

**Creating a Healthier Toronto Through the Official Plan:  
2013 Update**

<b>Date:</b>	November 24, 2013
<b>To:</b>	Board of Health
<b>From:</b>	Medical Officer of Health
<b>Wards:</b>	All Wards
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

**SUMMARY**

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The City of Toronto is undertaking a five-year review of its Official Plan (OP). This report provides comments on proposed amendments to OP policies on employment lands which were adopted by the Planning and Growth Management Committee at its meeting on November 21, 2013; and an update on Toronto Public Health's (TPH) ongoing efforts to enhance health and health equity principles in the OP.

Proposed changes to OP policies for employment lands will support healthy transportation options to work (transit, walking and cycling) that promote physical activity and decrease traffic-related air pollution. Walkable access to nutritious food stores, other retail, services and amenities are key features of a healthy neighbourhood. New policies proposed for OP amendment will require that redevelopment in residential and mixed-use areas consider options for walking to shopping and other services. TPH is collaborating with City Planning on the implementation of the Residential Apartment Commercial zoning designation which will help improve conditions in disadvantaged Apartment Neighbourhoods.

TPH supports policies that promote city-wide access to affordable daycare and works to ensure children and others are protected from potential environmental health hazards at such facilities. If adopted, proposed revisions to OP policies will prevent the siting of sensitive land uses such as workplace daycares, schools and places of worship in employment areas, uses which were previously permitted. TPH will continue to dialogue with City Planning on addressing issues arising from sensitive land uses in employment areas.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:**

1. the Board of Health forward this report to the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning for consideration in the Five-Year Official Plan Review.

### **Financial Impact**

There are no financial impacts arising from the adoption of this report.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting of September 24, 2012, the Board of Health requested the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) to collaborate with the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning to enhance health and health equity in Official Plan policies and to report back to the Board in 2013.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.HL16.1>

At its meeting on November 21, 2013, the Planning and Growth Management Committee considered a report from the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning that included recommendations to amend Official Plan employment policies.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.PG28.2>

### **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

Boards of health are required by the Ontario Public Health Standards 2008 (OPHS) to work with municipalities to support the development of healthy public policies regarding built environment, and to create or enhance supportive environments, as outlined in the chronic disease prevention and the environmental health program standards. Further, under the authority of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7., TPH is required to prevent, eliminate and decrease the effects of health hazards in Toronto by identifying health hazards, assessing potential risks to the public and determining appropriate action to reduce risk.

Health inequities are linked to income; in Toronto people living in areas with the lowest income have the poorest health and those living in middle income areas have poorer health than those living in areas with the highest incomes<sup>1</sup>. Quality of housing, access to nutritious food, and higher education are some of the determinants of health associated with income. In Toronto, there is an increasing concentration of poverty in the inner suburbs, as well as polarization and segregation of neighbourhoods based on income and other characteristics such as racialized groups.<sup>2,3,4</sup> Land-use decisions influence the health of the population by influencing access to affordable housing, employment, education, nutritious food, supportive environments for physical activity, and air quality.

### **The Toronto Official Plan Five-Year Review and Municipal Comprehensive Review of Employment Lands**

The Toronto Official Plan (OP) five-year review, currently in progress, was initiated in 2011. The OP is a statutory document under the authority of the Ontario Planning Act

(1990). It is a policy document to manage growth and development in the City. It provides direction for land-use planning decisions that influence how growth in Toronto will take place between now and 2031. The OP was adopted by City Council in 2002 and came into force in 2006.

The OP must conform to all provincial plans, policy statements and legislation. As such, it must meet the policy requirements of the *Provincial Policy Statement* issued under the Planning Act and *The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* issued under the authority of the Places to Grow Act (2005). The *Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* requires that municipalities conduct a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) before they permit the conversion of lands within employment areas to non-employment uses. Concurrent with the OP Review, City Planning initiated an MCR to address OP policy revisions dealing with areas of employment.

The intent of the OP Review is to identify which OP policies need to be updated, deleted, or revised and to add new policies in order to comply with provincial legislation, support civic policy initiatives and address new findings relevant to the future needs of communities. City Planning has organized the work into themes that include, among other topics, heritage; employment; transportation; parks; environment; housing; food; urban design; neighbourhoods; apartment neighbourhoods; and mix of uses. The status of these initiatives and a description of Toronto Public Health (TPH)'s involvement are found in Attachment 1.

Since initiation of the five-year review, City Council adopted OP amendments to include new Heritage and Public Realm policies and policies to facilitate the provision of affordable rented residential condominiums. Attachment 1 to this report provides further details on Council adopted policies and ongoing consultations for the OP Review.

