Request

On behalf of the applicant, 13th Floor Woodlands HB GB, please accept this application for a Large-Scale Land Use Map Amendment for approximately 165.53 gross acres (“Amendment Sites”) within the Woodlands Country Club to amend the land use from Commercial Recreation (CR) to Low (5) Residential. The Amendment Sites are located within the municipal limits of the City of Tamarac (“City”) and generally located north of NW 44th Avenue, south of W. Commercial Boulevard, west of Rock Island Road and east of NW 64th Street. An aerial location map of the Woodlands Country Club with the Amendment Sites identified is attached as Exhibit A of the attached “Application Checklist for Amendments to the Broward County Land Use Plan”. The request will allow for the conversion of the Amendment Sites from golf course use to single family residential use. A map illustrating the proposed land use designation for the Amendment Sites and the existing land use designation of the surrounding properties is attached as Exhibit E of the attached “Application Checklist for Amendments to the Broward County Land Use Plan”. The applicant is concurrently requesting a Rezoning of the Amendment Sites.

The attached “Application Checklist for Amendments to the Broward County Land Use Plan” provides a detailed project description, justification statement, compatibility analysis as well as information and studies that collectively provide a project impact analysis. The applicant’s request for a Low (5) Residential land use designation for the Amendment Sites would allow for up to 827 units; therefore, the analyses provided within the “Application Checklist for Amendments to the Broward County Land Use Plan” are based on 827 units. However, it should be noted that during the Land Use Plan Amendment process, the applicant intends to restrict the property to development of no more than 423 single-family detached residential units.

The City’s specific criteria for Land Use Plan Map Amendments and the applicant’s response are provided below.

City’s Land Use Plan Amendment Criteria

Section 10-5.4(B)(3) of the City of Tamarac’s Land Development Code states that, “In deciding the application, the City Commission shall
consider and weigh the relevance of and consider whether and the extent to which the proposed amendment is necessary in order to address conditions including, but not limited to, the following:

(a) A change in projections or assumptions from those on which the Comprehensive Plan is based;

The Land Use Plan Map designation of the Amendment Sites was established in the 1970s when golf course operations were flourishing in South Florida and nationwide. The economic landscape for golf course operations have changed significantly since that time. The economic struggle of the existing Woodlands golf club is reflective of a general trend in the golf course industry. The current owners, Clublink, purchased the golf course from the Woodlands members in 2011 after the club had endured years of declining revenue. Despite the current owners’ capital investment and best efforts to protect the viability of the golf club, revenue continues to decline. In this case, like many other courses across the country, the declining revenue is associated with the decline in membership and the decline in rounds played in an industry with increasing costs. Unfortunately, from an operational standpoint, there is no upswing in sight to reverse the trend. The proposal to convert select portions of the golf course to residential use will allow for an infill development that is compatible with the surrounding residential development and which will assist the County and City in meeting its future housing needs identified in the City’s Comprehensive Plan. The proposed infill development is an efficient reuse of land that would otherwise be underutilized and harmful to surrounding property values when the golf courses close.

(b) Identification of new issues, needs, or opportunities that are not adequately addressed in the Comprehensive Plan;

As discussed in (a), the proposed amendment reflects the new reality that golf course operation has become economically non-viable at the Woodlands. The proposal is an opportunity to protect the existing Woodlands community against future decline as well as an opportunity to address many of the community’s current needs. Some of the community-wide needs include providing additional stormwater retention, renovations to an old and underutilized clubhouse, updates to outdated signage, and reviving poorly maintained landscaping. The proposal will also allow for the creation of new quality neighborhoods that will assist the County and City in meeting its future housing needs identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

(c) A change in the policies, objectives, principles, or standards governing the physical development of the City or any other geographic areas addressed by the Comprehensive Plan; or
The requested land use map amendment is not a result of a change in the policies, objectives, principals or standards governing the physical development of the City.

(d) Identification of errors or omissions in the Comprehensive Plan.

The requested land use plan map amendment is not a result of data or mapping errors or omissions in the Comprehensive Plan or on the Land Use Plan Map.

City Comprehensive Plan Policy Regarding Golf Course Conversion

Policy 10.12 of City of Tamarac Comprehensive Plan, states that “Amendments to the Land Use Plan which would result in the loss of open space, including golf courses, shall not be encouraged. In those cases where necessary and applicable and which support the vitality of the surrounding area, the applicant shall submit a study which demonstrates the necessity and how the recreation and open space needs of the existing and projected residents of the community will be met, including how the negative impacts of the loss of open space on surrounding neighborhoods will be minimized or mitigated.”

Necessary Change

The applicant is requesting to convert land that is currently being utilized as golf course with a corresponding land use designation of Commercial Recreation (CR), to a land use designation of Low (5) Residential to allow residential uses on the property. The proposed amendment reflects the reality that the golf course operation at the Woodlands has become economically non-viable. This situation is not unique to the Woodlands or Tamarac. This trend is occurring across South Florida and the United States as golf courses have become too numerous and golf play continues to decline.

