

**OPA 231**  
**CONVERSION/FORECASTING POLICY REVISIONS**

Text that is **highlighted in yellow** is unapproved and subject to the Conversion/Forecasting phase of the OPA 231 hearing.

Text that is **highlighted in black** is unapproved and subject to future phases of the OPA 231 hearing.

Text that has been approved by the LPAT is not highlighted.

Proposed policy additions are shown with an underline. Proposed policy deletions are shown with a ~~striketrough~~.

## CHAPTER 2: Shaping the City

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### 2.2.4 Employment Areas: Supporting Business and Employment Growth

Toronto's *Employment Areas*, to be used exclusively for business and economic activities, are an essential cornerstone of our diverse and thriving civic economy. Almost a third of Toronto's jobs and forty percent of export-oriented jobs with high-multiplier spinoffs are in *Employment Areas*. The City's *Employment Areas* are healthy with considerable investment in new buildings and improvements and overall low building vacancy rates. Important elements of our civic economy, such as manufacturing and warehousing and goods distribution are located almost entirely in *Employment Areas* and provide for a broad range of jobs and a diverse economic base that helps our City through difficult cycles in the economy.

Our *Employment Areas* are finite and geographically bounded. Given relative land values, residential lands are rarely converted to employment uses and there is little opportunity to create new employment lands. It is the City's goal to conserve our *Employment Areas*, now and in the longer term, to expand existing businesses and incubate and welcome new businesses that will employ future generations of Torontonians. Given the diminishing supply of vacant land in *Employment Areas*, new development in *Employment Areas* needs to take place in a more intensive physical form.

Maintaining *Employment Areas* exclusively for business and economic activities provides a stable and productive operating environment for existing business that also attracts new firms. The introduction of sensitive land uses into *Employment Areas* can force industry to alter their operations, particularly when the environmental certificates that industries operate under are affected, or complaints are lodged about adverse effects from industrial operations. Even where new sensitive land uses are located outside of, but in close proximity to, *Employment Areas*, they should be designed and constructed to prevent the residents or users from being affected by noise, traffic, odours or other contaminants from nearby industry.

Toronto's *Employment Areas* are important in providing good quality services to our residents and workers. The industrial and commercial properties are vital to maintaining a healthy civic tax base that pays for those services. Most of our City and transportation yards that maintain our infrastructure are located in *Employment Areas* and have limited alternative locations.

Preserving *Employment Areas* contributes to a balance between employment and residential growth so that Torontonians have a greater opportunity to live and work in the City, rather than commuting distances to jobs outside of the City. As *Employment Areas* are spread across the City, work destinations and commuting direction are also spread out, resulting in less road congestion in any one direction. This provides workers who live in close proximity to *Employment Areas* with the opportunity for shorter commutes to work by either transit, cycling or walking.

Our *Employment Areas* are comprised of lands designated both as Core *Employment Areas* and General *Employment Areas*, which are both important 'employment areas' as defined in the Provincial policy framework. The conversion of lands within *Employment*

Areas is only permitted through a City-initiated Municipal Comprehensive Review as defined in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe of the Official Plan. During a City-initiated Municipal Comprehensive Review of the Official Plan, the City can assess any requests to convert Employment Areas on the basis of criteria that implement the Provincial planning framework and the policies of the Official Plan for Employment Areas.

## POLICIES

1. Employment Areas, as shown on Map 2, are comprised of both Core Employment Areas and General Employment Areas, as shown on Maps 13 to 23 inclusive. Employment Areas are areas designated in this Plan for ~~clusters of~~ business and economic activities including, but not limited to, manufacturing, warehousing, offices, and associated retail and ancillary facilities.
2. Employment Areas will be used exclusively for business and economic activities in order to:
  - a) Retain sufficient availability of lands, for both current and future needs, for industrial functions such as manufacturing and warehousing ~~which are permitted only within Employment Areas and Regeneration Areas;~~
  - b) Protect and preserve Employment Areas for current and future business and economic activities;
  - c) Provide for and contribute to a broad range of stable ~~full-time~~ employment opportunities;
  - d) Provide opportunities for new office buildings, particularly in business parks along the Don Valley corridor and/or within walking distance to higher order transit;
  - e) Provide a stable and productive operating environment for existing and new businesses ~~and economic activities~~ by preventing the establishment of sensitive land uses in Employment Areas;
  - f) Maintain and grow the City's business tax base;
  - g) Promote and maintain food security for the City's residents;
  - h) Maintain the market attractiveness of ~~the~~ Employment Areas for employment uses;
  - i) Provide prominent, accessible and visible locations and a wide choice of appropriate sites for potential new businesses;
  - j) Continue to contribute to Toronto's diverse economic base ~~and support export-oriented wealth creating employment;~~
  - k) Contribute to ~~complete communities by providing employment opportunities that support~~ a balance between jobs and housing to reduce the need for long-distance commuting and encourage travel by transit, walking and cycling; and

