmhouse heritage property on the site. Walter Percy House, an historic farmhouse on the property dating back to the 1870s is noted on the city's heritage register for its 'unique masonry'.

As part of the proposed

development, the front section of the farmhouse would be re-located from its current placement at the southeast corner of the site, and the rest of the structure would be demolished. Two separate barns and silos on the property would also be demolished.

Two tributaries belonging to West Duffins Creek, protected natural heritage areas, flow along the western and south-eastern edges of the site. Those would be preserved according to the development proposal.

The project would entail the construction of new public roads connecting the proposed facility to Hwy. 7. Two stormwater management ponds, a surface parking lot accommodating 967 spaces and room for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, bicycle storage and carpooling are also part of the proposal.

"[The Caplink proposal] could have five new industrial buildings, so you're looking at approximately 97,000 square metres of total space distributed

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Map of a 23-hectare site in Pickering where Caplink Limited is proposing to build a food manufacturing campus. The site is located at 745 and 815 Hwy. 7 near Whites Road on rural lands that were acquired by the City of Pickering from the province near Hwy. 7 and Hwy. 407 to establish a future 'innovation corridor' for employment.

SOURCE: CITY OF PICKERING

# EMPLOYMENT CORRIDOR

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amongst those five buildings,”

City of Pickering development review and urban design manager **Nilesh Surti** told *NRU*, noting that no manufacturing facility of that scale and type currently exists in the city.

“It’s a very large site, no doubt about it,” Surti added.

Following the upcoming September 6 planning committee meeting, Surti says a statutory public meeting will be

scheduled before the end of the year with the public to discuss the proposal.

“If all goes well, we’re hoping to bring a vote back to [City of Pickering] council [on the proposed development] in the New Year,” Surti told *NRU*.

The site is located within Pickering’s innovation corridor in the northern part of the city, an approximately 323-hectare area situated around Hwy.407

between York-Durham Townline Road and Brock Road, on lands formerly owned by the **Province of Ontario**.

The Pickering innovation corridor is located at the northern edge of the Seaton community. The lands were once included within a federal plan dating back to the 1970s to build an airport in northern Pickering and to develop a surrounding residential community to accommodate upwards of 200,000 new residents. With no guarantee of the airport plan’s completion from the federal government, the city developed a new planning vision to establish the ‘urban community’ of

Seaton, with a growth objective of attracting some 70,000 new residents to Pickering, as well as creating 35,000 new jobs. In 2018, the city announced it had secured agreements with ‘anchor tenants’ for lands in Seaton acquired from the province along Hwy. 407, providing new employment uses in a newly designated innovation corridor.

If the Caplink application is approved, FGF Brands will become the newest tenant of the innovation corridor, joining existing anchor tenant and farm vehicle and equipment manufacturer **Kubota Canada**, which has established a warehouse and head office facility just south of Highway 7. Additional anchor tenants are developing facilities nearby. **Red Crest Developments** is building two office buildings for the innova-

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Rendering of Caplink Limited’s proposed food manufacturing campus for a 23-hectare site on the Seaton employment lands ‘innovation corridor’ in Pickering. The proposed development would include food manufacturing and distribution facilities. An existing residential building at the southern end of the site is designated heritage and is proposed to be retained and relocated and incorporated into the development as a learning centre.

PLANNER: BIGLIERI GROUP  
ARCHITECT: BALDASSARRA ARCHITECTS INC.  
SOURCE: CITY OF PICKERING

Rendering of one of the buildings proposed in a development application under review by the City of Pickering. Caplink Limited is proposing a campus-style food manufacturing facility consisting of four buildings, new public roads, surface parking lots, bicycle storage areas and electric vehicle (EV) charging stations on a 23-hectare site at 745 and 815 Highway 7 in Pickering.

PLANNER: BIGLIERI GROUP  
ARCHITECT: BALDASSARRA ARCHITECTS INC.  
SOURCE: CITY OF PICKERING

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tion corridor, while the **Behar Group** is planning to develop an approximately 3,000 square-metre convention centre and adjoining hotel for trade shows, weddings, and other large-scale business and social events.

“These initial investments will kick-start immense commercial and industrial growth along Highway 407, which will create thousands of new jobs and strengthen both Pickering and Durham’s economy over the next two decades,” City of

Pickering Mayor **Dave Ryan** said in 2018 when the first tenants for the innovation corridor were announced.

Pickering ward 3 regional councillor **David Pickles** told *NRU* that he is excited by the ‘spectacular’ proposal by Caplink, for the FGF Brands facility and its potential to create thousands of new jobs as part of a phased development that could break ground as early as 2023.

FGF, which mass-produces baked goods by popular bak-

ing brands such as Stonefire and Simple Joys using what they call innovative production technologies, has added **George Weston Limited** food processing to its acquisition portfolio, formally acquiring the Canadian baking giant for \$1.1-billion in late 2021.

“When you start talking about thousands of jobs and millions of square feet [in employment space], it’s a very exciting project for the residents of the city, and for the city itself,” Pickles told *NRU*, adding that the proposed FGF Brands site could become one of the largest employers to be located within **Durham Region**.

Pickles is confident that city planning staff will approve

the Caplink proposal since the surrounding area making up the innovation corridor has already been designated by City of Pickering council for ‘prestige employment’ purposes, making it an attractive area, he believes, for large companies to locate their operations. Pickles added that major infrastructure components in the area such as sewer and water pipes have been ‘oversized’ to accommodate residential as well as industrial uses.

“We want to make sure that the employment lands are developed as well as the residential lands, and not as an afterthought,” Pickles told *NRU*.