## **COMMENTS**

As proposed amendments to the OP become available, TPH is reviewing them with a focus on implications to health and health equity. TPH has identified opportunities to enhance health and health equity principles in policies that address matters relating to affordable housing; low-income, low-growth neighbourhoods, specifically, apartment neighbourhoods; incorporating elements of the food strategy; building resilience to climate change; and expansion of transit and infrastructure for active transportation. As directed by the BOH its meeting on Sept 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012 (item HL16.1), the MOH is collaborating with the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning (Chief Planner) on ways for better integration of health principles in the OP.

## **Employment Land Policies**

Following public consultations, City Planning has proposed amendments to OP policies dealing with areas of employment. The proposed OP amendments adopted by the PGM committee can be accessed at

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.PG28.2>.

The stated intent of the key policy directions in the proposed amendments are to preserve employment land for business and economic activities; promote office growth along

rapid transit lines; and support growth of the retail sector and institutions such as hospitals and colleges. The comments below relate to how proposed policy directions relate to healthy transportation options, access to services and amenities in residential neighbourhoods, and sensitive land uses in employment areas.

### **Sensitive Land Uses in Employment Areas**

The OP describes sensitive land uses to mean "...buildings, amenity areas, or outdoor spaces where routine or normal activities occurring at reasonably expected times would experience one or more adverse effects from contaminant discharges generated by a nearby major facility. Sensitive land uses may be a part of the natural or built environment. Examples may include, but are not limited to: residences, day care centres, and educational and health facilities."

If adopted, proposed revisions to OP policies will prevent the siting of sensitive land uses such as workplace daycares, schools and places of worship in employment areas, uses which were previously permitted. Ice arenas and fitness centres will be permitted in certain employment areas found mainly on major roads and the peripheries of employment areas. Sensitive land uses that have already established in employment areas will be permitted to continue operations until there is a change in use.

Employment, working conditions and income are determinants of health. The availability of workplace daycare in employment lands is supportive of social policies that enable parents to find employment and increase their economic opportunities. TPH supports the establishment of workplace daycares in employment areas provided that a site assessment is conducted and mitigation strategies ensure children and other occupants of the daycare are protected from exposure to potential health hazards.

Toronto Public Health investigates complaints of potential environmental health hazards in all areas of Toronto including employment areas. Staff are in dialogue with City Planning to increase process efficiency for environmental site assessment to identify and mitigate potential health risks associated with sensitive land uses in employment lands.

### **Improving Transportation Options to Employment**

A transportation system that facilitates walking, cycling, and transit will improve health and provide affordable transport options to work. People living on a low-income in Toronto are greatly dependent on an affordable and easily accessible public transit system to get to work and access services. For those living in the inner suburbs, barriers to finding stable employment include inadequate public transit (including service at night), length of travel from home to work, and cost of transit fares.<sup>5</sup>

Proposed OP amendments will promote infrastructure for active transportation and public transit use in new development by, for example:

- promoting new office development within walking distance of rapid transit ; and maintaining existing employment sites near transit;
- promoting the establishment of institutions (hospitals, universities and colleges) near rapid transit; providing access to rapid transit for established institutions; and connecting major institutions to Toronto's bicycle network; and

- Promoting integrated multi-storey developments at subway and underground light rapid transit stations.

Policies that promote healthy transportation options – walking, cycling and transit – will be more meaningful to those commuting from areas with poor access to transit, mainly the inner suburbs, through expansion of transit and infrastructure for cycling and walking in disadvantaged areas of Toronto. TPH is engaged with City Planning through activities related to the "Feeling Congested" consultations to review and comment on OP transportation policies.

### **Increasing Access to Services**

Mixed-use areas support the creation of walkable neighbourhoods where people have access to a range of services and housing in close proximity to each other and include healthy transportation options. Proposed OP amendments to section 3.5.3 (The Future of Retailing) encourage retail development to be designed to promote street level retail, pedestrian and transit use, intensification of retail, and “encouraging stores selling fresh food in areas currently lacking pedestrian access to fresh food”. These policies apply to areas where retail is permitted including redevelopment of retail in *Neighbourhoods* and *Apartment Neighbourhoods*. Further, proposed OP policies (chapter 2, section 2.2.4) will direct the City to consider "sufficient parks, libraries, recreation centres and schools exist or are planned within walking distance for new residents" when staff are assessing development applications.