The Woodlands Country Club began operation in the early 1970s with a clubhouse, two 18-hole golf courses, known as the East and West Courses, and a community of approximately 890 single family homes surrounding the fairways. After years of operation, the Club experienced a decline in revenue. The decline was associated with a decrease in golf play, an uptick in operational costs and increased competition from new golf course communities in the area. These market changes made it difficult to keep the operation economically viable. In an attempt to preserve golf play at the Woodlands, the golf course was sold, by its members, to Clublink in 2011.

Clublink is a membership-based operation where members have access to all golf courses within the Clublink network. At its height, Clublink had 198 operating holes in Florida but has since closed 41.7% of those operating holes. For years, Clublink attempted to revitalize the Woodlands golf courses by making capital investments, none of which proved successful.
As evidenced by frequent course closures throughout Florida, and over 200 course closures across the country in 2017, the experience at the Woodlands is not unique. The current owner and the applicant strongly believe it is only a matter of time before the Woodlands golf course will have to close due to the financial pressures affecting most golf course owners today. The closure of the courses and the associated uncertainty will likely negatively affect the appearance and property values of the surrounding areas.

Supports Vitality of Surrounding Area

To update and enhance the Woodlands community, the applicant proposes to redevelop select portions of the East and West courses with 423 fee-simple single-family homes over 165.53 acres that match the architectural style and context of the existing community with no apartments and no attached homes. The applicant also proposes to preserve and maintain 113.93 acres of land that is currently golf course as open space. The applicant proposes a phased exit of the golf operation where one 18-hole golf course will be left undeveloped until such time that redevelopment of the other 18-hole golf course is substantially complete.

The partial redevelopment of the property will allow the applicant to make much needed improvements to the infrastructure and appearance of the community. Some of the proposed improvements include fencing the perimeter of the property, gating the community’s ingress/egress points, constructing a new Clubhouse (which will be open to the Woodlands residents), providing 113.93 acres of permanently preserved and maintained open space with a 3+ mile walking trail, improving the physical infrastructure with over 20 acres of new lakes, and proposing the provide numerous transportation improvements. The applicant believes that these improvements will result in appreciating home values, putting an end to the value stagnation present in the Woodlands today (see Exhibit R – Redevelopment Impact Analysis). In addition to protecting the Woodlands from future decline, the proposal will create new housing stock for the City of Tamarac, thus creating new tax base (see Exhibit S – Economic Impact Analysis). Additionally, the new walking trails and proposed transportation improvements will improve the vehicular and pedestrian linkages within the community and City. As such, the proposal will benefit the entire Woodlands community as well as the City of Tamarac and Broward County.

Recreation & Open Space Needs of Existing and Projected Residents

The existing Woodlands Country Club is approximately 279.46 acres centered around the West and East golf courses and includes integrated waterways, and the Clubhouse. While the proposed amendment includes residential development on approximately 165.53 acres, it should be noted that 113.93 acres will be maintained in the Commercial Recreation land use designation and a deed restriction will be placed over the property to protect it as open space. Additionally, the remaining 165.53 acres designated as residential land use will include at least 50 acres used for open space surrounding the residential homesites and associated
infrastructure, bringing the total proposed open space of the redevelopment to a minimum of 160 acres.

The proposed amendment will bring stability and predictability to the Woodlands community by creating revenue that will allow for much needed infrastructure improvements and will allow for the maintenance and upgrading of the open space. It is the applicant’s intent that the open space will include a 3+ mile walking trail, benches, gardens and pocket parks with new landscaping. In addition, the applicant intends to redevelop the existing clubhouse to include a resort style pool, tennis courts, a cafe and a fitness center. Currently the clubhouse only provides dining facilities, a community gathering room, business operations offices, locker room and a pro shop, intended for the use of golfers, almost exclusively. The proposed improvements will mitigate any loss of golf course open space by providing the Woodlands community with preserved and maintained open space and new and improved recreational opportunities.

Minimization or Mitigation of the Loss of Open Space on Surrounding Neighborhoods

The proposed development will not impact any public open space or public park system. The impact involves the conversion of a private golf course to residential and open space uses. The loss of the open space associated with the private golf course will be mitigated by the preservation and maintenance of 113.93 acres of open space and through the provision of other recreational opportunities. It should be noted that the proposed conceptual plan (Exhibit G of the attached Exhibit 3) has been carefully designed to maintain Commercial Recreation (CR) designations (i.e. dedicated open space) between a large portion of the existing and proposed development parcels. Where proposed Amendment Sites (i.e. residential pods) are adjacent to existing residential pods the conceptual plan has been carefully planned to maintain separation between the existing and proposed roadways or homesites with either a new lake or a buffer.