- l) Provide work opportunities for residents of nearby neighbourhoods.
3. A more intensive use of lands in Employment Areas for business and economic activities will be encouraged to make better use of a limited supply of lands available for these activities.
  4. Employment Areas will be enhanced to ensure they are attractive and function well, through actions such as:
    - a) Permitting a broad array of economic activities that encourage existing businesses to expand or diversify into new areas of economic activity and facilitates firms with functional linkages to locate in close proximity to one another;
    - b) Investing in key infrastructure to support current and future needs, and facilitating investment through special tools, incentives including tax incentives, and other programs or partnerships, in order to:
      - i) promote the distinctive character or specialized function of an area to attract businesses within a particular targeted cluster of economic activity;
      - ii) facilitate the development of vacant lands and the adaptive reuse of vacant buildings for employment purposes;
      - iii) facilitate the remediation of brownfield sites to enable redevelopment for employment uses;
      - iv) address the absence of key physical infrastructure and amenities for workers, ~~poor environmental conditions~~ or poor accessibility;
    - c) Encouraging and supporting business associations that promote and provide a voice for businesses within Employment Areas;
    - d) Establishing a connected network of public streets for use by trucks, automobiles, transit, bicycles and pedestrians; and
    - e) Promoting a high quality public realm and creating comfortable streets, sidewalks, parks and open spaces for workers and landscaped streetscapes to promote pedestrian/ transit use and attract new business ventures [while supporting the efficient movement of goods](#).

### **Conversion and Removal Policies for *Employment Areas***

14. The redesignation of land from an *Employment Area* designation to any other designation, by way of an Official Plan Amendment, or the introduction of a use that is otherwise not permitted in an *Employment Area* is a conversion of land within an *Employment Area* and is also a removal of land from an *Employment Area*, and may only be permitted by way of a Municipal Comprehensive Review. The introduction of a use that may be permitted in a *General Employment Area* into a *Core Employment Area* or the redesignation of a *Core Employment Area* into a *General Employment*

Area Designation is also a conversion and may only be permitted by way of a Municipal Comprehensive Review.

15. The conversion of land within an Employment Area is only permitted through a City-initiated Municipal Comprehensive Review that comprehensively applies the policies and schedules of the Provincial Growth Plan.

16. Applications to convert lands within an Employment Area will only be considered at the time of a municipal review of employment policies and designations under Section 26 of the Planning Act and a concurrent Municipal Comprehensive Review under the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Applications to convert lands within an Employment Area received between such City-initiated Official Plan Reviews will be not be considered unless Council directs that a Municipal Comprehensive Review be initiated.

17. ~~During a Municipal Comprehensive Review, t~~The City will assess requests to convert lands within Employment Areas, ~~pursuant to the Provincial Growth Plan Policy 2.2.6.5,~~ both cumulatively and individually, by considering ~~the following matters~~whether or not:

a) There is a demonstrated need for the conversion(s) to:

- i. meet the population forecasts allocated to the City in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe; or
- ii. ~~c) — There is a demonstrated need for the conversion(s) to mitigate existing and/or potential land use conflicts;~~

b) ~~d) — The lands are required over the long-term for employment purposes;~~

c) ~~b) — The City will meet the employment forecasts allocated to the City in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe;~~

d) The conversion(s) will adversely affect the overall viability of the Employment Area ~~and maintenance of a stable operating environment for business and economic activities with regard to the:~~

i. compatibility of the proposed land use with existing and permitted employment uses ~~or employment uses permitted in the zoning by-law~~ in the Employment Area;

ii. prevention or mitigation of adverse effects from noise, vibration, and emissions, including dust and odour;

iii. prevention or mitigation of negative impacts and minimization of the risk of complaints;

iv. ability to ensure compliance with environmental approvals, registrations, legislation, regulations and guidelines;

~~ii. — interference with the function of existing employment uses by affecting Environmental Compliance Certificates of industries and their renewal, or complaints of adverse effects to the Ministry of the~~

~~Environment under the Environmental Protection Act which could require changes to industrial operations or restrict operating hours;~~

~~iii-v. ability to provide appropriate buffering of employment uses from sensitive residential and institutional land uses, including residential uses;~~

~~iv. implementation of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment D series guidelines for compatibility between industry and sensitive uses or any successor guidelines;~~

~~v. impact on the affordability of property or building leases or land purchase costs for employment uses and tax assessments in the Employment Area;~~

~~vi. reduction or elimination of visibility of, and accessibility to, employment lands or uses;~~

~~vii. impact upon the capacity and functioning of the transportation network and the movement of goods for existing and future employment uses;~~

~~viii. removal of large and/or key locations for employment uses; and~~

~~ix. j) The ability to provide opportunities for the clustering of similar or related employment uses is maintained; and~~

~~ix.x. k) A sufficient supply of optimum sized provision of a variety of land parcel sizes is maintained in within the Employment Area for the to accommodate a range of permitted employment uses;~~

~~x. maintenance of the identity of the Employment Area.~~

~~e) f) The existing or planned sewage, water, energy and transportation infrastructure can accommodate the proposed conversion(s);~~

~~f) g) In the instance of conversions for residential purposes, sufficient parks, libraries, recreation centres and schools exist or are planned within walking distance for new residents;~~

~~h) Land already appropriately designated and zoned for the proposed non-employment use(s) is available outside of Employment Areas;~~