### **Next Steps**

City Planning is commencing work to review OP policies related to housing. It is anticipated that an approach to address the definition of affordable housing will be dealt with as part of the review process. Toronto Public Health will review consultation material on housing policies and provide input on proposed OP policy revisions. TPH will continue its work on providing input to City Planning on OP transportation policies in the upcoming 2014 consultations; and review and comment on policy revisions to other areas of the OP as identified in Attachment 1.

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**SIGNATURE**

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**ATTACHMENT**

Attachment 1: Status of Official Plan 5-Year Review by Thematic Area

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup>Toronto Public Health (2008). *The unequal city: income and health inequalities in Toronto*. Retrieved from [http://www.toronto.ca/health/map/pdf/unequalcity\\_20081016.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/health/map/pdf/unequalcity_20081016.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup>Hulchanski, J. D. (2010). *The three cities within Toronto: Income polarization among Toronto's neighbourhoods, 1970-2005*. Toronto, ON: Cities Centre, University of Toronto. Retrieved from <http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/pdfs/curp/tnm/Three-Cities-Within-Toronto-2010-Final.pdf>.
- <sup>3</sup>United Way Toronto (2011). *Poverty by Postal Code 2: Vertical Poverty*. Toronto, ON. Retrieved from <http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/verticalpoverty/>
- <sup>4</sup>Toronto Public Health (2013). *Racialization and Health Inequities in Toronto*. Retrieved from <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-62904.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup>Toronto Public Health (2013). *Next Stop Health: Transit Access and Health Inequities in Toronto*. Available at (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-56681.pdf>)

## ATTACHMENT 1

### Status of Official Plan 5-Year Review by Thematic Area

Theme <sup>a</sup>	OP Review Process Status
Transportation	Public consultation on draft policies underway through the “Feeling Congested” consultations The BOH forwarded recommendations on health and equity criteria for OP amendments for transportation investment in Toronto (March 25, 2013 BOH meeting). TPH will continue to participate in stakeholder consultations and advocate for policies that require equitable and affordable transportation through expanding transit and infrastructure for walking and cycling.
Study Implementation (Tower Renewal Study)	Draft OP amendments relating to Tower Renewal have not been released. TPH staff is in dialogue with City Planning and Tower Renewal (SDFA) to integrate health promoting policies as it relates to Tower Renewal.
Environment	Public consultations on draft policies have not been announced. TPH will identify and advocate for OP policies to support climate change adaptation and community resilience to extreme weather events.
Housing	Amendments to OP Section 37 policies to facilitate the provision of affordable rented residential condominium housing was adopted by Council (July 16-19, 2013(MM37.44). To support affordable housing policies in the OP, the BOH requested the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to amend the Planning Act to allow inclusionary housing (Sep 24 BOH, Item HL16.1). TPH staff, in consultation with City Planning and the Affordable Housing Office, will review and comment on proposals to revise OP housing policies.
Food	Draft policies have not been released for public consultation. TPH is in dialogue with City Planning regarding food policies consistent with the Toronto Food Strategy.
Urban Design	Amendments to heritage and public realm policies were adopted by Council TPH is working with the City Planning and Transportation to strengthen health elements in the Complete Streets Guidelines. Elements of the Guidelines will be reflected in upcoming OP policies. TPH will review and comment on OP policy revisions related to built form and the “human environment” – building communities.
Neighbourhoods	Draft OP policies have not been released for public consultation. The BOH requested the Chief Planner to consider recommendations on ways to strengthen health equity in low-income, low-growth neighbourhoods (Sept 2012 BOH, item HL16.1). The MOH participated in the Chief Planner roundtable discussion on suburbs in March 2013. TPH staff will continue to review and provide input to City Planning on OP policy revisions on <i>Neighbourhoods</i> .



Theme <sup>a</sup>	OP Review Process Status
Apartment Neighbourhoods	<p>Draft OP policies have not been released for public consultation. The BOH forwarded to the Chief Planner, for consideration, recommendations on strengthening health and equity in OP policies related to Apartment Neighbourhoods (Sep 2012 BOH, item HL16.1). The new city-wide zoning bylaw 569-2013 includes a new zone, Residential-Apartment-Commercial (RAC), which permits new uses such as small-scale retail, amenities and services, that support the creation of healthier communities. City Planning, in collaboration with TPH, is in the process of implementing the RAC zone.</p>
Mix of Uses	<p>Proposed OP amendment encourages mix of retail in Employment Areas and where retailing is permitted. TPH provided input to City Planning in drafting OP policies that require the provision of fresh food retail in areas with poor access to food stores. TPH will continue to advocate for mixed use policies that encourage creating healthier communities through access to amenities and services that are affordable and promote health.</p>

<sup>a</sup> Themes presented in this table are selected areas for review by TPH