~~i) New residents or institutional users on the lands would be adversely affected by noise, vibration, odours and other air emissions, dust and other particulates or other contaminants;~~

~~g) j) The ability to provide opportunities for the clustering of similar or related employment uses is maintained;~~

~~h) k) A sufficient supply of optimum-sized land parcels is maintained in the Employment Area for the range of permitted employment uses;~~

~~l) Employment lands proximate to essential linkages, such as supply chains, service providers, markets, and necessary labour pools are preserved;~~

~~i)g)m) Employment lands are strategically preserved near important transportation infrastructure such as highways and highway interchanges, rail corridors, ports and airports to facilitate the movement of goods;~~

~~n) The proposal(s) to convert lands within an Employment Area will maintain and grow, or potentially diminish the City's tax base;~~

~~j)h)e) The proposal(s) to convert lands in an Employment Area will help to maintain ~~to~~ a diverse economic base accommodating and attracting a variety of employment uses and a broad range of ~~stable full-time~~ employment opportunities in Toronto; and~~

~~p) The conversion(s) will retain work opportunities for residents of nearby neighbourhoods; and~~

~~k)i)q) Cross-jurisdictional issues have been considered.~~

## CHAPTER 3: Building a Successful City

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### 3.5.1 CREATING A STRONG AND DIVERSE CIVIC ECONOMY

Toronto's economy is thriving, but continued efforts are required to attract new business and jobs, maintain the diversity of our economic base and maintain a healthy municipal tax base. Policies of the Plan to achieve this include:

- a. Promotion of transit-oriented office growth in the *Downtown and Central Waterfront*, the *Centres*, and within walking distance of rapid transit stations;
- b. Retention of *Employment Areas* exclusively as stable places of business and economic activities;
- c. Providing locations for the retail commercial and institutional sectors to meet the needs of our City and Region's growing population; and
- d. Promoting the cultural sector as an important element of our economy.

Almost half of the City's current jobs, and a majority of its future jobs, are in offices. The Greater Toronto Area could be adding millions of square metres of office space over the coming decades, and, given existing road congestion, it is essential to promote office growth on rapid transit lines throughout the City and Region. The Official Plan directs office growth, and in particular the development of large freestanding office buildings, to the *Downtown and Central Waterfront*, the *Centres*, and within 500 metres of rapid transit stations. At the same time, existing office space in these transit-rich areas needs to be sustained, not demolished to make way for new residential buildings. Where a residential development is proposed on sites with over 1000 square metres of employment space in these areas served by rapid transit where residential uses are already permitted, the development must also result in an increase of employment space.

Toronto's *Employment Areas* have great potential for additional employment growth through the incubation of new business, the nurturing of small business to become large business, attracting new and expanding employment clusters, and intensifying the form of development in our employment lands. To grow employment and investment the Plan promotes, and the City currently provides, both tax incentives and priority processing for new and expanding office buildings and industries. These incentives augment the supports for economic growth in Toronto already provided by: a well-educated and skilled labour force, access to financial capital, a strong research and development sector, advanced communications networks, a dynamic business climate, and an enviable quality of life in safe, inclusive neighbourhoods.



## CHAPTER 4: Land Use Designations

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### 4.6 EMPLOYMENT AREAS

*Employment Areas* are places of business and economic activities vital to Toronto's economy and future economic prospects. Both *Core Employment Areas* and *General Employment Areas* are important and comprise the City's "Employment Areas" as defined under the Provincial Planning framework.

The majority of Employment Areas are designated as *Core Employment Areas* where uses identified in Policies 4.6.1 and 4.6.2 are permitted. *Core Employment Areas* are, for the most part, geographically located within the interior of employment areas. Uses that would attract the general public into the interior of employment lands and possibly disrupt industrial operations are not generally permitted in *Core Employment Areas*. Industrial trade schools are traditionally permitted in Employment Areas and are provided for in *Core Employment Areas*. Media facilities include uses such as, but are not limited to, production studios and establishments that manufacture printed and/or digital communications.

*General Employment Areas* are generally located on the periphery of *Employment Areas* on major roads where retail, service and restaurant uses can serve workers in the *Employment Area* and would also benefit from visibility and transit access to draw the broader public. Retail uses on the periphery of *Employment Areas* frequently serve as a buffer between industries in the interior of *Employment Areas* and nearby residential areas. In addition to all of the uses permitted in a *Core Employment Area*, the uses identified in Policy 4.6.3, are also permitted in *General Employment Areas*. Automobile dealerships are permitted as a retail and service use in a *General Employment Area*.

Retail uses of any scale or form that implements the built form policies of this Plan is provided for in a *General Employment Area*. However, because major retail developments have the potential for greater impacts, they may be permitted only through the enactment of a site specific zoning by-law, and after consideration of a number of criteria, including:

- a. Transportation impacts on the *Employment Area* and nearby residential neighbourhoods;
- b. A form that represents intensified use of finite employment lands;
- c. Effect upon the economic health of nearby retail shopping areas;
- d. Provision of new streets or driveways and pedestrian amenities; and
- e. Placement of buildings next to the street frontage.